

# Digital Era and Reading Habits: An Empirical Study on College Students Active on Social Media

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## **Abstract**

Reading in the 21st century networked society is no longer confined to print reading. The printed publications were the main medium for traditional reading culture. The Internet has come to forefront that changes the traditional reading habits of the readers. People nowadays tend to rely more on electronic based resources (such as e-books, e-papers, e-journals, e-mails, e-videos, e-games, e-images, e-maps, e-cards, etc.) than paper based resources (such as books, newspapers, magazines, journals, letters, snail mails, cards and postcards, pictures, etc.). These electronic sources have, fully or partially, entered in reading habits of the students. The youth especially students, who have opened their eyes in full bloom of electronic revolution, adopt these sources most of all. This close association of students and Internet is supposed to greatly influence their reading culture. Therefore, the study has been conducted with the purpose to identify the impact of Internet on reading habits of different college students under Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University. The survey method was used to conduct the study and questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The stratified random sampling technique was employed to choose the students. The results of study reveal that Internet has increased access to information, use of foreign sources, contacts with worldwide readers and time spent on reading, and have decreased dependence on print sources, contacts with print sources, reading in local languages and reading of books. Hence, the conclusion can be drawn that Internet is a mixed blessing for traditional reading culture.

**Keywords:** Reading Habits, Digital Era, College Students, Internet, Social Media

## **Introduction**

Reading is one of the oldest habits of human civilization and possibly the only one without a worthy substitute. Reading has been passion of the greatest personalities of all times. Humans have been reading since ages and thus words of knowledge have been passed on through generations. One of the first documentary sources for reading was manuscript, however, accessible to only creamy layer of the society. Later, the arrival of Gutenberg printing press ended such discrimination by making the printed word available to all. The Gutenberg printing press brought drastic changes to the fundamentally oral society of the day. It was certainly a great jump in humanity's onward march and the beginning of transformation from oral society to reading society. Today, the emergence of the Internet has created an extraordinary change in all spheres of the society. Initially developed for scientific research community

by the Department of Defense, United States of America (Cheung & Huang, 2005), Internet has now crossed more than 1.7 billion users. In the first four years, the number of Internet users reached 50 million and, in contrast, it took Radio 38 years, Television 13 years and the Computer 16 years to reach the same milestone. Interestingly, a significant proportion of the youth especially college students uses the Internet and is potentially the largest group of the Internet users. They are well versed with the new technologies and their application in present networked society and are commonly known as the net/second generation students. The Internet has fixed deep roots in their lives than all other technological innovations. This heavy use of Internet by the students is supposed to greatly influence their reading culture. The predictions are made worldwide that the next generation students may go directly from oral to digital culture and skip over the traditional reading and book culture. However, Internet is a mixed blessing for reading culture and its impact can be positive or negative. The easy availability and accessibility to the reading materials on the Internet is considered as a boon for reading culture and at the same time, the Internet services like online games are considered a threat to traditional print reading. Therefore, there is pressing need to assess the impact of Internet on reading habits. Therefore, there is pressing need to assess the impact of Internet on reading habits. Social media has become an essential part of life of hundreds of millions people worldwide. Whether we want to find good books or popular movies, life issues or seek the help of medical problems, we can turn to social media. Social media has changed people's social habits. It is becoming a hotspot and trends of the network technology. Feature analysis of social media has a broad social background, economic background and technical background. Social Media provide an innovative and effective way of connecting users. Features of Social Media enable users to generate interpersonal connections based on common grounds. Social Networking Site's (SNS), such as Tinder, LinkedIn, Netflix, Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia set up personal communities, allow users to make persistent comments on the profiles of their friends and send private messages. These features make Social Media excellent in initiating interaction among users. Social networking is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with web world. India considered a fast developing country has not lagged behind. As such the usage of social media is rampant among citizens and they hail from every class. Indian society has adopted the new age media, i.e., social networking along with maintaining its traditions. It's an amalgamation of both modernity and tradition. Therefore, Social Networking Sites form part and parcel of everyday life of many Indians. Particularly, this study is performed to explore the impact of digital era on reading habits and behaviors among students. To achieve the objectives of this paper, the following hypothesis 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.

### **Literature Review**

The review of literature for this paper includes topics on reading habits, digital era, Impact of social media among college students in the digital era.

### **Reading Habits**

Reading is defined as cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at meaning. Reading is important because it develops our mind and gives excessive knowledge and lessons of life. Lambrini

Kourkouta(2018) found that reading is the most beneficial exercise for our brain and mind as it could help the human brain perform all its functions as properly as possible. 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. But due to advancement of technology, university students are now engaged in social media, there is decreasing trend in their reading habits. So we need to work more aggressive in order to ensure students will always keen on reading.

