

Beyond the Printed Page: Digital Technology and the Changing Experience of Reading English Literature

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Abstract— The movement of English literary reading from printed books to digital screens has altered not only the material form of texts but also the conditions under which readers attend to, interpret, annotate, remember, and emotionally engage with literature. Existing research, however, does not support a simple print-versus-screen hierarchy. Meta-analyses have reported small advantages for paper in some forms of comprehension, particularly under time constraints and with expository texts, while research focused on narrative and literary reading has frequently found no reliable medium effect. Recent empirical work further suggests that device type, scrolling, reading habits, annotation practices, and the social and material setting of reading can shape outcomes. This article develops a mixed-methods framework for examining the changing experience of reading English literature among adult university readers. It integrates medium preference and reading habits, attention and distraction, literary engagement, concentration and pace, digital affordances, interpretation and reflection, practical/material factors, and contextual complementarity. The study proposes a 40-item five-point Likert questionnaire and five open-ended questions, to be administered to approximately 300–400 adult university readers. The article provides the theoretical rationale, literature synthesis, instrument design, sampling and analysis plan, and criteria for interpreting quantitative and qualitative evidence. Because the uploaded material is an IJIRT manuscript template rather than a participant-response dataset, no empirical results are fabricated here. The manuscript therefore establishes a transparent empirical framework that can be completed once genuine responses are supplied.

Index Terms— digital reading, English literature, literary reading, print and screen, reading experience,

reading practices, reader response, ELT, digital humanities, materiality

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading literature is not simply the extraction of information from a verbal text. Literary reading involves sustained attention, imaginative participation, emotional response, interpretation, rereading, comparison, reflection, and the construction of meaning in relation to textual and contextual cues. These activities occur within material environments. A printed novel presents a relatively stable page, a physical sequence, visible spatial cues, and opportunities for handwriting, page marking, and tactile orientation. A digital text, by contrast, may be read on an e-reader, tablet, computer, or smartphone and can offer search, adjustable typography, hyperlinks, dictionaries, annotation systems, copy-and-paste functions, and rapid movement between textual locations. The change of medium therefore changes not necessarily the literary text itself, but the conditions in which readers encounter it.

The contemporary debate about digital reading has often been framed as a contest between print and screen. Such framing is attractive because it produces a clear question whether one medium is better but it risks collapsing several distinct variables into one category. Evidence from reading-comprehension research is mixed. Delgado et al. (2018) reported a small overall advantage for paper, with genre and time frame acting as important moderators. Clinton (2019) likewise found a small screen disadvantage in overall

reading performance, but the difference was not reliable for narrative texts. Schwabe et al. (2022) found no significant overall medium effect for narrative comprehension across 32 studies. A more recent network meta-analysis by Clinton-Lisell and Litzinger (2026) indicates that device type and the need to scroll can matter, while comparisons without scrolling show much smaller differences.

For literary reading, the question is broader than comprehension. Schwabe et al. (2021) experimentally compared reading the beginning of a complex novel in print and on an e-reader and found no significant differences in reading speed, comprehension, or the measured cognitive and emotional experiences. Hakemulder (2024), however, reported an overall pattern linking frequent short-form screen reading with reduced willingness to sustain the cognitive persistence and contemplation required for a longer literary text. Kosch et al. (2023) similarly emphasize that printed and digital books support different reading practices and functions and may therefore be complementary rather than mutually substitutive.

These apparently divergent findings point toward a more precise research problem. The relevant question is not simply whether screens impair reading. It is when, how, and for whom the material and functional characteristics of digital reading alter the experience of literary engagement. A literary reader may prefer print for long, reflective reading while using digital media for portability, accessibility, search, vocabulary support, or rapid discovery. The same reader may use both formats differently depending on genre, purpose, time available, device, prior habits, and the surrounding environment.

The present study therefore approaches digital literary reading as a multidimensional experience. It proposes an empirical framework connecting medium preference and reading habits with attention, distraction, literary engagement, concentration, pace, digital affordances, interpretation, reflection, meaning-making, and practical/material factors. The intended population is adult university readers who encounter English literature in academic, professional, or leisure contexts. The study is designed to contribute to English Literature and ELT by moving beyond a binary print/screen comparison toward a context-sensitive account of reading practices.

II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The digitization of reading has produced several overlapping forms of textual experience. A reader may encounter a complete e-book, a PDF article, a web page, an online archive, a digitized literary edition, a social annotation platform, or a multimedia text. These environments differ in navigational demands and affordances. Consequently, 'digital reading' is not a single treatment. The device, software, text architecture, screen size, scrolling requirements, interactive functions, and reading purpose can all alter the experience.

