

Internet Use and Attitude towards Reading among the Students of an International University in Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to find the university students' internet usage, their attitude towards reading using the Likert scale, and to find the difference in terms of gender for the internet use and the attitude towards reading. This study also explored the differences and the relationship between internet use and attitude towards reading. This is a quantitative co-relational study using questionnaire, and it cross-tabulated the variables using a cross-sectional survey design. The study used a purposive sampling technique to provide a diverse range of 200 students from 6 different faculties (Arts and Humanities, Business, Education, Science, Theology, and Nursing) of a private international university in Saraburi, Thailand. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. Further t-test and ANOVA with Tukey Post-Hoc test were conducted to find the difference across gender and major. Also, a correlation assessment between attitude towards reading and internet use was performed using the Pearson correlation. The study revealed that the respondents were neutral towards the reading attitude and internet use. For difference based on subgroup of gender for reading attitudes, there was no difference between male and female significance at 0.05. But, in examining the difference based on subgroup of gender for internet use, difference was found between male and female. Also in the one-way ANOVA, there was a significance between groups in the internet usage (IU). As a matter of fact, this study further helps the researchers to have an opportunity to investigate further in the area of reading among university students and how internet can influence their attitude towards reading.

Keywords: Network, Internet technology, Reading comprehension, Reading perception

1. Introduction

Reading is an age-old practice of mankind to advance knowledge in various spheres of human pursuit. Regularly, it has been influenced by the growth of civilization, culture, religion, and technology. Among them, the Internet is one such technology that modern man would like to invest his time in for

various requirements. In the pursuit of adorning internet for multiple needs, ‘students enjoy the internet more than recreational reading (Mokhtari, 2009).

To add, the internet is the biggest world-wide communication network. It carries information through different kinds of networks. In the world today, there are about 4 billion internet users, which represent about 55.1% of the world’s population (Brisson, 2018). It also means that the highest ratio of internet users is in Asia. According to Statistics Portals (Statista, 2018), 41.57million people were accessing the internet in Thailand. This figure is projected to grow to 49.16 million in 2022. Given that the population is between 60-70 million, the internet users’ penetration in Thailand is about 82.4% (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2018). The penetration means that the majority of the Thais use the internet.

According to a January 2017 release of data from the National Statistical Office in Thailand, more than 90% of internet users in the country go online via smartphone, far the exceeding rates for any other device. The second most popular device for internet access was the desktop, used by just half of the internet users surveyed.

The lives of millions of people during the last decade have been changed by the use of the Internet usage and the rapid developments in the internet technology. Due to this growth, there have been many types of research on internet usage around the world, and most of them found that internet usage is most prevalent among younger and more educated people and also among students and teachers. Moreover, the internet is becoming an increasingly important part of the educational process in a classroom and educational materials (Almarabeh, Majdalawi and Moham, 2016).

Attitude is defined as a “predisposition...to react specifically towards an object, situation, or value usually accompanied by feelings and emotions” (Good, 1973). This definition corroborates the definition of Smith (1990) “as a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable”.

McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, and Meyer (2012) call for the use of a broader lens in conducting an inquiry into the reading of adolescents, a lens that brings affective factors into focus. According to them, one reason is that the measurement of attitudes holds the potential to contribute to our understanding of reading comprehension and reading difficulties. Another reason these researchers point out is that reading attitudes broadens our understanding of adolescents’ reading identities.

In this context, the study conducted by Annamalai and Balakrishnan (2013) among the Malaysian polytechnic students reveals that they do not enjoy reading as much as other activities that involve technologies. The students find reading as difficult and causing reading anxiety. Moreover, the students felt that there are other ways to learn new things than by reading as they find it boring and less motivating.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The internet has made life more comfortable than before, but at the same time, it has affected several human pursuits. One such leisure and serious quest that has been affected by the

internet is reading. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to survey 200 university students' attitude towards reading in relation to the internet usage. Another aspect of the problem was to know whether it was possible to find a positively defined attitude towards reading, in the context of a large scale internet usage among the university students.

1.2 Literature Review

Reading has been an object of empirical and theoretical investigations for quite some time.

The areas of study in reading have come from various academic disciplines (Karim & Hasan, 2007).

According to Adomi and Ejirefe (2012), the majority of students use Facebook for connecting with friends, relatives, and close acquaintances, and this, however, discourages reading habit among students.