### Digital Era

The advancement of technology has made our life easier but have impacted the reading habits of the students, Now, the students prefer browsing, watching entertainment, surfing social networking in their free time. In present time looking at trend, where information has no boundary we should provide students with right information and also e-books so that they at least read the materials and inculcate reading habits. During the past years, it is a trend when people especially students looking for an opportunity to read in the library. But nowadays, library needs to come out with extraordinary initiatives and creativities to maintain the trend of reading in the library.

### Impact of social media

Social media has become part of everyone's life, students are also active users of social media from connecting people to sharing ideas and content students use social media for various use. Social media has impacted the reading habits of the students. Before a decade students used to read storybooks, novels during their free time but now trend has changed, students spend most of their time using social media. Waseem Akram(2018) have found that social media has both positive and negative effects of social media. Negative effect of social media can be dangerous, so we should use social media in positive way keeping our privacy and security safe.

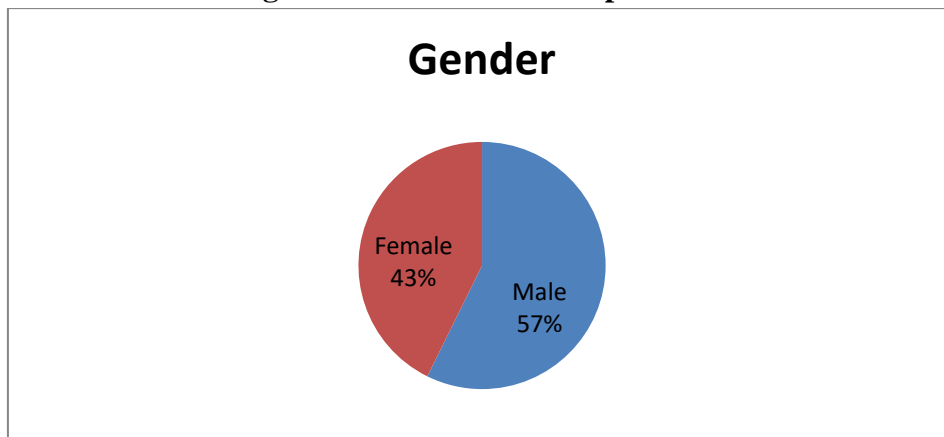
### Methodology

In this study, a quantitative approach was utilized. The survey-based questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms and the random sampling was distributed among 1000 college students from multiple departments of Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University.

Department	Number of respondents
Bengali	109
Chemistry	85
English	112
Geography	133
History	121
Library Science	56
Mathematics	105
Philosophy	87
Physics	94
Sanskrit	88

It consists of 2 sections where Section A about the general information such as name, gender, and department, while Section B is specific close-ended questions relating to social media used by them, hour spend in social media and reading. In addition, the questionnaire was distributed to them online via email, whatsapp group, social media sites. To collect data of respondents for this study, students will take about 5-10 minutes to answer this survey. Data collected using Google form responses were calculated which the results below were showed using the pie chart. The detailed results are tabulated in the following section.

**Figure 1: Gender of the respondents**

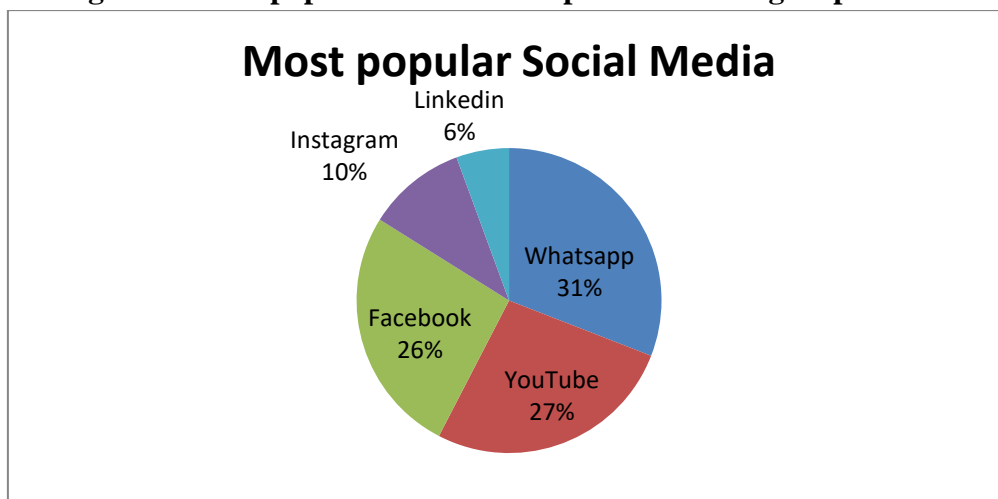


**Table 1: Gender of the respondents**

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	573	57%
Female	427	43%

Figure 1 shows the gender of the respondents. It is found that most of the respondents were male which carried the percentage of 57% and the remaining was female with the percentage of 43%. Therefore, as we can expect most of the colleges under Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University are dominated by male students rather than female students.

