

A Study on Book Buying Behaviour: Factors Influencing Reading Habits

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Abstract:

Reading has significant benefits and the culture of reading have proven beneficial in all ages for all civilizations. The revolution of technology has played a transformational role and can boost the efforts in maintaining lifelong learning. Readers nowadays can read on mobile phones, Kindle and Tablets. Various factors affect the reading habit development of middle school students studying in private schools mainly caused due to excessive use of screens such as mobile, TV and electronic games. These are the major reasons of falling reading habits. For avid readers, different genres like fantasy, mystery, suspense, thriller, non-fiction, memoirs, historical fiction and science fictions seems to attract them and some enjoy middle grade fiction. Most books are bought through recommendations. Sales, freebies, exceptional cover art and recommendations from established authors are also good strategies to promote books. The most common reason why people buy books is the good writing style and ability to hold a reader to complete reading the book. This study focuses on studying the impact of income level and marital status on book buying behaviour. Contrary to the common belief that higher income and single status has influenced book purchasing and reading, the research shows no significant association with level of income and marital status in book buying or reading behaviour. The researchers thereby try to explore other factors that contributes to lower reading habits or lower book buying.

Keywords: Book Buying, Reading Habits, Income Levels, Marital Status, Reading Culture

Introduction

Reading has significant benefits and the culture of reading have proven beneficial in all ages for all civilizations. The revolution of technology has played a transformational role and can boost the efforts in maintaining lifelong learning. Readers nowadays can read on mobile phones, Kindle and Tablets. In a study by Zaheer et al (2021) on factors affecting the reading habit development of middle school students studying in private schools showed that excessive use of screens such as mobile, TV and electronic games are major reasons of falling reading habits. For avid readers, different genres like fantasy, mystery, suspense, thriller, non-fiction, memoirs, historical fiction and science fictions seems to attract them and some enjoy middle grade fiction. Most books are bought through recommendations. Sales, freebies, exceptional cover art and recommendations from established authors are good strategies to promote books. The most common reason why people buy books is the good writing style and ability to hold a reader to complete reading the book.

In a study by Luis, et al (2018) on consumers' book buying behaviour, the results showed that one third of books are purchased as gifts, women buy and read more books than men and higher educated and older consumers tend to read more books. The study also showed that women are more impulsive when buying books for themselves.

People are known to each other at different levels. Some people are known to each other personally, others are known from following them on social media, and still others are influencers or famous personalities we are familiar with. The same is true with authors. The number one reason that readers buy books is because they know the author. This does not always mean that the reader is a personal friend of the author. The reader may know the author because; they have heard the author speak, they have read other books by the author, they have heard the author interviewed on television, a radio show, or podcast, or they have read an interview or article by the author on a blog or other publication, the author is an influencer they listen to, watch, or follow.

Another significant factor driving book purchasing decisions is recommendations by store. When a store recommends a book, people take note. However, books can be guided by trusted resources in several ways; from an influencer the reader

follows (blogger, thought leader, pastor, etc.), by a trusted publication such as a book review publication or website or through social proof by other consumers who post positive online reviews.

We buy food to feed ourselves, clothes to wear, and furniture for comfort. Why we choose to buy what we buy in each of these categories is generally a personal preference, but the fact remains that we purchase things to meet a need. Books are no different, consumers buy books to meet a need they have in their lives. That need is usually for entertainment (fiction books) or to learn something (nonfiction books). It might be that a person wants to lose weight to get fit, improve a relationship, or learn a new skill. Books provide both entertainment and education.

Giving gifts is a common practice everywhere. We give gifts at all important milestones and celebrations, and books make great gifts. People buy books, lots of them, to give as gifts.

Understanding why people buy books can inform book marketing practices. People make purchasing decisions rooted in emotional impulses as much as logical facts. Book marketing efforts should speak to both emotions and logic to appeal to readers.

Different ideas can be put into practice when marketing directly to consumers and when marketing a book to the media for book publicity. More people are interested in buying a book that has won awards than one that hasn't. According to a survey, respondents said award-winning books had a moderate influence on their buying decisions, while some felt that it was a major influence.

