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Reading Habits in the Digital Age:
Marketing Strategies to Promote Reading among Children and Young Adults

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Prof. Doctor Rui Torres

Abstract

Reading is a form of active learning, and cultivation of reading habits is vital for every child and young adult. However, according to the world's most in-depth and trustworthy indicator of students' abilities, PISA, reading skills among youngsters are barely improving. The project aims to deliver answers to the questions: what is the overall state of the reading habits of European children and young adults?; how is reading encouraged and promoted to children and young adults in the digital age?; what marketing and advertising strategies and initiatives are being introduced and practiced in Europe to encourage and promote reading among children and young adults?. To follow this aim we propose a survey overview on children's and young adult's reading habits and attitudes; bibliographical review of previous research on the topic of reading promotion, positive practices and marketing strategies; and a questionnaire survey, conducted among European organizations, involved in book and reading promotion. By observing the gathered data, we were able to conclude that reading habits and attitudes of children and young adults are predetermined at a very young age. The most important influencing factors that we examined were the active home literacy environment with access to books and literacy materials at an early age; the application of the reading aloud practice, starting at infancy; the kindergarten and school environment. What is more, we concluded that all adults, participating in children's lives: parents; relatives; educators; librarians; social media influencers are role models with a strong influence on the shaping of the attitudes of youngsters towards reading.

Key words: book reading, reading habits, reading attitudes, young readers, reading promotion

Resumo

Ler é uma forma de aprendizagem ativa e o cultivo de hábitos de leitura é vital para todas as crianças e jovens adultos. No entanto, de acordo com o indicador mais aprofundado e confiável do mundo sobre as competências dos alunos, o PISA, as competências de leitura entre os jovens não estão a melhorar. Este projecto tem como objetivo dar resposta às seguintes questões: qual é o estado geral dos hábitos de leitura das crianças e jovens europeus ?; como a leitura é incentivada e promovida para crianças e jovens na era digital ?; que estratégias e iniciativas de marketing e publicidade estão a ser introduzidas e praticadas na Europa para encorajar e promover a leitura entre crianças e jovens adultos ?. Para cumprir este objetivo, propomos uma pesquisa geral sobre os hábitos e atitudes de leitura de crianças e jovens adultos; uma revisão bibliográfica de pesquisas anteriores sobre o tema promoção da leitura, práticas positivas e estratégias de marketing; e um inquérito por questionário, realizado entre organizações europeias envolvidas na promoção do livro e da leitura. Pela observação dos dados recolhidos, podemos concluir que os hábitos de leitura e as atitudes de crianças e adultos jovens são pré-determinados numa idade muito jovem. Os fatores de influência mais importantes que examinamos foram o ambiente ativo de alfabetização domiciliária com acesso a livros e materiais de alfabetização desde a infância; a aplicação da prática da leitura em voz alta, desde a infância; o jardim de infância e o ambiente escolar. Além disso, concluímos que todos os adultos, participando na vida das crianças: pais; parentes; educadores; bibliotecários; os influenciadores das redes sociais são modelos de comportamento com forte influência na formação das atitudes dos jovens em relação à leitura.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to all individuals who are devoting their efforts and time, both in their professional and personal lives, to the mission of forming readers from children and cultivating love for reading and curiosity among them.

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Introduction

Reading is a complex cognitive process which involves brain parts accountable for language, sight, cognition, motor, and affect. What is more, reading relies on memory; deduction and induction; evaluation; problem solving; critical and analytical thinking; and interpretation. The comprehensiveness of reading makes it physically beneficial for the human brain as it stimulates it mentally.

The benefits from recreational reading are numerous, as we will try to explain in our bibliographical review. The activity has positive effects on focus and concentration, reduces stress, improves the memory, expands the vocabulary, strengthens analytical thinking, improves one's writing skills and, more importantly, it expands knowledge. A significant part of humans' natural intelligence is developed till the age of 8 where different sensory stimuli affect its progress. Early reading predetermines the child's desire and attitude towards learning, developing functional literacy which is a solid ground of one's ability to excerpt information from different sources, to analyze it and to make well-grounded assessment. Hence reading, being a form of active learning, and cultivation of reading habits, are vital for every child's and young adult's development and education.

The major questions driving this dissertation are: what is the overall state of the reading habits of European children and young adults?; how is reading encouraged and promoted to children and young adults in the digital age?; what marketing and advertising strategies and initiatives are being introduced and practiced in Europe to encourage and promote reading among children and young adults?. Having in mind the remarkable benefits that book reading has on children's growth, it is essential to observe and research these questions.

Quite a few strategies and initiatives aiming to encourage and promote reading among children and young adults are being practiced in Europe. These strategies are marketing, advertising, and institutional. However, the results from worldwide recognized surveys are worrying, as decreased reading time and unstable independent reading habits among European children and young adults are observed. According to the world's most in-depth and trustworthy indicator of students' abilities *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, that measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet challenges in the real life, one fifth of 15-year-olds and about 73

millions of adults did not have the basic reading and writing competences (2018). The survey is conducted every two years and the most recent report from 2018 shows that the average performance in reading of European students is evaluated as “mostly flat” or “positive, but flattening” which means there is a drop in literacy rates worldwide and reading skills are barely improving.

The main personal motivation behind the choice of this topic is my experience working in the book publishing and literature industry and being involved in the organization and promotion of events and campaigns that aim to promote reading as a pleasant and beneficial activity among both youngsters and adults. Academically, this work would be useful in providing an overview of the current reading habits and attitudes among children and young adults; exploring the links between reading habits of youngsters and their media literacy, social media usage habits, and average grades; investigating the practices that influence the development of independent reading habits by children, at home, in school, or in other public spaces; summarizing good marketing, advertising and institutional campaigns and practices which promote reading as a recreational activity in Europe.

The first part of this project provides context and theoretical framework of the topic. In the first chapter we observe the current reading habits and literacy levels of children and young adults, as well as their attitudes towards reading through highly recognized European surveys, such as *EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy Final Report*; *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*; *Scholastic’s Kids and Family Reading Report*; and *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)*, held by *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)*.

In the second chapter we investigate the significance of home and school environment in shaping children’s reading attitudes and habits, as the results from the survey overview defined it as a crucial factor. Also, we explore the concept of active and passive home literacy environment and how it influences children’s perspective on reading. In addition, we study the roles of teachers, school environment and peers in the development of independent book reading habits among children and young adults.

In the next chapter, we go into more detail and audit positive practices to develop independent reading habits, applied both at home by the parents and at school by the educators, such as reading aloud and reading competitions.

In the fourth chapter, we investigate how books and reading are promoted to European children and young adults. We make an introduction to the key stakeholders: parents and relatives; teachers and educators; publishing houses; libraries and librarians. Also, we analyze how new technology is used to reach the youngsters and we look into approaches like book-trailers and social media.

In the next chapter we explore reading promotion from another perspective, as applied by national and multinational institutions that aim to promote books and reading for pleasure, such as the *Europe Reads (EURead)* consortium¹, and the *Federation of European Publishers (FEP)*² and their non-profit member organizations. The initiatives they practice in their countries include reading aloud activities; reading competitions; literary awards; celebrity endorsements; and gamification of reading.

In the final chapter, we deepen the focus on new technology and how it influences the book industry and the book reading. In particular, we observe how reading is remediated in the digital age. We discuss ebooks; audiobooks; book apps; and interactive books among other hybrid mediums; and if they affect reading comprehension.

The second part of the project is a case study that aims to look into the topics discussed in the first part in more depth by gathering insight directly from European organizations that are actively engaged in book reading and literacy. The research instrument selected as most appropriate for the purposes of the case study was a questionnaire that combined close-ended and open-ended questions that were asked consistently across all respondents.

The participants in the questionnaire were international European associations with member institutions that are engaged in reading promotion in general and consortiums of European reading promotion organizations. Those are the members of the *Federation of European*

¹ <https://www.euread.com/>

² <https://fep-fee.eu/>

Publishers (FEP) and the *Federation of European Literary Associations (FELA)*³, as they have more broad activities in the book, reading and literacy fields, as well as the members of *Europe Reads (EURead)* consortium, that operate specifically in the field of reading promotion.

