
READING HABITS: LEISURE AND PLEASURE

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Abstract

Illiteracy is one of the biggest problems in the spread of information and knowledge. In India there are two hundred million people consisting of seventy million males and one hundred females. This illiteracy is reducing at annual rate of 1.3% which means it will take around twenty years to clear the back log. This paper explores the actual scenario of the reading habits of Indian citizen. This paper also stresses on to develop English skills and vocabularies and government role, role of public libraries etc, and recommendation becoming more efficient in reading habits

INTRODUCTION

Habit means a thing that one do often and almost without thinking especially that is hard to stop doing. People around the world are involved in various kinds of habits. Enough resources and effort are being spent to avert the people from bad habits at the same time indulge the people towards good habits which may yield good result on the people and as a consequence on the society. Among the worth mentioning habits is reading habit, which every parent and teacher try to inculcate among the young and fresh ones. Reading habits does not mould the fresh minds only it has been prescribed by doctors over the years to cure insomnia, it has converted jail birds into saints. Still there is much more to explore about the reading habits.

THE SCENARIO OF READING HABITS

If we compare the reading habit scenario of today with that of past undoubtedly there has been a tremendous decrease in the reading habits among us. It is difficult to blame any one for this downfall. But some one has to take the responsibility for this down fall. Lifestyle of people which is being highly affected by technology is a major cause for the negligence of reading habits. Ample of entertainment through easily and economically subscribed satellite channels which brings universe of entertainment at the touch of finger, music and television has crushed the reading habits to almost death. The remaining blood has been sucked by web technology/internet /search engines. Search engines bring to the point information at a touch hence saving enough time to spend on other entertainment. The Web technology has spread its web to capture young and old, even business, education, medical treatment in short all spheres of life alike. But it is also universal fact that search engines are not a substitute for reading habits. Though web technology brings universe of information at a single hit but this to the point and up to date information is only short term gain, in this way of collecting information related matters keep on ignoring which is not the case in the reading of documents.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

Illiteracy is one of the biggest problems in the spread of information and knowledge. In India there are two hundred million people consisting of seventy million males and one hundred females. This illiteracy is reducing at annual rate of 1.3% which means it will take around twenty years to clear the back log (Mahleskar 2004). The fate of a nation depends on its citizen.

Education is not the amount of information that is put into ones brain and runs riot there undigested all through the life (Swami Vivekananda). If education is the same as information then libraries are the greatest sages in the world and encyclopaedias are Rishis. In India there are 372 universities, more than 15600 affiliated colleges in which more than 10 million students are pursuing higher education but very little stress is given on cultivation of minds. The syllabus that is taught in our colleges and universities is mainly on various scholars and teaches students the idea of Shakespeare, Darwin, Newton and Einestine but does very little to enrich students minds. Our colleges and universities produce degree holders every year but they scarcely know anything beyond their course of study.

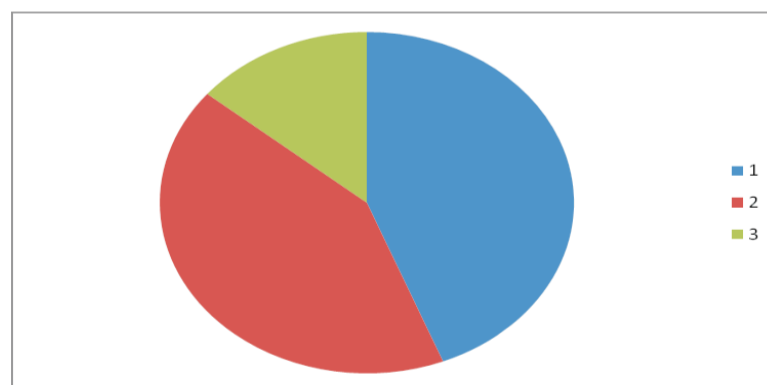
This scenario reflects the negligence of reading habits. If there had been a good reading habit the scenario would have been different.

ARE THE YOUTH ALWAYS TO BLAME?