Consumers like to surf the web, browse various portals and discover something new that attracts their attention. At that moment they read about the product and make a purchase. Social Media Sites have useful book information and great recommendations. The recommendation for readers can come from various sources: Family members, colleagues, and friends, a thought leader that the reader follows, an authority figure like a teacher, a government leader or a librarian, a trusted publication like a website or book review publication, and online reviews. The closer you are to the person giving the recommendation, the greater the chances are of you acting on that recommendation. This makes social media a powerful tool in making book buyers out of their audience. Reviews on different platforms continue to have a moderate to major influence on why readers buy books. This is why authors need to get reviews and keep getting them consistently over the years on multiple websites. Every author needs a platform to reach a wide audience, and the author's website or the publisher's website is another great way to spread the word about their new book. Though no longer as powerful as they were decades ago, print ads carried a moderate influence. However, these days Google Ads brings in most of the traffic for store visits, where the consumer makes the purchase. The new generation of readers gets recommendations from book review sites, sellers like Amazon, and social networking book sites such as Goodreads. Although print media may not be as easily accessible, it still has a moderate influence on why readers buy books. Newspapers and magazines or Blog sites are still regarded as authority figures in their areas of expertise, and many readers take their recommendations seriously.

Background of the Indian Book Market

Economic Times (2015) reported that India's book market, was worth Rs 261 billion making it the sixth largest in the world and the second largest of the English language, and grew to touch Rs 739 billion by 2020, as per the survey.

Nielsen India Book Market Report 2015: Understanding the India Book Market" was conducted in association with the Association of Publishers in India (API) and the Federation of Indian Publishers (FPI) to evaluate the opportunities and challenges facing the industry, as well as where its future lies.

The study estimates a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 19.3 per cent for the industry in the next five years. However, the Indian book industry receives no direct investment from the government - "a serious roadblock for publishers," the report says

Other challenges include the fragmented nature of publishing and bookselling, a tortuous distribution system; long credit cycles that make it difficult to manage cash flows, and increases in direct costs. Piracy is widespread, with virtually every street in the country home to stalls selling pirated texts

The Nielsen report, among other interesting facts, also highlights that India is the second largest English-language print book publisher in the world with over 9000 publishers. More than 70 per cent of publishers in India have digitised their content to produce e-book versions - smartphones and e-readers offer consumers opportunities to access digital content.

Further, books have emerged as an instrumental category for e-commerce business, accounting for 15 per cent of the overall e-commerce trade, just trailing behind electronics (34 per cent) and apparel and accessories 30 per cent).

The study said that "general and literary fiction" was ranked the #1 genre in the trade books segment while "test prep" was the most sought-after genre in Academic books.

A survey of 2,000 consumers, representative of the urban population aged 18+ during the study provides deep insights into changing consumer preference for books in India

The consumer data survey shows that on average people read books 2.1 times a week while nearly two-thirds read the book occasionally; interestingly, 56 per cent of the respondents bought at least one e-book a year and nearly half of these bought at least 3-4 e-books a year indicating a growing demand for digital books.

Fifty-five per cent of trade sales are of books in English. Books in Hindi account for 35 per cent of Indian language sales, but the largest share of these sales is taken by "Others," despite what the report identifies as a "highly disorganised" local publishing sector. Both in trade and educational publishing, there is significant room for growth.

While the market is highly fragmented, it is also experiencing consolidation, in part as a result of the involvement of foreign multinationals - the government allows 100 per cent foreign direct investment.

This is not only in trade publishing, with the merger of Penguin and Random House and HarperCollins' acquisition of Harlequin (all companies with substantial presences in India), but also in educational, with S Chand's acquisition of Madhuban, Vikas Publishing House and Saraswati Book House, and with Laxmi Publications' acquisition of Macmillan Higher Education

President of API Vikas Gupta says about the report, "The report offers invaluable insights into the books market that will help not just the publishing industry but also the government and educators to make plans for a fully literate and educated nation."

Vikrant Mathur, director of Nielsen Book India, adds, "There is enormous potential in the Indian book market which has been highlighted by the report, enabling publishers, booksellers and libraries to gain a deeper understanding of the market, pinpointing areas that can be developed and those pinch points that need to be addressed in order to bring more efficiency and cost savings to the Indian book market and its supply chain."

NewIndianXpress (2018) reported that Bengaluru has emerged as the most well-read city in India, while Mumbai and Delhi stand at second and third position, respectively, according to a survey conducted by Amazon India's Annual Reading Trends Reports for 2017.