The data was collected by using the Google Forms platform and arranged in quantitative and qualitative findings, examining common traits and highlighting significant discoveries. The discussed topics were: the conduction of surveys (or lack of) that examine the current reading habits of children and young adults and the factors that influence them; the major practices applied on a national level to promote book reading to children and young adults; the communication campaigns, marketing and advertising strategies to promote recreational reading; the role and level of engagement of the educational system and the public libraries in the process; the factors that influence children's and young adult's reading habits and attitudes. The questionnaire respondents were also asked to share what challenges they face when working to fulfill their goals for higher levels of literacy and for developing affection towards reading among children and young adults, hence independent reading habits.

After reviewing the current literacy levels and reading habits of European children and young adults through survey overview, and after investigating what positive practices to develop independent reading habits are being applied by leading organizations, it was concluded that the most influencing factor is the environment in its various dimensions. In the home environment, parents are the most dominant role models when it comes to developing positive attitudes towards reading at an early age. As children grow and enter the education system, the role models shift to educators and peers. Considering the digital age context, the trend is that youngsters are introduced to technology at an earlier and earlier age. The digital environment presents its role models as well which could be perceived as a threat but it also is a powerful opportunity to endorse popular figures into reading and book ambassadors for children and young adults.

³ <https://www.literacyeurope.org/>

Chapter I - Reading Habits and Attitudes in the Digital Age: Surveys, Influences, Positive Practices and Initiatives

1.1. European Children's and Young Adults' Reading Habits - Survey Overview

Reading is an appropriation of a literary text. In other words, it is a “process through which one analyses what they read and uses it in every stage of their life” (Karadeniz and Can, 2015, p. 4059). In that sense, reading is the most powerful learning activity through which people can boost their critical thinking, develop different and new perspectives, understand themselves and the surroundings, and provide interpretation of the situations they are going to experience (Yilmaz, 1998). A basic definition of reading, suggested by Harvey and Goudvis (2007), is that reading is a process of thinking and understanding.

Bloom (2000) refers to reading as a “solitary praxis” performed in order to “strengthen the self and learn its authentic interests” (Bloom, 2000, p.21). He suggests that reading transcends the self and is one of the greatest pleasures that could be practiced in solitude. In addition to being a recreational activity, reading is a source of knowledge and wisdom. In his “Why Read the Classics”, Calvino (1991) points out that “A classic is the term given to any book which comes to represent the whole universe, a book on a par with ancient talismans” (Calvino, 1991, p. 6). Schopenhauer (1851) adds that “[o]ne can never read too little of bad, or too much of good books: bad books are intellectual poison; they destroy the mind” (Schopenhauer, 1851, p. 4).

Yilmaz (1998) argues that regular reading with a critical approach answers to the needs of youngsters while also being a source of enjoyment, thus forms a “reading habit”. Reading habits of children and young adults has been a thought-provoking topic for scholars for long, and numerous researches worldwide are being conducted regularly in order to examine how much time children and adolescents spend reading and what is their literacy level.

According to the Final Report of the *EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy* (2012), every fifth 15-year-old has imperfect reading skills and more than 73 million adults are functionally illiterate. The report also states that 12.8 % of the students in the European Union leave school prior to graduating which led to 30% increase in unskilled jobs by 2020.

The *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*⁴ is held biannually by the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*, is the world's most in-depth and trustworthy indicator of students' abilities. The survey measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their skills and comprehension of reading, mathematics and science in order to cope with real-life challenges. The most recent report from 2018 evaluates the average performance in reading of European students as "mostly flat" or "positive, but flattening" (2018, p. 6). This means that a drop in literacy rates is observed worldwide and reading skills of youngsters are barely improving.

*Scholastic*⁵ is one of the largest players in the book publishing market worldwide. Its main agenda is to promote literacy through books. The book publishing house also executes a biannual survey called *Kids and Family Reading Report* which reflects on attitudes of children and parents towards reading. The geographical focus of the *Scholastic* report from 2015 is the UK, and the main objectives of the survey are to examine how often reading aloud is practiced, what is the frequency of reading independently at school, and what is the level of importance children and parents place on reading skills. The *Kids and Family Reading Report* (2015) concluded that reading for enjoyment drops significantly after ages 8 and 11, that comes to demonstrate that when children grow reading starts to compete with various screen-related entertainment. Amongst the strong predictors of reading rates were children's beliefs that recreational reading is important, their enjoyment of reading, and less time spent online using digital devices such as smartphones.

The nonprofit and independent organization *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)*⁶ is another organization which examines reading habits among children. It is based in The Netherlands and Germany and is an international cooperative of national research institutions, government research agencies, scholars, and analysts joining forces to evaluate, understand, and improve education worldwide. In the frame of the survey *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)*⁷ IEA is assessing the reading comprehension of pupils at fourth grade every 5 years. The most recent report was published in 2016 with 50 participating countries from around the world. While in every country there was a wide range of reading achievements, from basic skills to advanced

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

⁵ <https://emea.scholastic.com/en>

⁶ <https://www.iea.nl/>

⁷ <https://www.iea.nl/studies/iea/pirls>

comprehension, a solid finding for 10 and 11-year-olds from all countries was that the positive attitudes toward reading were connected to higher reading achievements. A great number of researches suggest that positive reading attitudes and high achievement are related in a duplex way, meaning that better readers enjoy reading more, and thus tend to read more often than the poorer readers in the survey sample.

1.2. Influence of Home and School Environment on the Reading Attitudes of Children and Young Adults

The significance of book reading undertaken in childhood cannot be underrated, as it provides habit and affection for recreational reading and is also a ground for acquiring knowledge. After observing the current state of children's and young adult's reading habits provided by the surveys we describe in this part of the project, the resulting logical question is: what predetermines and influences them? The exploration of this question shaped two major factors — home and school environment.

Recollecting *Scholastic's Kids and Family Reading Report* (2015) we can observe that parents' reading frequency and parental involvement in children's reading habits before starting school are strong predictors of youngster's reading attitudes and frequency. The school environment is also understood as playing a crucial role. According to the report, pupils claim that they wished to engage in independent reading activities with their class more often or that this is one of their favorite parts of the school day. Hence, children who are provided with the opportunity to read independently at school are more likely to continue reading more often rather than kids who are not given this time, the report concludes. According to *PIRLS* (2016), higher reading achievement was related to a home environment which supports learning, such as books at home, parental study support, and parents with higher education who are frequent readers. What is more, all fourth graders in the sample who demonstrated higher literacy skills had an early start in literacy learning either at home or at preliminary education institutions.

Once children are intellectually ready to learn prior to entering the educational system, they start learning from the people who surround them in the home setting, most particularly their parents (Kloosterman *et al.*, 2010). Parents tend to have a strong influence on the academic achievements of their children, as they are the figures who provide them with unofficial

education which prepares them for tasks within their future formal education. In that sense, parents have an impact on whether their children will adopt reading as a recreational activity and become capable readers or not. Greaney (1986) argues that children's verbal interaction with their parents at early age, parents with higher education who are regular readers, and access to reading materials at home enhance their reading skills. Hyunjoon (2008) concludes that parents' attitudes towards reading, early home literacy activities and access to books at home have a great impact on the reading performance of children.

A home domain that encourages children to read is a main component in the concept of active home literacy environment (HLE). An active HLE is described by Baroody and Diamond (2012) as a home environment which is abundant in activities and materials related to literacy, thus providing the children with opportunities to develop their own literacy skills, in contrast with the passive HLE. Active HLE has a positive impact on enjoyment from reading, frequency of reading, and early literacy skills among children. Parents' educational backgrounds was found to be very influential in whether a home literacy environment is active or passive (Wiescholak *et al.*, 2018). Children with parents with higher educational background have access to significantly more books at home and tend to enjoy print-related activities in general. Solely active HLE is related to six-year-olds' frequency of looking at and reading books. Importantly, active and passive HLE have nearly the same impact on literacy enjoyment among children. Hence, we can conclude that a home environment with emphasis on reading habits and positive parental attitudes plays a vital role in the development of reading habits, early literacy skills and enjoyment of recreational reading among children.