Youths are the builders of the nations. If we do SWOT analysis than youth are the strength for the progressive and sustainable development. Therefore indulging the youths towards reading habit certainly yield positive result. Dr. APJ Kalam once said there is tremendous explosion of knowledge in all sphere of life so it is essential to learn such knowledge as will help to understand the surrounding society and this would be possible only if we know what kind of capacities we want to have in our youth. These capacities should include research and inquiry, high technology, creativity and innovation entrepreneurial and moral leadership qualities. Therefore, youth are the major resource of the country which should be given right direction through good reading habits from the beginning.

The following few surveys reveals some of the interesting features about Indian youth. To explore the leisure preferences of Indian youth, a leisure index was prepared on the basis of survey.

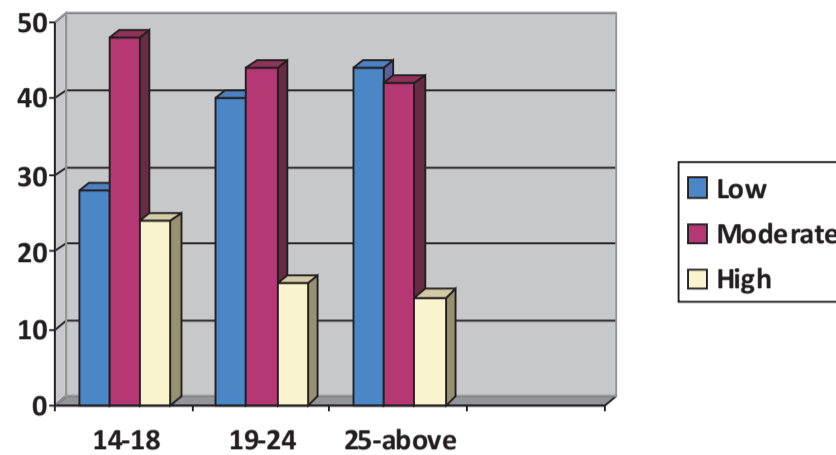
1. The leisure activities included reading books and magazines, listening to music, going out with friends, reading books and magazines playing some sports and watching film and TV.



Leisure time avail by youth

- i. 44% with Low time
- ii. 42% with Moderate Time
- iii. 14% with High Time

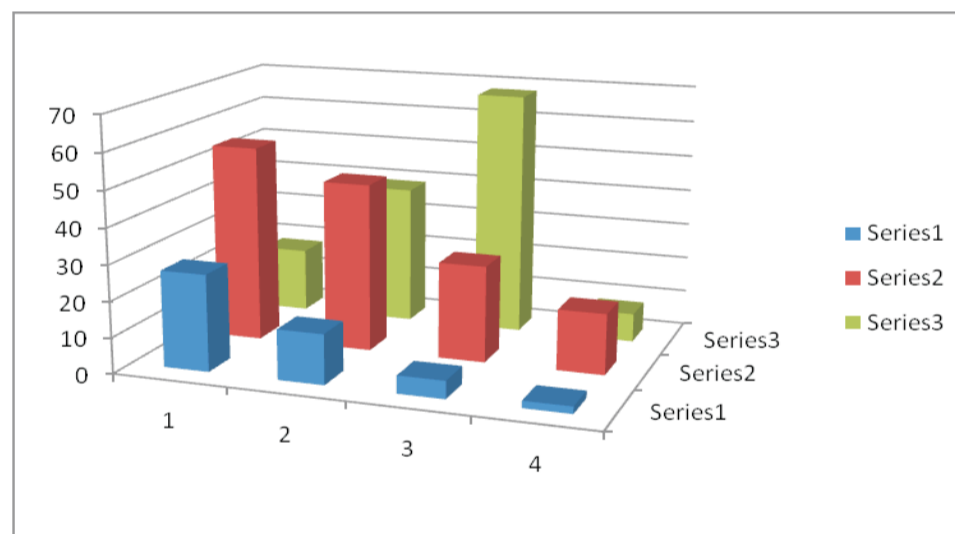
1. Lower the age of youth greater is the propensity to be involved in leisure activities.



Leisure activities according to age

It is clear that the younger the respondent the more likely he/she is to have a schedule that leaves time for leisure pursuit. Hence there is also greater inclination to be involved in leisure activities. With increasing responsibility and focus on professional lives the time avail for leisure pursuits steadily decreases. Thus Libraries can put more emphasis on younger to pursue their leisure activities in a more positive way.