One study among Malaysian university students points out the high rate of the use of several websites for reading, in addition to academic books and newspapers. It shows that they were found reading for academic purposes only, and not for improving their general knowledge and pleasure for reading like in the past. The level of percentage changes for students who read newspaper every day for at least a few times a week (74%); followed by websites (70%), and magazines (39%). Thus the study assumes that the trend may have shifted to digital reading habit, which is different from the conventional definition of reading (Karim & Hasan, 2007).

Shabo and Usوفia (2009) pointed out that these days, the reading habit is diminishing among the youth, mainly because the students spend time on social network sites, and it's a worrying factor.

A survey conducted by Scholastic, in conjunction with Quinley Research and Harrison Group, in Spring 2010 in the United States, found that there is a decline in the students who read books for leisure while the children spend going online for fun and using their cell phones to text and talk increased. Besides that, it has been noted that popular social networking sites such as Facebook seem to appeal to students around the world than reading books (Sinek & Sara, 2010).

According to Guzman (2013) many children spend more time on the internet and watching TV and less on reading. His study points out the influences of media, the home, and school in contributing to the development of negative attitudes of children toward reading, because there's a lapse in the monitoring of students' guided independent reading (GIR) and leisure reading (DEAR—Drop Everything and Read) from both the parents and teachers.

Some research conducted on the reading habits and attitudes of college or university students is interesting. Blackwood *et al.* (1991) analyzed the pleasure reading habits of 333 college seniors enrolled at US Liberal Arts University. The findings showed that the majority were mainly reading newspapers and mostly utilized their vacations to read. During the academic session, both male and female students reported reading for about 2.5 hours each week and slightly more during holidays.

But, McKenna *et al.* (2012) findings show that females have a more positive attitude toward academic reading in print and digital settings as well as recreational reading in print than their male

counterparts. It further points out that in contrast, males exhibited more positive attitudes than females toward the recreational reading in digital environments.

According to Alexander and Filler (1976), reading attitudes are defined as an individual's feeling about reading—causing learners to approach or avoid a reading situation. Moreover, attitude and interest in reading can be associated with emotional feelings and learners' interest to learn. Therefore, positive reading attitudes lead to positive reading experiences, which also lead to higher academic performances (Karim & Hasan, 2007).

A study by Walberg and Tsai (1985) concluded that a positive attitude toward reading has a strong correlation to reading achievement. According to the study, the factors that contributed to a positive attitude among adolescents included:

- believing that reading is essential;
- enjoying reading;
- having a high self-concept as a reader; and
- having a verbally stimulating home environment where verbal interaction takes place regularly.

However, the above studies concentrated on a positive attitude toward reading, leading to higher academic performance and its correlation to reading achievement. Therefore, the determination of this study was to survey 200 university students' perceptions towards reading in relation to internet usage.

2. Research Objectives

- 2.1 To study students' perceptions of internet usage and their attitude towards reading.
- 2.2 To find difference in terms of gender for internet use and attitude towards reading among students.
- 2.3 To find difference in terms of majors for internet use and attitude towards reading among students.
- 2.4 To find the relationship between internet use and attitude towards reading among students.

3. Methodology

This study is geared towards determining the relationship between attitude towards reading and internet use as perceived by students of an international university in Thailand. This study is considered as quantitative due to the use of questionnaire and correlational design.

3.1 Research Design & Instrument

First of all, we collected 30 sets of data from convenient samples to measure the reliability. The result showed that the Cronbach's Alpha levels were satisfied in both questionnaires. After that we tested again with 200 data sets. The Cronbach's Alpha levels increased. It showed that the questionnaires that we used were reliable.

This study used a cross-sectional survey design, and the survey instrument comprised of two sections. The demographic variables such as genders, majors, academic levels were addressed in section 1, while section 2 dealt with 34 Likert type statements that measure the students' perceptions about the attitude towards reading and internet use. The Likert scale employed in this study was a five-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree.

The attitude towards reading scale was adapted from McKenna et al. (2012). This scale assessed an individual's attitude towards reading. Sample items from the scale include "I love to read in my free time" and "I like to read before I go to bed".

The internet use scale was adapted from Keith J. Anderson's internet usage survey (2001). This scale assessed an individual's perception of internet use. Sample items include "I have dropped a class instead of spending less time on the net" and "I have tried to spend less time on the net, but have found it difficult to cut back."