Parental encouragement is another influential factor in terms of children's and young adults' reading behaviors and habits. In their research, Clark and Hawkins (2010) found that youngsters who had received parental encouragement to read were more likely to have positive attitudes toward reading in comparison to those who had not. Encouragement of parents in regard to reading has different dimensions, such as reading aloud to children at early ages, listening to them while reading, buying books and other reading materials of interest for them, bringing their children to visit libraries, book shops and literary events.

The foundation of developing reading habits and positive attitudes towards books and reading amongst youngsters are laid at home but should continue when children start to go to kindergarten and attend school, as school is the place where children are officially engaged in

learning literacy, among other subjects. Educators believe that integrating reading for pleasure into classrooms can be beneficial for literacy development of children and young adults but also set a structure for them to follow in their adult reading (Wiesendanger, Braun and Perry, 2009).

At school, teachers have the major role in providing children and youngsters with the chance to improve literacy throughout the academic year. If teachers are actively engaged and interested in students' learning achievements, this will largely influence students' involvement in the learning process as a whole. Teachers' engagement forms students' engagement but at the same time students' engagement affects teacher' engagement (Skinner *et al.*, 1993). What is more, teachers bear the opportunity to promote reading as a leisure time habit, as schools have the function to help children acquire the habits of reading being the second most preferred place to read after home (Majid and Tan, 2007). Researchers found that practically a quarter of children aged between 9 and 12 preferred recreational reading at school, while the rest preferred it at home. Correspondingly, Clark and Hawkins (2005) found that children aged between 8 and 14 years point to the school as their second or third most preferred reading location, after home.

In terms of teaching literacy and promoting recreational reading as an independent habit, teachers have an important influence on their pupils and students not solely because they carry out the classes but also because they act as model readers. McKool and Gespass (2009) explored the reading habits and attitudes of North American teachers and how they affected the frequency of reading activities being implemented in the school curriculum. They concluded that teachers who engage in recreational reading more often were those who were more likely to include guided reading lessons in class, discuss their personal reading, recommend books outside the official school lists, and stimulate students to take part in periods of independent silent reading.

The role of teachers and the school environment in the development of independent book reading habits among children and young adults have more facets. A major one is reading aloud to children in kindergartens and to youngsters in classrooms, a powerful practice found to encourage children to read books by themselves and to persuade less able children to read (Canoy, van Ours and van der Ploeg, 2006), among other significant benefits to be discussed in the next part of this project. However, in many cases this routine was found not to be

practiced regularly but rather implemented as an “award” or when spare time is left (Ledger and Merga, 2018). Another approach teachers can adopt is to engage parents by inviting them to the kindergarten or classroom and ask them to read to the children from their beloved children and young adult books (Stoeva and Filipova, 2018). Scholars also argue that teachers could make lists of book suggestions which children could read at home, and then spare time during the school day for discussion, thus giving reading an additional element, such as engaging with fellow readers (Merga, 2015).

1.3. Positive Practices to Develop Independent Reading Habits

As previously highlighted, reading is a fundamental part of the way people learn, thus it is highly important to understand the best and most effective ways to encourage children and young adults to read not only when they are required to but also for enjoyment. As it was observed in the previous part of this project, both the home and school environment, respectively parents’ and teachers’ attitudes and actions, are highly influential on the building of reading habits of children and young adults. Therefore, efforts are being put into that direction by governments, institutions, educators, teachers, and scholars through research, introduction and practice of activities, educating parents and the society.

Reading aloud to children is a powerful practice with no equivalent in terms of positive benefits for youngsters and encouragement of interest towards reading. Especially when practiced in the early years, reading aloud is linked with broadening the vocabulary and benefiting literacy and reading achievements (Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini, 1995). It is a reading intervention strategy that benefits children’s motivation to read and helps create independent reading habits (Fox, 2013), improves their cognitive skills and literacy comprehension (Kalb and van Ours, 2014), and increases their vocabulary (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2002). Beck and McKeown (2001) underline reading aloud as a tool to help children decontextualize language, and Senechal and Levre (2001) argue that practicing reading aloud at home strengthens the forming of language skills, both connected to listening and speaking. What is more, when parents read aloud to their children, the practice “provides a valuable opportunity for focused interaction, with reading subsequently situated as a valued social practice” (Merga, 2018, p. 125).

Nevertheless, the majority of children show a positive attitude toward being read aloud both at school and home (Ledger and Merga, 2018). Children engaged in the activity described to experience emotions such as “happy”, “relaxed”, “good inside”. Those children who did not prefer the activity explain that the reason is they did not fancy the way the reader would present the text — “too loud”, “too soft” or with “lack of expression”. On a rare occasion children would say that the content was “boring”. In their research focusing on the practice of reading aloud and its frequency, Ledger and Merga (2018) concluded that it tends to be interrupted in older ages, most frequently when children obtain the ability to read independently.

With all benefits for children from the reading aloud practice considered, Stoeva and Filipova (2018) argue that children’s experience with books should start before school, as reading is a key factor in their preparation for entering the academic system. Scholars suggest that when young children are aware of the relation between illustrations and text which were introduced to them, live surrounded by books and do not consider reading as a boring activity, they feel more comfortable at school and manage their tasks better. The reading aloud practice, part of the home environment activities, should start before children begin school. Stoeva and Filipova (2018) claim that reading aloud to babies and very young children supports their social, emotional and cognitive development, as they gain knowledge about the surrounding world faster, find answers to their questions and doubts easier and become more tolerant. Thus, the practice is considered an investment in the future of the youngsters.

Fairy tales contain 50% more uncommon words in comparison to television programs and everyday life, Stoeva and Filipova (2018) argue. Therefore, they suggest that the choice for this type of literature helps children hear words which they would not encounter anywhere else. In addition to fairytales, which expand children’s vocabulary vastly and benefit their psychological development, scholars recommend contemporary literature to children and young adults. Such texts provide youngsters with answers about the surrounding world; they are illustrated and thus, educate and promote a good visual culture; they awaken children’s natural curiosity; they follow present-day grammar standards and help young readers in adopting grammar rules in a natural manner.

The *Pair Reading Program*, applied in multiple countries, is another approach similar to reading aloud. The practice is known for its positive effect on reading motivation among

children and young adults and is designed to take place in the classrooms. It could be defined as a teaching approach where students assist each other and learn while tutoring, acting as tutor and tutee (Goodlad and Hirst, 1989). The *Pair Reading Program* consists of three components: “simultaneous reading; reading alone; and text comprehension” (Monteiro, 2013, p. 310). In the first phase, the tutor and tutee read aloud together at once and the goal for the tutee is to read all words out loud correctly. Then, for the second phase, the tutee reads independently when they gather sufficient confidence, while the tutor is silent. The tutee has to read on their own until they make a mistake which they do not correct by themselves. The tutor should praise the tutee when reading correctly and not making mistakes but additionally correct mistakes when they are being made. The tutor can also read alone, which Monteiro calls “modeling” and defines it as “the process in which an expert shows nonexperts how to perform a task” (Monteiro, 2013, p. 310), while the expert also builds their own comprehension on how to perform the task. In the concept of the *Pair Reading Program*, the expert is the tutor. When a child sees their friends reading something successfully and shares it, this is referred to as modeling and this is the final, third component of the practice. In order to have better text comprehension, after reading, both students discuss the text and ask their fellow students to answer questions on what they have read. The Program aims to improve reading competences among children and young adults along with motivating them to read with schoolmates through interaction and cooperative work.

1.4. Promotion of Books and Reading to Youngsters

Reading promotion is a concept reflecting on the ways in which literacy and reading are transmitted to all social groups in the reading chain, such as readers, publishers, traders, authors, media, and branch associations. Promotion of books applies to all forms of programs, activities, workshops, events and meetings which aim to develop reading habits and to spread literacy culture. Book and reading promotion include four main elements which represent the starting points of promoting community reading: reach availability; speed; and innovation (Bokan and Cupar, 2017). The way children and teenage books are promoted has a significant role in attracting the attention of these age groups. Interactive and non-controversial approaches tend to be more successful and intriguing, having in mind that competitors of children’s and young adults’ attention are rapidly growing in the digital age.