According to the survey, exam preparation books emerged as the most popular genre on Amazon. In while Indian writing grabbed the second spot literature and fiction, personal development self-help and romance categories were ranked in third, fourth and fifth position respectively

Among books, 'Indian Polity (5th Edition)' ranked as the top selling book across the country while 'Sita - Warrior of Mithila' emerged as the highest selling fiction book of 2017. Another exam preparation book 'Word Power Made Easy' by Norman Lewis' came in close at third rank followed by 'The Power of your 'Subconscious Mind' and 'Think and Grow Rich'. Chetan Bhagat's 'One Indian Girl', continued to rank among the top 10 bestsellers, holding the sixth spot.

Amazon India also conducted a Readers' Poll on its website inviting readers to vote on their favourite book across eight categories and 'This Is Not Your Story' by Savi Sharma is the most popular book of 2017 with the highest votes across categories. 'Sita - Warrior of Mithila' by Amish once again received the second highest votes followed by 'Origin' by Dan Brown.

According to the survey, 'I Do What I Do' by Raghuram Rajan emerged as the winner under the Business category while 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Getaway' by Jeff Kinney won maximum hearts under Children's books category. Under Hindi books, 'Heera Pheri' by Surrender Mohan Pathak topped the poll.

In the non-fiction category 'India's Most Fearless: True Stories of Modern Military Heroes' by Shiv Aroor won the readers hearts while in the romance book category 'Our Story Needs No Filter' by Sudeep Nagarkar topped the poll. 'How to Be a Bawse: A Guide to Conquering Life' by Lilly Singh was voted as the winner under the self-help category.

Statista (2022) has reported that revenue in the Books segment is projected to reach US\$4.81bn in 2023. Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2023-2027) of 4.41%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$5.72bn by 2027. In the Books segment, the number of readers is expected to amount to 434.9m users by 2027. User penetration in the Books segment is expected to be at 26.6% in 2023. The average revenue per user (ARPU) is expected to be US\$12.45. In global comparison, most revenue will be generated in the United States (US\$19,310.00m in 2023). In the year 2021, a share of 36.9% of users is in the high-income group and 41.0% of users is 25-34 years old.

Contrary to what we discussed above, The Readers Digest has closed down in May 2024. As of April 30, 2024, Reader's Digest UK has ceased publishing its print edition after 86 years. The magazine's editor-in-chief, Eva Mackevic, announced on LinkedIn that the company was unable to withstand the financial pressures of the current magazine publishing landscape. The May 2024 issue was the last to be published. RD used to fill a part of the need that currently what the internet does. They probably lost their unique identity and could never find space to rebuild themselves. How should the ever-changing landscape of publishing and reading habits be evaluated for better understanding of publishing business?

Factors Influencing Book Buying Behaviour:

The Indian e-book market has also seen a major overhaul, with internet expansion and spread of mobile phones, especially smartphones. Fifty-five per cent of trade sales are of books in English. Books in Hindi are 35 per cent of Indian language sales but the largest share of these is taken by 'Others', despite what the report identifies as a "highly disorganised" local publishing sector. Fifty-five per cent of trade sales are of books in English. Books in Hindi are 35 per cent of Indian language sales but the largest share of these is taken by 'Others', despite what the report identifies as a "highly disorganised" local publishing sector.

In India Nielsen report focuses on the growth of Book Industry, Nielsen report is published with the association of Association of Publishers in India and the Federation of Indian Publishers Whenever a reader or customer enters in to the e-commerce site to purchase the book, customer wants to get the glimpse of the book with minimum usage of the keywords. Once the books arrive on the screen it is up to the customer how he purchased, but surely reviews, stars, price and the quality of the book definitely help him to make him to purchase the books. Buying behaviour of customers is influenced by factors such as, Author, Price, Publication House, Availability of alternative, Price in Bookstore, Delivery Time

In reviews related to reading interest and marital status, Scales and Burley (1986) undertook a research study of 233 males and 61 females in Egypt. The findings of the study revealed that more married than single and more males than females read religious material. Diamond (1987); Valdez and Gutek (1987) conducted research studies and inferred that women get interrupted in their careers and process of learning because of their spouses careers or parenting responsibilities. Their