3.2 Research Setting and Data Collection

This study was conducted at a private international university in Saraburi, Thailand. The population of the study was purposely chosen to provide a diverse range of students from six faculties of the university. A total of two hundred students were used. Within the sample, 56.5% were females, and 43.5% were males. For majors, 37% were from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 22% were from the Faculty of Business, 16% from the Faculty of Education, 15.5% from the Faculty of Science, 7% from the Faculty of Religious Studies, and 3.5% from the Faculty of Nursing. The researchers used 10-15 minutes of class time to complete the survey. Moreover, the respondents were informed of their right to refusal as well as the purpose of the study. All respondents were assured of the anonymity, and their participation was voluntary.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. Further *t*-test and ANOVA were conducted to find the difference across the sub-groups to provide information on students' perception when divided by gender and major. Also, a correlation assessment between attitude towards reading and internet use was performed using the Pearson correlation. Finally, multiple comparisons were done by Tukey Post Hoc test to determine the association between groups.

4. Results

For attitude towards reading, the respondents were generally neutral towards the statements which were indicated undecided by the respondents ($\bar{X} = 3.39$, S.D. = .91). For example, samples indicated ambivalence to the following statements: "Like to read before going to bed" ($\bar{X} = 3.24$, S.D. = 1.02), that they "like to look through the books at the library" ($\bar{X} = 3.25$, S.D. = .95), and that they "read often in spare time" ($\bar{X} = 3.52$, S.D. = .83). In addition, they also disagreed by saying, "reading is

boring" ($\bar{X} = 2.34$, S.D. = 1.02). However, samples stated a positive view towards reading when they responded to the statement, "Reading is an important part of my life" ($\bar{X} = 4.20$, S.D. = .07).

In terms of internet use, the respondents primarily were neutral ($\bar{X} = 3.04$, S.D. = 1.02). For example, the respondents indicated that they "have been late more than once for other appointments because they were spending time on the internet" ($\bar{X} = 3.00$, S.D. = 1.03); they "find it much easier to talk to someone on the internet than in person" ($\bar{X} = 3.15$, S.D. = 1.04); and that they "have tried to spend less time on the internet, but have found it difficult to cut back" ($\bar{X} = 3.23$, S.D. = .90). However, respondents disagreed towards statements that they "have dropped a class instead of spending less time on the internet" ($\bar{X} = 2.22$, S.D. = 1.07); and that they "have avoided making social plans to give themselves more time on the internet" ($\bar{X} = 2.59$, S.D. = .95).

For difference based on subgroup of gender for reading attitudes, there was no difference between male and female significance at 0.05. Male (n = 87, $\bar{X} = 3.41$, S.D. = .44) and female (n = 113, $\bar{X} = 3.38$, S.D. = .42) conditions; (t-test = 0.44 and p-value = .65).

But, in examining the difference based on subgroup of gender for internet use, difference was found between male ($\bar{X} = 3.10$, S.D. = 0.57) and female ($\bar{X} = 2.98$, S.D. = .43) conditions; (t-test = 1.71 and p-value = .08).

Also in the one-way ANOVA, there is a significance between groups in the internet usage (IU), as shown in the table below. To test the ANOVA, the normality or variance was tested and the Skewness value and Kurtosis value showed less than 2.00 which is acceptable as shown in Table 2.

Table 1 The difference between male and female using t-test for attitudes toward reading and internet usage

Item	n	\bar{X}	S.D.	t	Sig.
1. Attitudes toward reading					
Male	87	3.41	.44	.44	.65
Female	113	3.38	.42		
2. Internet usage					
Male	87	3.10	.57	1.71	.08
Female	113	2.98	.43		

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
ATR	2.17	4.61	3.39	0.43	0.18	-0.27	0.17	0.61	0.34
IU	1.62	4.52	3.03	0.50	0.25	0.22	0.17	0.39	0.34

The one-way ANOVA results showed that there is a significance of 0.01 between groups. Among the students in each faculty, there is a significant difference in internet use at 0.05 level.

From the table below, you will see that faculties of Arts & Humanities and Nursing are statistically significant at 0.029; Business and Theology are significant at 0.008; and Business and Nursing are significant at 0.038.

The internet usage of students in Arts & Humanities and Nursing are found to be different; the internet usage of students in Business and Theology are different; and the internet usage of students in Business and Nursing are significant at .05.

Table 3 The difference between Groups Using One-Way ANOVA by major for IU

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.56	5	.71	2.98	.01
Within Groups	46.44	194	.23		
Total	50.01	199			

Table 4 Mean score for each faculty

Faculty	n	Subset for alpha = 0.05
Nursing	7	2.70
Theology	14	2.72
Science	29	2.92
Education	32	2.99
Business	44	3.12
Arts &Humanities	74	3.13

The Tukey Post Hoc test revealed differences between the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Religious Studies and Theology (Mean difference = .41, p-value = .005); between the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Nursing (Mean Difference = .43, p-value = .03); between the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Religious Studies (Mean Difference = .34, p-value = .008); and between the Faculty of business and the Faculty of Nursing (Mean difference = 0.42, p-value = .04).