3. Higher the education of youth, greater is the propensity to be involved in leisure activities.

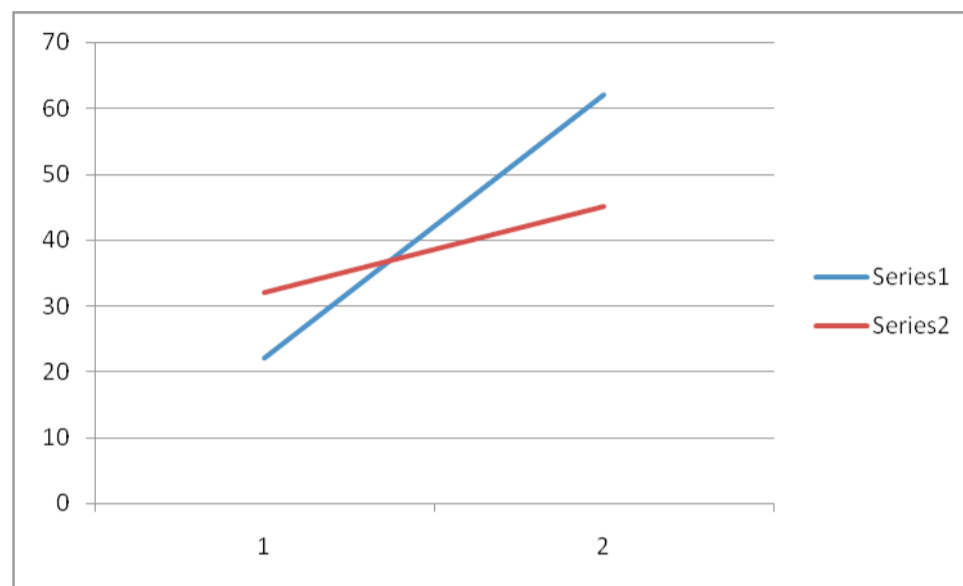


Series1- High, Series2- Moderate, Series3 – Low

1= College and Professionals, 2= Up to Matric, 3= Up to Primary, 4= Illiterate

The quantum of time that the youth are able to devote to leisure activities is also linked to their educational attainment. More than 80% among the illiterates reported low level of participation in leisure activities. Thus % falls as the educational level of the respondents improves. Among the graduates only one of every ten belongs to this category. On the other hand just over 2% of those who are illiterate are in the high band for time spent on leisure activities while among the graduates more than 1/4th have reported that they spend a lot of time on leisure activities.

3. Higher the education, greater the level of aspiration among the youth.



Series1= Graduates, Series2= Illiterates

The above figure shows nearly 1/3rd of illiterate have limited aspirations. Those who have completed college education have relatively higher aspirations.

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

Leisure times of youths are enough and this opportunity can be utilized by attracting them involving into reading habits. If their leisure time can be utilized positively it will yield good result. The collection should reflect the taste of youth. Thus it will be a great measure to enhance the reading habit.

MEASURES

Role of parents

Encourage and affirm: A word of genuine appreciation from parents means the world for their children. Therefore parents must encourage and motivate their children for reading.

Spend time with children: Parents should share their interests, hobbies etc, with their children; children feel more confident, secure and loved when parents spend time with them. Moreover, parents would also be satisfied that their children grow up in a loving and safe environment. Various documents are available on hobbies; interest in these documents will attract young learners towards reading.

Correct them: Children are not perfect and need to be corrected. Hence they should be encouraged to read aloud so that parents can rectify them. Parents should set an example as children tend to follow them. Therefore parents should have reading habits for themselves also.

ROLE OF TEACHERS

Empathy: Teachers should be empathetic to the problems of their students. It is often said that this is an essential quality of a successful teacher, which all children can sense. Only if a teacher is empathetic he/she can appreciate and understand the feelings of the students. Teacher should help the student for developing reading skill which can complement their studies also.

Student centred: Teacher's main concern should be the overall development of the students and not just completion of the syllabus. Hence project work or assignment should involve such phenomenon which compels students to move towards libraries. Teacher should encourage contribution from the student's community and recognise the potentialities and opportunities to display their skill.

Role of professionals: Professionals should be dedicated towards their job helping the users to be good

readers. They should abide by all five laws of library science.