studies further revealed that men get less disrupted because of the same reasons. Osmany and Khan (2003) conducted a research study on teacher educators and found that married teachers are more stressful due to dual roles than unmarried teachers. Kim and Merriam (2004) worked on older adults and found that marital status, level of education and length of residence in the state emerge as significant variables to determine their learning. Their study further revealed that married were less motivated by reading material than participants who were widow, divorced or single. They further inferred this may be due to their family factors and social contacts because reading interest does not make them easily motivated/interested. Solomon (2011) revealed that male professors whose wives did not work full time felt more comfortable whereas female professors regardless of their spouse profession felt that being married and having children interfere in their profession. Matheson and Rosen's (2012) studied both male and female married teachers and found that women professors were not able to balance between personal life and work. This pointed that the learning experiences of female professors are honed and their interest is not much with their work. Asgari (2012) conducted a research study on effects of gender and marital status on burnout of English teachers in Iran and found that no significant difference between marital status and English teacher's score on burnout. Nagra and Arora (2013) conducted a research study on occupational stress and health among teacher educators concerning their gender and marital status and found significant among teacher educators regarding occupational stress concerning married and unmarried teacher educators.

Research Design:

1. Exploratory research
2. Convenience Sampling
3. Google Sheet used for data collection
4. A total of 100 samples were collected. 83 samples, which complied with the requirement were taken for the study are used for the study.

Problem Statement: Technology plays a vital role in transforming book buying and reading behaviour. Individual preferences, choice of books, expectations, price, discounts, custom reviews, exchange policies, variety of books and delivery systems also influence reading habits and book-buying behaviour. It is often said that paucity of time especially for married people and the level of income determines to a large extent the reading habits of people. While income determines the ability to purchase the book, marital status determines the leisure time and willingness to read during free time. The current study attempts to research the influence of income level and marital status on reading habits.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the reading patterns of Mumbai readers.
2. To understand the book buying behaviour pattern.
3. To evaluate the influence of the readers' income on book-buying behaviour.
4. To explore the role of marital status in booking buying and reading behaviour

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in the frequency of book purchases among the four income levels?
2. Is there a significant association between marital status and book-buying behaviour?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the frequency of book purchases among the four levels of the Income category.
2. There is no significant association between marital status and readership frequency.

Sampling Framework

Measures

Data Analysis

60% of respondents are below the age of 30 and 66% are male. Out of 83 respondents 51 are unmarried and 56% work in the private sector. About 82% of respondents are graduates.

Inferential Statistics

To reach the objectives of the study, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted.

Table No.: 1 – Mean Rank

Ranks			
Variable	Annual Income	N	Mean Rank
Frequency of Purchasing Book	Less Than 2 Lacs	19	46.58
	2 To 5 Lacs	11	43.36
	5 To 10 Lacs	35	42.26
	More Than 10 Lacs	18	35.83
	Total	83	

The income group less than Rs. 2 Lacs indicated highest mean rank – 46.58.

Table No.: 2 – Chi-Square Test

Test Statistics	
	Frequency of Purchasing Book
Chi-Square	2.406
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.492
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: ANNUAL INCOME	

Table No.: 3–Frequency of Purchasing Book

Frequency of Purchasing Book		
Annual Income	N	Median
Less Than 2 Lacs	19	4.00
2 To 5 Lacs	11	4.00
5 To 10 Lacs	35	4.00
More Than 10 Lacs	18	3.00
Total	83	3.00

Findings of the Study

A Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no statistically significant difference in frequency of purchasing across four different income groups (**Group1**, n = 19: Income less than 2 Lacs; **Group2**, n = 11: Rs. 2 to 5 Lacs, **Group3**, n = 35: Rs. 5 to 10 Lacs, **Group4**, n = 18: More than Rs.10 Lacs), χ^2 (3, n = 83) = 2.40, p = 0.49. Although, higher income group recorded a lower frequency of book purchasing which is indicated by lower median score (Md = 3) than other three lower income groups which recorded high median values of 4.00. Hence, 'There is no significant difference in the frequency of book purchases among the four levels of the Income category'.

Descriptive Statistics

Table No: 4 Marital Status * Frequency of Reading

Marital Status * How Often Do You Read? Cross tabulation						
			How Often Do You Read?			Total
			More Than Once In A Week	Daily	Once A Month	
Marital Status	Married	Count	13	12	7	32
		% Within Marital Status	40.6%	37.5%	21.9%	100.0%
		% Within How Often Do You Read?	46.4%	32.4%	38.9%	38.6%
		% Of Total	15.7%	14.5%	8.4%	38.6%
	Unmarried	Count	15	25	11	51
		% Within Marital Status	29.4%	49.0%	21.6%	100.0%
		% Within How Often Do You Read?	53.6%	67.6%	61.1%	61.4%
		% Of Total	18.1%	30.1%	13.3%	61.4%

Following observation made from above table –

Married respondents read more than once in a week (40.6%) and 37.5% read daily. However, 49% of non-married respondents read every day.

