The effect of eBooks on academic learning of undergraduate students

JAYANT BHASKAR GONDANE

Designation: Asst. Professor

Institute name: Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Management Studies and Research, DeekshaBhoomi, Nagpur

Abstract

Due to the technological advancement and easy accessibility to the electronic display gadgets (like pc, laptop, Smartphone's, tablets, e-Reader etc.) popularity of eBooks enhanced significantly. Today electronic books (eBooks) have become an important part of book reader's life. EBooks are available on almost every subject and vast category of topics.

This research work was conducted in Nagpur City (Maharashtra, India) and is an attempt to identify and compare the usage of eBooks and printed books by undergraduate students for academic purpose. The aim of this study is to find out when, why and how undergraduate students use or not use eBooks for academic purpose. This article reveals the factors that encourages and discourages the undergraduate students for adoption of eBooks and it also reveals type of electronic gadgets mostly used by undergraduate students for reading eBook.

The source of primary data collection were online questionnaire and interview of undergraduate students (n=129) of Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University.

Keywords: eBooks, undergraduate students, academic, electronic gadgets.

Hypothesis

Despite the fact enhanced awareness about technology and easy access to electronic gadgets, eBooks cannot replace the physical book because of its inherent advantage such as tangibility, user friendliness, comparative low eye strain, no requirement of electronic gadgets and electric power. On the other hand, reading of eBook requires special hardware and software, internet connection for downloading the eBook and electricity power. Although students read eBooks for academic / university syllabus they give more preference to physical books.

Research Objectives

1) To investigate that students preference between electronic books and physical books.
2) To investigate the most popular source of undergraduate students for obtaining eBook.
3) To investigate how many students refer electronic books for academic purpose?
4) To investigate what factors that motivate the student to use an eBooks?
5) To investigate in which situation student prefer the eBook most.

6) To investigate which hardware device is most popular amongst students for reading an eBook.
7) To investigate the factors that discourages the students from using an eBook.

Introduction

The Kindle was launched in the US on November 19, 2007, leading a new revolution in digital reading. Amazon made the device available in India in 2012. While the advancement in technology and easy accessibility of electronic readers enhanced the awareness and usage of eBooks, physical book still dominates the Indian book market.

Reading of eBooks can now be done on a computer, laptop, Smartphone, tablet or on an e-Reading device. E-readers allow students to read text on a hand held device. The use of e-readers allows the readers to select text with the touch of a button, to enlarge the fonts size if needed, to watch the animated pictures, and in some circumstances, the book can be read aloud with the help of e-reader.

Today student can't remain dependent on physical book only, because of the affordable and easy accessibility of eBook reader gadgets, advantage associated with the eBooks and unavailability of physical books in library. Even today many students borrow books from college or university library. University syllabus recommends at least 5-6 books per subject and there are many subjects. Students do not afford buying of so many books. So the only option to them is to borrow books from college or university library. But the numbers of physical books are limited and many times students do not able to issue the required book from library because they are already issued by other students. Also from the library point of view, library cannot buy large number of copies of the same book because of storage space problem. This is why libraries are providing eBooks to the student in their premises.

Buying of book or eBook is the last resort to many students. However, students refer eBook for various advantages associated with its use. This research article focuses on various advantages as well as disadvantages of eBooks and the problems associated with the usage of eBooks from student perspective.

Literature Review

Effective eLearning comes from using information communications technology (ICT) to broaden educational opportunity and help students develop the skills they—and their countries—need to thrive in the 21st century. While conclusive, longitudinal studies remain to be done, an emerging body of evidence suggests that eLearning can deliver substantial positive effects on students learning (Intel Corporation, 2012, p. 1)

Hwang et al. (2014) examined the usage patterns and perceptions toward e-books in South Korea. They uncovered the role of the library to be very important, as most users learn about and access e-book through the websites of university libraries.

Previous research work was done on eBooks was to find out usage of eBooks and printed books by the users of all the categories or according to age groups of readers. Some researcher also carried out their research study on impact of eBooks on school going students. Those research works incorporated different categories of eBooks including fiction, self-help, art, science, etc.

However, this research article specifically focuses on usage of eBooks for academic/study purpose by the undergraduate students studying in Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University. This research study incorporated Ist , IInd and IIIrd year students of three streams (computer application, commerce and management) . In this study researcher tried to find out the different causes for using or not using eBooks for academic purpose and usage pattern of eBooks by undergraduate students.