Public libraries have the capability to be a powerful mediator between books and recreational reading and potential readers, as their fundamental purpose is to promote reading to all members of society. They have the social responsibility to provide access to materials at different levels of media and various approaches towards reading activities both digitally or hard copy (Bokan and Cupar, 2017). Several studies reveal that public and school libraries are the main places where students acquire reading materials (Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007; Smith and Day, 2013) and are one of their preferred places to read (Clark and Hawkins, 2005). For instance, Miller *et al.* (2013) examined the role of libraries and found out that for parents with children aged 18 and below, libraries were pointed as “very important” or “somewhat important” for them and their families, unlike for parents without children. In addition, parents with positive attitudes towards libraries reported that they benefited children’s desire to read, supplied with reading materials for their children, and were a secure place for them.

Another research explored the link between the use of public libraries among young students and their reading habits, reading attitudes and reading enjoyment (Clark and Hawkins, 2010). They found that the use of public libraries decreases as the age of youngsters increases and that almost half of the survey sample did not visit public libraries at all, stating reasons such as their families did not go to public libraries, their friends did not go, and that public libraries did not have any interesting reading resources to offer. At the same time, the students who did use public libraries did so because “they have interesting reading materials”, “they are friendly spaces to be”, “using them makes them better at school”, “they have computers”. The scholars concluded that students who used public libraries were more likely to have positive attitudes towards reading and to enjoy the activity, as well as to receive parental encouragement to read, in comparison to those students who did not visit public libraries.

However, Bokan and Cupar (2017) observed the libraries in Croatia and discovered that librarians are not as skilled and prepared to promote and market books digitally, as necessary. According to the scholars’ study, librarians are not active in updating content on the library’s website or in publishing in social media, which are means that strongly target younger people. The researchers concluded that these limitations are because of librarians’ lack of time and relevant digital marketing skills. Bokan and Cupar discovered that libraries fail to exercise their role in promoting literacy continuously and regularly. Not only do they rarely develop

and execute a strategic plan in implementation of reading promotion activities but also do not have a clear criterion for composing a reading promotion method.

A survey conducted in Germany by the German reading foundation *Stiftung Lesen*⁸ together with the *German Library Association*⁹ explored the reasons behind the issue why adolescents and adults do not or no longer visit and use municipal libraries. University and school libraries have not been taken into account in their survey. Among the main reasons the researchers identified were the restricted opening hours; the unattractive premises, a factor especially essential for children; and lack of engaging events. However, the most outstanding finding of the survey indicates that early promotion of reading to children is a key factor in establishing habits visiting libraries, as a large number of the research sample have become acquainted with libraries during childhood. Therefore, public libraries should focus on attracting families and cooperate with schools and kindergartens. Such an approach would allow children from all types of family backgrounds to receive lifelong access to the world of reading. In addition, a wide range of digital media should be incorporated in libraries' environments. With the described improvements and adjustments, public libraries could return to perform their indispensable part in successful reading promotion for children and for every member of society.

After observing the offline promotion of books and reading to young readers or non-readers, the next step of this overview is to focus on the online marketing and promotion. The book-trailer is a relatively new marketing resource introduced by publishers in order to promote books in the digital context. Book-trailers are produced in video format and are similar as film trailers and are spread by the means of Internet-based channels and networks. Most commonly, the book-trailer consists of a selection of pages that provide the synthesis of the most notable parts of the book. Another approach in executing book-trailers is by animation, especially when it advertises illustration or picture books.

However, the most popular book-trailers use the cinematographic approach and are closest to film trailers which represent a very short film that gives an idea of the plot, including music and oral words, also known as voice over. It is believed that book-trailers are especially appropriate when targeting children and young adults due to the recipients' identification with

⁸ <https://www.stiftunglesen.de/>

⁹ <https://www.bibliothekverband.de/metamenue/english.html>

flash fiction where they feel at ease (Sala and Valios, 2016). The most appropriate channel for distributing book-trailers to children and young adults is YouTube, as it reaches more 18-year-olds than any broadcast or cable TV network, according to the *Nielson study* from 2015. No research has been conducted about the influence that book-trailers may have on the attitudes of children and young adults towards reading.

Nevertheless, according to the *Nielson study* (2015), between 35% and 45% of children in the UK, aged between 4 and 7, visit YouTube at least once a week. The number grows parallel with the age, as around 80% of children by age 11 use the video social media weekly. Social media and digital marketing in general is a strong approach for book and reading promotion but it mostly targets parents and educators. If the goal of the book promotion is to target youngsters, the most fruitful approaches are those which engage the audience in a physical way. Such are book fairs, literary festivals, meet the author events, book tours, and literary workshops, as they give the chance to children to directly interact with authors, illustrators, and translators, and are valuable occasions for publishers and writers to meet their target audience. Therefore, these happenings are the subject of discussion in the next part.

1.5. Initiatives to Promote Reading among Children and Young Adults

The promotion of literacy practices is an important topic for public authorities all around the world, as they recognize its importance for the development of both individuals and societies.

Focusing on Europe, various multinational institutions operate aiming to promote books and reading for pleasure. A major one is *Europe Reads (EUREad)*, a consortium of currently 30 European reading promotion non-profit-organizations which believe that reading is an imperative condition for full participation in the current media-led and culturally heterogeneous society. The main objective of *EUREad* is to cooperatively develop new strategies for the promotion of reading amongst all age groups by exchanging knowledge, experiences and concepts.

Figure 1: Europe Reads (EURead)



Reading promotion to children and young adults has a separate place in the mission of *Europe Reads*. Its first pan-European campaign was in 2018 and aimed to raise awareness about the importance of reading promotion, first of all on national level. The primary material, produced by the consortium, was an animated short film explaining the benefits of reading aloud to children, translated in 7 languages. In addition, in the frame of the campaign, all members were invited to organize their own national events targeting youngsters, resulting in *National Month of Reading* in Slovenia, *Let's Read Together* in Greece, *Reading Aloud Day* in Austria, *Children's Reading Day* and *The Week of Reading to Kids* in Czech Republic, *Read Every Day* in Bulgaria, *Reading Aloud Week* in Portugal, *Drop Everything and Read* in Ireland, *Reading Aloud Day* in Switzerland, *National Reading Aloud Days* in The Netherlands and *Reading Aloud Day* in Germany.

As part of the *EURead's* framework, Portugal conducts its own strategic *National Reading Plan (Plano Nacional de Leitura)*¹⁰ which takes place in phases every 10 years. The *Plan's* main objectives are to provide access to reading, respectively to knowledge; to increase the reading rates and habits of the population; to improve the literacy of the Portuguese people; to promote recreational reading; and to raise appreciation about the value and significance of reading on a national level, among others. In practice, the *National Reading Plan* of Portugal for 2017 - 2027 supports and promotes programs for social integration through reading, as well as the training of different segments of the population: children, young people and adults. Within the program, workshops to improve literacy among students, events celebrating the International *Children's Book Day*, *Reading Week* and the above mentioned *Reading Aloud Week* are organized annually.

¹⁰ <https://www.pnl2027.gov.pt/np4/home>

Figure 2: Portuguese National Reading Plan (Plano Nacional de Leitura) 2017 - 2027



Looking at the other side of the continent, in 2019 the Bulgarian *Children's Books Foundation*¹¹, also an *EURead* member, introduced the national informational campaign *Read Every Day* in order to encourage parents to read aloud to their children on a daily basis. The context of the campaign are the results from *PISA* 2015 showing that 41.5% of Bulgarian 15-year-olds did not achieve the basis level of capability in reading, which means that they are functionally illiterate and have difficulties in accomplishing good education and realization in life. The *Children's Books Foundation*'s goal is to overcome the negative trend by developing a culture of recreational reading in every Bulgarian home by starting with parents who read aloud to their children at least for 15 minutes a day.

Figure 3: National Informational Campaign Read Every Day



¹¹ <https://detskiknigi.com/>

Another initiative that promotes reading for pleasure among children and young adults, also organized by the *Children's Books Foundation* in Bulgaria, extracts youngsters from the role of passive listeners and positions them in a scenario where they have a more active role. The national award *Magical Pearl*¹² is the first award in Bulgaria dedicated to contemporary children's books and awarded by children themselves. *Magical Pearl* was founded in 2013 and takes place on April 2, the *International Children's Book Day*, every year since then. Children vote online to choose which contemporary books win the award. All nominated titles are published in the previous calendar year divided in five categories, according to the age of the readers. The categories are *Discoverers* (5-7-year-olds), *Explorers* (8-10-year-olds), *Dreamers* (11-13-year-olds), *Masters* (14-16-year-olds).

