Reading Habits Among Students in the Digital Era: Changes of Trends and Behaviours

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Abstract

Reading has a significant number of benefits and the effects of reading practice have been proven in most developed countries. The revolution of technology plays a significant role of unpredictable changes and pervasive effect that has transformed the society nowadays. Indeed, it can fundamentally change the reading habits and indirectly boost efforts in maintaining lifelong reading since Malaysia is now moving towards Vision 2020. Thus, the rapid development and demands of the technology has reinforced the challenges of making reading habits consistent and grows intensively. This study sought to identify and measure the reading habits among students which are their trends and behaviours toward reading that reflect on the impact of digital sources made available through the Internet. This study was conducted in Universiti Teknologi MARA Sarawak, limit to Semester One students, aged between 17-21 years by using a survey method involving 2340 from 10060 diploma students with the questionnaire as the research instrument. The random sampling for the students is involving 14 faculties in UiTM Sarawak branch. Taken together, QR code has been used as an initiative platform in order to conduct and monitor the survey efficiently. Data analyses were collected using Google Sheet and the study found that majority of the students (44%) like reading on websites compared to other choices such as print books, e-books, magazines, comics, novel and newspaper. Fiction is the most preferred type of literature read by 68% the students, followed by non-fiction (32%). The findings also found that majority of the students (49%) preferred reading from their mobile phone, whereas others preferred reading from a print book (44%) and reading from a computer (7%). Findings of the study revealed that the rise of information and technology has extensively changes the trends and behaviors of the student's reading habits, which slowly moving away from printed books to online source materials.

Keywords: reading habits; students, digital era, trend, behaviors.

1. Introduction

Reading is the most valuable way and great deals to approach life effectively and efficiently. The more we read, the more knowledge and exposure we gain. According to Samsuddin et al. (2019), reading is a method of getting data and engaging information. Generally, people are always encouraged to develop these reading habits at an early age, to expose them with a lot of things around the world. Undeniably, the facts that the power of reading brings a lot of advantages which indirectly can help to motivate people and build their self-confident.

As it is known, reading habits are very close to all the people around the world. Indeed, the students are the one that always be advised to strengthen their reading habits in order to support their learning capabilities. Walia & Sinha (2014) also emphasizes that reading is considered a practice, a way of thinking and a kind of real experience, and it requires many complex skills, the ability to interpret written words, to skim for knowledge, and then perhaps to read intensively. Therefore, reading habits is considerably significant towards students which can support their academic performances.

In the past, library is the most perfect place for students to spend for their reading activities. They will not be ready to expand reading practices beyond libraries reported by Dali (2015). Thus, academic library plays a very important role in these reading habits despite major changes in trends and behaviours. However, the traditional function of the academic library, which has rightfully been dubbed the "heart" of the academic community, remains intact (Banou et al., 2008). Besides that, students also take the traditional method of readings such as books, magazines

and journals where the fact they can feel the turning the pages and enjoy holding the physical materials. Songhui (2008) points out that, by "traditional reading habit" is supposed the reading of books published within the sort of paper only. Hence, the traditional student's reading habit has slowly changed and transformed in line with the current technological developments.

The revolution of technology plays a role of unpredictable changes and pervasive effect that has transformed the society nowadays. Literally, this situation is referring to the digital era that has completely dominating the world today. Hall (2019) indicates the digital era has brought new technologies, tactics and organizations to support action. Consequently, the digital era has totally brought large and rapid changes occurring in the development of the industry in this world.

As the world becomes technologically advanced, many people nowadays have changed their culture and environment on reading by looking for the digital sources of reading materials. Abdul Karim & Hasan (2007) had earlier reported that the trend may have shifted to a digital reading habit, which is completely different from the traditional definition of reading. Even though the reading habits have literally changed, we need to be disciplined and committed in order to cultivate lifelong reading habits in our society. There have several issues on reading habit problems among students and a key issue is the emergence of various applications and social media has neglected the time of the students. The tremendous advancement in data innovation that consequently have made understudies to peruse books less and get more associated with sitting in front of the television, chatting and getting all the more profoundly fascinated in the activities in the social media (Fatiloro et al., 2017). The other issues are the level of the information literacy skills among the students. According to (Böckle et al. (2020), the literacy rate is heavily influenced by reading ability and access to services such as libraries. It is important for the students not only able to read for information and believe in what they see, they should have the ability to understand the information or messages sending from all of different types and formats of reading sources. Generally, the advancement of digital technology has affected many other spheres of our lives and indirectly hit our reading habits.

