

From Print Culture to Digital Platforms: An Empirical Study on Mobile App-Based Reading and the Transformation of Sri Lankan Publishing Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the nature of the change in the Sri Lankan publishing industry from printed materials to reading using mobile phone applications. Quantitative research approach was utilized to collect data from a sample of 200 readers and analyze the same using SPSS software. ISBN registration records of the National Library and Documentation Services Board, Sri Lanka, were also examined. Findings from the analysis revealed that although print books remain dominant (78.5%), younger generations, especially those aged 19-40, increasingly use e-books and print books, with the older reader base being largely resistant to digital platforms. Smart phones come out as the device of choice for digital consumption of reading, with fiction literary genres such as novels and short stories being mass-consumed digitally. Convenience, portability, low price and ready availability were the main enablers of digital adoption, and technical complexity, lack of digital content, low levels of digital literacy and cost sensitivity the main impediments. ISBN data also confirm an increase in registration of e-books during the COVID-19 pandemic. App-based publishing is however viewed mainly as a colorless factor by readers, which bears witness to an attachment to a print culture. The study confirms that Sri Lanka's publishing sector is not a replacement for print media, but rather one where there is an evolving hybrid model of information in digital form reinforcing conventional publishing. It therefore recommends that publishers, policymakers, and technology developers collaborate to drive increased local language content, boost app usage, adopt low-cost pricing models, and bolster digital literacy programs to facilitate a sustainable development of the digital reading habit of the nation.

Keywords: Book publishing industry, printed books, e-books, mobile reading apps, reading

INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, the book has been a fundamental tool in human evolution, primarily by facilitating writing. As Hamblen (2011) notes, "For more than a century, books have been a key part of modernity and a fundamental basis for education and academic life." The book's format and external appearance designed to express and store information--have continually evolved in accordance with the technological parameters of each era.

In the modern world, the development of information and communication technology, particularly the Internet, has driven major breakthroughs across many fields. The Internet, alongside personal computers and mobile devices, is rapidly transforming how we access information. With a simple click of a mouse from home, school, or university, information can be retrieved at high speed. According to Loan (2011), "using the Internet as a reading source allows for a large amount of information to be obtained in a short time, and graphics and animations can be used to understand more information than traditional printed books," which has attracted traditional readers to these new trends.

Consequently, many physical concepts were digitized, leading to a new lexicon of terms prefixed with 'e-' or 'E'. As Tosun (2014) states, "Namely, e-mail, e-shopping, e-banking, e-commerce, e-government, e-signature and e-learning are prominent concepts among them. The latest concept that was added to this was e-books." The emergence of e-books also led to the creation of dedicated devices for reading them, known as e-Readers.

E-books represent a new type of book format born from the widespread adoption of information technology. Tosun (2014) defines an e-book as “a digitized electronic format with content produced in an electronic environment and which can be displayed, accessed, and published using a desktop computer, any handheld device with a screen, or any custom-designed electronic device.” The act of reading e-books falls into two categories (Siegenthaler et al., 2010):

1. Reading e-books downloaded onto devices like computers or mobile phones via the Internet.
2. Reading using dedicated e-book readers (e-Readers).

This shift represents a change in the medium of reading--from paper to screen--rather than a change in the content itself. It is essentially a translation or imitation of the traditional reading behavior. In this changing environment, online books are increasingly replacing printed ones. “The form of ‘reading’ in the modern era is undergoing a major change compared to the way it was a few years ago. Although print media is not dead, people all over the world are reading on digital screens every day” (Loan, 2011).

New reading modes dedicated to this purpose are emerging globally. Among the most popular are apps for smart devices like mobile phones and tablets. Examples of these applications include Libby, BookBub, Kindle, Wattpad, NetGalley, Apple Books, Google Play Books, Barnes & Noble Nook, Kobo Books, and KyBook. The number of users who have downloaded these applications is shown below.

Apps Name	Download count
Libby	10M +
Kindle	100M+
Wattpad	100M+
NetGalley	100K+
Barnes & Noble Nook	500K+
Kobo Books	10M+
Moon+Reader	10M+

(Source – Android Playstore, 2025)

Several such apps were launched in our country over the last decade. Among them are apps from major publishing houses, including Gurulugomi (by M.D. Gunasena), KReader (by Kbook), Kathuwaraya: Sinhala Novels, Sarasavi (by Sarasavi publisher), Samudra (by Samudra publisher), and Bhawana, as well as several others. The number of users who have downloaded these apps is shown below.

Apps Name	Download count
Gurulugomi	100k+
KReader	5K
Kathuwaraya: Sinhala Novels	100k+
Sarasavi	5K
Samudra	10K
My Books: School Books Sri Lanka	100K
Pinki Pinki	1K



Sinhala Novel	50K
Sri Lanka School Books:Result	500
Bhawana	10K

(Source – Android Playstore, 2025)

In addition, there are many social media groups on social media applications such as ‘WhatsApp’, ‘Telegram’ and ‘Facebook’ that share PDF versions of novels, short stories, etc. The above data shows that printed books, as well as e-books and e-book reading applications and devices, are currently very popular around the world. The reading pattern of humans has also changed according to these new technological parameters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People read books for two main purposes. That is, to gain knowledge and to spend leisure time meaningfully. For this, since people have been accustomed to reading printed books since ancient times, the publishing industry as an industry developed rapidly in the world as well as in our country. However, although e-books have gradually become a popular feature of the world over the past two decades, it has been almost a decade since this has become a reading mode in our country. Therefore, in this study on the applications of reading e-books, attention is paid to the definitional analysis of that concept, its history and its nature.