Since this research study is carried out only on undergraduate students the finding may differ if the analogous research study carried out on post graduate student as they are matured enough in comparison to undergraduate students.

Methodology

The self-administered questionnaire for this research study was designed using Google form and sent to undergraduate students via email. Printed questionnaires i.e. schedules are also distributed among the students in college premises whose email address was not available. Additional primary data was collected using face to face interview with undergraduate students.

The primary data was collected from 129 under graduate students of Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University who are studying in the academic year 2017-2018 and the survey lasted for a week.

Data Analysis and Findings

Online questionnaire

Email addresses are collected directly from various undergraduate students for survey purpose in college premises. Some undergraduate students also shared email address of their classmates which helped the researcher to gather sufficient number of email addresses. The self administered questionnaire is designed using Google form. The questionnaire is sent to 218 student on their email address with request to respond it. Exactly 58% (129) students responded to the online questionnaire.

When students asked whether they read study related eBook the researcher got the following figures.

Do you read course/study related eBooks?	
Answer	Number of students
Yes	56

| No | 44 |
| Seldom | 27 |

When student were asked whether they prefer reading physical book or an eBook , the researcher got the following answer.

Do you prefer reading a physical book or an e-book?	
Answer	Number of students
eBook	39
Physical Book	86

When student were asked that which electronic hardware device they prefer for reading eBook, researcher got the surprising answers.

which device you prefer the most for reading eBooks	
Answer	Number of students
Desktop/laptop	27
Smartphone	74
Tablet	8
eRead like Ipad, kindle, Nook etc.	9

When students were asked the source of procuring eBook researcher got following answers.

Do you usually obtain the eBooks from?	
Answer	Number of students
Online purchase	35
Procure from friends	28
Free download from internet.	79

Students were also asked that whether reading of eBook is hard on eyes and the researcher got the following answer

Does reading of eBooks for longer time hurts your eyes when compared to physical book?	
Answers	Number of students
Yes	106
No	22

Students were also asked whether they get less comprehension from eBook when compared to physical book. Following table shows the response

Does reading of eBooks for longer time hurts your eyes when compared to physical book?	
Answers	Number of students
Yes	94
No	23

Analysis and finding of this research work show that while today's students are technological skills and electronic gadgets still they prefer physical books over eBooks for inherent advantages of physical book such as Print books are just easier on your eyes and tangible, less distracting, no requirement of e-Reader, internet connection, special software and electricity.

One of significant finding from this research is that now a day's students are mostly using Smartphone instead of e-book reader like kindle or computer for reading eBooks.

Another important reason for not using eBook by the undergraduate students is that most of the students already engaged with social media such as facebook, instagram, whatsup etc. for considerable amount time from their daily schedule. It also requires screen reading; therefore students avoid reading of eBook which can enhance the stress on their eyes. In addition to this, many students have less comprehension problem when reading an eBook.

However, it is not that these students do not refer eBook. Today's students refer both types of books printed books and eBooks depending upon the circumstances and requirement. Students prefer to read eBook for various advantages such as portability, ease of searching the desired content quickly, facility of altering the font size, ease of copying text, low maintenance cost, the audio function allows the user to hear the text as it reads, number of books can stored in small space, possibility of saving a lot of resources in cell phone or hard disk additional facilities provided by e-Reader such as note, bookmark, highlight, dictionary access while reading eBooks , etc.

Students tend to use eBook for shorter period of time because after a while screen reading is hard on eyes and gives strain. Students used to copy the required data from the eBook to word processor then take printout of it for future reading or reference.

Students prefer eBook when they don't have physical book readily available and when they require the instant access to the require study material.

Most of the student prefers to download free eBooks from internet or they procure it from friends, if the free titles are not available and the printed book is also not available then only students tend to purchase eBooks online.

Conclusion

It is clear that the most serious barrier to the acceptance of ebooks is the dislike of reading from the screen. Whatsup, facebook and other social media usage already augmented the use of screen reading, in such situation student prefer to read printed books to reduce the eye strain.

In addition to this, use of Smartphone for reading eBooks should be considered while designing the eBook as most of the students today prefer reading eBook on Smartphone.

In order to promote the use of eBooks for academic purpose publishers should reduce the cost of eBook significantly as compared to physical book because eBook reading requires additional resources as mentioned above.