It is significant to explore the impact of digital era towards reading habits since it is an important to identify the trends and behaviours among students nowadays. With the availability of various gadgets and widespread use of social media, students are more interested in spending their time reading through the phone or laptop. According to Tanjung et al. (2017), indicate that it's closely associated with the utilization of gadget among students like smart phones or tabs which are simply exploited to access the present online news In this digital age, readers (especially younger readers) tends to grow gradually develop the screen-based reading behaviour. According to Abdul Karim & Hasan (2007) found that the developing amount of reading time are spent more on searching and browsing for information on the web based platform. Currently, students choose to stay in one place and access the internet to read while doing another movement not just focus in one place and read lots of documents (Manalu, 2019). Furthermore, it clearly shows that the main reason of the changes of this trends and behaviours on reading habits are related to the ubiquity and advancement of technology. Particularly, this study is performed to explore the impact of digital era on reading habits and behaviours among students.

To achieve the objectives of this paper, the following hypotheses is formulated. Then, the paper discusses the methodology and follows with the results and findings about the topics. The last section of this paper will discuss and make a conclusion on the topics.

2.   Literature Review

The review of literature for this paper includes topics on reading, students' reading habits, traditional students' reading habits, digital era, traditional reading habits vs modern reading habits and trends and behaviors of reading habits among students in the digital era/digital material.

Reading

Reading is a complex and cognitive process for learners to easily understand the information that they receive every day. It can be either through text or passages, which usually come from a printed or non-printed material. Besides, Mohamed et al. (2012) found that some view reading as a complex process integrating all aspects of human behaviours and demanding varied and continued instructional guidance to read precisely, to appraise and to relate to others during a significant way. The concept of reading is generally an activity to understand meaning, message from written materials or non-printed that helps the readers catch what idea the writer is trying to convey.

There are many reasons that make reading very essential and need to be developed to each and everyone. Basically, reading can help us a lot on exposing ourselves with a new thing and indirectly broaden our knowledge effectively. Mohamed et al. (2012) indicates that in Islam, reading is crucial and a thought of as a window to knowledge. Reading is an important tool for achieving emotional stability, enjoying leisure hours, sharing the difficult experiences which are encountered in books and it continues to follow developments in the world (Ogunrombi & Adio, 1995). Therefore, reading is very important and brings a lot of positivity in our life.

Students' reading habits

The concept of students reading habits is on how often they read, when do they read, what do they read and why do they read. Literally, not all students have the same habits in reading. According to Davidovitch et al. (2016), reading habits are the way individuals organize their reading. Some would choose reading through written or printed materials because it is way more direct and there are some would prefer digital materials as it is faster and easier just by searching information through the internet. With no doubts, the reading materials itself can affect their reading habits. Besides that, Avci & Yüksel (2011) stated that in individual reading, students read the page and continue, often not understanding all or part of its content. In order to determine the students reading habits, we need to understand their attitudes, the environment and the reading materials that they prefer.

Students are the one who are significant with this reading habit because reading will have a good effect on their learning journey. Literally, university students are groups that are expected to possess a high level of reading habit, which is among the individual and social development criteria (Erdem, 2015). In addition, Abdul Karim & Hasan (2007) found that, from the previous study, the amount of time spent on reading by the university students was found to be higher than the average adults. But the fact is, the level of students' reading habits is not an achievement we can be proud of so far, yet we need to work more aggressive in order to ensure students will always keen on reading.

Traditional Student's Reading Habit

There are some traditional ways of reading habits that students still practice today. According to Songhui (2008), "traditional reading habit" means the reading of books published in the form of paper only. Thus, by reading a book, it is one of the way students can expand their knowledge and utilize their leisure time wisely. Reading usually said to be an individual's personal relationship with the book, but in addition, this relationship can be influenced by environmental situations such as the presence of places and the choice to spend free time (Walia & Sinha, 2014). Therefore, the traditional students' reading habit are basically depending on the use of printed or physical materials such as books, magazines and journals. Furthermore, Duncan et al. (2016) found out that the teenagers usually have more appeal with reading materials such as traditional texts and fiction books to reading comprehension. Not only that, academic library also play a vital role in creating this traditional reading habits among students. As a whole, printed materials and libraries are necessary in ensuring that these reading habits are always relevant among the students.