THE WAR OF TALENT

Current thinking about the knowledge economy, global economic competition and organisational change and the view that these changes are putting pressure on organisations to attract, develop and retain truly talented people. The value of human capital has never been greater, given the increasing value of intangible assets such as proprietary networks, brand, intellectual capital and capital. It is important to acquire great talents, since the differential value created by most knowledge workers is enormous.

The war for talent presents a view of economic competition and corporate efficiency based on the assertion that human resources are a decisive facet of competitive advantage and that there are significant differences in the contribution of members of the workforce that are reflected in their remuneration. Talent is often viewed as the sum of a person's abilities: his/her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgements, attitude, character, and drive. It also includes his/her ability to learn and grow. However, talent is a code for the most effective leaders and managers at all levels, who can help drive a company's performance.

Among the bulk of professionals as in the ancient time talent has become the coin of the realm. Professionals who multiply their human talent will prosper; those who do not will struggle. As we know, the bulk of professionals are available in our field, which sometimes leads to exploitation also. Hence innovation, creativity, team work and leadership are always welcome from the professionals. These qualities ultimately attract users towards libraries, consequently increasing the reading habits.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT BODIES

Funding agencies

Infrastructure, neat clean well decorated libraries

Supporting and sufficient staff

Similar support and effort as that of primary education for public libraries may improve reading habits.

Financial resources are one of the important factors for improving the libraries' conditions. Therefore, government should give attention towards the library as they have been giving their best effort for spreading of education via different programmes on primary education. As we know, public libraries are funded and maintained by governments only and they are providing free of cost reading facilities to all its citizens. Therefore, upgradation as well as development of public libraries should be taken care of from time to time. Innovative thinking, new collections meeting the demand of the public may enhance reading habits among the common people.

ENGLISH SKILLS AND SUCCESS

An average college graduate's English language skill is comparable to that of an 8th standard student's and woefully defective and inadequate in grammar and vocabulary. College students, mainly from English medium schools, can't write a proper, error-free essay or presentation on standard subjects. Colleges and other educational institutions just don't have time to improve and correct English language skills of their students.

The popular advice is to improve the communication skills. While prima facie, this sounds sensible, we must learn to differentiate between language and communication skills. The analogy is as follows: while communication skills are like learning to shoot a gun; English language represents the gun and bullets. One can not do the former without having the latter.

While soft skills are very important, it will be irrelevant if students are weak in English. English language refers to fundamental skills like reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. One can not learn to speak English if other related skills are poor.

A person's professional career and its progress can be largely attributable to his/her English language skills. People with sound English knowledge seldom remain at the bottom while there may be

few top executive with poor English skills. It is important to perceive English language skill as a professional enabler and not as a replacement for the mother tongue. It makes good sense for students to be comfortable in English as much as in their mother tongue. A good bilingual graduate (one language being English) has a greater chance of professional success. English language is clear and powerful differentiator which can break all socio-economic cultural and educational barriers. It is now possible to equalise those section of society which remained cut off from standard educational opportunities. The best way to learn good English within a reasonable time and efficiently is to improve form middle school and subsequently prepared for a standardized English test, which test skills of comprehension like reading and listening and expression skill like writing and speaking. Reading habit plays a good role for improving English skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Upgrading the updating of the libraries

Consolidating and expanding opportunities at all levels so that every young who deserve and desire to pursue any field of knowledge/ field gets and opportunity to get in time.

To make the young learn a useful vocation.

To make the young learn what is worth learning so that they can easily pursue for that.

To teach the young how to decide what is to be learnt and also to be kindle interest in them to continue to learn throughout their times.

Providing vivid options/ reading materials to suit different age groups; different taste.

CONCLUSION

The international commission on education for the twenty first century in its report to UNESCO pointed out that "At the dawn of new century the prospects of which evokes both anguish and hope. It is essential that all people with sense of responsibility turn their attention to both the aims and means of education". It is the view of the commission that while education is an on going process of improving knowledge and skills. It is also perhaps primarily an exceptional means of bringing about personal development, building relationships among individuals, groups and nation.

Education must be available to all and it should be one that fits them to the task of earning their livelihood, contribute to the world of knowledge and bring out the best talents that are hidden in them.

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