Development of Reading Culture Through the Use of Social Media

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Abstract

At present, India has more than 80 crore internet users, and a majority of them are young people who are active on social media. Traditionally, social media is viewed as an enemy of reading culture. However, this research looks at the issue from a different perspective. It attempts to find out whether social media can become an effective medium for the development of reading culture.

This study is based on the secondary source method. Published research papers, reports, statistical data, academic journals, and studies by various organisations were analysed. The research proposes a practical framework for promoting reading culture through social media. It includes reader-centric content creation, building reading communities, gamification, development of digital literacy, parent-teacher partnership, and emphasis on local languages.

The main conclusion is that social media is not an enemy of reading culture; if used properly, it can become a powerful friend.

Keywords: Social Media, Reading Culture, Digital Literacy, Indian Youth, Reading Communities, Digital Social Reading

Introduction

India is obviously going through a digital revolution at an extraordinary sped. The availability of affordable cellular data and affordable smartphones in India, along with an increase in digital literacy, have led to a rapid increase in internet users. There are over 80 crores of internet users in India at the moment. The vast majority of them are young people who are using many social media platforms. Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, as well as WhatsApp, have become essential parts of our lives.

In this context, how could a reading culture be fostered should become a prominent question. Parents and teachers are (how to put this) apparently more worried that social media has limited young people's participation in reading than previously. The growing prevalence of bite-sized content such as 'Reels' and 'Shorts'' has given rise to concerns that long-form reading is vanishing from the market. The question, then, must be asked whether this perspective is one-sided or not? Is social media merely a hindrance in the creation of reading culture, or can it also assist in creating reading culture?

The goal of this study is to answer the research questions. The latest studies show that the relationship between digital media and reading is not an opposing one. In fact, they are complementary. Young individuals are connecting with reading through multiple mediums, with digital processes now becoming a basic component of their reading.

Review of Literature

The past decade has seen increasing concern about how much teenagers read. The international community has identified a potential reading crisis. However, Reimers et al (2025 argue that the international narrative about declining reading among adolescents is based on an inaccurate interpretation of test data. Moje et al. (2008) suggested expanding the definition of "reading" to include digital reading materials, while Rutherford and Turner supported including video game and online written content as "reading" (2017, 2020).

Murray described the development of what he calls a "digital literary sphere" in 2018, and pointed to Instagram and TikTok as examples of platforms fostering communities of readers. Steiner's research on BookTok in 2025 found both intensive reading practices and extensive reading practices co-existing within that same community.

Rawat reported high rates of social media use among Delhi students in 2024; Nongmaithem has noticed this positive relationship between social media (2023) and the reading habits of the students. Ruslan et.al (2025) saw a developing hybrid literacy practice in Gen Z.

Research Objectives

1.   To study the impact of social media on the reading habits of Indian youth.
2.   To review the use of various social media platforms for the promotion of reading.
3.   To develop a practical framework for promoting reading through social media.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted using the Secondary research method. In other words, data was collected from research papers, academic articles, government reports, and books, journals, and reliable online sources. No surveys or interviews (Primary data) were used to conduct this study. This process helps establish an understanding of how social media affects reading culture while developing a workable framework based on existing research.

Social Media: Definition and Nature

Social media is the collective term for digital platforms which permit the users to create, share and engage with the content. Social media platforms are primarily based on the Web 2.0 technology that allows the users to be content creators, rather than being passive content consumers. The key features of social media are:

1.   **Interactivity**: Social media does not provide a one-way communication channel it provides two-way communication and promotes active engagement.
2.   **User-generated Content**: Almost all of the content on Social Media Platform is produced and shared by the user.
3.   **Community Building**: Social media provides an opportunity for individuals with similar interests to connect with each other in the form of community.
4.   **Real-Time Information**: Information is being shared as well as being accessed instantly in real time.
5.   **Algorithm-Based Content**: Social Media platforms provide content based on algorithms to users according to their interests & preferences.

In India, WhatsApp has the highest awareness at 87.28% and YouTube at 83.21%. Instagram's average awareness is 75.83% followed by Facebook.

Reading Culture: Definition and Components

Reading culture is a set of habits, attitudes, values, and practices of reading in a community. An individual's reading habits leads to the formation of reading culture in that individual's society. The two main elements of the reading culture are:

1.   Reading Habit: The habit of reading on a regular basis and finding enjoyment in doing so by, allotting time to the reading activity,
2.   Reading Motivation: The reasons why individuals read, and what inspires them.
3.   The diversity of reading material: In library we can read Diversity materials like books, newspapers, magazines, digital materials, blogs etc.