Digital Era

Nowadays, the advancement of the technology and wide range of digital advocacy has initiate people to the digital era. As a result, the rise of digital era generally hit and change our reading habits. Abdul Karim & Hasan (2007) provide evidence that the trend and behaviors will be transformed to a digital reading habit, which is completely different from the traditional definition of reading. In parallel, the invention of paper and printing technology in ancient China enhanced ways of reading and reading capacity immensely, speeding up the development of mankind's literate community (Songhui, 2008). The digital era has mainly changed our various ways of life and aspects of this world and the changes of the reading habits that people are experiencing now.

The widespread use of digital technology has a huge impact on students' reading practice today. It totally makes changes the traditional ways of reading habits of the younger generation which are the students that always looking for an opportunity to fully utilize the value of the digital era. Today's technologies not only influence students learning and studying in the classroom but also affect their reading behaviours at home. Liu (2005) found that the digital era has started to impact the reading behaviour of people with the increasing amount of digital content available and the increasing amount of time people spend reading electronic media. As a result, the digital era transforms the trends and behaviours of reading habits among students and impacts the changes in reading materials as well as the use of technology in reading.

Traditional reading habits vs modern reading habits

The traditional reading habits and modern reading habits have their own strength and weakness which will influence students 'choices to read. The reading of books written solely on paper is referred to as a "traditional reading habit". Meanwhile, modern reading habits are evolving with various forms and formats that move in line with the development of technology nowadays. Davidovitch, Ph, et al. (2016) report that students may choose to read information that is readily available rather than sifting through a library's collection of academic texts. Although, using gadget and other forms of technology, everyone can read at any time and from any place, regardless of the type of reading material (Samsuddin et al., 2019). After all, if students read an article or e-text online, they save money on paper and other physical costs, such as the production and sale of a hardcopy course pack (Ji et al., 2014). These apparently shows that digital library should seize the opportunity to look up for the initiative by using both of this approach or method in order to enhance the reading habits among students.

Trends and behaviors of reading habits

As the technology develops tremendously, indirectly it also contribute a great change in the trend of our reading habits. For instance, during the past years, it is a trend when people especially students looking for an opportunity to read in the library. But nowadays, library need to come out with extraordinary initiatives and creativities to maintain the trend of reading in the library. Songhui (2008) points out that in the modern age, the library is experiencing drastic changes in its information service as a conventional information institution. Hence, library institution continuously plays important roles to be alert with changes in the trend of reading habit from time to time.

Apart from that, the digital era has even changed the behaviours, or the way people read especially among the students. Today, young people have less time to read on a study table (Walia & Sinha, 2014). For instance, instead of spending time reading on a study table or in the library, they can simply pick up the phone and just sit back and relaxing on the couch while reading. Moreover, instead of going to the library and looking for materials on the shelves one by one, it is easier for them to just find the existing materials available in digital form. This means that the digital era totally changes the behaviours of reading habits among the students.

With the growing number of digital materials, it indirectly affects the revolution of reading materials among students. Nowadays, most of the students prefer using digital form of reading materials. Abdul Karim & Hasan (2007) pointed out that this phenomenon will affect how people interpret reading and how printed materials are used to make reading easier. The reading materials are also affected with the rapid technology that people face nowadays.

3.   **Methodology**

In this study, a quantitative approach was utilized. According to Caldenas (2019), we are performing research with quantitative data when the data is numbers (or when the information acquired is represented into numerical scales). The survey-based questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms and the random sampling was distributed among 2340 diploma students of UiTM Sarawak from multiple faculties during the interim session.