**Figure 2: Most popular social media platform among respondents**

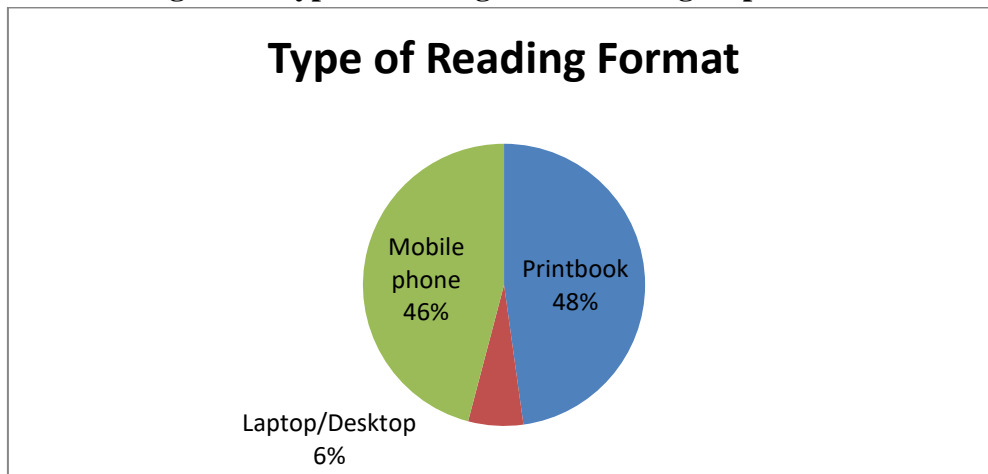


**Table 2: Most popular social media platform among respondents**

Social Media	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Whatsapp	309	31%
YouTube	267	27%
Facebook	263	26%
Instagram	105	10%
Linkedin	56	6%

Figure 2 shows the most popular social media platform among students. It is found that most of the respondents are users of Whatsapp and YouTube whereas LinkedIn is being used by least. YouTube has 267 users out of 1000 respondents. Social Networking sites like Facebook and Instagram is also being used by many respondents.

