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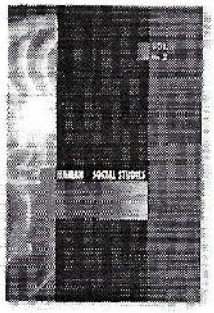
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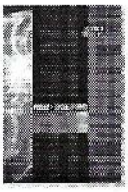
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Access to Tablet Portable Computers and Undergraduates Reading Culture: The experience of a Nigerian University

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University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper examines the use of tablet personal computers (PCs) and how they interfere with Nigerian undergraduates reading culture and love for educational books. The study adopts a descriptive research design. The University of Ilorin undergraduates constitute the population for this study while 200 level students of three faculties across the university constitute the target population. Stratified sampling technique was used to sample the needed respondents. A researchers' designed questionnaire was use for data collection. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that access to tablet computer influence the undergraduate reading culture. Also, 55.7% of 200 level undergraduates read more electronic materials on their tablet computer than printed texts. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that students should be encouraged to visit the library and read textbooks since there is certain fundamental knowledge that might not be accessible on the net.

Keywords

Access, Tablet PC, Computer, Reading culture.

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1. Introduction

The past decades have witnessed the invention, use, and integration of the computer and of information technology into man's endeavour. The most influential bearing of technology is arguably on the use, analysis, transfer and interpretation of information. The traditional way of transmitting information, which is through printed documents, has begun to be replaced by online data.This change has inevitably affected how people read. The results of a survey, conducted by Shen (2006), showed that students' reading habits have shifted from paper-based to internet-based reading. Liu (2005) started that the new reading behaviours are influenced by the mushrooming growth of available digital information, otherwise called e-information, and there is an increase in the amount of time people spend reading electronic media. Since reading is a must in developing other critical language skills such as writing, listening and speaking, this shift in reading habits should not be ignored by educators.

Findings have shown that the digital age has already engulfed people's reading habits (Shen, 2006). With the invention of radios, televisions, computers, smartphones and other similar devices and their mass production, the bearing of technology on people's lives has become even greater. These improvements in technology have brought about a new trend in reading, called digital reading. Online newspapers, magazines, electronic books, and audio books constitute many of the widespread technology-assisted reading sources.

Online periodicals include newspapers and magazines that are prepared and made available online for their readers. They are online, in a digital format, and it is easy to add, review, change, and update their data. With the recent improvements in portable devices, applications can easily be downloaded to a mobile phone or tablet PC to access them. The information available in the applications can be obtained and read anytime, anywhere without an internet connection. Furthermore, reading online news, users can watch videos and listen to the news available through these system applications.

In the work of Couse and Chen (2010), reading is done either with printed books or an e-book, which is possible with the use of a computer of any size. Tablet PC, Notepad, Laptop, DeskTop among others are

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sources of the e-book. The tablet PC is a fully handy windows or android portable computer that can be operated with or without a digital pen. A stylus pen can be used to control the tablet PC and also to 'write' on the screen of the device. Incorporated handwriting recognition technology allows users to create handwritten documents. Handwriting can be saved as an image, converted into typed text, and some applications, such as Windowsdocuments, permit the user to save and search 'digital ink' documents.

Tablet PCs offer a screentouch, an alternative to pen and paper, with a more natural and intuitive interface than a conventional desktop or laptop computer. Tablets are also portable providing enhanced mobility and ease of use (Becta, 2004). There are two types of tablet PC or notebook: namely 'slates', without keyboards, which can be connected to a USB keyboard with a cord or Bluetooth or docking station and 'convertibles', which come with an attached keyboard and can be used in either slate or palmtop mode. Either can be used by students in schools or homes for academic activities such as reading at any point in time.

Studies by Lee, Kathryn, Kristen, Mary and Joanna (2012) on the general reading habits of American high school students, revealed that 87% of the students who have taken the interest in reading e-books, read more books than other readers. They also read more frequently and are more likely than others to read for more purposes. The finding also observed that 88% of those who read e-books in the past 12 months also read print books. However, they are also more likely than others to have bought their most recent book, rather than borrowed it, and they are more likely than others to say they prefer to purchase books.

Also in another survey study conducted by National Literacy Trust (2013) on people reading e-books on computers and cell phones, findings shows that 22% of e-book readers consume their books on a computer; 29% of those who read e-books consume e-books on their cell phones, and 19% of e-book readers consume books on their Tablet PCs. In another study respondents who practiced long-form reading on a digital platform were asked whether or not the availability of digital books, newspapers, magazines, and journals affected the amount of reading they did. The study found that 62% of the respondents said they were reading more, 7% said they were reading less, and 30% stated that

they were reading the same amount.The digital content readers who said they were reading more stood out in several respects: 41% of tablet PCs owners and 35% of e-reader owners said they were reading more since the advent of e-content. 42% of readers of e-books said they were reading more now that long-form reading material was available on digitalplatform. The longer people had owned a tablet PC, the more likely they stated that they were reading more: 45% of those who had owned a tablet for more than a year said they were reading more.