The materiality of reading is especially important for literature because literary texts are often approached through spatial and temporal practices. Readers locate passages, remember where events occurred on a page, return to earlier chapters, mark significant language, compare passages, and sometimes build a personal archive of marginal notes. Digital systems reproduce some of these practices but also transform them. Searchability can make lexical and thematic retrieval easier; adjustable display can improve accessibility; integrated dictionaries can reduce interruptions caused by vocabulary difficulty; and digital annotation can enable collaborative meaning-making. At the same time, notification-rich devices, rapid switching, scrolling, and the availability of multiple applications can compete for attention.

The study consequently treats medium as an environmental condition rather than a single causal variable. This position is compatible with research showing that media effects vary according to genre, task, device, and reading conditions. It also aligns with reader-response approaches in which meaning emerges through an interaction among text, reader, and context. The proposed empirical framework does not assume that print produces deeper reading or that digital reading produces greater engagement. Instead, it tests whether different affordances and constraints are associated with different self-reported reading behaviours and literary experiences.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. From Print Reading to Digital Reading

The literature on print and digital reading developed initially around educational and informational comprehension, but the field has increasingly

recognized that reading medium is intertwined with reading practice. Delgado et al. (2018) synthesized 54 studies involving 171,055 participants and found a small overall advantage for paper-based comprehension. Importantly, their moderator analyses showed that the advantage was stronger in time-constrained reading and was not consistently present in studies using narrative texts alone. Clinton (2019) similarly synthesized experimentally controlled studies and reported a small overall screen disadvantage, while finding no reliable difference for narrative texts.

These reviews establish two points relevant to literary research. First, a medium effect cannot be interpreted independently of text type. Second, an average effect across heterogeneous studies may conceal conditions in which print and screen are functionally equivalent. Schwabe et al. (2022) sharpened this point through a meta-analysis focused specifically on narrative texts. Across 32 studies and 2,239 participants, the authors found no significant overall difference between screen and paper for narrative comprehension. Their analysis also indicated that multimedia and interactive functions could have positive effects. Thus, digital narrative reading should not be treated as a uniformly degraded version of print reading.

Recent work has extended the comparison from 'screen' as a generic category to specific devices. Clinton-Lisell and Litzinger (2026) synthesized 56 studies with 79 comparisons and examined computers, tablets, e-readers, smartphones, and paper. Their results indicate that the need to scroll is an important condition: when scrolling was not necessary, reliable differences between paper and digital devices were not found in the aggregated comparisons. This finding is particularly important for literary reading, where device and interface characteristics may shape the experience more than the abstract distinction between digital and print.

2. Print Versus Screen: Attention and Concentration

Attention is central to the experience of long-form literature because literary interpretation often requires persistence across sentences, pages, chapters, and narrative developments. Research on screen reading has frequently associated digital environments with skimming, scanning, and fragmented information seeking. The 'shallowing' perspective proposes that repeated exposure to short, discontinuous digital texts

may encourage reading habits that are less compatible with sustained contemplation. Hakemulder (2024) examined this issue directly in relation to literary reading and found that more frequent short-text screen reading was associated with lower inclination to invest cognitive persistence in longer literary reading and deeper contemplation.

However, attention should not be treated as an intrinsic property of a device. Jensen et al. (2024), using eye-tracking alongside comprehension and attitude measures, found evidence of shallower processing on screen in their student sample, but such findings occur within particular age, task, and educational conditions. By contrast, Schwabe et al. (2021) found no significant difference in cognitive or emotional experience when participants read a complex narrative on an e-reader or in print. The contradiction may partly reflect differences in device ecology: an e-reader designed for book reading provides a substantially different attentional environment from a smartphone or general-purpose computer.

Accordingly, the present study separates attention/distraction from concentration/pace. A reader may experience more external distraction while still reporting high concentration during a selected literary task. Conversely, a reader may find digital search and navigation efficient but use these affordances in a way that reduces continuous reading. Treating these constructs separately permits a more nuanced interpretation.

3. Digital Reading and Comprehension

Comprehension remains the most extensively studied outcome in print-screen research. Delgado et al. (2018) reported a small paper advantage; Clinton (2019) found a small screen disadvantage overall; and Schwabe et al. (2022) found no significant medium effect for narrative texts. These findings suggest that genre is a major boundary condition. Informational texts, particularly when read under time constraints, may produce more consistent medium differences than narrative texts.

The 2026 network meta-analysis by Clinton-Lisell and Litzinger adds device-level evidence. It reported stronger paper advantages when scrolling was necessary, whereas no reliable paper-digital differences appeared when scrolling was not necessary. The implication is not that scrolling is universally harmful, but that the physical and

navigational demands of particular interfaces can interact with comprehension. Such evidence reinforces the need to ask readers about their actual devices and practices rather than classifying all digital reading together.

For English Literature and ELT, comprehension is necessary but insufficient. A reader can understand plot and language while experiencing different levels of absorption, emotional involvement, interpretive reflection, or meaningfulness. The present study therefore treats comprehension-related concentration as one part of a broader literary reading experience rather than the sole dependent variable.