Faculty	Number of respondents
Faculty A	218
Faculty B	223
Faculty C	236
Faculty D	195
Faculty E	156
Faculty F	134
Faculty G	228
Faculty H	132

Faculty I	145
Faculty J	106
Faculty K	152
Faculty L	164
Faculty M	116
Faculty N	135

It consists of 2 sections where Section A about the general information such as name, student ID, gender, and faculty, while Section B is specific close-ended questions relating to their reading habits. In addition, the questionnaire was distributed to them online, whereby QR Code is provided for them to scan and access the questionnaire. To collect data of respondents for this study, at the end of each session for 2 days, students will take about 5-10 minutes to answer this survey. Data collected using Google Sheet and Microsoft Excel responses were calculated which the results below were showed using the pie chart. The detailed results are tabulated in the following section.

4. Results and Findings

The results of the experiment found clear support to identify and measure the reading habits among students which are their trends and behaviors towards reading. The questionnaires were built based on the objectives and the responses were calculated which the pie chart below depicts the result. Data analyses were collected using Google Sheet and Microsoft Excel.
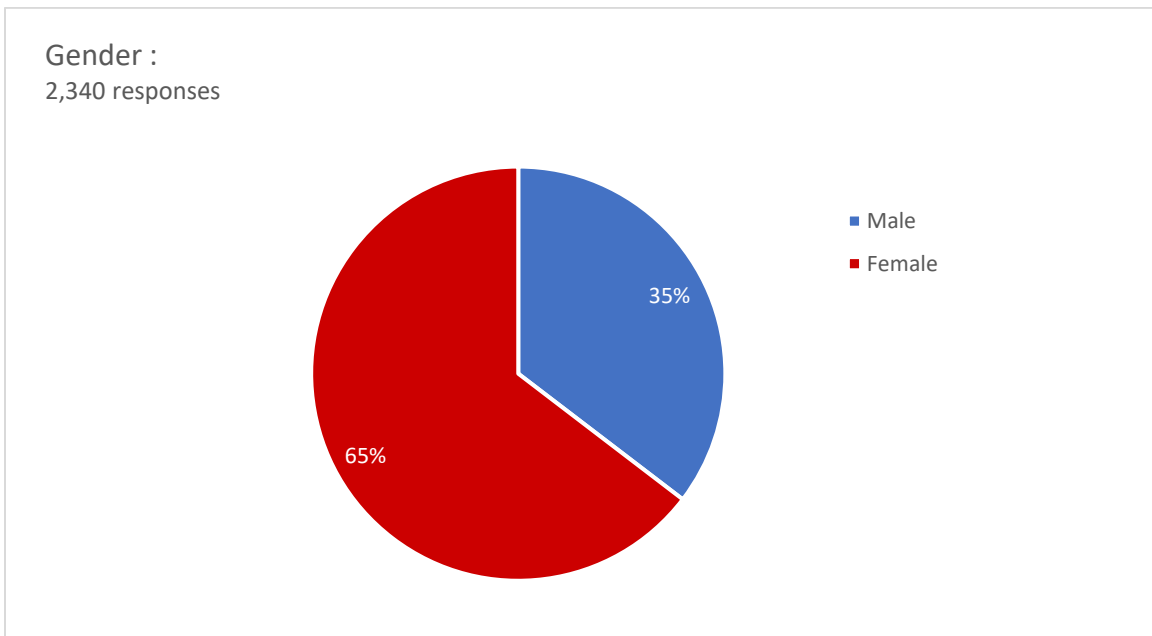
Demographic