Clarke and Svanaes (2012) conducted a survey study on those who read e-books, read more books of all kinds, and read more frequently for every purpose. The study concluded that those who read e-books are more likely than other people who stated that they read for every purpose and to do so frequently – that includes those who read for pleasure (92% do that on their tablet PCs computer); to keep up with current events (87% did that on their tablet PCs), to research specific topics that interest them (92% do that on their tablet PCs) and for work out of school (78% do that on their tablet PCs).

Twining, Evans, Cook, Ralston, Selwood, Jones, Underwood, Dillon, Scanlon, Heppell, Kukulska-Hulme, McAndrew, and Sheehy (2005) conducted a study on tablet PCs in seven schools (including secondary and primary). Here, the students used tablet PCs.The study revealed that the students who were using tablet PCs, when and where they used them and what effect, if any, Tablet PCs had on students' learning including motivation, reading habit, access to the curriculum, learning outcomes, learning approaches and so on. The findings revealed that in all of the schools where the students were using Tablet PCs, they had a substantial impact on students' motivation.

Two of the schools commented that motivation increased when the technology worked, but could decrease when technology did not work. The schools where it worked were very clear about the positive impact of Tablet PCs on motivation. One school noted a drop in attendance on days when Tablet PCs were due to be used. It was observed that in all schools, it seemed that tablet PCs had an impact on learning by increasing:

- access to and the range and diversity of resources;

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- learners' independence, including choosing to do extra work outside school time;
- variety in lesson presentation, which often meant making lessons more interactive and/or involving more collaborative work; and
- the differentiation of work to meet the full range of learners' needs.

This means that that access to Tablet PCs by students at any level of their schooling has a lot with a lot to reading habit of students.

2. Statement of the Problem

There seems to be a belief among contemporary educators, textbook writers, booksellers, poets, writers and other educators, that contemporary students have lost their reading culture, that they now read less and are more attracted to technological devices. They spend more time engaging themselves in different platforms on the internet, watching films, and posting pictures on the histogram, among others, rather than reading for academic purposes. This has become a source of worry to education stakeholders. They are of the opinion that to a large extent, the fall in the standard of education, and the poor or drastic drop in the reading culture of students is due to the use of tablet PCs. In the view of Karim, Hasan and Shahriza (2006), the increasing entertainment applications in a digital format are becoming more popular among younger people and this constitute a threat to their concentration in academic activities.

The case of University of Ilorin undergraduates was not an exception, many teachers or lecturers keep complaining of the low rate at which their students patronize printed materials at the expenses of e-reading. The general complaint has been that undergraduates have been so much carried away by the use of their tablet computer for entertainment purposes and have little time to concentrate on their reading to learn. This is evidenced in the recent report by the University of Ilorin Library, where they recorded a very low patronage and use of the Library. The situation in the University of Ilorin, deteriorated to a level that the University librarian, with the approval of the University Academic Planning Unit, advised lecturers to stop providing lecture materials for students so as to encourage them to make adequate and maximum use of

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the University Library. Certainly, students have to read so as to make teaching and learning meaningful but the educators' major concern is how they read and what is the source of the materials that students read.

Twining et al (2005), Clarke and Svanaes (2012), the National Literacy Trust (2013), Lee, Kathryn et al (2012), Couse and Chen (2010), and Liu (2005), among others, have worked on use of tablet computers. A cursory look at these studies showed that none was conducted in Nigeria and they were carried out by foreign researchers, thus, this constitute a part of the research gap to be filled by this study.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether University undergraduate access to tablet PCs influence their reading culture. Specifically the study assessed:

a. If University of Ilorin undergraduates' access to tablet PCs influence their reading culture;
b. Whether tablet PCs-user undergraduate students of University of Ilorin had a preference (love) for printed texts.

3.1. Research Questions

a. Does access to tablet PCs by University of Ilorin undergraduate students influence their reading culture?
b. Do undergraduate students of University of Ilorin read more e-books or printed texts?