4.   Library and reading Room: Library and reading Room are the main means to spread Readership.

5.   Reading community: Libraries have classified Readings rooms into two main parts which is Book reading club (Physically) and another digitally (online reading club)

6.   Critical Thinking: Read the book and understand it deeply.

In the Indian context, multilingualism is an important aspect of reading culture, as readers engage with texts in various languages.

Social media, Reading Culture and its Impact

Digital social reading involves reading on digital platforms, connecting with other readers, discussing and recommending books, and the development of bookish communities online. Instagram's **Bookstagram** and TikTok's **BookTok** have been adopted as the latest reading trends, with consumers posting their reviews, pictures of books, and reading lists. Indians have developed a #malayalambookstagram, as pointed out by Gauthaman (2024), and BookTok has not only had a large impact on what youth read in particular genres, but also the publishing industry and the way the youth read (intensively and extensively).

Positive Impacts

Social media has several positive effects on reading culture:

- **Discovery of New Literature:** Readers can easily access information about new books, authors, and genres.
- **Availability of Diverse Content:** Literature from different languages, cultures, and subjects becomes more accessible.
- **Formation of Reading Communities:** Readers with similar interests can come together and form communities.
- **Reading Motivation:** Posts and reviews by readers inspire others to read.
- **Educational Resources:** Academic content, book recommendations, and study materials can be easily shared.

Negative Impacts

Some negative impacts are also observed:

- **Distraction:** Multiple attractions on social media divert attention from reading.
- **Skim Reading:** Due to social media habits, readers prefer superficial reading instead of deep engagement. Skimming may be an efficient survival strategy, but it leads to shallow understanding.
- **Information Overload:** Excess information and the illusion of novelty encourage speed over depth.
- **Lack of Concentration:** Continuous notifications reduce the concentration required for long reading.
- **Desire for Deep Reading:** Despite the dominance of fast content, there is still a strong interest in meaningful and deep reading experiences.

Framework for Developing Reading Culture through Social Media

The most important contribution of this research is the development of a practical framework for promoting reading culture through social media. The framework includes the following components:

- ### Reader-Centred Content Creation

Literary content should be produced specifically for social media. Book teasers, quotes, infographics, book trailers, and author interviews are just a few examples of the types of literary content that can be produced for social media. Shorts excerpt(s) of long books can be shared on social media to reach out to new readers and generate interest.

- ### Building Reading Communities

People can organise WhatsApp, Telegram, or Facebook groups in multi-different languages. One can use them to discuss literary topics regularly. People can use one book per week for group discussions. One can form virtual book clubs.

- ### Gamification

Transforming your reading experiences into fun and game-based ones will make them enjoyable. Some of the ways include having Reading games and competitions, Reading Quizzes and Reading streaks. You can also set reading goals and reward those who accomplish them.

- ### Development of Digital Literacy

Students must be educated on how to check facts, rate researchers based on credibility and consume social media responsibly. Hybrid literacy approaches need to develop techniques to teach students to restrain their consumption behaviour with careful analysis.

- ### Parent–Teacher Partnership

Parents should guide their children on the right way to use social media instead of completely restricting it. schools and colleges can initiate digital reading clubs and include digital literature reading in their curriculum.

- ### Emphasis on Local Languages

We should promote the literature written in regional languages, in addition to English. Social media can create space for poets and writers writing in regional languages. Literary work in the regional languages must be promoted to cultivate the reading culture.

Conclusion

Social media and reading culture do not contradict each other, but rather complement each other. The belief that social media will eventually replace reading is mostly not justified. On the contrary, social media has generated new dimensions to how people read. Social reading on the internet, Bookstagram, BookTok, etc., transformed reading into a greater social and interactive process.

On the other hand, while it is true that all perspectives have merit, a shift in how we view social media needs to take place. While it may be easy to write off social media as just another waste of time, we need to see it in a new light and as a possible tool for increasing the amount of reading students do. This will require everyone involved with students (parents, teachers, policymakers, etc.) as being part of the solution.

India, a country of many languages, cultures, and traditions, uses social media as an effective means to strengthen the reading culture. All that is needed is a better direction and planned efforts. The practical framework proposed in this study is an important step forward.

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