E-Reading an Observer's View Across 3 Generations

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Abstract

People's reading habits and habits have changed significantly as a result of the widespread usage of digital resources and the increased amount of time spent online. The reading scene has undoubtedly changed as a result of the digital revolution. E-reading is the current version of flipping through pages, except instead of using paper and ink, you use electronic displays to interact with text. Review of the many studies on the observer's perspective on e-reading from three generations (generation X, generation Y or millennials, and generation Z) is covered in this article. From an observer's perspective across three generations, e-reading preferences reveal diverse trends. Generation Z, though digitally inclined, still favors traditional printed texts for learning. Millennials show a balanced preference between e-books and print, using online platforms primarily for research and news. Generation X, adapting over time, now relies heavily on the internet for information and infotainment, reducing library usage unless services are virtually accessible. Post-COVID instructional shifts and open-access content have further driven e-reading. The digital landscape significantly influences reading behaviors, underscoring the need for adaptive strategies by educators, librarians, and individuals to support evolving generational preferences.

Keywords; Generation-X, Generation-Y or millennials, Generation-Z, E-Reading, Online reading, E-books, etc.

INTRODUCTION

As more individuals read online, the extensive use of digital resources has resulted in notable changes in reading habits and behaviour. With the introduction of computers and the Internet, people's reading habits have drastically changed in recent decades. In today's information-rich world, browsing or scanning is now a common reading pattern [1]. Since electronic books (e-books) became popularity in the late 1990s, e-books have gained a lot of attention. E-books may help an academic purpose by facilitating dynamic and economical collection management, saving time, and providing value as a collective online reference [2]. A digital book with a certain scope that is mostly composed of text is called an e-book. A book-like content that is digitally shown on a computer screen, a PDA, or a specially made reader is referred to as a e-book [3]. Electronic books may include text, pictures, video, animation, and/or sound. Using many of the advantages of paper books (p-books) and leveraging the benefits of electronic reading, the e-book is a new platform for accessing digital information [4]. When it comes to locations and specific objectives, e-books offer several benefits over conventional books. Positively, the availability of e-books around-the-clock and their "searchability" are two of the most appealing arguments for adopting them [5].

The most widely recognised classifications of generations are Generation-X, Generation-Y or Millennia, and Generation-Z. It is important to note that boundaries are arbitrarily established by researchers or census officials, resulting in a distance of approximately 20 to 30 years between each generation [6].

Given the social conditions and period of each generation, it is reasonable to assume that their behaviours are distinct from those of the previous generation. In emerging knowledge societies, it is crucial to understand the reading behaviour of this generation [7]. There is no way to disregard the disparities between generations. Compared to other generations, millennials possess a distinct set of abilities. The age of a user is one of the potential factors that may influence changing reading behaviour. Nevertheless, the reading habits of millennials have been the subject of limited research. Most of the literature is predicated solely on the opinions of writers, perceptions, and anecdotal evidence. Substantial empirical research is required to investigate this generation in depth [8].

Generation

The collective term "generation" refers to the group of individuals who were born and are currently living at approximately the same period. In addition, it is the average period, which is generally estimated to be between 20 and 30 years, during which children are born, grow up, become adults, and begin to have children. The parent–child relationship is denoted by the structural term "generation" in kinship. Biology also employs the term "generation" to refer to biogenesis, reproduction, and propagation [9].

Generation X (Born 1965-1980): After the energy crisis of the 1970s, Gen X entered the workforce amid economic uncertainty. They established a strong sense of self-reliance and a focus on work-life balance as a result of their parents' job security struggles and the corporate restructuring they witnessed. While they were initially exposed to technology through the development of personal computers, they were not as extensively exposed to it as subsequent generations [10].

Generation Y (Millennials) (Born 1981-1996): Millennials were born during a time of significant political events, globalisation, and the emergence of social media and the internet. This stoked a desire to change the world for the better and a feeling of global connectivity. Their information access and communication methods were influenced by technological developments [11].

Generation Z (Zoomers, Centennials) (Born 1997-2012): Growing up, Gen Z has seen economic downturns, the rise of social media, and an increasing awareness of climate change [12]. This has influenced their focus on work-life balance, entrepreneurial energy, and social concern.

Table 1 Generational Differences Chart to unpack the critical distinctions between Gen X, Y, and Z.