Conceptual Analysis of E-Book Reading Applications

When focusing on the main concept of the study, e-books and e-reading applications, several definitions can be found in this regard. The two concepts of e-books and e-reading are primarily based on digital reading. That is, reading something using an electronic device. Accordingly, “Digital reading can be simply defined as the process of extracting meaning from a text in a digital format. There are two main definitions of digital reading. Namely,

1. The presentation of the reading object or reading content in digital form. That is, e-books, online novels, electronic maps, digital photos, blogs, web pages, etc.
2. The digitization of reading methods. That is, the use of printed paper as the reading method is not used, but reading through electronic devices with screen displays such as computer screens, PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) ‘MP3’, ‘MP4’ laptops, mobile phones, digital readers” (Gamage, 2024, p. 25).

In this sense, looking at the basic concepts of this research paper, an e-book is “Any electronic device (handheld or attached to a table) that includes a screen, regardless of size or composition, and is published as a medium ‘Any electronic text’ (Armstrong, Edwards, and Lonsdale, 2002). Similarly, an e-book is “a work written or translated into digital format for display on a computer screen or portable device.” It can be purchased/downloaded and read without having to go to a bookstore or library” (OECD, 2012, p.4).

An e-book is also “a book published in digital form containing text, images, or both, that can be read on a computer or other electronic device” (Mashhour and Saleh, 2015). According to the research paper Trends of eBooks in the Digital Era by Jitender Singh for the International Journal of Information Movement Vol 2, an eBooks is an electronic version of a printed book that can be read on a computer, smartphone/tablet, or any other such device (Singh, 2017, p.203).

Accordingly, a smart device such as a smartphone is required to read or publish an e-book. According to another definition that has been proposed in this regard, “an e-book is a type of ‘Publication’ here refers to the process involved in transforming the content of a book created by the author into a product that can be sold to readers or made publicly available. It includes text editing, page layout, advertising and marketing, copyright registration (ISBN number), and administration and distribution” (OECD, 2012, p.11).

This does not only include the printing part of the process of creating a printed work, but also other ancillary processes. Here, the publishing model is the publication of the relevant work through a mobile phone application.

In the modern era, mobile communication has witnessed the rapid evolution of mobile phone technology, including mobile hardware and mobile software. The features available on mobile phones depend on software (applications). In the contemporary information and communication era, mobile phone applications are one of the fastest developing areas. At the same time, with the introduction of new software, service platforms and software development kits, mobile phone application design has undergone major changes. These changes are leading to the emergence of many new service platforms, such as Android, Google, and Apple IOS. "With mobile devices, a new application market called mobile apps has begun, and it is growing at an incredible pace" (Andersen, 2013).

Mobile applications are computer programs designed to run on mobile phones, tablets, and other mobile devices. "The term 'app' is a shorthand for the term 'application software'. Applications are easily available through application distribution platforms known as app markets, and these applications are usually available on mobile operating systems such as the Apple App Store, Google Play store, Windows Phone Store, and BlackBerry App World (Liu & He, 2014, p.10). Accordingly, there are currently two major app stores where these applications are easily available online. These are the iTunes App store and the Android Google Play store (Chu, 2009)'

A mobile application is a computer program that runs on a mobile device. In the research paper Evolution of Mobile Applications, Darya Dolgaya defines mobile applications as follows. According to that definition, a mobile application is "a software program designed to run on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. It is a result of recent technological innovations. The convergence of media, information technology, the Internet and advanced technologies has led to the emergence of mobile applications" (Dolgaya, 2018).

With the rapid growth of the Internet at the end of the last century, concepts such as 'electronic reading' and 'online reading' have all been transformed into new definitions such as mobile reading, digital reading and screen reading. New reading modes have also developed for this. 'Mobile applications' are one of these categories. Such applications are used to facilitate various functions on a mobile phone or tablet, and in modern times, they are also used as a means of reading books. Accordingly, a mobile phone application that can read books is a mobile phone-supported application that can read or listen to e-books using a smart mobile phone or tablet with a touch screen.

Research Gap

There are a number of studies on the comparison between printed book format and digital format in terms of usability, cost, and consumer preferences. Armstrong, Edwards, and Lonsdale (2002) conducted research on the availability of e-books in libraries, and Bailey, Best, and Scott (2015) discussed the cost factor of e-books versus printed books. Some studies, such as those by Tosun (2014) and Cumaoglu, Sacici, and Torun (2013), have indicated that digital reading provides ease and flexibility but consumers still prefer printed books for better understanding and comfort. However, Baron (2015) has highlighted the fact that digital reading influences the cognitive and behavioral abilities of consumers.

Theoretical perspectives, especially the Uses and Gratifications Theory, have also been extended to explain e-reading adoption. Shin (2011) used the model to understand the motive behind the use of e-books and found that "readers adopt the digital platform in order to gratify needs for convenience, entertainment, and information seeking." Cowan (2013) similarly analyzed gratification factors as an influence on using printed or digital formats. This indicates user motivation is a significant effect underlying the adoption and continued use of mobile reading applications.

Moreover, previous studies have investigated the educational and environmental effects of digital reading. For example, Hsieh & Huang (2020) and Park & Lee (2021) investigated the effect of digital reading in the aspect of learning outcomes in language education settings. Besides that, studies carried out by Kang et al. (2021) and Tahara et al. (2018) focused on sustainability characteristics and investigated the effect of digital reading in aspects of reducing paper use.

Moreover, there is an overall trend demonstrating an increased rate of acceptance for e-reading globally. Various reports and studies have documented observations of an increased rate of device ownership and the growing popularity of e-content consumption (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2014; OECD, 2012; Hamblen, 2011).



Within Sri Lanka's context, limited but emerging research has represented the digital reading behaviour of citizens. One such Generation Z-related reading habit study conducted by Gamage (2024) indicates a growing interest among younger readers toward digital platforms. Some previous works related to printing technology and the associated reading culture in Sri Lanka form the basis for understanding the transition from traditional publishing systems to digital formats (Leelaratne, 2010).