Figure 1 (a): Gender of the respondents

Table 1 (a): Gender of the respondents

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	828	35%
Female	1512	65%

Figure 1(a) shows the gender of the respondents. It is found that most of the respondents were female which carried the percentage of 65% and the remaining was male with the percentage of 35%. Therefore, as we can expect most of the universities including UiTM are dominated by female students rather than male students.
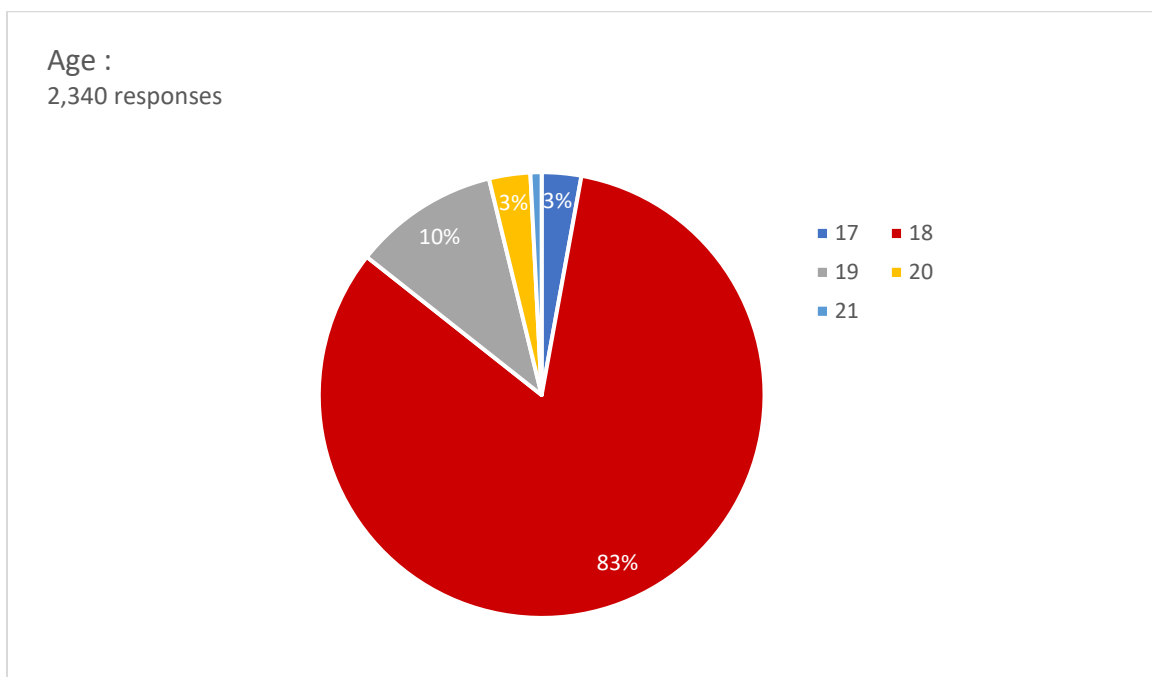

Figure 1 (b): Age of the respondents

Table 1 (b): Age of the respondents

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
17	67	2%
18	1937	83%
19	247	11%
20	70	3%
21	19	1%

Figure 1(b) shows the age of the respondents. It is found that most of the respondents belonged to the age of 18 years old with the percentage amount of 83%. Meanwhile, 11% of them were in the age of 19, followed by 3% for the age 20, 2% for the age 17 and only 1% for the age 21 years old. Besides that, the respondents are from 14 faculties in UiTM Sarawak and majority of respondents in answering the online survey was from Faculty C which consists 236 respondents and the lowest number of respondents was from Faculty J.

Based on the data obtained from the online survey, it is observed that the findings on this research were analysed in terms of the types of reading materials that are chosen (not for a class assignments), the genre of reading materials, the type of reading format and the frequency of student on readings.
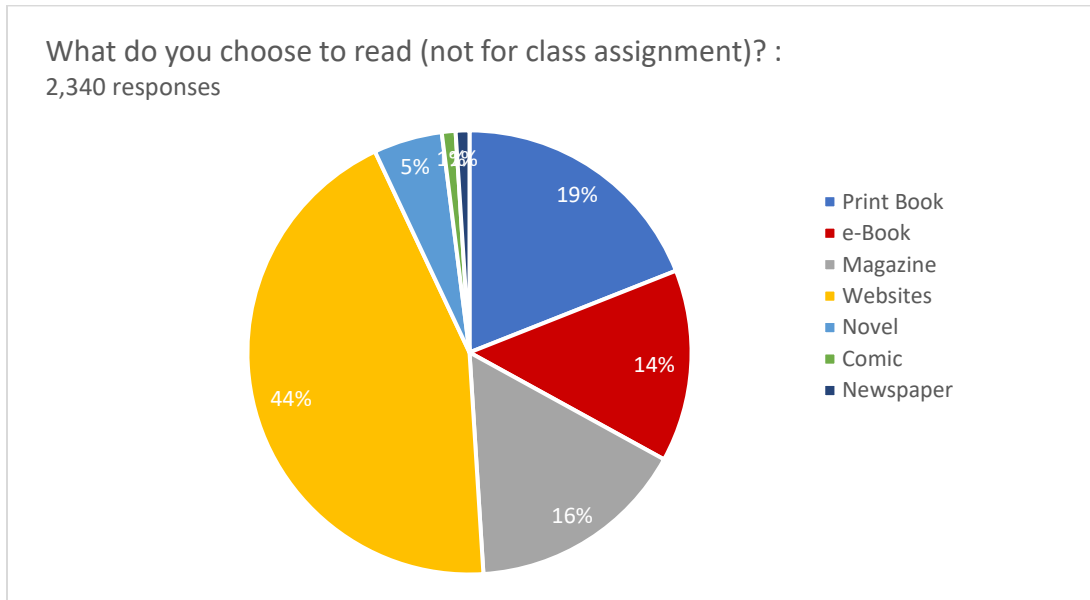
Types of Reading Materials

