

Academic Scholars Publishing League (ASPL)

ASPL International Journal of Information & Technology

ISSN: 2360-9981 | Volume 9, Issue 4 | October, 2024 | pages 167 – 180

DOI: 2775-16-209-83-955 arcnjournals@gmail.com https://arcnjournals.org

INTERNET AND STUDENTS READING CULTURE IN STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract: The study investigate the empirical link between internet and the reading culture of University students in Bayelsa State. Using social media, video browsing and online chat as the dimensions based on the recent trend of internet usage among students. The study adopted a case study approach, and 114 students was adopted as the study participant (sample size). structured questionnaire was adopted as the instrument for primary data collection, and the data collected was empirically analyzed using inferential statistical tool (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) with the aid of SPSS application. From the analysis, it was revealed that the dimensions of internet as a significant correlation with student reading habit. Based on the finidings, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between internet and the reading culture of University students in Bayelsa State. It was recommended that students are to take advantage of the numerous opportunities available on the internet to step up their reading culture and boost their academic prowess and knowledge in their field of studies.

Keywords: Internet, Reading Habits, Students, University.

Introduction

An individual's whole growth cannot be achieved without reading. Reading, argues Bana (2020), provides opportunities to learn more, become more self-aware, and have a richer perspective on life. Reading widely is essential in the classroom because it sets the stage for all other forms of learning and has a major impact on kids' performance in school. Strong reading abilities are crucial to academic success, which is why reading is so tightly tied to educational development (Palani, 2012). Igwe (2011) emphasises that reading improves life and provides access to culture and legacy, while Krashen (2011) observes that those with strong reading habits generally do better on different examinations.

Reading, according to Erlina (2019), is a crucial activity since it allows people to relate to the stories of others, learn new things, and have fun. Reading is essential for the growth of individuals and nations. Literacy is the primary means of information acquisition; hence, those who are unable to read or write, also known as illiterates, are generally restricted to acquiring knowledge through oral transmission. Reading improves language comprehension, which in turn improves verbal and written communication, and is necessary for many everyday tasks (Lucky & Saidu,

2020). Reading widely has several benefits, including fostering personal growth, enhancing intelligence, expanding one's understanding of the world, and moulding one's outlook and actions. "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body" (Suhana & Haryudin, 2017), as the astute Sir Richard Steele put it.

But with the development of the Internet, kids' reading habits have altered drastically. Websites, web pages, emails, discussion forums, chatrooms, instant messaging, blogs, wikis, and other multimedia documents have expanded the reading sources beyond printed materials due to the proliferation of the Internet (Umeh, 2016). Readers may now peruse material online without ever leaving their houses. According to Kazazoğlu (2020), e-readers may go from one page to another using hypertext and hypermedia technologies, which is referred to as surfing. Students may learn about a wide variety of topics, find out about new websites, get up-to-date information, and download anything that piques their interest by simply exploring the web. Reading newspapers and other printed materials was a major way for students to gain knowledge, develop their reading habits, and become more self-aware in the past (Bala & Verma, 2018).

To accommodate an ever-increasing number of users with ever-changing preferences, the Internet is always developing new features, information, and ways of using it. In today's technologically advanced world, many of the cultural products of the Internet come from the younger generation, especially college students and undergraduates (Kraus *et al.*, 2018). New research suggests that, when it comes to a social innovation, today's youth are more at ease, informed, and literate than their parents were at the same age. According to Shohel *et al.* (2021), the so-called "Net-Generation" will most certainly cultivate and enforce their culture on society at large through digital media. Students' ideas on identity, relationships, sexuality, and development are impacted by computers and the Internet, which also give them access to powerful intellectual resources (Mirra & Garcia, 2021). This study seeks to further our comprehension of the effects of internet usage, namely video viewing, on students' reading habits.