3.2. Methodology

The study is based on a descriptive survey conducted among University of Ilorin undergraduates, with a target population from three faculties. A 19 Likert-scale items researcher-designed questionnaire with content validity, as well as 0.81 reliability index after a test re-test pilot study was carried out, was the instrument used by the researchers to elicit the needed data from students. 200 level undergraduates were chosen because they were the categories of University undergraduates that had been officially exposed to the use of tablet computers for two academic sessions. A total number of 2,019 out of 11,212 undergraduates were randomly sampled from the purposively selected

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faculties of Arts (English and Islamic), Management Sciences (Sociology and Geography), Education (Social sciences, management, Counsellor & Sciences) (Research Advisor, 2006). Frequency and Percentage was used to answer the research questions raised for this study.

3.3. Results

Research Question 1: Does access to tablet PCs by University of Ilorin undergraduates influence their reading culture?

Responses on tablet computer usage and the level of usage were presented with frequency and percentage in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency and percentages of influence of tablet Computer on Unilorin undergraduates' reading culture

	USE LEVEL OF USAGE (Frequency and Percentage)					
Regularly	Mostly at	Mostly during	Irregularly			
Purpose	Frequency	Percentage	at all times	Night		Weekend
Pleasure	957	47.4	216 (22.6)	280 (10.6)	101 (29.3)	358 (37.5)
Academics	1,032	51.1	190 (18.5)	62 (6.0)	728 (70.5)	52 (5.0)
Daily News	30	1.5	10 (10.0)	1 (3.3)	4 (13.3)	22 (73.3)
Total	**2019**	**100**				

Table 1 revealed that 957 (47.4%) of the 200 level undergraduates of University of Ilorin use their tablet Computer to read for pleasure and 62.5% did this regularly at convenience times, while 37.5 of them did it irregularly. 1,032 (51.1%) of them used their tablet computer for academic work and 95% of them do this regularly at convenience times. The remaining 52 (5%) did it irregularly. Also, 30 (1.5%) of the 200 level undergraduates of University of Ilorin used their tablet PCs to read Daily News, 26.7% of them did this regularly at convenience time while 73.3% do it irregularly.

One can deduce from Table 1 that access to tablet computer by University of Ilorin undergraduates influenced their reading culture; this is evident with 95% of them regularly reading at convenient times for pleasure, and academic purposes.

Research Question 2: Do undergraduate students of University of Ilorin read more e-books or printed texts?

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Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of respondents' preference for reading e-book or printed text

Preference	Frequency	Percentage
e-book1,	344	66.6
Printed text	675	33.4
Total	**2,019**	**100**

Table 2 shows that out of 2,019 respondents, 1,344 (66.7%) read electronically while 675 (33.3%) read printed text. Thus, an above average number of the 200 level undergraduates of University of Ilorin read more electronic materials than printed text.

4. Discussion

This study investigated access to tablet PCs and undergraduates' reading culture using the experience of a Nigerian University (University of Ilorin), and it found that access to tablet PCs by University of Ilorin undergraduates influences their reading culture. This is evident with 95% of them regularly reading at convenient times for academic purposes. This finding corroborated Liu (2005) position that the new reading behaviours are influenced by the mushrooming growth of digital information available and that there is an increase in the amount of time people spend reading electronic media. Also, this finding is in line with the conclusion of Kathryn, Kristen, Mary and Joanna (2012) on general reading habits of American high school students, who also found that 87% of the students who take an interest in reading e-books, read more books than other readers, read frequently and for many purposes. Clarke and Svanaes (2012) reached the same conclusion.

This study also revealed that an above average (55.7%) number from among 200 level undergraduates of University of Ilorin read more electronic materials on their tablet PCs than printed texts. The finding is in line with the conclusion of Twining et al (2005) who noted that access to tablet computers by students at any level of their schooling has many positive impacts on their reading culture. Also this finding corroborated that of the National Literacy Trust (2013), which observed that 22% of e-book readers consume their books on a computer; 29% of those who

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read e-books consume e-books on their cell phones, and 49% of e-book readers consume books on their tablet computers.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The book-reading culture has changed drastically over time among learners due to advancements in information technology and the emergence of e-books. Findings of this study and conclusions of many researchers have corroborated this as a fact. Thus, in this study, access to tablet PCs by undergraduates of the University of Ilorin positively influenced their reading culture and more of them read electronic materials than printed texts. Based on these findings and discussions, the researchers recommended that:

- Tablet PCs applications should be controlled to ensure that only education materials are accessible to students and those that are not educationally useful are declared sites of no access;
- Undergraduates should be encouraged to always make a printout of any downloaded materials or important texts for reference purposes;
- Lecturers should make available the courseware and modules to encourage students to visit sites that promote learning;
- The university authority should provide up to date tablet PCs, subscribe for more bandwidth, and make them accessible for student use, and
- The University authority needs to expand the school e–Library for better use.

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