Overall, the exiting literature is informative about global digital reading trends, developments in technology, and user preferences. However, there is a clear lack of context-specific empirical research that explores in detail how these global patterns play out within developing countries like Sri Lanka, specifically in regard to mobile reading applications, reader motivations, and changes in the local publishing landscape.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach to the methodology of research for this study was quantitative. A purposive sampling method was used to sample 200 e-book readers in Sri Lanka who actively engage in digital reading. Data collection was carried out for five months—from March to July 2025. A structured questionnaire was forwarded, via email and Facebook and WhatsApp groups for e-book readers. Only those participants who acknowledged reading e-books on a regular basis were invited to participate in the questionnaire, considering the research objectives. Responses were coded and analysed using the SPSS software to develop descriptive and analytical data. The study was supported by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which helped in looking into the motives, preferences, and satisfaction factors that shaped the adoption of mobile reading applications.

Apart from conducting the above survey, predictive analysis was also carried out, and for that purpose, ISBN registration data was used. Trend analysis as a method of predicting possible future trends using time series projection analysis was employed for predicting future dynamics or trends. The trend analysis method was employed for future prediction because, with this approach, one can easily identify long-term directional trends using historical data.

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

Identifying the relevant theoretical underpinnings is important when conducting academic research because it gives the current study a conceptual foundation. Accordingly, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is the focuses of the current study.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a mass communication theory that focuses on the needs, motives, and gratifications of media users. The theory states that media consumers are not passive consumers of mass communications but rather play an active role in media consumption (Gordon, 2022). Around 1940, uses and gratification theories were introduced to the academic environment as a result of academic studies as to the reasons behind people's choice for different media. This theory was primarily used in later stages to discover the anticipated satisfaction of media users. During the 1970s, researchers started examining the effects of media use and the social and psychological needs that this theory suggested that the media satisfied (Vinney, 2019).

UGT has been used in the majority of previous research on the factors that influence user behavior when engaging in modern Internet-related activities and services. Shin, D. H. (2011), in his study of "Understanding E-book Users: Uses and Gratification Expectancy Model," has studied the subscription of online textbooks through this theory. The study of printed books versus electronic book formats - a study using niche gratification theory by Christi Cowan (2013) expressed from his master's thesis that printed books were found to have the best market strength, followed by e-readers, tablet devices, and computer e-books (Cowan, 2013). Accordingly, in the preparation of the questionnaires this theoretical approach was utilized to investigate the questions.

Data Analysis

In this case study on how the transition from printed books to mobile apps in the Sri Lankan book publishing industry has affected the reader, quantitative data obtained from surveys are analyzed and presented in this chapter using scientific methods. The questionnaire data was analyzed with SPSS version 22.

Data analysis about Sri Lanka eBook Publishing Industry

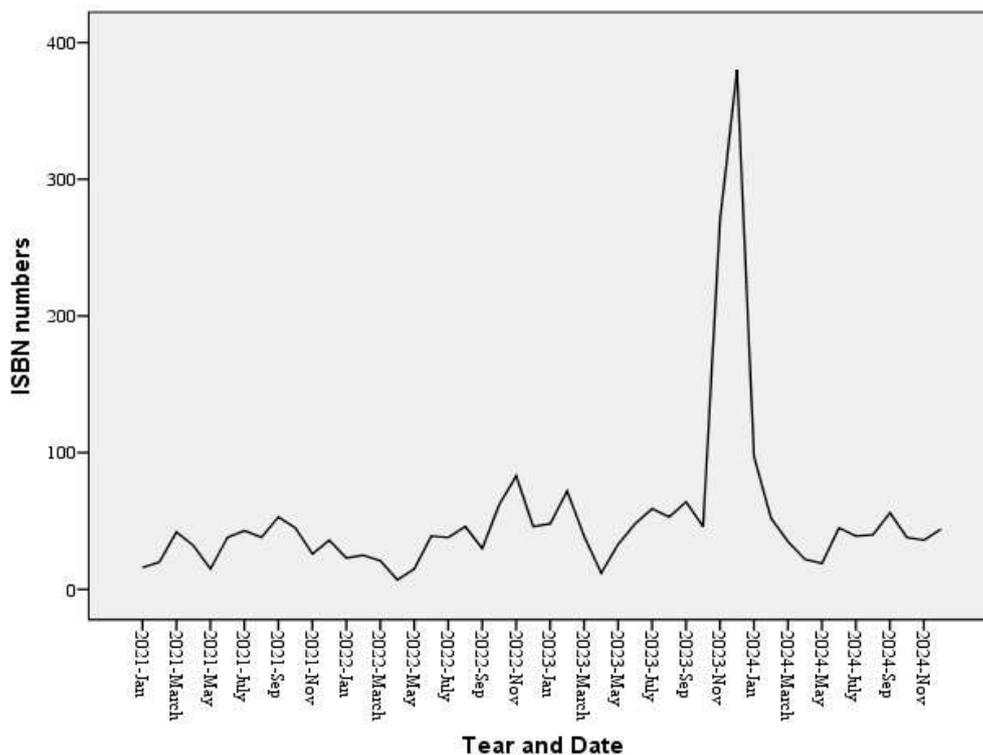
The National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB) of Sri Lanka is the only institution that sets standards for book publishing and issues ISBN numbers. According to data obtained from the website of the NLDSB, which issues ISBN numbers for books, the number of ISBN numbers issued for e-books over the past 4 years (2021-2024) is shown in the table below.



(Source – NLDSB , 2025)

Chart

NLDSB of Sri Lanka has started issuing ISBN numbers for e-books since the end of 2020. According, to this data, 1124 ISBN numbers have been issued for e-books in 2023 (During the spread of the coronavirus) alone, which is the highest figure in the past 4 years. When analyzing the month-by-month ISBN numbers issued for e-books by the NLDSB of Sri Lanka over the past 4 years, the highest values have been recorded in the 2 months of November (270) and December (380) 2023 compared to the previous period. A detailed understanding of this can be gained from Chart 4.1.2, which contains detailed data. Also, this growth has started from April 2022, during which time the Covid 19 virus spread to its maximum in Sri Lanka and travel restrictions were imposed in the country, and people were unable to obtain printed books. It can be concluded from this data that the demand for e-books increased due to that fact.