Problem Statement

Having access to ICT is a huge plus in Nigeria, and the educational opportunities it presents are huge boons, especially when it comes to maintaining relevance on a worldwide scale and keeping up with the times (Amkpa & Abba, 2009). According to studies done in different nations, the vast majority of people who use the Internet are students, particularly undergraduates (Jagboro, 2018; Singh & Nagar, 2019). This group of young people, known as the "net generation," has exceptional proficiency with the internet and related technologies (Prensky, 2001; Kabir, 2016). Their reading habits and comprehension are likely to be greatly affected by their heavy usage of the Internet (Umeh, 2016). Few studies have investigated how students' Internet use affects their reading habits and comprehension, even though academics are increasingly interested in students' Internet use in secondary school.

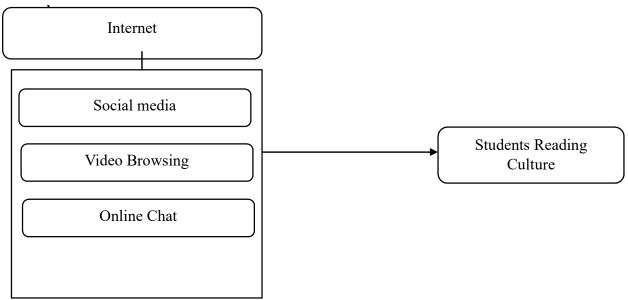
Students' perspectives and reading habits have been significantly impacted by the ubiquitous usage of digital texts in today's worldwide academic setting (Pardede, 2019). Internet use has grown in importance among students, who rely on it for everything from meeting basic academic requirements to enhancing their social life and expanding their knowledge of the globe (Bana, 2020). Digital reading's efficacy in comparison to that of printed text has been the subject of

several studies. The impact of digital texts on students' reading habits has also been studied (Bana, 2021; Kazazoglu, 2020).

When utilized properly, the Internet may greatly enhance the learning, teaching, and research processes. The reading culture, especially among students and teens, is being threatened by this technological innovation, according to observations (Monu *et al.*, 2020). Students in Nigeria are fast losing the habit of reading as technology takes over more and more aspects of their life. Concerningly, despite increasing Internet usage, children's declining interest in reading poses a serious problem, particularly among secondary school students. However, research on how this affects pupils' reading habits in Nigeria is limited. To fill this need, this study will examine how students' reading habits have changed as a result of their exposure to the Internet.

Conceptual Framework

Social media, video browsing, and online conversation are the variables that were created from the study of Abubakar and Alex (2019).



Source: Researcher's Construct, 2024.

Objectives of the Study

The overarching goal of this research is to learn more about the connection between internet and the reading habits of University students in Bayelsa State. The particular goals are:

- 1. To determine whether social media relates with student reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State.
- 2. To determine whether video browsing relates with student reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State.
- 3. To determine whether online chat relates with student reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State.

Hypotheses

This research study is hinged on the following hypothesized statements:

 H_{01} : Social media does not relate significantly with student reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State.

 H_{02} : Video browsing does not relate significantly with student reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State.

H₀₃: Online chat does not relate significantly with student reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State.

Conceptual and Theoretical Review

This section reviews related literature on internet and its dimensions, also reading culture.

Internet

As reading and the internet become more intertwined, teachers are having to rethink the modern definition of literacy. According to Schmar-Dobler (2003), pupils nowadays need to be literate in both the digital world and the more conventional print media. A broader definition of literacy now encompasses the abilities that people, communities, and nations need to find, evaluate, and use high-quality information in order to address pressing issues and disseminate that knowledge to others (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009). Knowledge of how to locate, assess, and utilize information is crucial for achievement in academic and occupational settings due to the internet's introduction of worldwide competition and an information-based economy.

According to McVicker (2018), readers face certain challenges while trying to make good use of the internet. The first challenge for anyone using the internet is sifting through the seemingly endless amount of material. The vast array of linked sites that may be accessed through links allows consumers to delve further into their initial search topic. Second, visually appealing and attention-grabbing sentences, as well as flashy images, are commonplace in online material. In order to get the most out of a webpage, readers need to evaluate it from every angle. The third point is that the majority of web information is instructional in nature, necessitating prior knowledge of the subject's principles, terminology, and organization.