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8. E-readers and the effects on students' reading motivation, attitude and comprehension during guided reading by Deanna Long1 and Susan Szabo2*

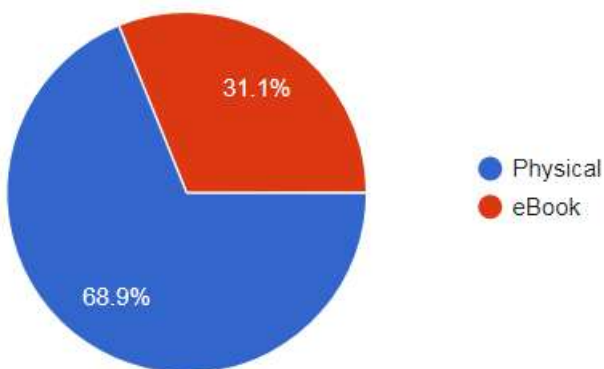# Questionnaire with response

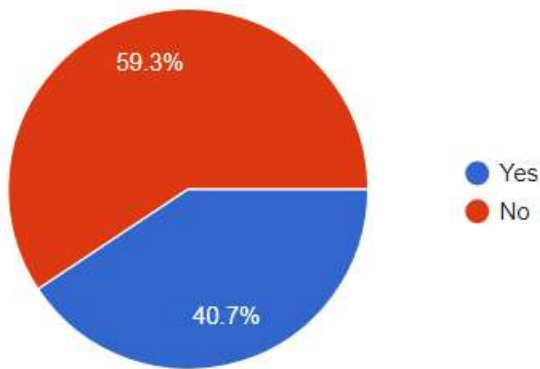Q1. Have you ever used an eBook ?
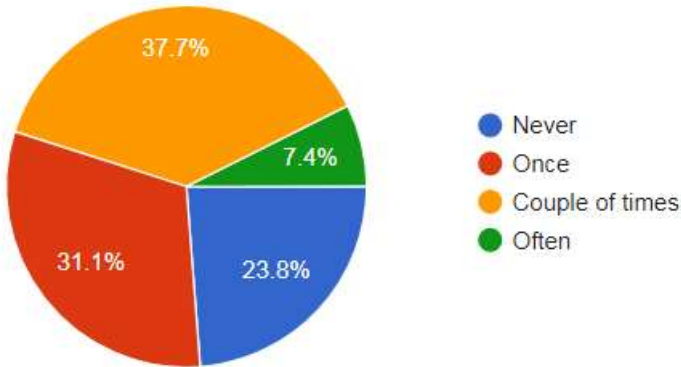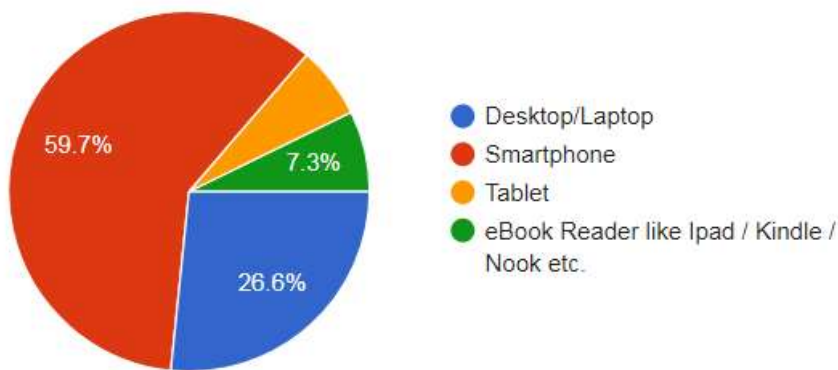