Figure 2: Types of reading materials

Table 2: Types of reading materials

Type of reading materials	Number of respondents	Percentage
Print Book	445	19%
e-Book	328	14%
Magazine	374	16%
Websites	1030	44%
Novel	117	5%
Comic	23	1%
Newspaper	23	1%

It is observed that majority of the students, which about 44% preferred reading on websites, followed by print book (19%), magazine (16%), e-Book (14%), novel (5%), comic and newspaper was only 1%.
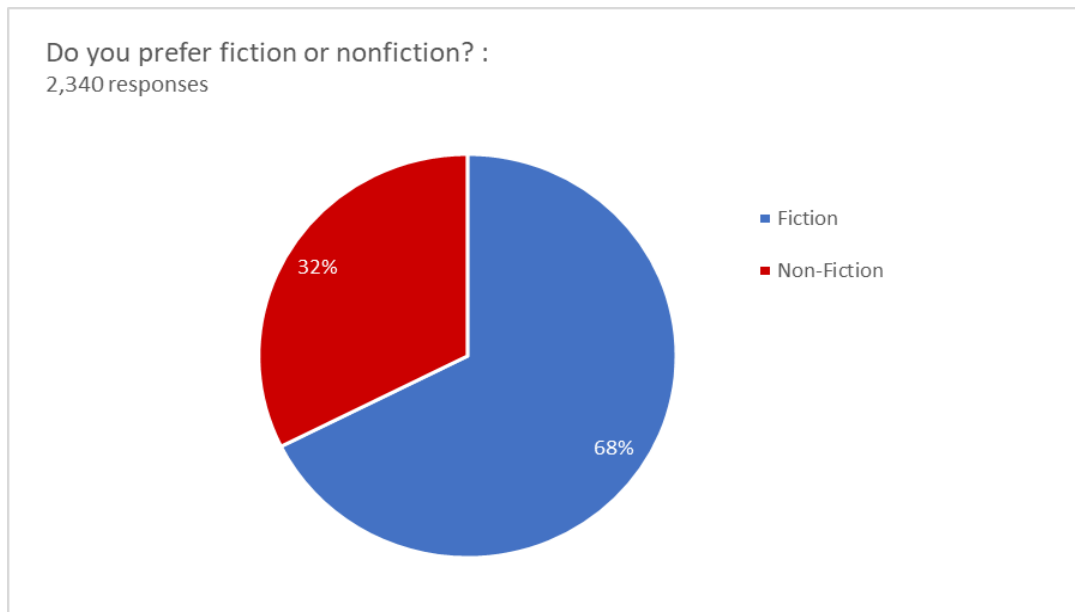
The Genre of Reading Materials

Figure 3: The genre of reading materials

Table 3: The genre of reading materials

Genre of reading materials	Number of respondents	Percentage
Fiction	1591	68%
Non-Fiction	749	32%