Users interact with material that is continuously updated, deleted, or altered as they construct their own paths by picking links in various sequences while reading online. Because online text is always evolving, the whole notion of a reader and literate individual must be rethought in light of this shift (Hofmann & Beaumont, 2005). Online resources such as e-books, websites, emails, message boards, chat rooms, and instant messaging have expanded our definition of reading thanks to technological advancements. Technology is changing the definition of literacy as more and more students rely on the internet to gather information and find answers (McVicker, 2018). In their pursuit of solutions, many literacy educators are keeping a close eye on the convergence of literacy and technology. They are now faced with the task of helping pupils use their reading methods to grasp the economic world.

A number of studies have found that students' internet use had either a negative or no significant influence on their learning outcomes. These include Davis (2001), Widyanto and Griffiths (2006), Odaci and Kalkkan (2010), and Odaci (2011). Students' academic performance is severely

impacted by excessive internet use, according to Young (as stated in Amasi *et al.*, 2017). Despite this, research by Olatokun (2008) and Nwagwu, Adekannbi, and Bello (2008) indicates that students utilize the internet more for schoolwork and test preparation than for fun. Despite the fact that some kids use the internet more than school libraries, they still consider it a great resource for general information that helps them read more and do better in school. According to Tarimo and Kavishe (2017), kids can benefit from the abundance of material available online if schools provide and encourage internet use.

Even if parents have legitimate worries, pupils have access to new options because to the internet, as pointed out by Chen and Fu (2009). Using the internet for networking and gaming can lead to bad reading habits, low test performance, general academic underachievement, and personal growth, while doing research online can boost exam results and help students complete assignments. It is critical that kids learn to use the internet responsibly since too much time spent online can hinder their concentration, ruin their reading habits, and lower their academic performance.

Yebowaah (2018) and Akande and Bamise (2017) also found that kids' performance in secondary school can be affected by the internet's ability to give information. Using reliable online resources is crucial for academic work, according to Sahin, Balta, and Ercan (2010) and Yebowaah (2018). This is especially true for more advanced classes that demand in-depth literature studies. Adolescents' academic success hinges on their ability to use the internet for educational purposes, according to Kim (as cited in Yebowaah, 2018). This is because students are able to access global information, conduct research, complete assignments, and communicate with their peers in the academic community.

Social Media

The term "social media" is used by Affilorama (2011) to refer to the content that people make and share online using user-generated content platforms that enable users to publish and share their own photos, videos, and text. You have the option to share this information with everyone on the internet or just a specific group of friends. The ability to freely communicate with others online, regardless of time or place, is what makes social media so revolutionary, says CubixDev (2011). According to Investopedia (2011), social media are online communities where users may interact with one another and share information about themselves, such as their bio, employment history, personal images, and current ideas. The ability to move fluidly between the positions of viewer and creator is a key feature of social media, according to ProPR (2008). Anyone may join communities centered on common interests and upload, discuss, share, or remix material on these platforms; coding skills are not required.

According to Coyle and Vaughn (2008), social media has been a way for individuals to connect and interact for a while now. The proliferation of internet-connected devices and applications has led to social media sites like Facebook, MySpace, Viber, WhatsApp, Twitter, 2go, Africhat, Bebo, Mozat, Friendster, and Xanga being primarily accessed online. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites (SNS) are online platforms that allow users to do three things: (1) establish a public or semi-public profile inside a restricted system; (2) compile a list of other users they are connected to; and (3) view and engage with both their own and other users' connections. For many years, "social networking" has been a buzzword to describe online communities where members share information and build relationships (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Platforms like Myspace, Facebook, Bebo, Friendster, WhatsApp, 2go, and Xanga have grown in prominence due

to the rising desire for communication and the widespread use of the internet (Coyle & Vaughn, p.41). The term "social networking site" (SNS) refers to a certain type of website that lets users build profiles, either public or semi-public, inside a specific system, and then connect with other users through their connections.