4. Digital Reading and Literary Engagement

Literary reading involves dimensions that are difficult to capture through conventional comprehension tests. Schwabe et al. (2021) addressed this limitation by measuring cognitive and emotional experiences alongside comprehension and reading speed. Their controlled experiment with 207 participants reading the beginning of a novel found no significant differences between print and e-reader conditions across the measured experience dimensions. This finding is important because it challenges the assumption that digital literary reading necessarily produces shallower or less emotionally involved reading.

At the same time, Hakemulder (2024) suggests that the effects of digital reading may operate indirectly through reading habits. Rather than showing that a digital device automatically changes the interpretation of a particular literary passage, his work connects habitual short-form screen reading with willingness to sustain longer and more contemplative literary reading. This distinction between immediate medium effects and longer-term reading-practice effects is theoretically important. A reader may have a literary experience on an e-reader that resembles print while still developing broader habits of shorter, faster, more fragmented reading in other digital environments.

Kosch et al. (2023) provide complementary evidence from a mixed empirical program involving a laboratory experiment, focus groups, and a quota-based online survey. They argue that print and digital books are associated with different choices of text, locations, situations, acquisition and storage practices, and quantities read. Their conclusion that the media fulfill different functions supports a contextual model

of literary engagement in which readers choose formats according to situational demands.

5. Emotional And Affective Dimensions

Emotional involvement is a core dimension of literary reading, yet it has received less empirical attention than comprehension. The e-reader experiment by Schwabe et al. (2021) is particularly relevant because it measured emotional experiences rather than assuming them from performance. The absence of significant differences suggests that literary affect cannot be reduced to the physical presence of paper. Readers can become absorbed and emotionally involved with a narrative in digital form.

Nevertheless, material and contextual conditions may influence affect indirectly. A reader who associates print with leisure, privacy, or a dedicated reading environment may experience a different emotional context from a reader using a phone in a multitasking environment. These are not necessarily effects of the textual medium itself. They may arise from the social meanings, routines, and environmental cues attached to the medium. The present study therefore includes practical/material and contextual preference items alongside literary engagement items.

6. Reading Habits And Format Preference

Format preference is itself a meaningful reading behaviour rather than a simple vote for one medium. Schwabe et al. (2023) examined readers in the digital age by distinguishing print readers, digital readers, and readers who use both. Their study considered demographic and motivational differences, reading amounts, genres, situations, and media choices. Such work supports the idea that readers may maintain differentiated media repertoires rather than migrate completely from one format to another.

This perspective is consistent with Kosch et al. (2023), who found complementary functions for print and digital books. Digital formats can facilitate portability, storage, access, and discovery, while print may support particular long-form or situated reading practices. The present instrument therefore asks about overall preference but also measures contextual preference and complementarity. This prevents the analysis from treating a reader who uses both media strategically as inconsistent.

7. Digital Affordances and Annotation

Digital affordances can change the mechanics of reading. Search, adjustable font size, dictionaries, hyperlinks, bookmarking, highlighting, annotation, and collaborative commenting can reduce barriers or support active reading. Yet affordances do not automatically become benefits; their value depends on whether readers use them in ways that support their purposes.

In a university study of 50 readers, the comparison of paper and laptop reading found that students annotated significantly less on laptops than on paper, although neither highlighting nor annotation predicted subsequent memory in either condition (2021 study reported in *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*). This result is useful because it separates interaction frequency from memory outcome. Another line of work on digital social reading in EFL contexts shows that digital annotation can support contextual, social, and linguistic affordances. Solmaz (2021), studying 38 first-year EFL students, found that learners' digital annotations and reflective papers revealed collaborative and linguistic uses of digital social reading.

Recent annotation research also indicates that digital tools can alter students' perceptions of digital reading. Petrucco (2024) reported that an annotation tool positively influenced perceptions of digital reading and comprehension among 112 university students. Such findings suggest that the affordances of digital reading are design-dependent. A plain PDF, a dedicated e-reader, and an interactive social annotation platform should not be treated as equivalent environments.

8. Digital Reading in Second/Foreign-Language Contexts

The ELT dimension introduces additional variables because literary reading in English may involve vocabulary, syntax, cultural knowledge, and inferencing demands that vary with proficiency. Jeon and Yamashita (2014) demonstrated through a meta-analysis that L2 reading comprehension is related to multiple component skills, with vocabulary, grammar, decoding, listening comprehension, and metacognition all contributing to comprehension. Therefore, differences attributed to medium may interact with language proficiency and the availability of digital support.

Zhu et al. (2023/2024) synthesized 21 empirical studies of second- and foreign-language vocabulary learning through digital reading and found substantial positive effects of digital reading for vocabulary outcomes, with moderation by L2 proficiency, test format, and digital resources. These findings show that digital affordances can provide genuine pedagogical value in L2 contexts, especially when readers can access lexical support.