Figure 4: National Literary Award Magical Pearl



Gutenberg 3.0 is another Bulgaria-based foundation that aims to promote recreational reading through gamification. To achieve this, in 2019 the foundation launched the digital platform named *Knigovishte*¹³. The platform is an online Q&A game with questions from the field of children literature and is targeted to children and young adults in the age range between preschool and 14 year-olds. The game is named after the neologism “knigovishte”, which was introduced to the Bulgarian language in the 18th century by the prominent encyclopedist Ivan Bogorov, and means “library”. *Knigovishte* is an educational tool that could be used both by parents and teachers to develop the reading literacy of their children and students, combining entertainment and learning in one process.

¹² <https://www.biserche.com/>

¹³ <https://www.knigovishte.bg/>

Figure 5: Knigovishte - Gamification of Reading



In practice, *Knigovishte* offers the young readers questionnaires based on numerous books for children and young adults. Currently, the platform has over 1200 questionnaires on children's fiction, popular science, and school literature. By playing the game on a computer, tablet or a smartphone, answering the questionnaires and completing 7 ascending game levels, children improve their reading comprehension before they realize it. There are three types of questions: regarding the content of the book; regarding the readers' reflection and interpretation; and regarding the readers' opinion.

Another notable aspect of *Knigovishte* is that the platform builds and develops a reading community among the young readers. While the children and young adults play the game, they earn game points, keep a reading diary, join thematic discussion groups, share personal insight with the fellow players, and compete with them. The competitive aspect is particularly beneficial, as it results in motivation to play and win more. And, in this case, *Knigovishte* is an online game but one in which reading books is the strongest asset of the player.

Federation of European Publishers (FEP), similarly to *EURead*, is a major European umbrella organization which currently unites 29 national publisher associations based in the old continent and active in the field of books and educational content in all formats which operate nationally, regionally and locally. *FEP* members are united by the major mutual mission to promote reading as a key ability and a fundamental right to the human condition

and citizenship, embracing children, young adults and adults by boosting the use of books and libraries as sources of knowledge and culture.

Figure 6: Federation of European Publishers

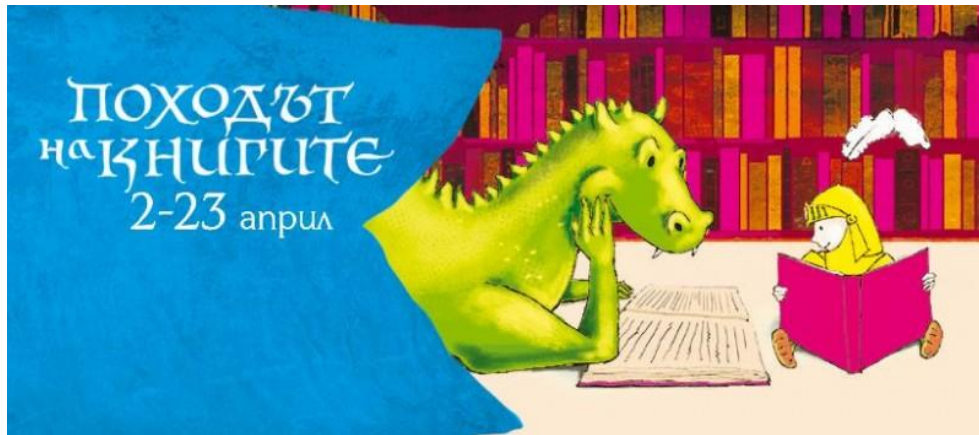


The book or publisher associations that are members of *FEP*, in their independent national activities, have separate operations and programs that target exclusively children and young adults following the goal to improve literacy and help creating positive attitudes towards reading and building reading habits amongst youngsters. Often those are delivered in the form of events and happenings which were discussed in the previous part of the project. Nevertheless, there are more contrasting initiatives.

A good example of such an event is *The March of the Books*, organized by the *Bulgarian Book Association*¹⁴, the only association of book publishers, book traders and literary agents in Bulgaria. The campaign started in 2011 and is held annually, starting on April 2, the *International Children's Book Day*, and continues till April 23, *UNESCO-introduced World Book and Copyright Day*. In that time frame, during *The March of the Books*, Bulgarian celebrities from different fields, such as writers, actors, musicians, athletes, etc., visit kindergartens and schools and read to children and young adults from their favorite children's books. Thus, they not only exercise the beneficial practice of reading aloud but also play the role of ambassadors of books and reading and, perhaps more importantly, endorse reading as a fun and pleasant activity which is essential, as celebrities are often role models for youngsters.

¹⁴ <https://www.abk.bg/>

Figure 7: The March of the Books



1.6. Reading and Remediation in the Digital Age

In the digital age, there are many competitors for people's attention. Those are digital distractions, interactive media, such as social media, and information flow with excessively high intensity that surround us constantly. Visual media, information and communication technologies are often recognized as a threat to book reading in the spare time. What is more, they are blamed for taking interest and time away from children's and adolescents' book reading, as they offer more accessible alternatives. New media and technologies are also accused for creating a need for constant action in order to arouse and maintain interest (Neuman, 1988). It is argued that the digital environment in general has a negative influence on children's and young adult's reading motivation.

Wigfield (1997) describes reading motivation as the belief of the reader about themselves; as their perception of self-report projection for reading success; and their perception of themselves as readers. He argues that when these beliefs are positive, both children and adults are more probably to engage in complex reading activities. Affect and enjoyment are other important aspects of reading motivation suggested by this author. They are essential because of their direct effect on aspects such as the worth of reading, inherent motivation for reading and interest in reading (Guthrie, Wigfield and VonSecker, 2000). According to Ryan and Deci (2002, p. 54):

To be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated (Ryan and Deci, 2002, p. 54)

Researchers in the field of reading achievement suggest that there are various stimuli for reading (Bake, Sher and Mackler, 1997). Children could be inspired to read because they recognize reading as an amusing activity, because reading is important for them, because it provides an opportunity for social interchange or because others would compliment them for reading. Each of these motivation varieties could strengthen the reading engagement of children or interfere with it.

Between 1976 and 2000, the Swedish longitudinal research program *Media Panel* observed how the introduction of new media in our daily life influenced children's and young adults' reading habits and how they changed in different media contexts (Johnsson-Smaragdi and Jönsson, 2006). By using the displacement hypothesis, whether new media displace more traditional media, scholars found very little support for the hypothesis that when new media appears and youngsters begin to arrogate it, they will surely lessen the amount of time they devoted to old media. Multiple new media formats were introduced in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s but the threat to book reading did not seem to be coming from those innovations. On the contrary, it was observed that most youngsters increased the total time they spend with the all media utterly. Hence, reading habits amongst children and young adults are determined by other factors, such as the attitude and perception of reading books in the surrounding environment, the attitude towards reading and books in the home environment, as well as the outlook of the school system towards reading and books.

However, Karadeniz and Can (2015) observed that there is a negative correlation between students' reading habits and their social media usage habits. At the same time, these scholars argue that there is a significant and positive correlation between students' book reading habits and media literacy, which shows that the higher attitudes towards reading students demonstrate the higher levels of media literacy they have. In other words, the more students read, the more critical attitude they have towards the events and circumstances they encounter. Thus, media literacy is an important skill to be obtained at an early age.

Ebooks have the capacity to be a bridge between printed media and interactive media which tend to be more appealing to children and young adults because of their characteristic to combine the advantages of a printed book with the capabilities of a digital device (Maynard, 2010). Interactive children ebooks combine physical and intellectual facets of pleasure. Thus, it is important to investigate what are the attitudes of children and young adults towards ebooks and e-reading and how they influence their reading habits. Maynard (2010) found that while adults tend to prefer traditional printed books, children not only choose the electronic ones but are also observed as “enthusiastic” readers when using ebooks. Additionally, studies on children’s reading habits show a recent increase in e-reading. According to the *Scholastic* 2012 biannual study *Kids and Family Reading Report*, 4th edition, 46% of children have read an ebook. The significance in this number comes from the fact that it is almost double in comparison with the previous report from 2010, when it was 25%.