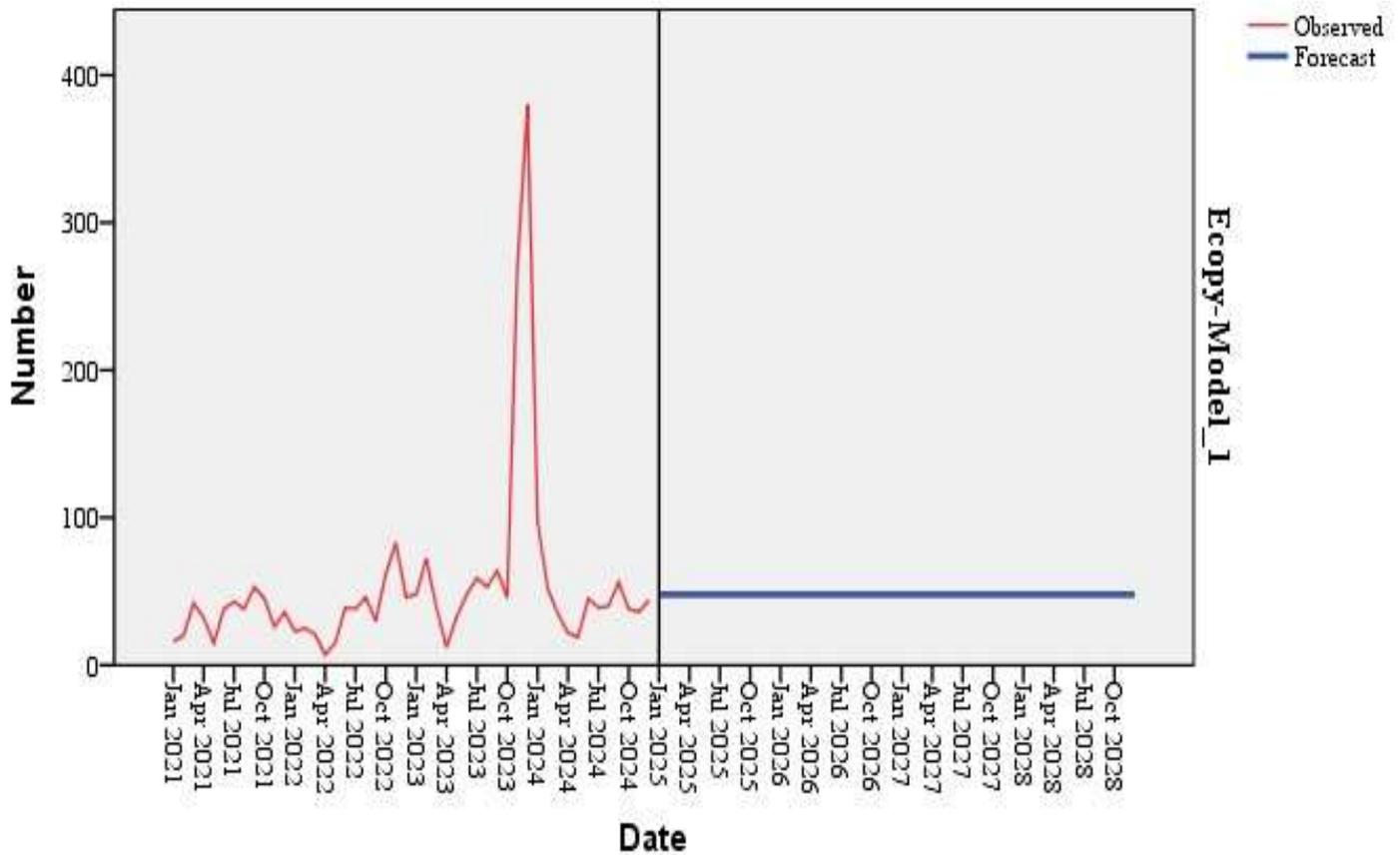


(Source – NLDSB, 2025)

Chart

Predictive analytics

The following results were observed when the ISBN numbers issued by the NLDSB of Sri Lanka from January 2021 to December 2024 were analyzed using SPSS 22 software as Predictive Analytics. When the observed data from January 2021 to December 2024 is projected for the next 3 years (until 2028), it is seen that the data moves forward in a straight line with the same range of values. It is illustrated in Chart 4.2.



(Source – Predictive Data, 2025)