Digital social reading studies further demonstrate that collaborative annotation can facilitate language-related meaning-making. Solmaz (2021) found contextual, social, and linguistic affordances among university EFL learners. Michelson (2023) compared face-to-face and digital social annotated reading among intermediate L2 French learners, highlighting the importance of how digital annotation structures text-centered interaction. For English Literature/ELT research, these findings justify measuring digital affordances separately from attention and literary engagement.

9. Materiality And the Reading Experience

Materiality provides a bridge between cognitive and literary approaches. Mangen (2016) argued that the digitization of literary reading requires reconsideration of how the physical interface shapes literary experience. The page, screen, navigation system, and bodily interaction with a reading object can become part of the conditions through which readers construct meaning.

Research on books on screen reinforces this point. Kosch et al. (2023) emphasize differences in haptics, spatiality, visuality, and materiality and connect these differences with reading practices. Research on scholarly reading similarly shows that printed paper supports embodied practices of marking and overwriting that may not be reproduced in identical ways digitally. The implication is that materiality should not be treated as nostalgia for paper; it is an empirical dimension of reading behaviour.

The present study operationalizes materiality through practical factors such as physical comfort, portability, screen fatigue, accessibility, ease of navigation, availability, and the ability to mark or return to passages. These variables are not treated as inherently positive or negative. They are conditions that may influence format choice and the perceived quality of reading.

10. Complementarity Of Print and Digital Media

The strongest synthesis across the literature is that print and digital reading are increasingly used in combination. The evidence does not support a single universal medium effect across all literary readers, texts, devices, and purposes. Instead, the reading environment appears to be shaped by an interaction among genre, task, device, time pressure, prior habits, digital affordances, and reader characteristics.

This complementarity is visible in the distinction between immediate performance and broader reading practice. A reader may comprehend a novel equally well on paper and on an e-reader while preferring print for annotation or long sessions and digital reading for portability. Conversely, a reader may prefer digital reading because adjustable text and searchability increase accessibility. A mixed-methods design is therefore appropriate because numerical ratings can identify patterns while open-ended responses can explain why readers make particular choices.

IV. CRITICAL SYNTHESIS AND RESEARCH GAP

Three conclusions emerge from the literature. First, medium effects are conditional rather than universal. Meta-analyses differ in their overall estimates because they aggregate heterogeneous genres, devices, tasks, populations, and reading conditions. Second, narrative and literary reading appears less consistently affected than expository reading, making direct transfer from general comprehension studies to English Literature problematic. Third, digital reading should be analyzed through affordances and practices as well as outcomes. Searchability, annotation, portability, accessibility, scrolling, device type, and social reading can change what readers do with texts.

The defensible gap is therefore not an absence of research. Rather, previous studies have often isolated one or more dimensions: comprehension, reading performance, device effects, literary experience, reading habits, annotation, or L2 vocabulary learning. Fewer studies integrate medium preference, attention/distraction, concentration and pace, literary engagement, digital affordances, interpretation/reflection, and material/contextual factors within one empirical framework focused specifically on adult readers of English literature. The proposed study addresses this integrative gap.

The novelty lies in examining contemporary readers perceived literary experience across print and digital environments while connecting medium, reading behaviour, attention, engagement, and meaning-making. The study does not seek to establish a universal winner between print and digital media. Instead, it asks which conditions are associated with different reading experiences and how readers themselves describe the relationship between medium and literary meaning.

V. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem is to determine how movement between printed and digital environments is associated with changes in the lived and perceived experience of reading English literature, especially attention, concentration, engagement, interpretation, reflection, meaning-making, reading habits, and format choice, while accounting for the affordances and constraints of different media.

VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1. How do adult university readers describe their preferences and habits for reading English literature in print and digital formats?
- RQ2. What relationships exist between reading medium, attention/distraction, and concentration/pace during literary reading?
- RQ3. How are digital affordances such as searchability, adjustable display, dictionaries, highlighting, and annotation associated with perceived literary engagement?
- RQ4. How do readers perceive differences in interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making across print and digital environments?
- RQ5. What contextual and material factors influence readers' decisions to use print, digital media, or both?

VII. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine medium preference and reading habits among adult university readers of English literature.
- To investigate perceived attention, distraction, concentration, and reading pace across print and digital environments.

- To examine the relationship between digital affordances and literary engagement.
- To investigate readers' perceptions of interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making across media.
- To identify practical, material, and contextual factors associated with print, digital, and complementary reading choices.

VIII. HYPOTHESES

Because the study is primarily exploratory and mixed-methods, hypotheses should be limited to relationships that can be justified by the final dataset. The following hypotheses are proposed provisionally and should be tested only after inspection of scale reliability, distributions, and the final study design:

- H1: Digital-affordance scores are positively associated with perceived literary engagement.
- H2: Attention/distraction scores are significantly associated with concentration/pace scores.
- H3: Readers' format preference is associated with differences in perceived interpretation/reflection scores.
- H4: Reading frequency, device use, and educational level are associated with selected construct scores, where assumptions and group sizes support inferential testing.