Q2. Do you read course/study related eBooks?
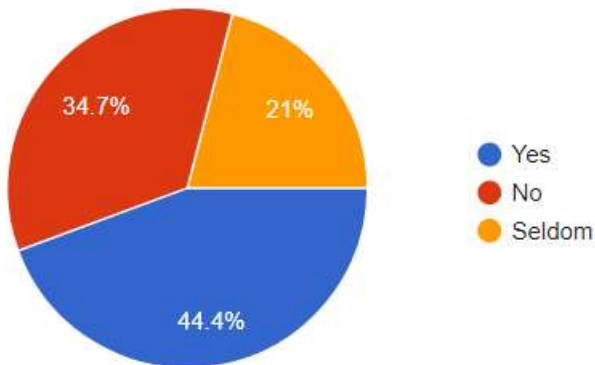
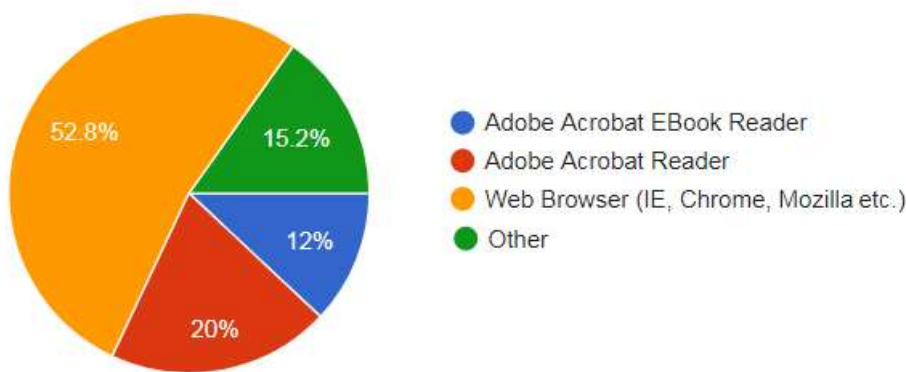Q3. Do you prefer reading a physical book or an e-book?

Q4. Do you know that University library provides access to eBooks?
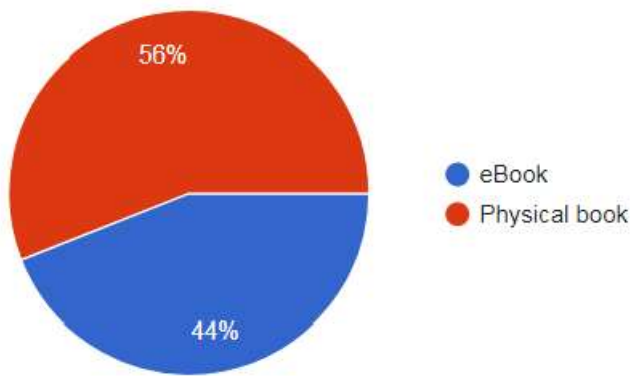
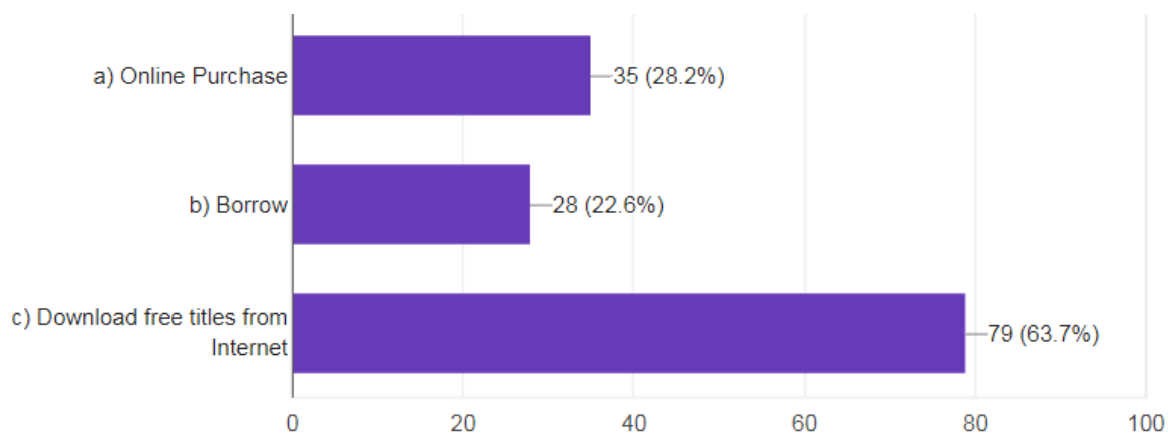Q5. When reading books electronically, which device you prefer to use the most?

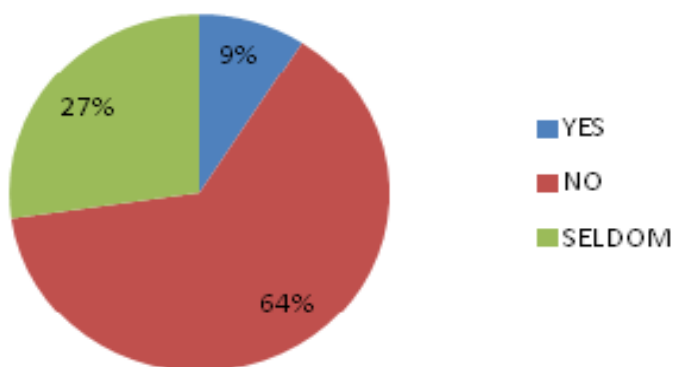Q6. What software do you use for reading eBooks?