Chart

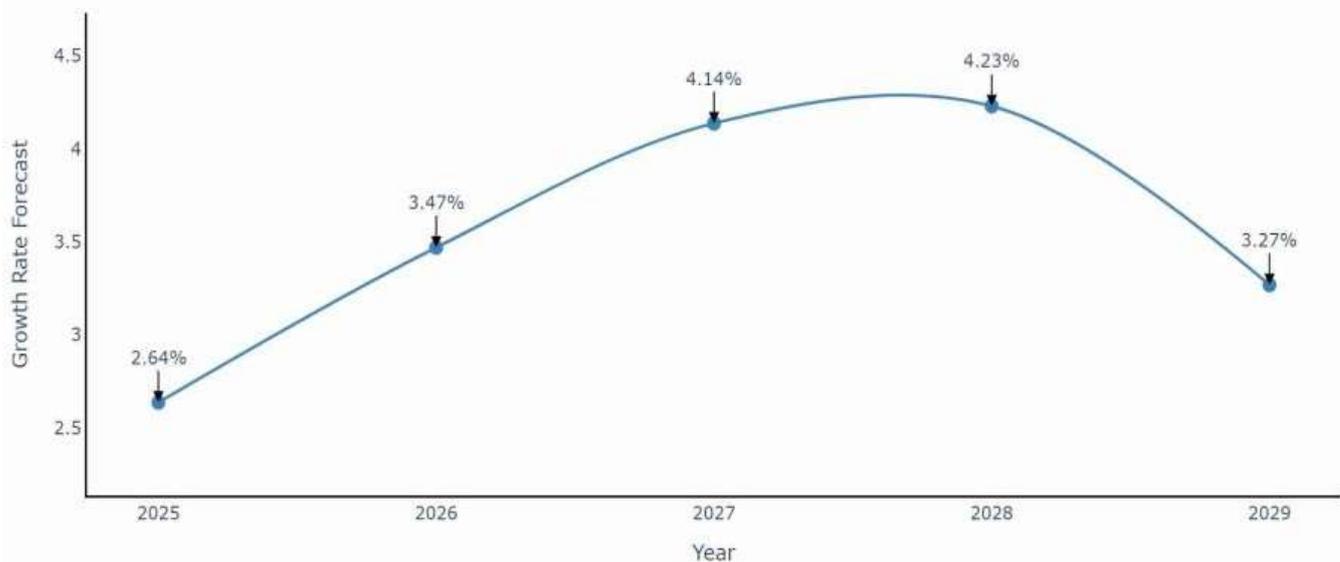
The blue line on stability period forecast section indicates a period of stability in the future. Also, after the late 2023 predicted variable sharp spike and alteration, the rest of the model stretches and maintains a relatively constant and pegged value for the period 2024-2028. This could be stability, which is a good thing for planning and resource allocation.

In the planning model, the flat forecast conceals the fluctuating spike in late 2023. This is assumed to be an "out of the picture" phenomenon, and is thus, a spike that is produced on an arbitrary basis or, perhaps, a onetime occurrence, devoid of any recurring potential. The model doesn't seek to embed this unforeseeable occurrence within the long-range forecast, but has, instead, excluded it to reflect a more stable outlook, thus, the long-term forecast is more reliable. This assists art of planning, as it distinguishes planning conditions from extraordinary conditions. Establishing a constant value in the forecast is probably the less ambitious approach, or a "most likely" scenario for future planning purposes. This forecast is flat in nature and thus, will make budgeting easier and resource allocation more efficient. This forecast eliminates the probability of a more extreme volatile future. All flat line outcomes achieved beyond this point in the forecast could be taken to reflect positive outcomes, thus, a suspicious indication of future potential growth or positive opportunity.

According to research conducted by '6Wresearch' on the Sri Lankan book market in 2025, after forecasting the data obtained, it has been revealed that the Sri Lankan book printing market will experience mixed growth rate

patterns between 2025 and 2029. The growth will accelerate to 4.23% in 2028, from an initial rate of 2.64%, and ease to 3.27% by the end of the period.

Sri Lanka Book Printing Market, Growth Rate Forecast (2025-2029)



Note: The market forecast is derived through analysis of correlations between key macroeconomic factors and market sales trends, followed by predictive modeling to project future sale.

(Source: 6Wresearch, 2025)

Chart

In the Sri Lankan book printing market, one of the major challenges faced is the increase in material and production costs. It is also pointed out that the fluctuating prices of paper, ink and other necessary materials affect the overall production cost for book printing machines. Additionally, this research has shown that limited access to modern printing technology and equipment may hinder the efficiency and quality of book printing services in Sri Lanka, and the industry also faces competition from digital and online platforms that offer alternative options for book publishing and distribution (6Wresearch, 2025).

The findings of this research suggest a potential decline in the printed book industry in Sri Lanka in the coming years. Evidence from the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) data on e-books (4.2 Chart), released by the NLDSB, indicates a steady and consistent increase in the adoption of e-books within the country (6Wresearch, 2025).

Demographic analysis

In this section, first, demographic factors were analyzed after collecting fresh data from 200 respondents.

Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	144	72.0	72.0	72.0
Male	56	28.0	28.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

The total sample surveyed (72%) consisted of Female (n=144) and 28% (n=56) were Male.

Age

Generation		Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Z	Under 18	17	8.5	8.5	8.5
	Y	19-30	81	40.5	40.5	49.0
		31-40	67	33.5	33.5	82.5
	X	41-50	25	12.5	12.5	95.0
	Baby boomers	51-60	6	3.0	3.0	98.0
		60+	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
		Total	200	100.0	100.0	

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

Here, the group between the ages of Under18 years was considered as Generation Z, the age groups 19-30 and 31-40 were considered as Generation Y, the group 41-50 was considered as Generation X, and the group 51-60 and above were considered as Baby boomers (Thalgaspitiya & Hettiarachchi, 2022). Accordingly, in the overall sample, 8.5% (n=17) are under 18 years of age, 40.5% (n=81) are between 19-30, 33.5% (n=67) are between 31-40, 12.5% (n=25) are between 41-50, 3% (n=6) are between 51-60, and n=2% (4) are over 60.

Living Area

Living Area	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Village	83	41.5	41.5	41.5
Urban	117	58.5	58.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

The total sample included both urban and rural populations in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, 58.5% (n=117) of the total sample represents rural populations and 41.5% (n=83) urban populations.

Analysis of Reading Preferences by Generation and Age

Generation	Age		What do you prefer to read			Total
			Printed	eBooks	Audio books	
Z Generation	Under 18	Count	14	2	1	17

		Percentage (%)	7.0%	1.0%	.5%	8.5%
Y Generation	19-30	Count	64	12	5	81
		Percentage (%)	32.0%	6.0%	2.5%	40.5%
	31-40	Count	53	13	1	67
		Percentage (%)	26.5%	6.5%	.5%	33.5%
X Generation	41-50	Count	17	7	1	25
		Percentage (%)	8.5%	3.5%	.5%	12.5%
Baby boomers Generation	51-60	Count	5	1	0	6
		Percentage (%)	2.5%	.5%	.0%	3.0%
	60+	Count	4	0	0	4
		Percentage (%)	2.0%	.0%	.0%	2.0%
Total		Count	157	35	8	200
		Percentage (%)	78.5%	17.5%	4.0%	100.0%

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

The table shows the generational distribution of reading format preferences. The formats considered include printed books, e-books and audiobooks, and the findings show that printed books remain the dominant medium preferred by 78.5% (n=157) of the respondents. E-books are at 17.5% (n=35) and audiobooks are at a marginal level of 4% (n=8). This highlights that despite the emergence of digital formats; the printed book industry still holds a strong position.

