

Reading Habits of Students on Mobile

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Abstract

In the last one decade, mobile phones and internet data have proliferated to every nook and corner of India. The introduction of android phones and iPhones and data by Reliance Jio has revolutionized the way how people in general and 21st century generation in particular consumes the information. A survey done among 17,500 high school students across 14 cities by tech giant Tata Consultancy Services in 2013 said that 70 percent students were using smart phones. Their number was more in smaller cities than the metros. Since then the number must have zoomed up to a new record.

The outbreak of Coronavirus and subsequent lockdowns announced by the centre and the state governments in the last six months have further accelerated the students' switchover to e-learning and digital consumption of information and knowledge. The footprints on social media of people in general and students in particular have risen further during the corona outbreak.

The objective of the research paper is to find out the reading habits of the students on mobile in India. The paper will be based on a survey.

Key Words: Reading habits, smartphones, students and social media.

Introduction

According to Somipam R Shimray, Chennupati Keerti and Chennupati K Ramaiah, reading is a multidimensional cognitive process of decrypting symbols to build and develop meaning from the recommended text and context. Reading is the only way to access information (Shimray, Keerti & Ramaiah, 2015). Reading is an active process of constructing meanings of words. The history of reading dates back to 4th millennium BC when the script got invented.

Martin Cooper, an American engineer, invented mobile in 1973. The equipment arrived in India in 1995 when the then Union Telecommunications Minister Sukhram spoke to then Chief Minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu using hand held phone on July 31st in 1995. But till 2000, not many people were in a position to afford the expensive mobile sets. The reading on mobile became popular in India after the arrival of android-based smart phones and iPhones. The launch of Reliance Jio smart phones in 2015 whereby calls were made free and customers were charged only for data revolutionized the reading habits of the Indians. For the generation next, reading on mobiles has become a habit. Not only do they read their subject notes on mobile but also prepare their reports on the device. They rely on social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to consume information.

With the outbreak of coronavirus and the announcements of lockdowns to contain it, mobile has even replaced the old teaching method with majority of teachers in India and across the globe relying on e-learning to impart education. Mobile and computer have even substituted the pen and paper with Google Meeting, Zoom etcetera being invoked to conduct exams.

The objective of this research paper is to find out about the reading habits of the students on mobile. The research will be based on survey. For this, a questionnaire will be shared with the respondents using the available electronic avenues.

Review of Literature

Fayaz Ahmad Loan in a research paper writes that the reading habits of the new generation readers are in transition – slowly shifting from restricted access to unrestricted access, local sources to worldwide sources, print sources to online sources, local languages to English language, individual reading to participative reading and less time spent on reading to more time spent on reading (Loan, 2011).

Shimray and others note that readers are estimated to progressively change the screen-based reading act to stay alive with knowledge-rich environments. “Mobile reading is extensively used for information seeking purposes. Usage of mobile reading is higher in urban areas. Reading devices support reading of a particular text and the extensive scanning of manifold texts.” They cite from a UNESCO study to find that illiterate girls and women are more attracted to the literacy courses offered through the mobile phones, computers, internet and TV. “Larger number of people is carrying small mobile devices with them that are capable of holding and reading tens of thousands of eBooks that are useful for the promotion of literacy and reading. They conclude that mobile phones and cellular networks are filling the gap created by inaccessibility of books. “It is often possible to provide access to printed books through a mobile device for a fractional cost. Today’s smartphones are less expensive and allow users to store large number of books and access and read them. Nowadays women and men, girls and boys around the world are reading many books on mobile phones” (Shimray, Keerti and Ramaiah, 2015). Shimray and others’ paper helps one find out how men and women and girls and boys are consuming information on mobile phones.

Dr. Pradeep Tiwari in a paper found that women and men consume online news in a slightly different manner. Women prefer to read information related to entertainment, development, health, education, and features. Man prefer political, sports, crime, business, and defence related news. More than half of Dr. Tiwari’s respondents had the subscription of online newspapers but

it would reduce when online newspaper would start paid subscription. Dr. Tiwari concluded that internet has become an important news medium serving millions of news users worldwide.

“The way people are reading news online, it is changing their reading habits. Online newspapers should focus on 24 hour news services as most of the online readers expect continuous updates. Most of the readers like to read all kinds of news. To attract the online news readers, traditional media should publish maximum news from the different parts on their online edition. Majority of Indian readers are not interested in paid subscription. It is a big challenge for Indian online media, as paid subscription is one of the revenue generation method for online media.....Newspapers should use their news links with all the social media websites. One third of online readers just read news on the social media” (Tiwari, 2015).