Gaining fluency in reading is an important first step toward a lifetime of knowledge and growth. If you want to be successful in life, you need to make reading a habit and teach yourself the fundamentals of reading. Holte argues that reading enriches life by introducing people to different cultures and their histories (1998, p.2). He stresses that reading gives people agency, promotes harmony in society, and unites people. In a similar vein, Okeke (2000) stresses the importance of reading as a universally valuable talent since it allows us to immerse ourselves in the stories of others, learn from other perspectives, and enrich our own lives. Reading is essential for personal and national growth.

Video Browsing

Media streaming has grown in importance as a means for individuals to interact with and take part in mediated culture due to improvements in network technology, especially higher internet connections (Burroughs, 2015). Consequently, it has become one of the world's most prominent news outlets. Academics have poured a lot of time and energy into studying this new kind of streaming media over the last decade, and it shows in all the books and papers they've written. There has been a change away from conventional ways of material transmission, such as overthe-air television (OTA), and toward streaming media, according to recent research (Siglin, 2018). As a result, scholars in the fields of mass communication and film and television studies have begun to acknowledge streaming media as a new academic discipline.

It is critical to delve more into the nature, traits, and potential consequences of streaming media beyond this broad recognition of its ascent. These problems are the focus of multi-level research efforts by several academic institutions and individuals. Developed nations such as the US, Australia, and the UK have contributed the majority of streaming media research and resources. Maybe this is because, in comparison to developing countries, these have a higher percentage of the population that is literate in using computers and the internet. Consequently, affluent nations have a far higher rate of streaming media consumption and use, which differs greatly from underdeveloped countries.

But that doesn't imply poor nations aren't using streaming services and other new digital channels. Actually, as of 2018, emerging nations like Vietnam, India, and Thailand have more Facebook users than many industrialized countries (Statista.com, 2018). No nation is immune to the importance of the internet and social media. Similar to the many ways in which social media platforms are utilized, the manner in which streaming media is accessed might fluctuate based on social and geographical characteristics (Jacobs, 2017). There is a noticeable gap in the amount of research on streaming media consumption in developed and developing nations.

Online Chatting

Facebook use has a detrimental influence on students' academic achievement, especially among male students (Ahsan UI Haq and Sohail Chand, 2012). The reason behind this is that male students tend to spend more time on Facebook, which makes it harder for them to concentrate on their schoolwork. Many Facebook users are extroverted, which might hurt their academic performance, according to Rouis, Limayem, and Sangari (2011). This provides more evidence that how a person acts when using Facebook is related to their academic performance.

When utilized properly, online media in the classroom may greatly elevate the standard of instruction and student achievement. The ability to mix several forms of content—including text, graphics, animations, videos, and sound—is a great benefit of these media. While playing video games online is an example of recreational media, watching news online or subject-related videos are examples of educational media. A key feature of internet media is its interactivity, which lets viewers actively participate in conversations rather than only taking in information in a passive manner. A number of prior research have been examined in order to have a better grasp of the educational and non-educational uses of internet media.

Reading Culture

Reading is a multi-step mental activity that requires the ability to decipher written symbols in order to understand what they signify. It is an essential tool for learning a new language, expressing oneself, and exchanging ideas and information. Reading is an activity that calls for constant work on one's part (Sukmawati, 2010). Because of its complexity and lack of succinct explanation, reading also necessitates originality and analytical thought. Readers utilize a variety of tactics to improve their understanding and decipher symbols, which are visual or auditory representations of speech (Pazmiño Tachón, 2019). As an example, individuals may incorporate new words into their preexisting knowledge schema by using context cues to determine their meaning. Books, periodicals, newspapers, and notebooks are still the most common forms of printed reading material, although electronic displays on devices like computers, televisions, mobile phones, and e-readers have largely replaced them. Another factor is handwritten text, which is often created with a pen or pencil (Luisa Sailema, 2018).

Reading has been defined differently by several scholars throughout the years, each having their own unique take on the term based on their own study and observations. Reading is characterized by Ukpebor (2017) as an intellectual activity that calls for the use of many different kinds of reasoning, including analytical, creative, imaginative, evaluative, judgmental, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In his perspective, the reader's surroundings shapes their mental ability, perception, and personal experience, all of which are essential to the reading process. Reading is vital for human growth and is seen as the foundation of scholastic achievement. To respond competently to one's surroundings, people need to be able to read well so that they may participate in activities that call for knowledge and abilities (Labra, 2019). At its core, reading is about understanding, assessing, and making use of text to fulfill one's own needs.