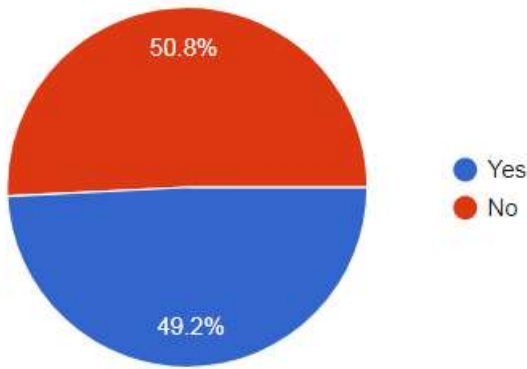Q7. If prices on physical books and eBooks were the same, which would you rather buy?

- eBook
- Physical book

Q8. Where do you usually obtain the eBooks from?

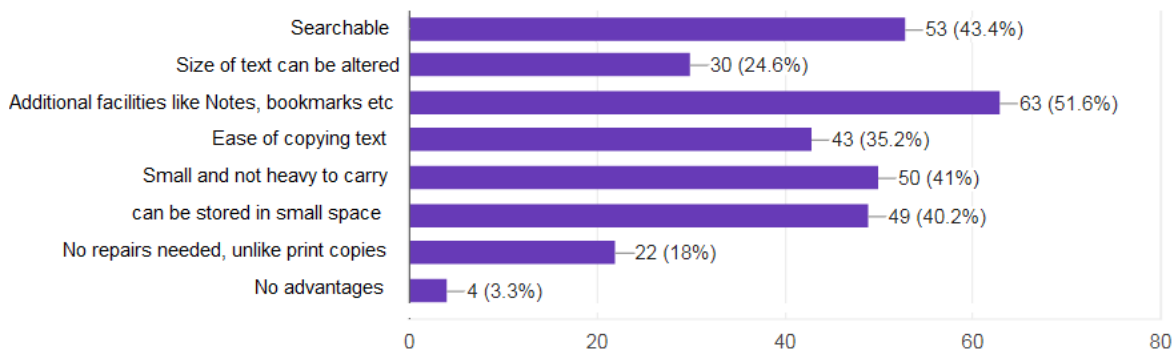Q9. Do you get free ebook titles on internet for the books recommended by university?

- YES
- NO
- SELDOM

Q10. Do you think students should be allowed to use electronic devices (e.g. smartphone) in the classroom?
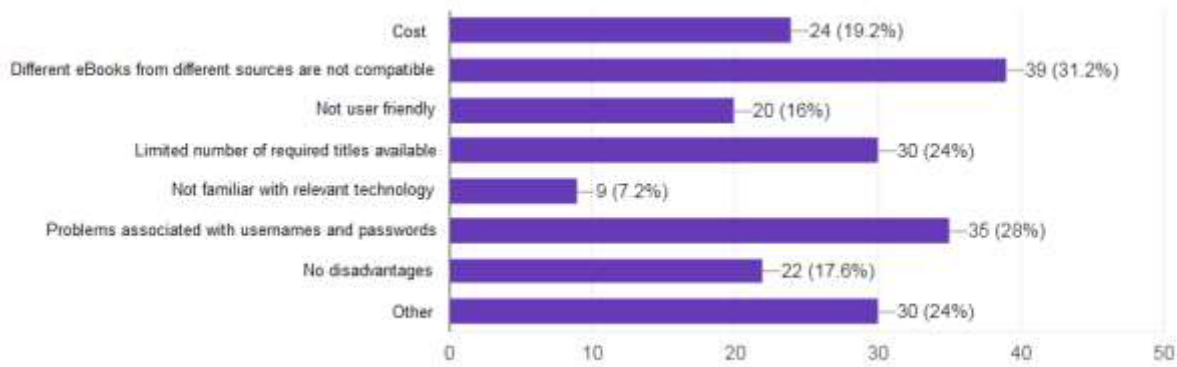