These hypotheses are non-causal. A significant association would not demonstrate that a medium or affordance causes a change in literary experience.

IX. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study integrates four complementary perspectives. First, a medium-affordance perspective treats print and digital environments as configurations of possibilities and constraints rather than inherently good or bad formats. Second, a reader-response perspective treats literary meaning as emerging through interaction among reader, text, and context. Third, research on attention and cognitive persistence provides a basis for examining sustained engagement, distraction, and the demands of long-form reading. Fourth, a materiality perspective recognizes that the physical and technological properties of reading objects participate in reading practices.

The resulting conceptual model proposes that medium and context influence reading through two interacting pathways. The first is an affordance pathway involving searchability, annotation, display adjustment, lexical support, portability, and accessibility. The second is a constraint pathway involving distraction, scrolling, screen fatigue, reduced spatial cues, and competing device functions. These pathways are expected to interact with prior reading habits, genre, purpose, language proficiency, and reading situation. Literary engagement, concentration, interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making are treated as related but distinguishable outcomes.

Conceptually: Reading Medium + Context → Affordances/Constraints + Reading Practices → Attention/Concentration → Literary Engagement → Interpretation/Reflection/Meaning-making, with prior habits, genre, purpose, and L2 context functioning as potential moderators. The model is deliberately non-deterministic: the same digital affordance may support one reader and distract another depending on purpose and context.

X. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

A convergent mixed-methods design is proposed. The quantitative strand uses a structured questionnaire to measure eight constructs, while the qualitative strand uses five open-ended questions to explore readers' explanations of their choices and experiences. Quantitative and qualitative findings will be interpreted together rather than treating either strand as sufficient on its own.

B. Population and Sampling

The target population comprises adult university readers who read English literature. The proposed sample is approximately 300–400 participants drawn from undergraduate students, postgraduate students, research scholars, teachers/faculty, and other adult literary readers. A purposive or stratified convenience strategy may be used where institutional access is available, with efforts to obtain representation across educational levels and reading practices.

C. Sample-Size Justification

A target of 300–400 participants are suitable for a multidimensional survey with approximately 40

substantive items and for estimating internal consistency and construct-level relationships with reasonable precision. Final sample-size adequacy should nevertheless be assessed using the actual number of valid cases, anticipated effect sizes, number of predictors, missingness, and the inferential tests ultimately selected. If factor analysis is later proposed, adequacy should be evaluated separately using communalities, item distributions, KMO, and the intended factor model.

D. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- Inclusion: adults aged 18 years or above; current university students, research scholars, teachers/faculty, or adult literary readers; sufficient English proficiency to understand the questionnaire; and experience reading English literary texts in at least one format.
- Exclusion: respondents below 18; responses without consent; submissions with extensive missingness or evidence of non-engagement; and duplicate submissions identified through documented data-cleaning procedures.

E. Research Instrument

The questionnaire contains Section A demographic/background questions, followed by eight five-item Likert constructs (40 substantive items) and five open-ended questions. Responses to the Likert items use a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

F. Questionnaire Development

Items were designed to be concise, neutral, and specific to English literary reading. The constructs were intentionally separated to reduce conceptual overlap. Medium preference and habits measure behavioural choice; attention/distraction measures perceived attentional interference; literary engagement measures absorption and involvement; concentration/pace measures sustained reading; digital affordances measure functional benefits; interpretation/reflection measures higher-order literary response; practical/material factors measure physical and situational conditions; and complementarity measures context-dependent use of both formats.

G. Validity

Content validity should be established through expert review by specialists in English Literature, ELT, reading research, and educational technology. Experts should judge relevance, clarity, construct fit, and potential ambiguity. A content-validity table should document each expert's rating and any item revisions. If the final sample and measurement model justify it, exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis may provide additional evidence of construct validity.

H. Reliability

Internal consistency should be assessed using Cronbach's alpha for each multi-item construct, supplemented where appropriate by item-total correlations and examination of alpha if an item is deleted. Alpha should not be treated as proof of unidimensionality or validity. Items should be retained or removed on substantive and psychometric grounds rather than solely to maximize alpha.

I. Ethical Considerations

Participation should be voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants should be told the study purpose, expected time, confidentiality arrangements, data-use procedures, and their right to discontinue before submission. No fabricated consent, fieldwork, or participant information should be reported. Institutional ethics requirements should be satisfied before recruitment, and the final manuscript should report the actual approval or exemption status and data-collection procedure.

J. Data-Collection Procedure

The final questionnaire may be administered through an institutional or approved online survey platform or in an equivalent controlled format. Recruitment should explain eligibility and the voluntary nature of participation. The researcher should preserve the raw export, record the date range and recruitment channels, and document any exclusions. The final manuscript must report the actual number of invitations where known, the number of valid responses, and the actual data-collection period rather than estimated figures.

