CultureCase

Book-buying habits since the arrival of ebooks

This research was conducted by **Paul Crosby** at **Macquarie University, Australia**

Summary

A survey of Australian adults revealed three types of book readers. The largest group, “Technological Adopters”, tend to be younger and are equally happy with traditional printed book formats as newer digital ones. They often ‘rely on critical review scores to make purchasing decisions’. The second group, “Popular Readers”, ‘clearly favour reading popular fiction on traditional paper-based book formats’. Finally, “Avid Readers” are fans of all genres and are prepared to pay more than the other groups for their books.

Technological Adopters make up about 43 per cent of the book-buying public. Popular Readers make up 30 per cent, and Avid Readers the remaining 27 per cent

The study is based on an online survey in which 242 people chose from sets of hypothetical books they might purchase, including which format was their preferred option: hardback book, paperback book, ebook and audiobook. The other characteristics which the study examined were genre (literary fiction, genre fiction, literary non-fiction and general non-fiction), the book’s critical score out of 10, the level of 'Australian content' and its price. The survey also collected demographic information like age and gender.

Ebooks will not eliminate the printed book, at least not straight away

‘There remain two distinct groups of readers (accounting for over half of the market) that are steadfast in their preference for traditional formats’. This segment of the market seem to feel that an ebook is not equal to traditional book formats, at least for certain genres. However, as the Technological Adopters get older and dominate the market they may continue to drive the sales of ebooks. Another finding of note is that 70 per cent of readers are willing to pay a premium to read books that contain a high degree of ‘Australian content’.

Keywords

survey **ebook** **Australia** **literature**

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