Q11. If you use an electronic device to read books, why do you prefer it over a physical one?
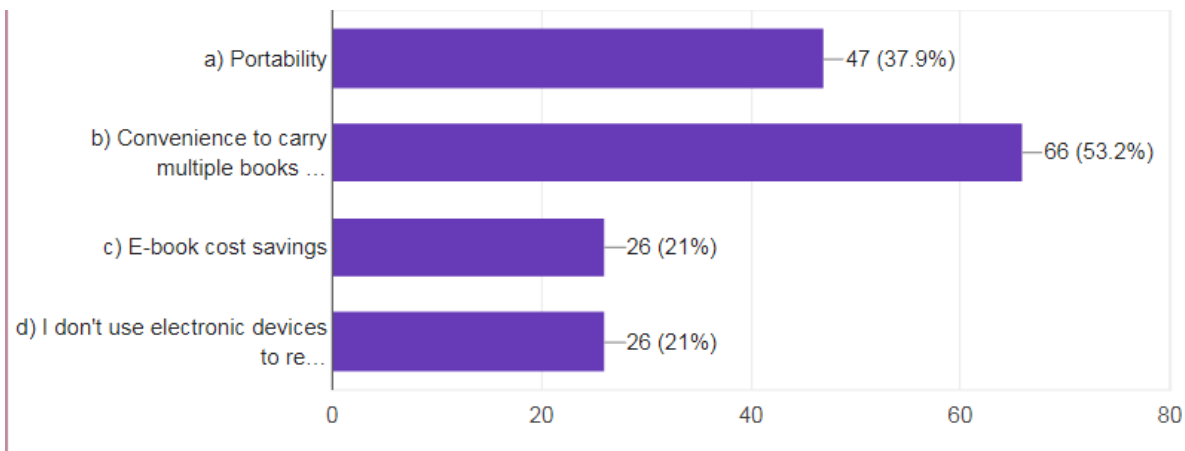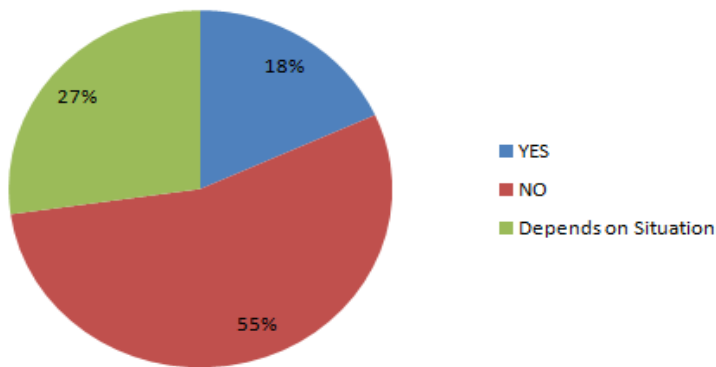

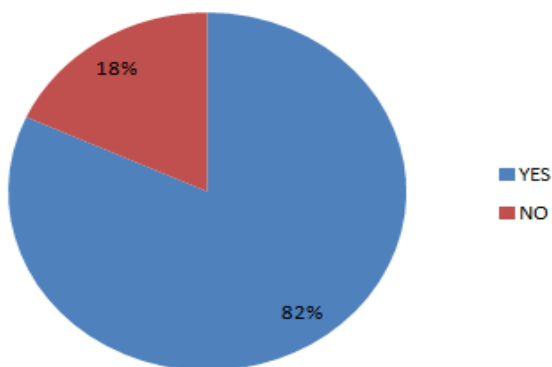Q12. What do you think as the advantages of eBooks?

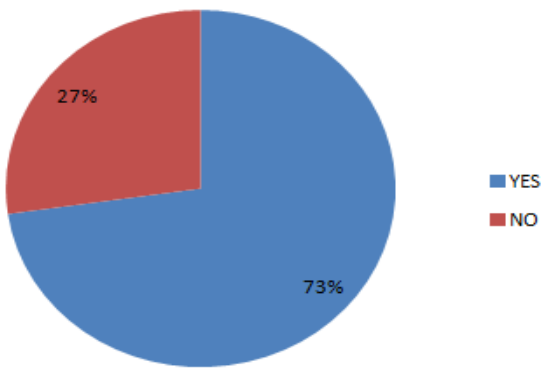
Q13. What do you think as the disadvantages of eBooks?

Q14. when you have to read book for more than couple of hours will you refer eBook ?

Q15. Does reading of eBooks for longer time hurts your eyes when compared to physical book?

Q16.Do you feel that reading of eBooks gives you less comprehension when compared to physical book?

Q17. Do you think that reading eBook is costly affair as it involves cost of eReader and electricity.