The UK-based *National Literacy Trust*¹⁵ conducts a literacy survey in the country annually. The report from 2012 concludes that children and youngsters read more on computers and other electronic devices than in print, which seems to confirm the central role of technology in young people’s literacy and lives. In 2012, for the first time in the history of the annual literacy survey, the proportion of respondents reading on screen outside the school environment outnumbered the respondents reading in print. The children from the survey sample were more likely to state that they preferred screen reading, as more than half of the respondents said they would rather read on an electronic device in comparison to under a third, preferring print. What is more, the number of children who stated that ebooks benefit their motivation to read has increased vastly.

In the following decade, the combination of the rising popularity of electronic reading both at home and school environment would be the one to shape children’s literacy development (Jones and Brown, 2011). Children are still being introduced to literacy through traditional print books at school but electronic reading becomes a greater part in their literacy life as they mature. As it was already observed, engagement is also a factor impacting reading motivation and reading achievement (Marinak and Gambrell, 2008), thus researchers argue that if the educators’ goal is to keep children and young adults actively engaged in reading, schools need to consider the effect of electronic books on the reading engagement of children. In a study

¹⁵ <https://literacytrust.org.uk/>

conducted by Jones and Brown aiming to examine the preferences of reading formats of 3rd grade children they found that over 50% of the participants wanted to continue to read in both print and digital formats. The key conclusion was that the digital book is not going to substitute the print book in the reading preferences of youngsters, in spite of their interest in the interactive features, such as narrating mode, vocabulary pronunciation abilities, visual and sound effects. On the contrary, digital books could be implemented in the educational system as a format with a positive benefit towards children's motivation for reading.

In the 21st century's digital age, literacy is no longer defined solely as reading and writing but also includes students' ability to learn and interact with technology (de Jong and Bus, 2002). Looking at the interface of technology and literacy, the role of technology in reading achievement and instruction is potentially most rewarding for literacy educators, especially in the case of students in their beginning reading stages, as "children have known for decades (since the flourishing of children's literature in the nineteenth century) how to read hypertextually" (Bolter and Gromala, 2003, p. 81).

During children's beginning reading stages, Canadian students for instance are recommended to use technology such as Internet in order to reinforce their language learning and literacy (Ciampa, 2012). One example of how teachers of beginner readers can use such technology in the classroom in order to benefit their reading program is online children's storybooks (Alexander and Jetton, 2003; Castek, Bevans-Mangelson and Goldstone, 2006; de Jong and Bus, 2002). Online children storybooks are part of the edutainment concept whose "design includes the design of both entertainment and educational aspects in a design artifact" (Jegers and Wiberg, 2005, p. 124).

The findings from the study conducted by Ciampa (2012) contributed to the growing evidence that computer-assisted reading has a positive effect on students' motivation to read, especially for those who demonstrated reading difficulties in the classroom, probably because "children treat the book as a reflective interface" (Bolter and Gromala, 2003, p. 82). What is more, computer assisted reading provides "possibilities for enlarging and enhancing conceptions and practices of critical literacy through the reflective appropriation of electronic technologies", (Peters and Lankshear, 1996, p. 52).

The research conducted by Ciampa (2012) suggested that inattentive students with reading problems perceived enjoyment with online storybook reading and were found to foster reading motivation. In conclusion, the scholar argued that online reading software could be a beneficial supplement to print literacy and could promote reading motivation amongst beginning readers mostly because of its characteristics to increase sustained levels of attention and engagement in reading tasks in the classroom. Parents and educators are contributory in helping their children and students to develop the new skills important in today's digital age.

As we already observed, children's literature is affected by all digital devices, part of every aspect of daily life. Such manifestations are children's book apps (short for application software), rapidly gaining popularity and already established as the most popular types of apps. They are designed to be displayed smartphones that have smaller screens. Two different types of children's book apps can be distinguished: adaptations of existing books and books apps designed from scratch as apps (Hadassah, 2014). The adaptation could be overseen as a simple reproduction of a children's picture book where the only enrichment is the option to have the text read out loud. The other type, the digitally born texts, is more ambitious, as it exploits the audio and visual potential of the media, including interactive animations and puzzles (Schwebs, 2014). Schwebs argues that all sorts of genres, such as computer and educational games, edutainment, adaptations of classic books and advanced literary products, belong to this category.

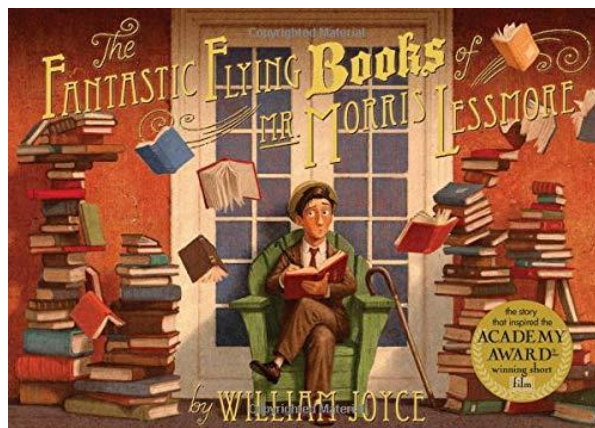
The goals for both app categories are to recreate the analogue reading by replicating the look of a paper book and to enrich the reading experience with technical additions, such as audio, video and interactive elements. However, technically, apps have the capability to create a fundamentally different experience from print book reading one. An example for that is the feature of some book apps which gives the reader the opportunity to change the plot. These book apps are known as multiple fabula apps. The concept originates from the analogue literary phenomenon and is closely related to the principles for hypertext. This kind of app is narrowly related to gaming and role-playing, sometimes to an extent where border lines merge. These apps give the readers interactive choices on the level of fabula. Users can determine how the narration develops. Wardrip-Fruin (2010) describes multiple fabula apps as a combinatorial literature which gives the opportunity of a number of initial materials to be arranged and, by following specific rules, to configure a large number of possible

presentations. Therefore, book apps have the status of hybrid texts that combine verbal, visual and sound elements, and are positioned on the threshold between a narrative and a game.

Another interpretation of the definition of book apps positions them as a part of digital literature that could be labeled as literature which “requires the digital computation” of technology (Wardrip-Fruin, 2010), and apps undoubtedly fall under this definition. For Aarseth (1997), book apps are examples of cybertext or ergodic literature, which is literature in which “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text” (Aarseth, 1997, p.19). According to the author, cybertext is “a machine for the production of variety of expression” (Aarseth, 1997, p.21), meaning the effort of the reader is required for it to become a text or an artistic product. Both of the approaches, of Wardrip-Fruin and Aarseth, are useful to determine which works belong to the categories of cybertext, hypertext and digital literature. However, it is difficult to position book apps solely in one category because of their multimodality, as the text in them is a composition of verbal, visual, sonic and interactive elements.

It is important to consider that adaptation has its roots in remediation. For instance, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*, telling the story of a the bibliophile Lessmore and his custodianship of a magical library of flying books, was firstly introduced in 2011 in the form of an award-winning short film, to be adapted to an iPad app in 2012, and to a picture book later in that year. According to Hutcheon (2012), the product of adaptation is a “transposition” of a particular work, and adaptation presents a transcoding process which often involves a shift of media and can also include a shift of genre, frame, and context.

Figure 8: “The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore”



Hutcheon argues that a transposition is a recreation rather than reproduction and should be regarded as an autonomous work, valued and interpreted as such. With the case of and its three different variations, it could be observed how the medium dictates the aesthetics. While in the short film the narrative is delivered exclusively relying on pictures, the app and the picture book both interact with visuals and words to tell the story. So far, the final adaptation of *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* is the augmented reality (AR) app titled *Imagnotron*. The AR app enables several layers of representation — visual, verbal and reader, and relies on interactivity.

