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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EBOOKS AND TRADITIONAL BOOKS IN MALAYSIA

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INTRODUCTION

The debate between eBooks and traditional books continues to grow, especially in Malaysia where digital technology adoption is rapidly increasing. This comparative study examines the current trends, advantages, and disadvantages of both formats within the Malaysian context, considering consumer preferences, environmental impacts, and future trends. Research indicates a notable rise in the adoption of digital reading platforms among university students in Malaysia, driven by factors such as convenience and accessibility (Rahim et al., 2021). This trend highlights the broader digital transformation occurring within the country's educational sector.

MARKET TRENDS AND CONSUMER PREFERENCES

The eBook market is experiencing significant growth globally, with a projected worth of \$32.19 billion by 2032. This trend is also noticeable in Malaysia, where increased smartphone penetration and digital literacy have propelled eBook adoption. According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), 97.4% of Malaysians used the Internet in 2022, with many accessing digital reading platforms through their devices. However, traditional books remain popular, particularly among older generations and those who value the tactile experience of physical books (MCMC, 2022; Hoffman, 2023).

A study among university students in Malaysia found that while 74.6% preferred eBooks for their portability, while 66.7% favoured printed books for ease of studying and making notes (Lim & Mokhtar, 2017). This highlights the diverse preferences across different demographics.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

As the eBook market expands, it is essential to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of eBooks and traditional books. Understanding these pros and cons can help users make informed decisions based on their reading preferences and needs.

eBooks:

1. **Convenience and Portability:** eBooks offer unmatched convenience, where an e-reader can store thousands of books, making it an ideal space-saving solution ideal for avid readers and students (Hoffman, 2023).
2. **Customisation:** eBooks allow adjustments in font size, style, and layout, which can enhance the reading experience, particularly for individuals with visual impairments or dyslexia (Kitaboo, 2024).
3. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Generally, eBooks are cheaper than printed books as they eliminate printing and distribution costs. Additionally, there are numerous free eBooks available online (Kitaboo, 2024).
4. **Environmental Impact:** While eBooks eliminate the need for paper, the production and disposal of e-readers contribute to electronic waste. Environmental benefits depend on the reader's habits, one of which is that prolific readers might find eBooks more eco-friendly over time (Hoffman, 2023).

Traditional Books:

1. **Tactile Experience:** Many readers prefer to enjoy the physical feel of books, which includes the texture of the paper and the act of turning pages, and these are absent in the use of eBooks (Hoffman, 2023).
2. **Ease of Sharing:** Physical books can be easily shared, sold, or donated, enhancing their lifespan and accessibility for generations to come (Kitaboo, 2024).
3. **Eye Strain:** Printed books do not cause the same level of eye strain as eBooks, which require staring at a screen causing visual fatigue after prolonged reading periods (Kitaboo, 2024).
4. **Durability and Longevity:** Well-maintained printed books can last for decades and be enjoyed by multiple generations, whereas e-readers may have a shorter lifespan due to technological obsolescence (Hoffman, 2023).

THE FUTURE OF READING IN MALAYSIA

The future of reading in Malaysia will likely involve a hybrid approach, combining the benefits of both eBooks and traditional books. The ongoing digital transformation is expected to make eBooks more prevalent, especially among the younger and tech-savvy population. Enhanced features such as read-aloud options, multilingual support, and personalised recommendations are also set to further boost eBook adoption among the community (Oliver, 2024).

However, traditional books are not disappearing anytime soon. Their unique advantages, such as the tangible reading experience and lower long-term environmental impact for occasional readers, allow them to remain an integral part of the reading landscape.

CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, both eBooks and traditional books have their own distinct advantages and disadvantages. The choice between them depends on individual preferences, reading habits, and environmental considerations. As technology continues to evolve, so does the way Malaysians consume written content, which these patterns make the current writing and publishing industry attractive, especially for readers and publishers.

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