Figure 3 shows that high majority of the students preferred fiction as the genre of their reading materials which consists of 68% compared with the non-fiction that only consists 12%.
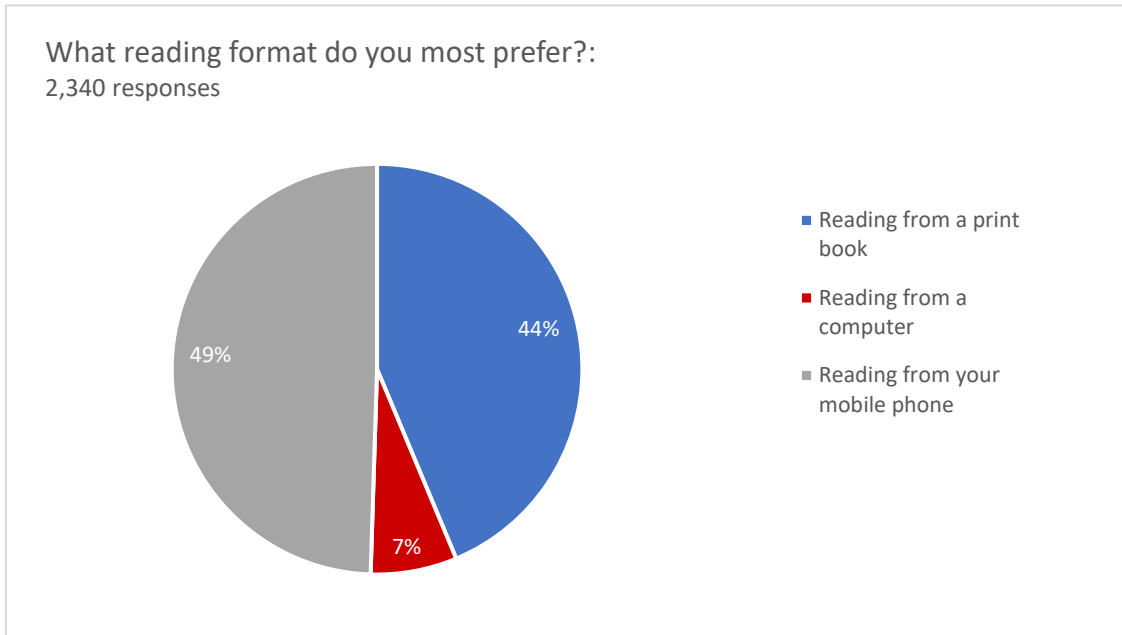
Type of Reading Format

Figure 4: Type of reading format

Table 4: Type of reading format

Type of Reading Format	Number of respondents	Percentage
Reading from a print book	1030	44%
Reading from a computer	164	7%
Reading from your mobile phone	1146	49%

As a result, depicted in figure 4, about 49% of the students preferred reading from their mobile phone while 44% choose reading from a print book and the lowest percentage was reading from a computer which just consists 7%.
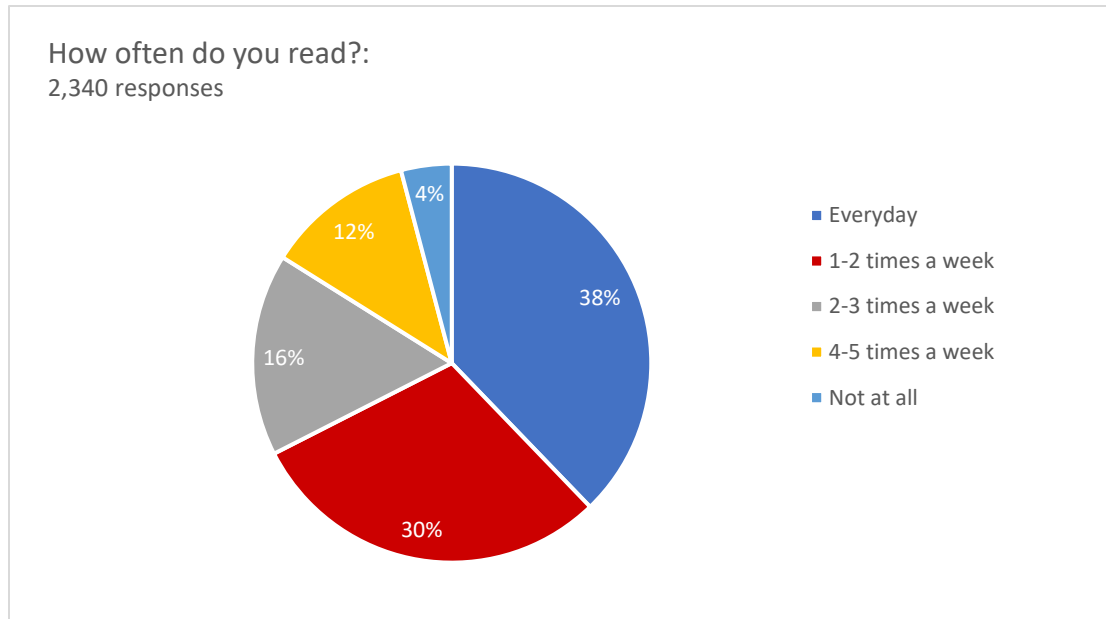
Frequency of Student on Readings