Similarly, Generation Z (under 18 years of age) dominates printed books 7% (n=14), with e-books 1% (n=2) and audiobooks 0.5% (n=1) showing limited adoption. Generation Y (19–40) also represents the largest segment of this sample (74% of the total sample, n=148). They say they use 58.5% (n=117) printed books, 12.5% (n=25) ebooks and 3% (n=6) audiobooks. This shows that young adults are relatively more inclined towards e-books than other generations. Generation X (41–50) remains dominant in print books (8.5%, n=17), but 3.5% (n=7) prefer e-books. The Baby Boomers (51+) generation prefers print books, and has very limited engagement with digital formats.

This data suggests a generational shift. Younger generations (Y and Z) show greater openness to e-books than print books. But no less than print books. In contrast, older generations are largely resistant to digital use.

Audiobooks are still in their infancy across all groups, and show minimal penetration in the Sri Lankan context.

Data analysis on awareness of apps for reading books using mobile phones

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	88	44.0	44.0	44.0
	NO	25	12.5	12.5	56.5
	To some extent	87	43.5	43.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

With a population of 200 respondents, the majority of the respondents provided a definite or qualified definite answer for the data analysis given, with 'Yes' representing 44.0% (n=88) and 'somewhat' representing 43.5% (n=87) of the responses. The two options combined represented 87.5% (n=175) of the total responses, showing agreement or general agreement with the topic that was not specified.

However, an absolute 'no' was the least common response, with 12.5% (n=25) of participants selecting it. The data shows a relatively small difference between the 'Yes' and 'somewhat' responses, each having supplied approximately half of all the positive answers. This thus suggests that while most of the sample possesses a strong positive, an approximately equal number of people possess a conditional or more weighted assent.

Data analysis on the most convenient device for reading digital books (non-printed books)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mobile Phone	102	51.0	55.7	55.7
	Tab	42	21.0	23.0	78.7
	Laptop/ Desktop	39	19.5	21.3	100.0
	Total	183	91.5	100.0	
Missing	System	17	8.5		
Total		200	100.0		

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

The frequency distribution of devices used for reading electronic materials is shown in the table. Out of the whole sample, 91.5% responses (n=183) were available, and 8.5% cases (n=17) were treated as not answered. Therefore, 51% (n=102) of the participants reported that mobile phones were the most commonly used platform for reading digital content. Furthermore, it was revealed that 21% (n=42) participants use tablets for reading digital content, and 19.5% (n=39) participants use laptops/desktops. Missing cases 8.5% (n=17) may reflect nonuse of digital platforms for reading or refusal to reveal device preference. The results highlight the pervasive role of mobile phones in digital reading culture within Sri Lanka, with more than half of the participants' valid

responses reporting usage. This suggests that digital reading is heading increasingly towards the mobile-first direction, as in more general trends in mobile media use globally.

Genre-related data analysis that is easier to read using mobile apps

Genre		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Valid	Novel	126	25.2%	69.2%
	Short Story	124	24.8%	68.1%
	Academic/Research	59	11.8%	32.4%
	Poetry/Poems	72	14.4%	39.6%
	School textbooks	35	7.0%	19.2%
	Others	42	8.4%	23.1%
	Children Story Book	42	8.4%	23.1%
Total		500	100.0%	274.7%
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1				

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

This data represents the distribution of participants’ preferences across different e-reading devices. For this, 500 responses were recorded, indicating that respondents could choose more than one category, where the total percentage of cases was more than 100% (274.7%).

The research proves that novels and short stories are the best literary genres to read via e-reading devices (25.2% and 24.8% respectively), with 69.2% (n=126) and 68.1% (n=124) of participants showing a strong preference for these two literary genres, respectively. This shows that narrative-based content is the overwhelming choice among the sample set.

Poetry 14.4% (n=72) and research or academic material 11.8% (n=59) were moderately popular, with 39.6% (n=72) and 32.4% (n=59) of respondents choosing each, respectively. These two categories reflect a similar relationship to creative and academic reading materials. School textbooks 7.0% (n=35) were the least popular, with only 19.2% choosing this category. In addition, children's storybooks and "other" materials each accounted for 8.4% (n=42) of all instances, totaling 23.1% of all instances.

Overall, the findings indicate that there is a broad trend towards recreational reading, particularly short stories and novels, via e-reading devices, with didactic and academic books generating only moderate interest. These findings testify to the power of imaginative literary forms in determining reading patterns and decisions across electronic reading devices.

Data analysis on the reason for reading books on the phone or computer

Data analysis on the reason for reading books on the phone or computer	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Ability to easily carry it anywhere	108	16.8%	59.7%
Ability to use it by changing font sizes (accessibility)	45	7.0%	24.9%
Ability to easily find books	92	14.3%	50.8%
Reduced cost compared to printed books	89	13.8%	49.2%
Ability to perform multiple tasks (reading, taking notes) without switching devices (multifunctionality)	40	6.2%	22.1%
Ability to buy and get books instantly without going to a store or library	60	9.3%	33.1%
Multi-format (PDF, ePubs, audiobooks and interactive books)	54	8.4%	29.8%
Ability to instantly translate definitions or text	40	6.2%	22.1%
No damage or misplacement like printed books	50	7.8%	27.6%
Environmentally friendly because paper is not used	33	5.1%	18.2%
Includes videos, images and interactive content	33	5.1%	18.2%
Total	644	100.0%	355.8%

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

From this data analysis, the primary motivation for reading books on a computer or phone is convenience in being able to carry it anywhere. This was answered by 108 individuals, or 59.7% of the whole sample. This is as provided by established literature that highlights the portability and convenience of e-books as the main advantages over traditional print books. Evidence of easy availability (50.8% of the cases) and being low-cost (49.2% of the cases) have been found to be other key drivers. This is also justified through scholarly studies that have asserted that instant access, having the facility of downloading books at any time, and e-book affordability are key drivers of their use.