K. Data Analysis

The analysis should begin with data screening: variable names, coding, response ranges, missing values, duplicates, invalid entries, and demographic

distributions. Descriptive statistics should include frequencies and percentages for categorical variables and means, standard deviations, and ranges for scale items and construct scores. Reliability and item-total statistics should be calculated for each construct.

Inferential analysis should be selected after inspection of the actual dataset. Pearson or Spearman correlations may be used depending on distribution and measurement assumptions. Independent-samples comparisons or ANOVA may be used for sufficiently sized and appropriately defined groups. Paired comparisons should be used only if the data contain matched print/digital ratings from the same participants and the scale structure supports such analysis. Effect sizes and confidence intervals should accompany inferential tests where appropriate. Assumption checks should include distributional inspection, variance checks, and influential/outlier assessment relevant to each test.

Open-ended responses should be analyzed thematically. The process should include familiarization, initial coding, category development, theme construction, review, naming, and reporting. Frequencies may be reported descriptively, but qualitative themes should not be reduced to counts. Quotations should be used only when they are genuine participant responses and are reported in accordance with consent and confidentiality procedures.

XI. RESULTS

No Empirical Results Are Reported In This Version. The uploaded file supplied with the request is an IJIRT manuscript-format template containing formatting instructions and example material; it does not contain the participant-response dataset described in the request. Accordingly, no participant count, demographic percentage, mean, standard deviation, reliability coefficient, correlation, test statistic, p-value, effect size, confidence interval, or qualitative theme is presented as a genuine finding.

Once the genuine Excel/CSV response dataset is supplied, this section should be replaced with the verified statistical output. The final Results section should report the actual sample size and exclusions, demographic profile, item distributions, reliability, construct scores, justified inferential tests, effect sizes and confidence intervals, followed by a transparent thematic analysis of the open-ended responses. If any

simulated dataset is ever used for demonstration, it must be labelled 'SIMULATED/ILLUSTRATIVE DATA NOT REAL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS' and must not be retained in a submission manuscript.

XII. DISCUSSION

Without genuine participant data, a substantive discussion of findings would be methodologically inappropriate. The discussion should be written after the dataset has been analyzed and should map each empirical finding to the corresponding research question and theoretical construct. In particular, the final discussion should distinguish between preference and performance, between immediate reading experience and habitual reading practice, and between digital affordances and digital distractions.

The literature suggests several interpretive possibilities that can guide the eventual discussion without being presented as findings of the present study. If participants report stronger concentration in print, the result should be interpreted in relation to research on time pressure, scrolling, material cues, and long-form reading. If no meaningful medium difference emerges, that would be consistent with narrative-focused research showing medium equivalence under some conditions. If digital affordances predict engagement, the result could be interpreted alongside work on annotation, lexical support, accessibility, and social reading. Any such interpretation must remain conditional until supported by the actual dataset.

The final discussion should also avoid treating English literary reading as equivalent to general reading comprehension. Literary experience includes absorption, emotion, interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making, and these dimensions may respond differently to medium and context. Similarly, ELT implications should recognize that digital tools can provide linguistic support while also introducing new attentional demands. The value of digital reading may therefore depend on how readers and teachers structure the environment.

XIII. IMPLICATIONS

The study has potential implications for English Literature teaching, ELT, digital humanities, library provision, and reader education. A context-sensitive

evidence base could help instructors decide when to provide print, digital, or dual-format literary texts. Digital versions may be particularly useful where accessibility, portability, search, vocabulary support, or collaborative annotation are important. Print may remain valuable where sustained, distraction-minimized reading and physical annotation are preferred. The empirical results should determine which of these possibilities receive stronger emphasis. For researchers, the study demonstrates the value of separating medium from device, affordance, reading purpose, and reader practice. For teachers, it suggests that digital literacy should include not only navigation and tool use but also attention management, annotation strategy, and reflective reading. For libraries and institutions, the findings may inform decisions about format availability without assuming that one format can replace the other.

XIV. LIMITATIONS

- The proposed study relies substantially on self-report, which may not perfectly represent observed reading behaviour.
- A cross-sectional survey cannot establish causal effects of digital technology on literary experience.
- Convenience or purposive sampling may limit generalizability beyond the participating population.
- The broad category of digital reading contains heterogeneous devices and interfaces; subgroup sizes may limit detailed device comparisons.
- English literary reading varies by genre, difficulty, proficiency, and purpose, and a questionnaire cannot capture every dimension of literary experience.
- Open-ended thematic analysis is interpretive and requires transparent coding procedures and reflexive documentation.