Signalling Theory

According to Dawkins (1991), signaling theory lays up a framework for comprehending the ways in which people divulge details on their SNS accounts. Donath (2007) points out that in both inperson and virtual contacts, many of the things individuals want to know about others aren't immediately apparent. She contends that signals revealing an individual's position and traits are present in most human interactions. According to signaling theory, one's online persona has the power to establish credibility and mold one's sense of self. By adding someone as a "friend," a user is essentially verifying that the person they are claiming to be is who they say they are. The reputation and integrity of users might be jeopardized if they accept friend requests from anybody, including strangers or false identities. Teens may view having numerous MySpace friends as a great thing, but having too many might make you look bad, like a "MySpace whore" (p. 129), as pointed out by Boyd (2008).

This is supplemented by warranting theory, which proposes that individuals evaluate others using signals discovered in their social media accounts. The beauty of a person's friends is a strong indicator of that person's overall attractiveness on Facebook, according to research by Walther and colleagues (2008). A person's attractiveness can be influenced by both positive and negative comments posted on their Facebook wall. Furthermore, the social context is a major factor in how social media users assess the veracity of profile information. This means that our online company may have a significant impact on how we are seen.

Empirical Review

At Cross River State's College of Health Technology Calabar, Eze and Ochagu (2022) investigated how students' internet use and reading habits were related. The study used a correlational survey approach to investigate the relationship between variables; it was guided by specified objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. The data was gathered from 913 participants using a structured questionnaire, with the use of both simple random and stratified random selection procedures. Statistical analysis was performed on the data using SPSS Version 22.0. Chi-square (X2) and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) were applied with a 0.05 alpha level. The findings provided strong evidence for both hypotheses, showing that students' internet usage has a substantial impact on their reading culture (hypothesis 1) and that there is a considerable correlation between the two (hypothesis 2). The study found that students' academic performance is significantly improved when they use the internet for both educational and recreational objectives. Particularly for college students, it advocated raising consciousness about appropriate internet usage, bolstering computer instruction, and fostering the integration of ICT in the classroom. Additionally, it advocated for public funding of infrastructure to facilitate internet access in schools.

The effects of digital media on the reading habits of Nigerian secondary school pupils were studied by Kabir and Jeromes (2022). Findings from the study shed insight on how reading habits have changed in the digital era and how this has impacted classroom instruction and workplace productivity. A new reading culture is emerging as a result of technological developments; young people, commonly called Netizens, consume electronic information more regularly than ever before. In this article, we will look at reading in the perspective of its historical development, the growth of internet culture, and the wealth of resources accessible to young people online. At the conclusion, it suggests striking a balance between the reading cultures of digital media and more conventional print media.

Researchers Akidi, Agbese, and Chukwueke (2021) looked at the impact of internet use on reading habits among Government College, Umuahia students. Three overarching goals informed the study's survey research design, which included 278 participants. A comprehensive census was carried out, with information collected by means of a questionnaire. Mean scores, basic percentages, and frequency counts were also included of the analysis. Most students use the internet for studying, test prep, assignment writing, and networking, according to the findings. On the other hand, they are exposed to unrelated material and are distracted from reading while using the internet. In order to foster a reading culture among secondary school students, the research suggested that schools host workshops on how to make good use of the internet.

Methodology

This study used a case study design for its investigation. The original sample for this study included all undergraduates at Niger Delta University, but we'll narrow our focus to the 322 OIM majors for the purpose of convenience. The 178 results are obtained using the Taro Yamen (1973) statistical method, which is used to determine the sample size.