The other features revealed in this analysis of data are the ability to buy books directly without going to a store or library 33.1% (n=60), compatibility with different formats for different types of files such as PDF and audiobooks 29.8% (n=54), and protection from physical copies getting lost or damaged 27.6% (n=50). The ability to resize font for accessibility (24.9%).

Analysis of Problems Related to Book Reading Applications in Sri Lanka

Age		What are the problems related to book reading applications used in Sri Lanka					Total
		Price increase	Limited number of books available for reading through apps	Awareness issues difficulty using the app)	Technical Problem requiring internet connection)	Others	
Under 18	Count	7	5	7	9	3	31
	Percentage (%)	2.0%	1.4%	2.0%	2.6%	.9%	9.0%
19-30	Count	29	33	26	40	5	133
	Percentage (%)	8.4%	9.6%	7.5%	11.6%	1.4%	38.6%
31-40	Count	22	39	27	37	4	129
	Percentage (%)	6.4%	11.3%	7.8%	10.7%	1.2%	37.4%
41-50	Count	3	10	8	10	2	33
	Percentage (%)	.9%	2.9%	2.3%	2.9%	.6%	9.6%
51-60	Count	0	2	2	3	0	7
	Percentage (%)	.0%	.6%	.6%	.9%	.0%	2.0%
60+	Count	4	2	2	4	0	12
	Percentage (%)	1.2%	.6%	.6%	1.2%	.0%	3.5%
Total	Count	65	91	72	103	14	345
	Percentage (%)	18.8%	26.4%	20.9%	29.9%	4.1%	100.0%

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

The data examined the issues faced by users of book reading applications in Sri Lanka, categorically divided into age groups, with 345 responses collected. The five key issues were identified: price hikes, books unavailable, awareness or lack of knowledge on how to use applications, technical problems such as requiring a stable internet connection, and other miscellaneous issues. Technical problems were the most prevalent issue that cut across all age groups at 29.9% (n=103), which indicates that many of the users experience problems with app functionality and connectivity that can impact ease of accessibility and overall satisfaction.

The second most recurrent issue was that not many books to select from (26.4%, n=91), which indicates limited options to fulfill readers' diversified needs. Lack of digital literacy or inability to use the applications placed third at 20.9% (n=72), indicating usability and digital literacy issues, especially among older users. Price issues accounted for 18.8% (n=65) of answers, and miscellaneous issues were the smallest group at 4.1% (n=14). Agebased analysis indicates that users below 18 years old most frequently cited technical issues (2.6%), awareness issues (2.0%), and price issues (2.0%). Amongst 19–30-year-olds, the largest group (38.6%), technical problems (11.6%), limited availability (9.6%), awareness difficulties (7.5%), and price increases (8.4%) were all major concerns, indicating widespread concerns related to their extensive use of apps.

Those aged 31–40 (37.4%) similarly cited technical problems (10.7%) and limited content (11.3%) as leading issues, in addition to awareness problems (7.8%) and price problems (6.4%). Aged 41–50 (9.6%) reported the same degree of concern over technical issues (2.9%) as shortage (2.9%), while the 51–60 age group (2.0%) reported fewer, with technical issues (0.9%) being higher. The 60+ (3.5%) reported technical issues (1.2%) and price (1.2%) as their greatest challenges. These findings point out that technical limitations remain the primary issue, content limitations severely restrict user engagement, awareness and usability problems are exaggerated among the youngest and oldest viewers, and cost remains a moderate but important parameter for younger and older readers alike.

An Analysis of User Preferences for Mobile Book Application Enhancements

Necessary Changes in Mobile Book Reading Applications for Enhanced User Experience		Age						Total
		Under 18	19-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	
Ability to use Night Mode when reading	Count	6	32	38	9	2	2	89
	Percentage (%)	1.0%	5.1%	6.0%	1.4%	.3%	.3%	14.1%
User-friendly interface (easier to use)	Count	4	23	32	13	1	0	73
	Percentage (%)	.6%	3.7%	5.1%	2.1%	.2%	.0%	11.6%
Font size can be changed	Count	6	26	31	13	3	4	83
	Percentage (%)	1.0%	4.1%	4.9%	2.1%	.5%	.6%	13.2%
Providing books for free	Count	11	42	26	13	3	4	99
	Percentage (%)	1.7%	6.7%	4.1%	2.1%	.5%	.6%	15.7%
	Count	4	22	25	9	1	2	63

Providing discounts or concessional prices over printed books	Percentage (%)	.6%	3.5%	4.0%	1.4%	.2%	.3%	10.0%
Developing audio book facilities	Count	1	16	21	9	1	0	48
	Percentage (%)	.2%	2.5%	3.3%	1.4%	.2%	.0%	7.6%
Improved search capability	Count	8	29	19	10	2	2	70
	Percentage (%)	1.3%	4.6%	3.0%	1.6%	.3%	.3%	11.1%
Automatic Personalized Recommendations	Count	5	16	12	3	2	0	38
	Percentage (%)	.8%	2.5%	1.9%	.5%	.3%	.0%	6.0%
Being able to develop community participation	Count	2	13	6	2	0	0	23
	Percentage (%)	.3%	2.1%	1.0%	.3%	.0%	.0%	3.7%
Smart AI Reading Assistant	Count	3	15	15	7	3	0	43
	Percentage (%)	.5%	2.4%	2.4%	1.1%	.5%	.0%	6.8%
Total	Count	50	234	225	88	18	14	629
	Percentage (%)	7.9%	37.2%	35.8%	14.0%	2.9%	2.2%	100.0%

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

Based on the data provided, the survey to identify the favored changes in mobile book applications involved 629 participants across a range of age groups. A majority of the participants showed that providing free books was the topmost preference with 99 responses, which equated to 15.7% of the cumulative responses. The 19-30 age group was significantly high in this regard and represented 42 of those responses. Night mode use ability received 89 votes, or 14.1%, and font size adjustability received 83 votes, or 13.2% of the total sample. These three features, thus, appear to be the most critical to improve the reading experience of mobile phone apps.