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the researchers used both probability and non-probability samplings for conducting the survey. They prepared online questionnaire and disseminated link to known internet users. There were total 16 questions in the questionnaire. An overwhelming majority of the respondents were students studying in different universities across India. The questionnaire was shared with 150 respondents out of which 110 responded to the questions. The questionnaire link was shared through Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and email

Questionnaire consisted of two types of questions - personal questions and core questions. Personal questions included questions about habit, age, occupation and interests. Core questions consisted of reading time, and time spent on phones etc. The core questions were divided into groups for clarity, addressing the main objectives of the research.

All communication took place through the Social media. However, before that the researchers made a list of Social media accounts list to disseminate information. The researchers purposely targeted known students as the possibility of forms getting filled was highest in this group.

Questionnaire was made available for a week. Data collected through online forms was then analyzed on the basis of commonality in the interest groups, age and supposed correlation with interest groups.

Analysis

Our survey says 80 percent youth use android phones while 20 percent use iPhones. Smartphones have ushered different changes in different age groups in the society. Most persons from the 16 to 25 age group use the social media. They spend time on social media’s various platforms and get 60 percent of their information from the social media. Reading habits have created an adverse impact on people due to various types of advancements in digital communication. Digital information impacts the reading behaviour of most readers. Digital information and content have led to a shift from reading printed books to digital reading. For example, 40 percent readers consume information from internet while 20 percent gather their information from e-books. Mobile phones have developed to an advanced level and gained popularity. 54 percent people use mobile phones for entertainment. Only 12 percent use news apps for information. Users do not stick to one programme for their reading. On the other hand, UNESCO conducted a study on mobile reading in developing countries and found that mobile phones are helping as a gateway to long-size text.

Only 17 percent smartphone users enjoy reading on the phone and study says 43 percent people say they are okay with reading on phones. 60 percent people say need for information motivates them to use mobile phones. Mobile devices are a central part of their daily lives. Mobile phones or smartphones travel along with their owners from table to workstation to shops and home again with efficiency, proximity and convenience. Nowadays, 34 percent mobile users like reading news in morning and 32 percent users give priority for information to The Hindu. It means many users do not have fixed time for news reading. On the other hand many journalists and professionals have accounts on Twitter. Only 6 percent users take news form the twitter and most users get information from the Facebook.

Use of the social media is high and most of the users use apps like Instagram and Facebook etc. Approx. 52 percent of the new generation prefers to read Instagram and 75 percent users get the news from Facebook. Our survey indicates many changes. Social media is the king for mobile users and they believe in it only.

- The result in this chart shows that about 43 percent of young people get their news from social media
- About 84 percent of respondents who use mobile for reading purpose come in 16-25 years of age.
- If we talk about gender then 55 percent of young men and 45 percent young women are using mobile in daily life for reading.
- This data shows that young people using internet are 45 percent and rest uses epapers and other medium of communication.
- Android using young people in India are about 80%.

What do you choose to read?

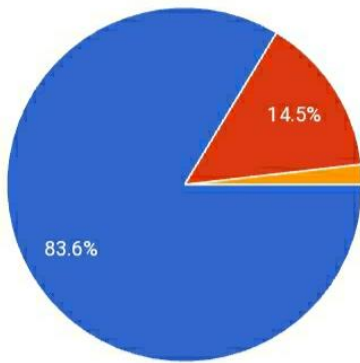
110 responses



- E-books
- E-papers
- Websites

What is your age?

110 responses



- 16-25years
- 25-35years
- 35-45years
- Above 45 years

Which mobile phone do you own?

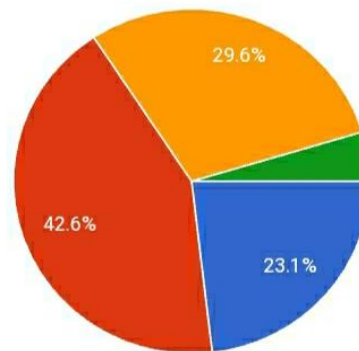
110 responses



- Android
- Iphone
- Windows Phone

How much of your news you get from social media?

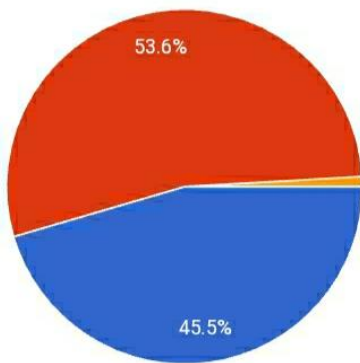
108 responses



- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- 60-80%
- 80-100%

What is your gender?