Figure 9: Imagnotron - Reading Augmented Reality



Interactivity is a key feature in children book apps with multiple and wide-ranging functions. Those interactive elements can create a tension between text and image, text and sound, and image and sound; drive the story forward; provide additional information; suggest reader/activities within the app; allow reading of the story or creating a new one; offering the possibility to select different elements of the narrative (Hadassah, 2014). Thus, book apps, because of their interactive features, enable the reader/user to become co-author, co-illustrator or co-narrator. Therefore, scholars argue that the use of book apps and ebooks may promote young children's emergent reading and be beneficial for their achievements in written language (Korat, Shamir and Segal-Drori, 2014), especially vocabulary development,

phonological awareness, and story comprehension. Importantly, interactive books encourage youngsters to read.

A supporting example of the way new technology can positively impact children's reading motivation and engagement, among other literacies, is the case of *Inanimate Alice*, an ongoing digital novel and interactive multimodal fiction, telling the story of aspiring Alice, written by award-winning novelist Kate Pullinger. The transmedia narrative consists of text, images, music, sound effects, puzzles (Pence, 2012) and other game-like mechanisms that trigger youngsters' attention, enhancing their motivation to read and comprehend the story. While not contemplating on the didactic potential of her creation, the author admits that the success *Inanimate Alice* had in the area of education was an astonishing surprise (Pullinger, 2015). *Inanimate Alice* became an educational tool because of its value as a platform for promoting multimodal, problem solving, cultural, and social emotional literacies.

The educational digital novel entered classrooms around the world, including in Portugal in 2018, when , the Portuguese translation of *Inanimate Alice*, was included in the *Portuguese National Reading Plan 2027 (Plano Nacional de Leitura)*, already discussed here, to become the very first digital literary work ever endorsed by the teaching system in the country (Machado *et al.*, 2018).

Figure 10: Inanimate Alice - Educational Digital Novel



Another hybrid medium which combines the text-based and the acoustic world is the audiobook (Philips, 2007), introduced in the market in the 1980s and then referred to as a “talking book”. An audiobook is an audio record of a book read by a narrator who often is a professional or an actor, or sometimes the author themselves. Nowadays, audiobooks are distributed by book publishers or traders in multiple audio formats on physical and digital

devices, and through apps. Audiobooks are also considered as another remediation of the printed book which merge technology and media, even though oral reading activities have always been part of literary practices, such as poetry reading and similar public reading events (Have and Pedersen, 2016).

Youngsters tend to enjoy listening to audiobooks as a leisure activity. Nevertheless, audiobooks have their application in the classroom as an educational tool because of their beneficial impact on students' story comprehension and general literacy (Locke, 2001). The contributions of listening skills to literacy have long been acknowledged by scholars in the field of education (Pearson and Fielding, 1982). According to Serafini (2006) listening to an audiobook "deepens the reader's interpretation and their ability to comprehend and analyze literature" (Serafini, 2006, p. 5). Audiobook listening can "introduce readers to new literature and different genres, provide exposure to materials beyond their independent reading abilities, develop vocabulary, provide models of fluent reading, and promote struggling readers' literacy development (if they listen while reading)", (Moore and Cahill, 2016, p. 4).

A survey of the *Audio Publishers Association* in the USA from 2010 on audiobook usage showed that among the benefits for children and young adults who listen to audiobooks are encouraging reading, introducing titles and topics unknown to the readers, and developing love of reading. According to *Scholastic's Kids and Family Reading Report* (2019), 70% of kids who have listened to an audiobook agree that it has encouraged them to read more. In addition, Wolfson (2008, p. 108) argues that "audiobooks can model reading, teach critical listening, build on prior knowledge, improve vocabulary, encourage oral language usage, and increase comprehension." The scholar points out that it is essential to indicate that audiobook reading supports the development of all four language systems: phonological, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic.

Audiobooks also facilitate independent learning for students with sight limitations and positively affect children and young adults with reading difficulties or lack of reading motivation. A survey conducted in 2007 in Turkey showed that students, diagnosed as legally blind, claimed their learning improved after audiobooks became available because they were able to be more independent (Ozgur and Huseyin, 2007). Another research that involved secondary school students identified as struggling readers concluded that the participants in the survey sample had very positive reactions towards their teacher's reading aloud in the

classroom over a course of several weeks, which is a beneficial reading intervention practice, already discussed here. According to the results of the survey, students with an impersonal attitude towards reading were enthusiastic and participated actively in in-depth discussions that promoted critical thinking after the practice. Students also debated over literary elements and unknown vocabulary based used in the read texts (Zientarski and Pottorff, 1994). Scholars concluded that the described reading experience had affected the mental component of the reading process. Concerning the cognitive domain, scholars found that both strategies: listening while reading and repeated reading majorly benefit the fluency in reading among adults with reading deficits (Winn *et al.*, 2006).

In the course of digitisation, Mangen and van der Weel (2016) argue, the range of layers for textual reading is being enlarged to reach a vast number of screen-based technologies, reading devices and audiobooks. The authors explain that digitisation has shifted reading from its natural place to the universe of media and modalities, changing the core concepts of text, reading and literacy with the introduction of new multimodal forms of the activity, as it is now increasingly performed with digital screens and new technologies. Digitisation is affecting reading and literacy activities in kindergartens and the educational system as well with the introduction of digital screen technologies such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and e-books which expand the paper. The term “digital reading” is established to answer these changes. Digital reading refers to a text that has an analogue equivalent and was digitally encoded to be read in a diversity of online text formats, such as websites, blogs, emails, social media posts or long-form narratives (Glavanakova, 2020). Glavanakova (2020, p. 5) emphasizes the phenomenon that digital reading bears — “humans are only one component in the processes of creating and delivering texts online”, since digital machines have become not solely mediators but also essential factors on textuality, integrals to the reading process.

In order to examine this phenomenon, a large number of studies on the dissimilarities in reading comprehension between print and screen have been conducted in the past two decades. According to Porion *et al.* (2016), no difference in comprehension between conventional (paper) reading and digital (screen) reading is found. The scholars compared the effects of the two media (paper and screen) on the reading comprehension and the memorization amongst secondary school students. The students were provided with a carefully tailored text that had a controlled hierarchical structure and then were asked to answer a questionnaire, consisting of three types of questions — surface, semantic, and

inference. The overall results indicate that the reading performances are not significantly different when comparing both media. On the contrary, a meta-study that includes 54 studies conducted in 19 countries in the timeframe 2000-2017 concludes that when deep reading is required, print reading is the better option in terms of comprehension and the preferred choice even by digital natives (Delgado *et al.*, 2018).

Reading is a historical and cultural practice of great significance that has taken centuries to evolve to its current shape of textual literacy. Thus, practiced in any form, reading has its ubiquitous dimensions, as suggested by Mangen and van der Weel (2016, p. 121): “the ergonomic dimension: it is a physical, multisensory engagement with a device; the attentional dimension: it is allocation of attentional resources; the cognitive dimension: it is cognitive, linguistic processing; the emotional dimension: it is an emotionally impactful experience; the phenomenological dimension: it is a personally meaningful activity; the sociocultural dimension: it is socioculturally appraised and historically contingent activity with sociocultural implications”.

Chapter II - Reading Promotion Practices and Approaches, Communication Campaigns and Influential Factors - Case Study

2.1. Methodology

2.1.1 Methodology Overview

The research instrument selected as most appropriate for the purposes of this case study is a questionnaire. The justification behind this choice consists of a few factors — the large number of targeted survey participants, the need of collecting wide-ranging data, and time limitations.

The questions in the survey questionnaire are a combination of forced (close-ended) and open-ended questions and were asked consistently across all respondents.

2.1.2. Design of Study

In order to answer the research questions: what is the overall state of the reading habits of European children and young adults?; how is reading encouraged and promoted to children and young adults in the digital age?; what marketing and advertising strategies and initiatives are being introduced and practiced in Europe to encourage and promote reading among children and young adults?; a questionnaire was designed. It consists of a series of questions with the purpose of gathering information from preliminary targeted respondents, experts in the field, where both quantitative and qualitative data can be obtained.