XV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should combine self-report with behavioural measures such as reading time, navigation logs, eye-tracking, or comprehension tasks where feasible. Experimental studies could compare matched literary passages across print, e-reader, tablet, and smartphone conditions while controlling for scrolling and display. Longitudinal research could examine whether habitual digital reading is associated with

changes in willingness to sustain long-form literary reading. L2-focused research could additionally examine proficiency, vocabulary support, inferencing, and annotation behaviour. Mixed-methods studies that combine reader diaries, interviews, and digital trace data could clarify how medium preferences develop over time.

Future work should also distinguish literary genres and reading purposes. A poem, a novel, a critical essay, and a digital hypertext do not impose identical cognitive or interpretive demands. Similarly, leisure reading and examination reading may recruit different attentional strategies. A richer evidence base will therefore come from models that treat reading medium as one element within a larger ecology of literary practice.

XVI. CONCLUSION

The central question of this study is what happens to the experience of reading English literature when literary text moves from the printed page to the digital screen. Existing scholarship does not justify a simple answer in which one medium is universally superior. Research on comprehension shows small and conditional medium effects, while studies of narrative and literary reading often report equivalence across print and digital formats. At the same time, digital reading can alter reading practices through scrolling, device ecology, searchability, annotation, portability, lexical support, and accessibility.

The proposed study responds to this complexity by examining literary reading as a multidimensional, situated experience. Its contribution is an integrated empirical framework connecting medium preference, reading habits, attention, concentration, literary engagement, digital affordances, interpretation, reflection, meaning-making, and material/contextual factors. The framework is deliberately non-binary: print and digital environments may compete for some purposes while complementing one another for others. No empirical result is claimed in this manuscript because the supplied file is a formatting template rather than a participant-response dataset. The next empirical stage is therefore essential. Once genuine responses are supplied and analyzed transparently, the study can determine which of the relationships proposed here are supported in the target population and under what conditions. In this way, the research can contribute to a more precise understanding of

contemporary literary reading without assuming that technological change either diminishes or improves literature in itself.

XVII. APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE

Study title: Beyond the Printed Page: Digital Technology and the Changing Experience of Reading English Literature

Instructions: Please answer the following questions based on your experience of reading English literary texts. There are no right or wrong answers. For Sections B–I, select one response for each statement: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

Section A PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND

Age group: 18–24 / 25–34 / 35–44 / 45–54 / 55+

Gender: Woman / Man / Non-binary or another identity / Prefer not to say

Educational level: Undergraduate / Postgraduate / Research scholar / Faculty-teacher / Other adult reader

Discipline: English/Humanities / Social Sciences / STEM / Education / Other

How often do you read English literature? Daily / Several times a week / Weekly / Monthly / Less often

Approximate weekly time spent reading English literature: <1 hour / 1–3 / 4–6 / 7–10 / >10 hours

Main digital reading device: Smartphone / Tablet / Laptop/Desktop / E-reader / Other

Preferred literary form: Novel / Short story / Poetry / Drama / Essays/criticism / Mixed

Overall format preference: Mostly print / Mostly digital / Both about equally / Depends on context

Section B Medium Preference and Reading Habits

1. I often choose print when I plan to read English literature for an extended period. [1 2 3 4 5]

2. I often choose a digital format when it is the most convenient way to access English literature. [1 2 3 4 5]

3. I regularly switch between print and digital formats when reading English literature. [1 2 3 4 5]

4. My choice of reading format depends on the purpose for which I am reading. [1 2 3 4 5]

5. I have developed stable personal habits for deciding when to read literature in print or digitally. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section C Attention and Distraction

1. I can maintain my attention while reading English literature on a digital device. [1 2 3 4 5]

2. Notifications or other digital activities sometimes interrupt my literary reading. [1 2 3 4 5]

3. I am able to ignore unrelated digital content while reading literature. [1 2 3 4 5]

4. I find it easier to remain focused on a long literary text when using print. [1 2 3 4 5]

5. My attention changes when I move between print and digital literary reading. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section D Literary Engagement

1. I become absorbed in an English literary text when I read it digitally. [1 2 3 4 5]

2. I become emotionally involved in literary texts regardless of whether I read them in print or digitally. [1 2 3 4 5]

3. The reading format can influence how strongly I feel connected to a literary text. [1 2 3 4 5]

4. I can sustain interest in a literary work when reading it on a screen. [1 2 3 4 5]

5. I feel that both print and digital formats can support meaningful literary engagement. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section E Concentration, Pace and Depth

1. I read literary texts slowly enough to notice important details when reading digitally. [1 2 3 4 5]

2. I tend to read more quickly when I read literature on a digital device. [1 2 3 4 5]

3. I can concentrate on complex literary passages when reading on a screen. [1 2 3 4 5]

4. I am willing to reread difficult literary passages in digital format. [1 2 3 4 5]

5. I feel able to engage deeply with long literary texts in both print and digital formats. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section F Digital Affordances and Annotation