The questionnaire is the main source of data. After providing participants with the survey instruments and giving them 15 business days to complete them, the study coordinator collected the completed forms. Using a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 indicates Strongly Agree and 1 indicates Strongly Disagree, the questionnaire was created. The respondents were given the instrument directly to increase their level of involvement. Prior to administering the instrument to a sample of respondents, it was presented to specialists in management science research for any necessary feedback or modifications. To guarantee the instrument's dependability, a test-retest reliability test was carried out. On the other hand, 114 people (or 64% of the total) were able to finish the survey and get it back to the researcher thereafter.

Inferential statistical analysis was performed on the collected data after it had been coded and compiled. To ascertain the nature of the link between the variables, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is employed.

Results, Analysis and Discussion

Using inferential statistics, we examined data obtained from respondents in Bayelsa State who were state-owned businesses. Using SPSS, this part mostly addresses statistical testing of the study's assumptions and results interpretation using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Table 1: Correlation Outcome between Social Media and Student Reading Culture Correlations

		Social media	Student Reading Culture
Social media	Pearson Correlation	1	.894**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
Student Reading Culture	Pearson Correlation	.894**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS, 2024.

The study concludes that there is a highly substantial positive correlation between students' usage of social media and their reading culture, as indicated by the result of \(r = 0.894 \). Social media and reading culture among students at state-owned institutions in Bayelsa State are significantly related, as the significance threshold is \(p = 0.00 \leq 0.01 \), rejecting the null hypothesis. These results are in line with those of Eze and Ochagu (2022), who studied the effect of internet use on reading habits among students at Cross River State's College of Health

Technology Calabar. Their research proved their theories right: kids' internet use has a major impact on their reading culture. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of internet use for both schoolwork and leisure, implying that students' academic performance may be improved via the responsible use of online media, free from distractions.

Table 2: Correlation Outcome between Video Browsing and Student Reading Culture

Correlations

		Video browsing	Student Reading Culture
Video browsing	Pearson Correlation	1	.827**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
Student Reading Culture	Pearson Correlation	.827**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS, 2024.

The study found a high positive correlation between students' reading culture and video browsing (r = 0.827). We may reject the null hypothesis and conclude that video browsing has a substantial impact on student reading culture at Bayelsa State's state-owned institutions since the significance threshold is \(p = 0.00 \leq 0.01 \). This confirms what Kabir and Jeromes (2022) found when they investigated how students' use of the internet and other digital media affected their reading habits in Nigerian secondary schools. The authors of the study emphasized the need of balancing digital and conventional print reading habits and went into detail about the effects of online content and digital media on reading culture.

Table 3: Correlational Outcome between Online Chat and Student Reading Culture

Correlations

		Online chat	Student Reading Culture
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.904**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
Student Reading Culture	Pearson Correlation	.904**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS, 2024.

The study shows that there is a high positive correlation between student reading culture and online discussion, with a correlation coefficient of 0.904. Online conversation had a substantial influence on student reading culture in Bayelsa State's state-owned institutions, as indicated by the null hypothesis being rejected at the significance level of (p = 0.00 0.01). The results of this study are in line with those of Akidi, Agbese, and Chukwueke (2021), who looked at how students at Government College in Umuahia's internet use affected their reading habits. Using statistics like percentages, mean scores, and frequency counts, they found that students often utilize the internet for things like studying, test prep, assignment completion, and social media. Yet, students were exposed to unrelated material, had trouble focusing on what they were reading, and were distracted during class as a result of this usage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study evaluate the empirical relationship between internet usage and student reading culture.in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State, specifically address the use of social media, video browsing and online chatting to support reading activities in school by students. The study conducted inferential analysis on the dimensions of the independent variable and the dependent variable, which revealed that there is a significant relationship between the variables. However, the study concludes that there internet usage influenced students reading culture in state-owned universities in Bayelsa State. The following recommendations were raised:

- 1. School management to should provide effective internet services to support student internet usage for academic purposes.
- There should be emphasis on the utilization of contemporary internet services such as the use of AI chatting to provide answer to academic concepts and issues in respective disciplines.
- **3.** Students are advised to take advantage of the numerous opportunities available on the internet to step up their reading culture and boost there academic prowess and knowledge in their field of studies.

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