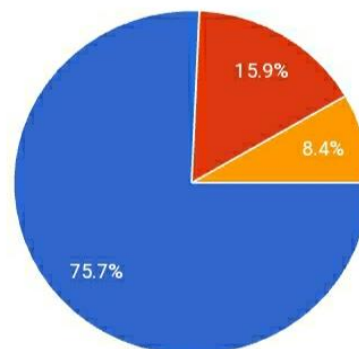
110 responses



- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

How much of your news you get from Facebook?

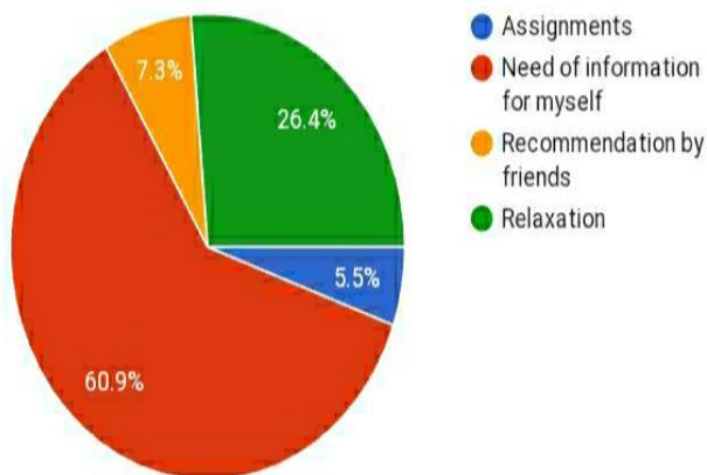
107 responses



- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- 60-80%
- All news from Facebook

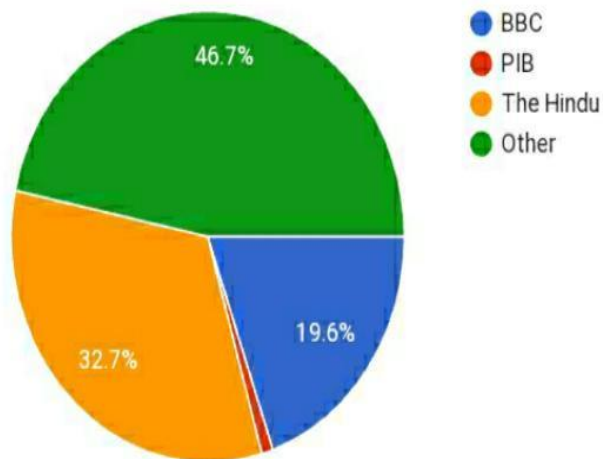
What motivates you to read?

110 responses



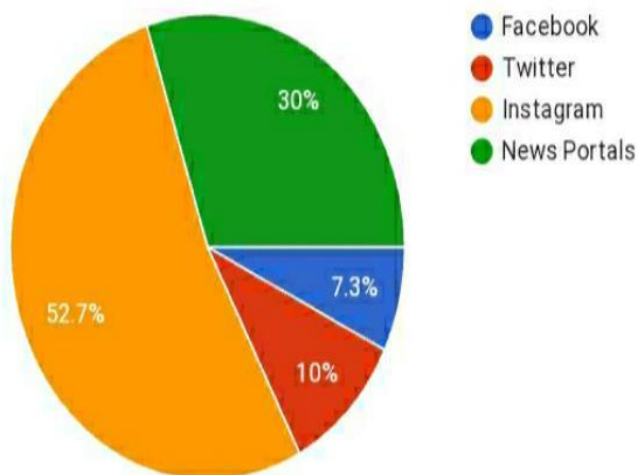
Which news portal do you prefer for News reading?

107 responses



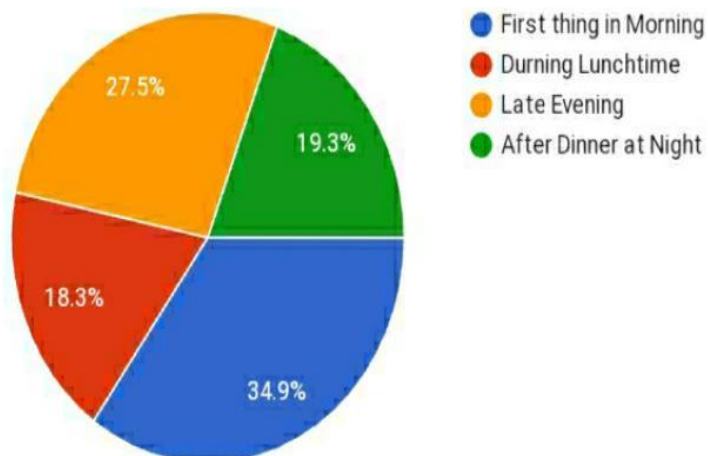
Which site do you prefer to read?