The other common requests include a user-friendly interface with 11.6% responses (n=73) and improved search function with 11.1% responses (n=70). These features refer to the importance of simple navigation and easy discovery of content for readers.

Less popular but still significant was the recommendation to offer discounts on printed books. It received 63 responses, or 10.0%, of the total sample. There were also 7.6% responses (n=48) for the development of audiobook capability and 6.8% responses (n=43) for smart AI reading buddies. The least popular demand was the ability to enhance community interaction. It received only 23 responses, or 3.7% of the total.

Briefly, the survey clearly points out that users are most interested in cost-saving and easy but essential features for reading convenience and ease. The need for more advanced features, such as AI assistants or social features, is not yet high. The data also shows that age groups 19-30 and 31-40 are the most frequent users of these apps and are also the ones with the most specific opinions about the improvements they would require.

Review of Opinions on Mobile App-Based Publishing

Age		Review of Opinions on Mobile App-Based Publishing					Total
		Extremely like	Like	Holds a neutral opinion	Not liked	Extremely disliked	
Under 18	Count	0	2	10	2	3	17
	Percentage (%)	.0%	1.0%	5.0%	1.0%	1.5%	8.5%
19-30	Count	4	1	46	20	10	81
	Percentage (%)	2.0%	.5%	23.0%	10.0%	5.0%	40.5%
31-40	Count	3	6	40	9	9	67
	Percentage (%)	1.5%	3.0%	20.0%	4.5%	4.5%	33.5%
41-50	Count	2	1	13	5	4	25
	Percentage (%)	1.0%	.5%	6.5%	2.5%	2.0%	12.5%
51-60	Count	1	2	3	0	0	6
	Percentage (%)	.5%	1.0%	1.5%	.0%	.0%	3.0%
60+	Count	0	0	4	0	0	4
	Percentage (%)	.0%	.0%	2.0%	.0%	.0%	2.0%
Total	Count	10	12	116	36	26	200
	Percentage (%)	5.0%	6.0%	58.0%	18.0%	13.0%	100.0%

(Source – Survey Data, 2025)

The majority of the 200 people surveyed (58%) showed a neutral reaction, which suggests that there are still not enough strong likes among most readers or that most readers are most likely not influenced by mobile app-based reading platforms. Few showed strong acceptance, with 5% (n=10) responding that they strongly liked it and 6% reporting they liked it. On the other hand, 18% (n=36) complained they did not like it and 13% (n=26) strongly disliked the shift from print to app-based publishing.

Generation Z (<18) feedback was also split, with the majority being neutral (5%). Some provided feedback of dislike (1%) or strongly disliked (1.5%). Generation Y (19–40) was most receptive as well, with 2% of the 19–30 liking it a lot, 0.5% liking, and 23% neutral in their opinions. The same was true for 31–40, with 4.5% liking or liking a lot, and 20% having neutral opinions. Generation X (41–50) answers fell in a neutral (6.5%) category with some resistance thrown in the form of dislike (2.5%) and extremely dislike (2%). Finally, Baby Boomers (51+) were resistant or cautious, and older generations (51–60 and 60+) were more resistant or cautious, and most of them showed low or moderate acceptance, and almost no respondents exhibited high support.

The chart thus identifies that publication on mobile apps has yet to experience robust uptake among all generations within Sri Lanka. Young adults between 19–40 are most receptive, but even among them, neutrality is dominant, indicating unfamiliarity or lack of clarity. Older generations tend to be more inert, indicating continued cultural loyalty toward books.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the research conducted, the results clearly show that hard copies of books are still the preferred medium of Sri Lankan readers. However, e-books and hard copies are gradually gaining popularity among the youth (Generation Y and Z). This clearly shows the difference in reading interests and preferences between generations. The leading medium for digital reading is mobile phones, which is in line with the early patterns of digital reading globally, followed by tablets and laptops.

The best-selling reading genre among readers through digital media is fiction such as novels and short stories, while there is less convergence in research papers, school textbooks and children's books. This suggests that entertainment and leisure are the main motivations for digital reading. Also, consumers are largely motivated to read e-books mainly due to ease of use, mobility, ready availability and affordability. It was also found that readers are more interested in practical and budget-friendly benefits than new or interactive features. The main issues that hinder digital consumption are technical aspects such as unstable internet connectivity, lack of book availability, ignorance and lack of digital literacy, and rising prices.

Research data shows that when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Sri Lanka (2022–2023), e-book usage accelerated and ISBN registrations increased. However, the acceleration of the corresponding joy did not show, and 58% of readers are hesitant about app-based publishing. To help mitigate these issues, publishers should adopt a hybrid publishing model (both print and digital versions alongside each other). They should also expand local language e-content and implement flexible pricing mechanisms such as discounts, subscriptions or student packs to encourage usage.

These applications should improve usability by adding essential features such as night mode, font size adjustment, offline support and ease of use. Accessibility should be improved, especially for the elderly and new users. Policymakers and organizations such as the NLDSB should improve support by simplifying e-book ISBN services, ensuring copyright protection, providing digitization grants and developing a national repository of ebooks to ensure greater access and credibility of digital works. Ultimately, the long-term future of the publishing industry in Sri Lanka lies in creating a balanced hybrid model where digital is a complement to print media, not a replacement, and whose survival depends on collaboration between publishers, policymakers, technology innovators, and readers.

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