	Gen-X (1965-1980)	Gen-Y (1981-1996)	Gen-Z (1997-2012)
Preferred learning styles	1. Learn by doing, not by theory. 2. Blended learning, clear instructions. 3. Open to diverse learning methods, including online.	1. Collaborative, experience-based learning. 2. Hands-on, visual, tech-driven.	1. Seeks active, visual, and kinaesthetic learning over passive learning methods 2. Tech-infused learning tools and materials
Effective teaching methods	1. Focus on practical application. 2. Encourage self-directed learning & projects.	1. Tech-infused, interactive lessons. 2. Meaningful context & clear feedback.	1. Integrate interactive digital tools to create engaging and dynamic learning journeys. 2. Foster collaboration and mutual learning among students. 3. Personalise learning with adaptive software, independent exploration, and hands-on projects.
Technology Adaption	Assimilated	Integral	Digital natives

Online reading or Digital reading

Reading online is the act of extracting meaning from a digital text. Also known as digital viewing. The majority of researchers concur that the experience of reading online (whether on a PC or a mobile device) is profoundly distinguished from the experience of reading print materials. However, as will be elaborated upon below, the nature and character of these various experiences, as well as the specific skills necessary for proficiency, are still being researched and debated.

Benefits of E-reading

Reading novels online is an immutable practice that remains as relevant and essential as ever in a world where technology continues to influence our daily lives. In solitude, books function as companions, repositories of knowledge, and portals to new realms. Nonetheless, the field of reading has experienced a significant transformation as a result of the emergence of digital technology. There is an enormous digital realm beyond the traditional paperback or hardcover editions, where literature flourishes in pixels and code. We should explore the numerous advantages of adopting online reading.

Convenience of E-reading: Passed are the days of transporting cumbersome volumes or visiting the library or bookshop. With the ability to access their preferred titles at any time and from any location, reading books online provides an unparalleled level of convenience. All that is required to embark on a literary adventure is a device and an internet connection, regardless of whether one is on a congested commuter train or a serene shore. Digital libraries are limitless, providing a wide range of titles and genres to accommodate any mood or preference [13].

Cost-effectiveness: In addition, adopting online reading can be a financially prudent choice. Despite the undeniable allure of physical books, their digital counterparts frequently cost a fraction of the fee. The financial threshold for entrance is substantially reduced by the availability of subscription models and extensive collections of gratis resources on online platforms. By introducing readers to new authors and genres at a reasonable cost, reading becomes more accessible to all.

Interactive features: One of the unique characteristics of perusing literature online is its interactivity. Modern digital platforms enable consumers to interact with the text in unprecedented ways. The reading experience can be tailored to the preferences of the reader, from highlighting passages to recording annotations. Furthermore, online forums and communities develop a sense of community among bibliophiles by offering platforms for discussion and debate.

Customization and personalization: Traditional books cannot match the degree of customisation available via digital reading platforms. In order to maximise readability, readers may change the typefaces, font sizes, and background colours. In order to provide tailored suggestions, computers also examine reading interests and behaviours, guaranteeing that each reader discovers their next literary passion.

Eco-friendly option: In an age of growing environmental concern, online reading presents itself as a more eco-friendly alternative to conventional print literature. By eliminating the need to make and distribute paper, digital reading reduces the carbon footprint of the publishing sector. In addition to being a practical choice, adopting digital literature is a responsible one that contributes to the preservation of our planet's resources.

Enhanced learning experience: Integration of multimedia enhances learning, particularly in educational environments. Digital textbooks use interactive graphics, videos, and simulations to increase student engagement and help them understand complex concepts. Users may study new content at their own speed thanks to the wealth of learning aids available online, including exams and flashcards [14].

Disadvantages of E-reading

Technological limitations: Reading on the internet is heavily reliant on technology. Although it offers advantages, it also has a number of disadvantages. For example, you can't read if the battery on your smartphone is dead or if your gadget doesn't support the eBook file format. On the other hand, you won't be able to access your eBook if you are in a "no-internet" zone. A severe discomfort results from this.

Health implications: Harmful blue light is emitted from the displays of digital devices, including smartphones, laptops, and tablets... The eyes are gravely damaged by this light, which results in a variety of vision problems. It has been established that mental fatigue is also a consequence of protracted online perusing. Therefore, it is imperative to be alert to the amount of time spent reading online.

Highly addictive: Consuming content, including novels, through digital means turns out to be a perilously addictive habit. This is a contributing factor to the 61% of internet

consumers who are devoted to it. In addition to the detrimental effects on an individual's physical, mental, and emotional health, this fixation also has a detrimental effect on the cerebral development of children and adolescents.

Misinformation: The potential for online reading to be misleading is one of the primary reasons why many individuals avoid it. Not all journals, articles, or threads that are read on the internet are fact-checked and accurate. Therefore, it is exceedingly effortless to remain ignorant and be misinformed regarding a subject.