110 responses



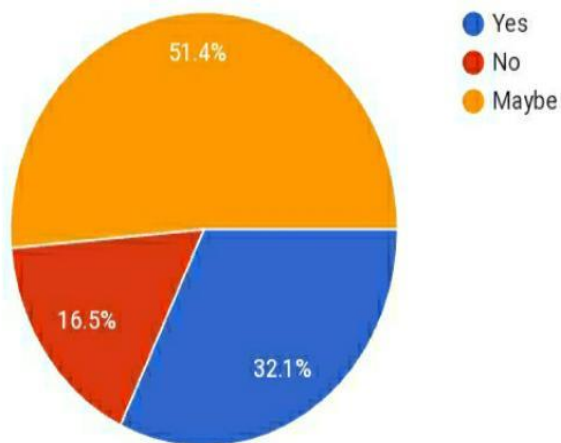
When do you typically Access News?

109 responses



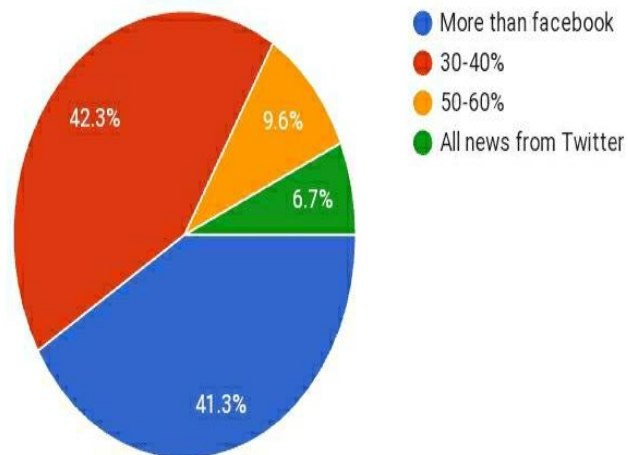
After becoming Mobile reader have you started reading more?

109 responses



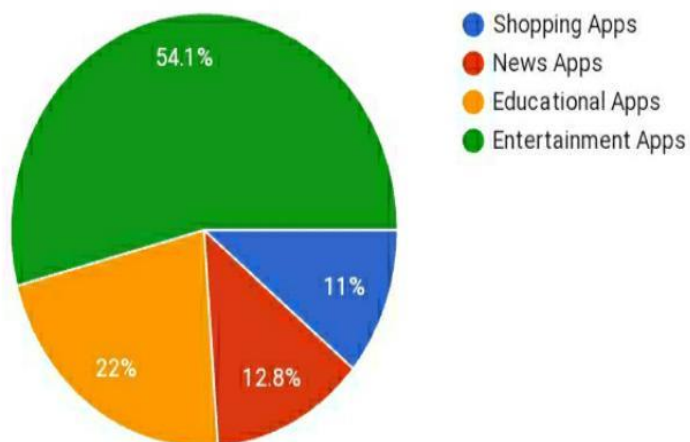
How much news you get from twitter?

104 responses



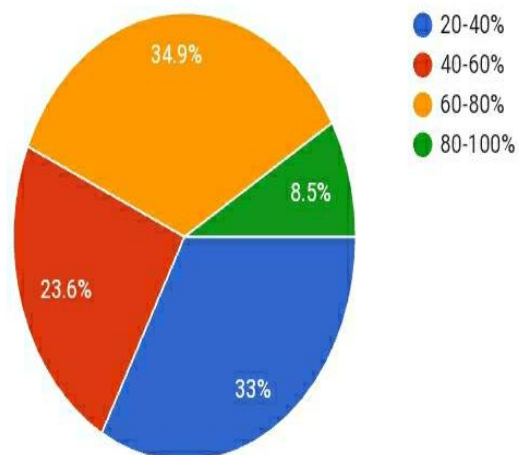
Which type of Apps you visit most?

109 responses



How much of News you get from other websites, portals and News apps?

106 responses



Conclusion

Social media has become the biggest source of information for youth in general and students in particular. They find reading more enjoyable on mobile phones. They go to their mobiles for information as well as relaxation. An overwhelming majority of the students check news on their mobiles either immediately after waking up or before retiring for the night. The Hindu is most popular source of news among them followed by the BBC though websites, apps, e-books are preferred over the epapers.

There may be a message for newspapers here – they should not charge for e-papers subscription. Among apps, the entertainment apps are on top followed by educational, news and shopping apps. Among the social media sites, Instagram beats Twitter and Facebook hands down.

There may be a need to equip all students with mobile phones at least outside the class as the surveyed students said they had started reading more after getting smart phones. Moreover, the students prefer Twitter to Facebook for news.

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