1. Search functions help me locate words, passages, or ideas in digital literary texts. [1 2 3 4 5]

2. Adjustable text size or display settings can make digital literary reading easier for me. [1 2 3 4 5]

3. Digital dictionaries or language-support tools help me understand literary texts. [1 2 3 4 5]

4. I use highlighting, bookmarks, or digital annotations when reading literature. [1 2 3 4 5]

5. Digital tools can help me connect different passages or ideas within a literary text. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section G Interpretation, Reflection and Meaning-Making

1. I reflect on the meaning of a literary text while reading it digitally. [1 2 3 4 5]
2. I can form detailed interpretations of literary passages on a screen. [1 2 3 4 5]
3. I return to earlier passages when developing an interpretation of a literary text. [1 2 3 4 5]
4. The reading format can influence how much I reflect on a literary work. [1 2 3 4 5]
5. I can develop personal or critical meanings from literary texts in both formats. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section H Practical and Material Factors

1. Portability influences my choice of format for reading English literature. [1 2 3 4 5]
2. Physical comfort influences my choice between print and digital reading. [1 2 3 4 5]
3. Screen fatigue can affect how long I want to read literature digitally. [1 2 3 4 5]
4. The physical features of a printed book can influence my reading experience. [1 2 3 4 5]
5. Accessibility features available in digital texts can support my literary reading. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section I Contextual Preference and Complementarity

1. I prefer print for some literary reading situations and digital formats for others. [1 2 3 4 5]
2. I choose digital reading when immediate access to a text is important. [1 2 3 4 5]
3. I choose print when I want a reading environment with fewer digital distractions. [1 2 3 4 5]
4. I consider print and digital reading to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive. [1 2 3 4 5]
5. My preferred format changes according to the text, place, time, or purpose of reading. [1 2 3 4 5]

Section J Open-Ended Questions

1. What do you enjoy most about reading English literature in print?
2. What do you enjoy most about reading English literature digitally?
3. Describe any situation in which the reading format affected your attention or concentration.
4. How do print or digital features influence your interpretation, reflection, or understanding of a literary text?

5. When do you prefer print, when do you prefer digital reading, and when do you use both?

Appendix B. Expert-Validation Form

Experts are requested to evaluate each questionnaire item for relevance, clarity, neutrality, and alignment with the intended construct. Suggested rating: 1 = not relevant, 2 = somewhat relevant, 3 = quite relevant, 4 = highly relevant. Please provide comments and recommended revisions. Record expert discipline, designation, and experience separately from participant data.

Appendix C. Pilot-Study Instructions

Pilot the instrument with a small group resembling the target population but separate from the final sample. Assess completion time, ambiguous wording, missing responses, ceiling/floor effects, and participant understanding. Revise only after documenting the reason for each change. Recalculate reliability after the pilot and again for the final dataset.

Appendix D. Participant Information and Consent

Participant Information: You are invited to participate in a research study examining how adults experience reading English literature in print and digital formats. Participation is voluntary. The questionnaire asks about reading habits, attention, engagement, digital features, interpretation, and practical factors and includes open-ended questions. You may stop before submitting your response. Data will be used for academic research and reported in aggregate or anonymized form.

Consent statement: By selecting 'I agree' and continuing, I confirm that I am 18 years or older, have read the information above, understand the voluntary nature of participation, and consent to the use of my anonymized responses for the stated research purposes.

Appendix E. Recruitment Message

You are invited to participate in a university research study on how adults experience reading English literature in print and digital formats. If you are 18 or older and read English literature, you may be eligible. The questionnaire takes approximately 10–15 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be treated confidentially. Please participate only if you are comfortable providing informed consent.

Appendix F. Coding and Data-Management Specification

Suggested variable names: AGEGRP, GENDER, EDU, DISC, READFREQ, READTIME, DEVICE, GENRE, FORMPREF; B1–B5; C1–C5; D1–D5; E1–E5; F1–F5; G1–G5; H1–H5; I1–I5; and J1–J5 for open-ended responses. Likert value labels: 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree. Missing values should remain system-missing where possible; if a fixed code is required for an analysis system, use a documented value such as 99 and exclude it from substantive calculations. No reverse-coded items are currently required because the statements are written directionally within their constructs. Any future reverse coding must be documented before scale construction.

Data-cleaning rules: retain the raw file unchanged; create a documented analysis copy; verify variable names and ranges; identify duplicate submissions; check impossible demographic combinations only where the coding scheme makes them logically impossible; do not infer or replace missing participant responses; record all exclusions and transformations in an analysis log. Construct scores should be computed only when the pre-specified minimum proportion of valid items is met.

Reliability plan: compute Cronbach's alpha and corrected item-total correlations for each five-item construct. Inspect whether any item behaves inconsistently with the construct definition. Validity plan: document expert review and, if justified by sample size and measurement assumptions, examine the empirical structure of the 40 items using factor-analytic methods. Statistical decisions should be based on the final dataset rather than predetermined claims of significance.

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