Minimum contentment: It is impossible for eBooks to supplant the experience that is associated with traditional books. Although they may be more interactive and immersive, the sense of fulfilment that one experiences when reading, turning pages, and ultimately completing a book is distinctive and wholesome. Therefore, despite the fact that both offer the same information, the level of satisfaction experienced during online reading is significantly lower than that of offline reading.

Too many distractions: It can be challenging to concentrate on the task at hand due to the numerous distractions that online reading presents, including advertisements, pop-up notifications, and social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Judijanto et al., 2025) [15] Using a quantitative methodology, this research investigates how the BookTok phenomenon has affected Indonesian Generation Z's reading habits. The findings indicate a favourable correlation between increasing reading frequency, genre variety, and a preference for digital reading modes and better BookTok participation. According to the research, BookTok encourages Generation Z to read more, experiment with different genres, and use digital reading tools, all of which have a substantial impact on their reading habits. In their attempts to introduce younger generations to literature in the digital age, the publishing sector, academic institutions, and libraries must take these ideas into consideration.

(Amirtharaj et al., 2023) [16] Evaluating preferences for printed vs e-books is the primary goal of the research. The survey finds that although conventional printed copies are more comfortable to use and make it easier to take notes and prepare for tests, students prefer e-books since they can carry them about and spend more time reading from them. Practical implications: The results of the study will help stakeholders and educational policy makers create innovative and modernised educational designs that have an

impact on students' social and psychological development, as many aspects of instructional design strategies are changing due to the introduction of hybrid teaching and learning methods.

(Vijay Tandon Professor et al., 2023) [17] The objective of the study was to examine the sustainability-related reading habits of Gen-Z in relation to newspapers and e-newspapers. The findings indicated that Gen-Z is increasing their use of e-newspapers, primarily due to their convenience and accessibility, rather than environmental concerns. The research posits that the newspaper industry should adopt environmentally responsible practices and inform Gen-Z about the detrimental effects of print media on the environment. The results also suggest that, despite their lack of awareness of sustainability, Gen-Z is enthusiastic about supporting sustainable initiatives within the newspaper industry. Overall, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of the reading habits and preferences of Gen-Z, which can be beneficial to newspaper publishers and policymakers as they formulate long-term strategies to accommodate the evolving needs of younger generations.

Figure 1 Preference of Gen-Z to reading news via online and offline [17]
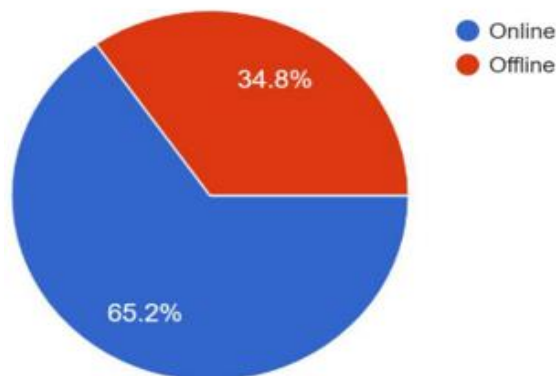
(Masa'deh et al., 2022) [18] The objective of this research is to examine the diverse factors that influence the behavioural intention to use an e-textbook, which in turn affects academic achievement in a bilingual academic environment. The empirical results present a number of significant discoveries. Initially, academic achievement is positively influenced by the behavioural intention of utilising an e-textbook. Secondly, behavioural intention towards using e-textbooks is positively influenced by attitude towards e-textbooks, subjective norms towards e-textbooks, and perceived behaviour control towards e-

textbooks. Independent factors have a positive impact on both perceived behavioural control and attitude towards using e-textbooks. This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature by empirically evaluating and theorising the effects of e-textbooks on the academic performance of university students in a bilingual environment in Jordan.

(Srirahayu et al., 2022) [19] Finding out whether social, emotional, and gender aspects are barriers to Generation Z's use of e-books is the aim of this research. Only emotional connection directly influences the choice for e-books, according to the study's findings, which also show that gender and social impact have no effect on e-book usage. When it comes to reading activities, Generation Z is really prepared to utilise e-books. They do, however, contemplate reading e-books for a number of reasons. They take into account how simple it is to use and how beneficial e-books are for their everyday need. Managers of Indonesian information institutions and providers might thus at least think about the types of e-books that can be offered and the target audience for them.

(Khalid & Anavarathan, 2021) [20] The purpose of this research is to ascertain the proportion of students who prefer reading printed or other digital texts, as well as the impact this has on reading strategies. 17.2% of pupils prefer reading digital texts, compared to 45.2% who prefer reading printed ones. When asked whether they prefer printed or digital texts, the majority of students (51.6%) cite availability. 70.8% of students prefer using their phones for studying, whereas 2.0% choose computers. Even if digital texts are more handy, the research found that printed reading

materials are still the preferred option in the specific geographic location. It is necessary to identify the factors that either stimulate or restrict the usage of resources that support a healthy environment.

