

# Forecasting Format: A Study on the Diffusion of E-books and Audiobooks as Alternatives for Print Books

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## ABSTRACT

*Publishing houses have adopted innovations like e-books and audiobooks to cater to the changing needs of their consumers in the digital age. This study applies Everett Rogers' diffusion of innovations model to understand the variables that affect individuals to shift from the traditional print format to e-books and audiobooks. It examines whether there is a relationship between a readers age to their reading preferences. Results indicate that more respondents still prefer print books over e-books and audiobooks, especially those aged 18-24 years old, 25-29 years old, and 57 years and older. In addition, most participants cite their enjoyment of the tactile experience of reading print books and the format's lack of distractions and technological issues as the primary reasons for their preference.*

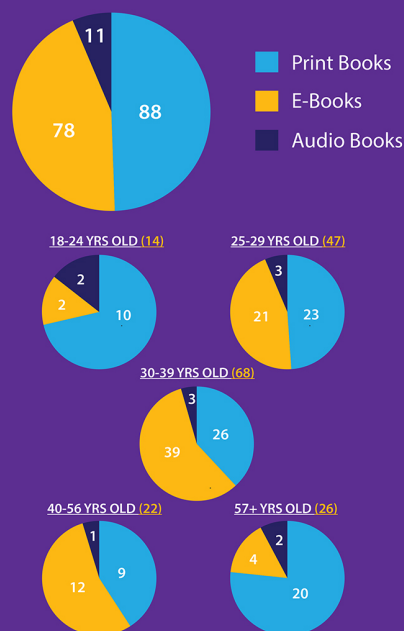
## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there is a greater push for the digitalization of media. This has left the print media industry struggling to keep up, forcing them to adapt quickly in order to save their businesses (Digital Initiative, 2016). Print media companies, specifically publishing houses, have begun to adopt new innovations like e-books and audiobooks, as a means to anticipate upcoming trends in reading. Many media analysts in the early 2010s predicted that digital books would soon completely replace print books. However, this has yet to happen as 65% of U.S. adults use print books, but only 25% use e-books and 20% use audiobooks (Pew Research, 2019). Using Everett M. Rogers' theory on the diffusion of innovations, this research aims to answer the following research questions: What are the variables that affect an individual to shift from print books to e-books or audiobooks as their reading preference? Is there a correlation between an individual's age and their preferred reading format?

## METHOD

Through the use of MTurk, 178 participants in the U.S., who fall within the age groups of 18-24 years old, 25-29 years old, 30-39 years old, 40-56 years old, or 57 years old and older, were asked to participate in a survey. All participants were instructed to complete a questionnaire inquiring about their demographic information and reading preferences for the last 12 months. After indicating whether their preferred reading format were e-books, audiobooks, or print books, participants were given a number of statements regarding a few perceived attributes and advantages of their respective format. Participants were then asked to indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, are neutral, agree, or strongly agree that the listed attribute affected their preference for their chosen format. Descriptive statistics was then used to analyze the data.

### TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 178



## RESULTS

### 49.72% of participants prefer Print Books

(participants aged 18-24 yrs. old / 25-29 yrs. old / 57+ yrs. old)  
Top reasons: enjoyment of tactile experience, no technology issues, less distractions

### 44.07% of participants prefer E-books

(participants aged 30-39 yrs. old / 40-56 yrs. old)  
Top reasons: immediate access after purchase, minimal use of physical storage, portable

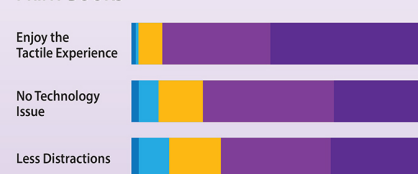
### 6.21% of participants prefer Audiobooks

Top reasons: portable, enjoys having a narrator read to individual, allows individual to multitask

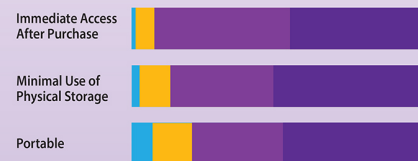
### 32.58% of participants who chose e-books/audiobooks started preferring their format at ages 25-29 years old.

#### TOP 3 REASONS

##### PRINT BOOKS



##### E-BOOKS



##### AUDIOBOOKS



## CONCLUSION

Approximately half of the respondents still prefer to read traditional print books over e-books or audiobooks. Participants cited their enjoyment of the tactile experience of reading a physical book and their minimized interaction with technology as their primary reason for staying with the format. However, it is worth noting that e-books are gaining popularity, especially with working-age individuals. These respondents report that e-books' accessibility and portability were the variables that caused them to shift as they perceived these to be advantaged over print books. With 44.07% of participants preferring e-books over print books, we can say that the innovation has already been adopted by the early majority and may soon be diffused to the late majority. Although recognizing e-books' perceived attributes as being advantages have helped the innovation's rate of adoption, its incompatibility with the common understanding of reading as a focused task that 'disconnects' one from the technological world may hinder its diffusion.



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