Table 5 Tukey Post Hoc Test

(I) Major	(J) Major	Mean	SE	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Nursing	Arts & Humanities	-.42*	.19	.02	-.80	-.04
	Business	-.41*	.19	.03	-.80	-.02
	Education	-.28	.20	.16	-.69	.11
	Science	-.21	.20	.29	-.62	.18
	Theology	-.01	.22	.94	-.46	.43
Business	Arts & Humanities	-.00	.09	.92	-.19	.17
	Education	.12	.11	.25	-.09	.35
	Science	.19	.11	.09	-.03	.42
	Theology	.39*	.15	.00	.10	.69
	Nursing	.41*	.19	.03	.02	.80

* p -value < 0.05

Table 6 Correlation Test

		Gender	Age	Year Std	Major	ATR	IU
Gender	Pearson	1	-0.00	0.08	-.18**	-0.03	-0.12
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.90	0.21	0.009	0.65	0.07
Age	Pearson		1	.27**	.125	0.05	-0.01
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.00	0.07	0.47	0.79
YearStd	Pearson			1	-.22**	-0.10	-0.01
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.00	0.14	0.83
Major	Pearson				1	-0.04	-.25**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)					0.51	0.00
ATR	Pearson					1	0.08
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)						0.22
IU	Pearson						1
	Correlation						
IU	Sig. (2-tailed)						

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation test between attitude towards reading (ATR) and internet use (IU) was done using Pearson Product for the entire samples. There was no significant relationship found between attitude towards reading and internet use ($r = .08$, $n = 200$, $p\text{-value} = .22$)

This research study has clearly outlined the findings on students' perception of attitude towards reading and internet usage. For the attitude towards reading, this study showed that the students are neutral towards reading except when they have to, before going to bed and reading in their spare time, while they mildly agree that reading makes them feel good and it is an enjoyable way to learn. For the internet usage, the students indicated that they are unbiased and have never got into major problems due to the use of the internet while they agree that they tried to spend less time on the net, but found it difficult to get back to read or continue their work. The second significant finding was based on the subgroup of gender. As a moderating variable for the relationship between the attitude toward reading and the internet use, the finding for male and female showed no difference between them which means that attitude towards reading do not differ for genders because they are students. But there was a moderate correlation between the attitude towards reading and the internet use when compared between majors.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The participants of this study indicated neutral perception towards reading attitude and internet use in their academic life. The neutral perception towards reading means that attitude towards reading does not change, except when they have to, before bedtime, and leisure reading, as the students mature in their academic life as mentioned in one of the previous studies Mckenna et al. (2012). Also, Ofuani and Gbenedio (2009) stated that reading is important for students' life as it empowers the mind, broadens the reader's vision, and deepens the mind and also widens students' horizons.

Even though the students indicated that they have never got into major problems due to their internet usage, they agreed that they have been late for appointments because of the use of the internet. According to a study done by Roberts, Yaya and Manolis (2014), this is possible that students are not conscious of their use of the internet. Shehu and Shehu (2014) they stated that "Though they enjoy these benefits from the social network, some of the students reported that the social media has resulted in distraction in classroom and reading habit because of reduction in time spent reading".

The reality of both the genders susceptible to the use of the internet equally is reconfirmed in this study. Even prior studies have made a similar conclusion about this. According to Roman and Manuel (2011), there is no notable difference between males and females in case of internet usage percentage.

The students of different majors, when compared, did not show any relationship in the attitude towards reading, whereas, their perceptions were different about internet use. This means that students doing different majors use internet for diverse purposes. A study confirms the relationship found between internet use and attitude towards reading, as indicated in other studies (Anderson, 2001).

6. Recommendations

This study recommends that further research needs to be done to find the impact of the internet use on the attitudes of reading to help students to identify the problems and to get a solution for reading, since reading is crucial in academic life. It also further recommends to study to determine the negative effects of overuse of the internet on the reading attitude to help students get motivated to read even for entertainment.

Moreover, the participants of this study were from a single institution, and the participants were from only six majors/faculty. Thus the generalization of these findings is limited. In addition, only the relationship between perceptions of students in reading and internet use is studied and the impact of the internet usage in the performance needs to be analyzed.

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