(Calvo-Porral & Pesqueira-Sanchez, 2020) [10] Generational differences exist in the motivations that underlie technology behaviour, and there may be variations in the manner in which each generation interacts with and utilises technology. Generation X individuals are primarily motivated by utilitarian purposes and information inquiry, while millennials primarily engage with technologies for hedonic and entertainment purposes, according to research findings. In addition, the research results suggest that the use of technologies is moderated by the generational cohort. The primary distinctions and motivations that influence the technology behaviour of millennials and Generation X individuals are empirically demonstrated in this study.

(Soroya & Ameen, 2020) [21] Through an examination of their reading habits inside the digital paradigm, this article reveals the reading habits of Millennials residing in Pakistan. The results of the survey demonstrated that Millennials were increasingly consuming electronic content, even if they still preferred print content. Nonetheless, the research demonstrated that the choice of reading format is influenced by the reading objective. Furthermore, as free websites were millennials' favourite way to get reading material, the availability of open access and public domain electronic reading materials may be a factor in the rise in e-content usage. In order to read e-content and obtain pertinent information, social networking sites and sophisticated search engines like "Google" were also used.

Figure 2 Preferred reading format in Gen-Y (Millennials) [21]
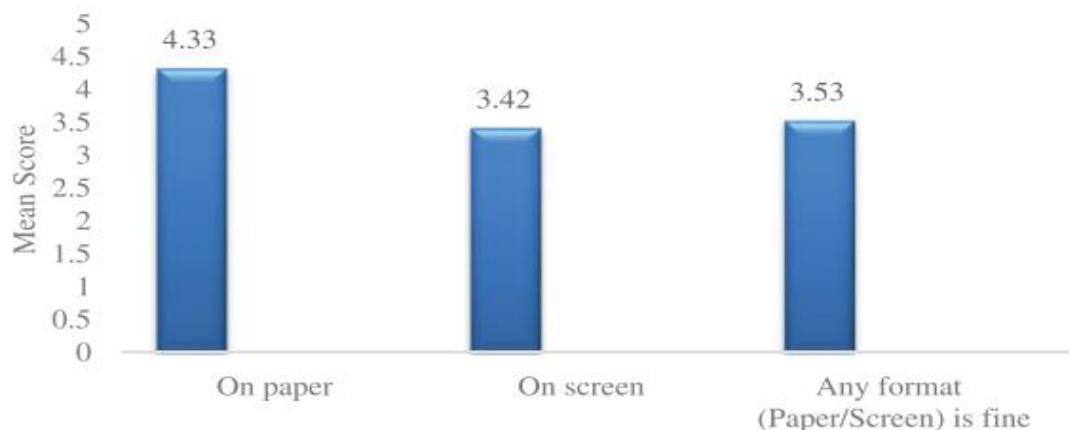
(Hanim Rahmat et al., 2018) [22] Teachers who have had the opportunity to instruct pupils from various generations will recognise that the focus and manner of instruction must differ across generations, in addition to the differences in reading materials. In a public institution in Malaysia, this investigation investigated the impact of literacy issues, cognitive skills, and critical thinking skills across various faculties among the Z generation. The questionnaire employed consisted of four sections, with Section A focussing on the demographic profile. Issues in reading were examined in Section B, cognitive skills were examined in Section C, and critical thinking skills were examined in Section D. The data that has been analysed has intriguing implications for the instruction and learning of literacy.

CONCLUSION

The review reveals diverse perspectives on e-reading across three generations. Generation Z, though deeply immersed in digital technology, shows a paradoxical preference for traditional learning with printed textbooks, linking learning styles to academic performance. The post-COVID era has introduced hybrid teaching methods, reshaping cognitive engagement and learning behaviors. Millennials display a strong inclination toward digital content, using e-books for research and favoring free, accessible platforms. However, their preference is split between print and digital when considering ease of use. Social media and search engines further support their e-reading habits. Generation X, once reliant on physical libraries, has adapted to the convenience of online content, viewing the Internet as a primary source of infotainment. This shift has diminished their use of traditional library services unless virtually accessible. Despite the rise of digital media, a notable segment across generations still values print for its tactile experience and readability. The findings underscore the evolving nature of reading behaviors influenced by technology, accessibility, and personal preference, suggesting a need for adaptive strategies by educators, librarians, and content providers to meet the varied demands of multi-generational readers.

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