Figure 5: Frequency of student on readings

Table 5: Frequency of student on readings

Frequency of student on readings	Number of respondents	Percentage
Everyday	889	38%
1-2 times a week	702	30%
2-3 times a week	374	16%
4-5 times a week	281	12%
Not at all	94	4%

Besides that, the results on the figure 5 aims to identify the advancement of technology can boost up the levels reading habits among students. The result displays that, 38% students' reads daily and only 4% students did not read at all. Therefore, it shows that the changes in current reading trends and behaviours can at least attract and convince students to read.

5.   Discussion and Conclusions

As the result that shows above, it has been proven that students nowadays have change the trends on reading which they preferred the electronic type of reading materials compared to the traditional printed book. The result is slightly supported by the study conducted by Francis et al. (2020) about 45.9% of students acquire new information through internet sources and only 4.9% of students gather information from book sources. Even though the previous study focuses on the way students acquire information and not for a reading purposes, it is showing that students nowadays are more interested in using electronic technology. Furthermore, the findings from Table 3 are in close agreement with the study conducted by Walia & Sinha (2014), they found that the preference of non-fiction and both fiction and non-fiction among the younger age group (<15 years) as seen in this research, the widely held assumption that younger adolescents are less inclined towards non-fiction. Thereby, as the technology grows intensively, it does not really affect the genre of the reading materials which they still favor such as science fiction, romance and fantasy.

Besides that, if we look the findings on the preferred reading formats in relation to the current situation, we literally can expect this decision because students nowadays are very dependent on their mobile phone. This may explain that students fully utilize the use of technology and it totally changes the behaviours on their reading habits. The trend may have changed to a digital reading habit that varies entirely from the standard meaning of reading (Abdul Karim & Hasan, 2007). The findings also showed that teacher applicants have predominantly used internet for doing research, reading news and journals; and accessing knowledge; so it could be concluded that with the aid of the internet, they used the internet to improves themselves and easily accessed new information reported by Ilgar & Ilgar (2012). An initial objective of this paper was to identify the impact of digital era on reading habits. From the findings from each of the variables, the advent of technology in this digital era indicates that reading habits still exist among students, but the trends has turned out in a way that is more in line with the latest technology flows.

In conclusion, the contribution of this study has been to confirm that digital era creates the conversion of the trends and behaviors towards reading habits among students. Students prefer using mobile phone to read information rather than reading using the traditional format such as book and newspaper. In addition, it is supported that the changes of this trends indirectly strengthen the reading habits among students which from the findings showed that students frequently read every day. Therefore, academic library needs to empower their roles for continuously comes out with a variety initiative to reinforce the reading habits among students. Thus, the findings of this study must be seen considering some limitations. Due to time constraints, the biggest limitation was the inability to gather samples and data from the other level of study such as degree and master. Therefore, the results of this study are not significant to generalize the overall institutions because it is limited only to the Diploma students. Hopefully with the technology alongside the new changes of trends and behaviors nowadays, it can foster interest in reading habits that can be more remarkable among the students. In the foreseeable future, further research can be conducted in a large scale which also involves the postgraduate's students to see more clearly how the digital era can make a change on the trends and behaviors towards reading habits among students. In terms of directions for future research, further work could determine the roles of the information institution such as academic library in order to support the trends of reading habits among the students in this digital era. Besides, the institution will have a better understanding regarding the importance of reading habits among students that literally can help to improve the quality of learning and teaching process. Future research of reading habits should be considered is investigation of information literacy rate among students from the reading habits to better measure the competency on searching for the reliable information and sources.

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