Inferential Statistics

Table No 5 : Analysis of Chi-square Test

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.319 ^a	2	.517
Likelihood Ratio	1.318	2	.517
Linear-by-Linear Association	.428	1	.513
N of Valid Cases	83		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.94.

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.126	.517
	Cramer's V	.126	.517
N of Valid Cases		83	

Findings

A chi-square test for independence with Pearson Chi-Square indicated no significant association between marital status and frequency of reading $\chi^2(2, n = 83) = 1.32, p = 0.51$, and Cramer's $V = 0.126$ which indicated small effect. Hence, 'There is no significant association between marital status and readership frequency', the hypothesis can be retained.

Discussion

Demographic Analysis

Age Group	
20-29	60 %
30- 39	25 %
40-49	10%
50 and above	5 %

Majority of the respondents are in the age group of 20- 29 years. Only 25 % of the respondents are students and 9% of the respondents are self -employed. Around 56% of the respondents work with Private Organizations and meagre 10 % of the respondents are employed in public sector. More than 81% of the respondents are graduates, 9 % have postgraduate degrees and 10 % have doctorate degrees. Around 61 % of the respondents, are unmarried and only 29 % are married.

Where do you Read

Library	40 %
During Travel	33%
Coffee Shops	6%
Home	18%

What do you Read

Only Fiction	12 %
Only Non- Fiction	21%
Both	50 %

How often do you Read in a Week

Read Regularly	70 %
Read Somewhat	5%
Don't Read Weekly	25 %

How often do you purchase books?

Yearly	49 %
Monthly	46 %
Weekly	5%
Daily	-----

Do you have a Planned Budget for buying books?

Yes	4 %
No	96%

Data analysis shows individuals with lower incomes might work multiple jobs or longer hours, leaving less time for reading. Income often correlates with educational attainment, which is a strong predictor of reading habits. Higher

education levels typically foster better reading habits and a greater appreciation for reading. Married individuals might engage in social activities that reduce the time available for reading. Single individuals might turn to reading as a solitary leisure activity.

Contrary to the general perception, the research shows that the frequency of purchasing or reading books is highest amongst the lower income groups as compared to higher income groups. There is no statistical difference in frequency of purchasing books across all the different income groups. The research also shows there is no significant association between marital status and frequency of reading. Around 96% of the respondents have no planned budgets for buying and are impulsive buyers.

Numerous reasons, from individual preferences and lifestyle decisions to more general societal and technological influences, are to blame for poor reading habits. The following are some major causes of poor reading habits: People's reading habits may change as a result of the popularity of digital entertainment including social networking, video games, streaming services, and online videos. Many people don't have much time for leisure reading because of their hectic schedules

Conclusion

According to general perception and belief, higher income often correlates with better access to educational resources, including books, e-books, and libraries. As per common belief, people with higher incomes may have more discretionary funds to spend on books and other reading materials. Those with higher incomes might have jobs that offer more free time or flexible schedules, allowing for more leisure activities such as reading.

Encouraging a culture of reading, through school projects, community programs, and family activities is important to foster a culture that values reading.

Accessibility is improved by the availability of reading materials via digital platforms, book fairs, and libraries. Promoting early literacy policies by offering interesting, developing appropriate books and reading activities, to help children develop a love of reading from an early age. Technology can be leveraged to increase reading accessibility and convenience, use audiobooks and e-books. To make reading more pleasurable, assisting people in locating books that correspond with their interests is a great strategy. Education assistance to encourage educational initiatives that highlight the value of reading while offering assistance to those who struggle with literacy will motivate readers.

According to Statista Consumer Insights Global as of January 2024, many magazine and weekly newspaper subscribers have high annual household income and almost 55 % are male. The subscribers mostly live in urban areas and cities and have shown keen interest in the sports section. The survey also discusses how consumer lifestyles and consumer attitudes are changing the reading preferences of the consumer. The consumer would like to read about food and security issues and are keen on innovations that contribute to environmental sustainability. The present-day reader consumes all types of media and interacts with companies more often. Hence, every journal and magazine should understand the evolving consumer need to encourage reading habits.

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