**Figure 3: Type of reading format among respondents**

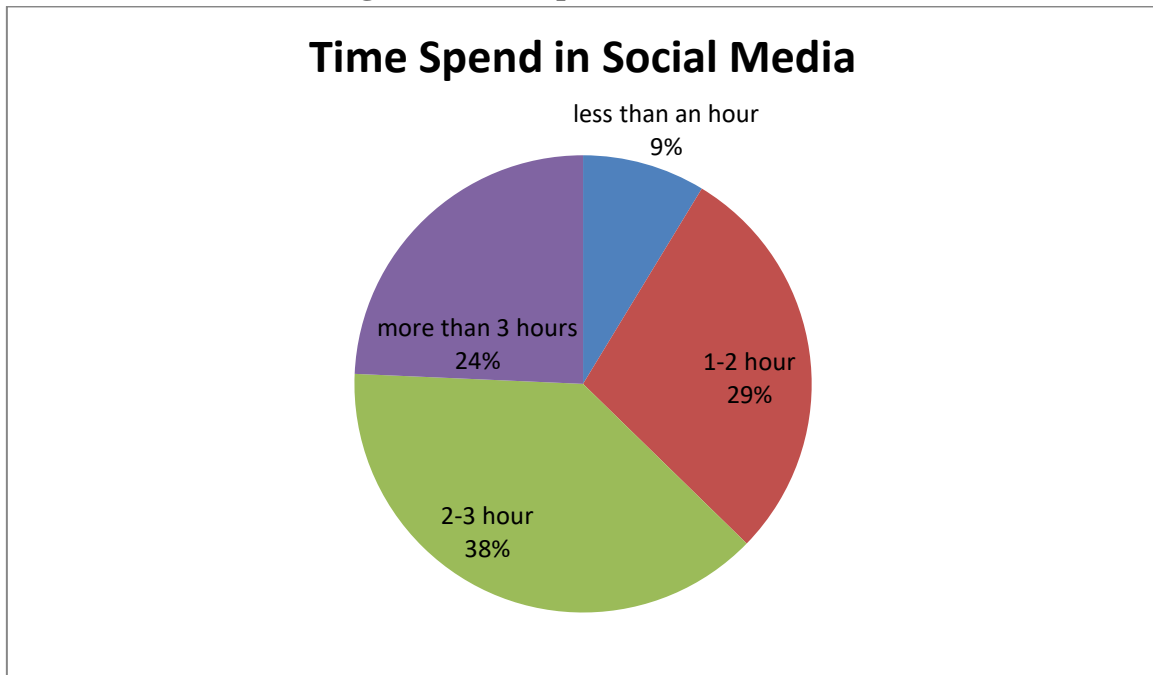


**Table 3: Types of reading format**

Reading format	Number of respondents	Percentage
Printbook	478	48%
Laptop/Desktop	63	6%
Mobile phone	459	46%

We can clearly see in Figure 3 that majority of respondents prefer digital reading materials than printbooks. Mobile phone are now used not only for calling, entertainment but also for reading notes and materials.

**Figure 4: Time spend in social media**

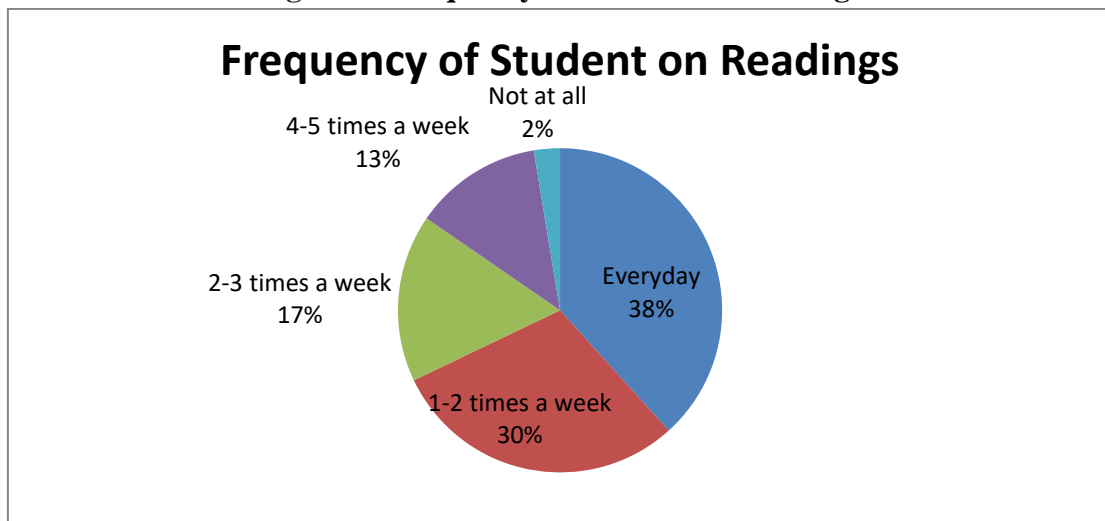


**Table 4: Time Spend in Social Media**

Time	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than an hour	87	9%
1-2 hour	286	29%
2-3 hour	384	38%
More than 3 hour	243	24%

Figure 4 clearly shows that most of the respondents are active users of social media and mostly spends their major time in it. Only 87 out of 1000 respondents use social media less than 1 hour and 243 out of 1000 respondents uses social media more than 3 hours.

**Figure 5: Frequency of Student on Readings**



**Table 5: Frequency of Student on Readings**

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Everyday	296	30%
1-2 times a week	383	38%
2-3 times a week	167	17%
4-5 times a week	128	13%
Not at all	26	2%

From figure 5 it can be found that now majority of the colleges students don't study daily, it may be the result of excessive use of social media. 2% of the students do not even study once in a week it clearly shows that they might have been addicted to mobile phones.

### Conclusion

It is evident that most students of Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University have taken advantage of social media to enhance their social relationship with others. These students also use social media to share and exchange some form of academic information. Although they take pleasure in these benefits from social media, some of them acknowledged they spend more hours of their day on the internet accessing social media platforms. Hence, it has resulted in distraction in the classroom, and even when reading in the library. This has affected their reading culture because of the reduction in time spent reading. Since social media has become a vital component of the daily life of students, the study, accordingly, concludes that social media should be used prudently, not only to stay in touch with family and friends but must be used reasonably as a vital information source and conducting academic activities. Time spent on the social media must also be reduced to enable students to improve their reading culture since it will consequently enhance their general academic performance.

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