The questionnaire was used to inquire the respondents about several aspects involved in this research: previously conducted surveys which examine the current reading habits of children and young adults in their country and factors that influence them; practices they apply to promote book reading amongst children and young adults in the digital age context and their efficacy; marketing strategies and/or communication campaigns in the media that they execute; if and how they collaborate with national, government and/or international institutions; which are the most important factors that influence the reading attitudes and habits of children and young adults in their experience; and which are the main difficulties

when working on a campaign that aims to positively impact children's and young adult's reading habits and attitudes, according to their experience.

Analysis of the qualitative data from the survey consists of coding the data to determine patterns and themes, and the quantitative data consists of statistical analysis. They both steered to the findings in this study.

2.1.3. Participants

To assemble appropriate participants to answer the questionnaire in this survey, international European associations with member institutions that are engaged in reading promotion in Europe in general and consortiums of European reading promotion organizations were investigated.

The members of The *Federation of European Publishers (FEP)* and the members of The *Federation of European Literacy Associations (FELA)* were outlined as potential respondents with more broad activities related to books, reading and literacy. Additionally, members of *EURead* consortium's network of organizations operating specifically in the reading promotion were also considered.

The contact information of the establishments mentioned above is publically accessible and published in the umbrella organizations' websites. In result, 65 European organizations from 31 countries were chosen as potential survey respondents, judging by their publicly announced mission and activities, and their contact information was collected.

2.1.4. Procedures

Following the finalization of the questionnaire, its design and skip logic, both described in the following paragraphs, and following the approval of the *Ethics Committee* of *University Fernando Pessoa*, the questionnaire was uploaded to the Google Forms platform. This particular platform was chosen because it allows different types of questions to be addressed, as well as the use of different scales. Also, it supports validation options and skip logic in the design. Last but not least, questionnaires prepared in Google Forms have a professional

appearance and the platform is very recognizable, user-friendly, mobile-friendly and wide-spread.

Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire to the targeted respondents, it was pre-tested for validity. The link to the Google Forms questionnaire was tested on different devices - cell phones and computers, to assure that it works correctly. Then, the questionnaire was completed without being submitted in order to pinpoint logic problems and linguistic mistakes. After those were identified and eliminated, the questionnaire was tested for face validity by an expert in the field, a fellow colleague from the board of Bulgarian Book Association. By answering the questions on their own, and again without actually submitting their answers, the expert evaluated that the questions effectively captured the topic. After completing the described pre-testing steps, the questionnaire was ready for dissemination.

In the beginning of April, the selected 65 European organizations were sent an email containing a brief description of the project, a justification why they were addressed, and a request to fill in the questionnaire, provided in the email via the already pre-tested hyperlink.

The questions offered in the questionnaire were asked consistently across all respondents to ensure reliability and validity and were a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions which allowed obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data.

The questionnaire consisted of 21 questions in total, divided into a few segments. At the start of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their consent to take part in the survey, or not to and therefore exit the survey. Afterwards, the respondents answered some background questions, such as which organization they represented and in which country. Regardless, participation was anonymous because no names and other personal data were required.

In the next segment, the respondents were asked a series of close-ended questions, such as whether or not their organizations conduct surveys to examine the current reading habits of children and young adults in their country and factors that influence them. Also, if they applied any practices to promote book reading amongst children and young adults in the digital age context. Skip logic was implemented in the questionnaire design in those close-ended questions. In case respondents gave a positive answer, they were directed to the next

open-ended question or set of open-ended questions which required them to provide additional descriptive information. And in case they gave a negative answer, they would skip those descriptive open-ended questions and would continue to the next section.

Participants who stated that their organizations do apply book promotion practices targeting youngsters were asked to evaluate their efficacy. A 5-point Likert scale was applied to measure this trait.

Another set of 6 closed-end questions tailored with skip logic enquired if the institutions organized campaigns, initiatives, events at kindergartens and/or schools to help the development of independent reading habits; if they executed any marketing strategies and/or communication campaigns in the media, new and conventional; if public libraries in their countries were actively engaged in the book promotion process that targets children and young adults; if schools in their countries use digital means to enhance the learning process; and if they collaborated with other government, national and/or international institutions/organizations.

Again, those who gave positive answers to the close-ended questions were directed to a section with descriptive open-ended questions. In that section, they were asked to provide additional information, links, and examples. And those who gave a negative answer were directed to the next question section.

The questionnaire also offered three open-ended questions that required long answers and were not linked with the skip logic, meaning that they were mandatory for all respondents. Those questions asked for information on what book promotion approaches and strategies do the publishing houses and book traders in their countries apply when targeting children and young adults; which are the most important factors that influence the reading attitudes and habits of children and young adults; and which are the main difficulties when working on a campaign that aims to positively impact children's and young adult's reading habits and attitudes. The questions described above collected valuable qualitative insight obtained by the organizations' representatives throughout their long-lived professional experience.

To ensure reliability and validity, the same questionnaire was distributed to all consenting participants. After all the data was collected, it was coded and aggregated based upon themes and patterns presented.

2.1.5. Data Collection

The instrument used and mentioned above, Google Forms, is very widespread and intuitive. It is easy to use and well known, therefore it was not a constraint for the respondents, quite the opposite. The Google Forms questionnaire took a maximum 30 minutes for the participants to complete, depending on their willingness to be more or less descriptive in their answers.

The data was collected anonymously, meaning that no personal names, email contacts or other significant information were collected. All collected data was securely kept and remained confidential throughout the whole study. No hard copies were made and the digital data records were stored on the researcher's personal and password-secured computer.

2.1.6. Data Analysis

The purpose of the data analysis was to examine how reading could be promoted to children and young adults as a recreational activity in the digital age; what good practices, marketing and advertising strategies and initiatives to encourage and promote reading among European children and young adults are being practiced; what surveys that examine the current reading habits of children and young adults are being conducted in Europe; what book promotion approaches and strategies do the publishing houses and book traders in their countries apply when targeting children and young adults; which are the most important factors that influence the reading attitudes and habits of children and young adults; and which are the main difficulties when working on campaigns that aim to positively impact children's and young adults' reading habits and attitudes. The data analysis includes both qualitative and quantitative techniques as the questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended question types.

After the defined time frame of one month for gathering answers from the targeted respondents was terminated, the collected data was exported from the Google Forms platform. The exported information presented the data from all participants according to each question.

The total number of respondents who completed the questionnaire was 21 out of 65 targeted organizations. This includes establishments from 17 European countries — Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Scotland, Serbia, Slovenia, and The Netherlands. The participants in the questionnaire are representatives from the following organizations: *Asociación Artística-Sociocultural Mestiza*¹⁶ (Spain), *Association of Belgian Publishers*¹⁷ (Belgium), *Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels*¹⁸ (Germany), *Slovenian Reading Association*¹⁹ (Slovenia), *Bulgarian Book Association*²⁰ (Bulgaria), *Croatian Reading Association*²¹ (Croatia), *Dutch Publishers Association*²² (The Netherlands), *Federation of Book Publishers from Luxembourg*²³, (Luxembourg), *Icelandic Publishers Association*²⁴ (Iceland), *Knigovishte.bg* — *The Bulgarian Educational Platform to Promote Reading Comprehension through Quizzes on Books*²⁵ (Bulgaria), *Lithuanian Publishers Association*²⁶ (Lithuania), *Littera* — the *Portuguese Association for Literacy* (Portugal), *Lukukeskus* — the *Finnish Reading Center* (Finland), *Österreichisches Bibliothekswerk*²⁷ (Austria), *Portuguese Publishers and Booksellers Association*²⁸ (Portugal), *Publishers and Booksellers Association of Serbia*²⁹ (Serbia), *Scottish Book Trust*³⁰ (Scotland), *Stiftung Lesen*³¹ (Germany), *The Association Read*³² (Norway), the *Finnish Publishers Association*³³ (Finland), and the *French Publishers Association*³⁴ (France). The geographical diversity of the participating organizations and the heterogeneity of their profiles granted the survey a wide scope.

The results of the quantitative data were automatically estimated by the Google Forms platform and presented in the form of pie charts for each question. They are presented in the

¹⁶ <https://mestiza.org.es/>

¹⁷ <https://adeb.be/en/about/>

¹⁸ <https://www.boersenverein.de/>

¹⁹ https://www.culture.si/en/Slovene_Reading_Association

²⁰ <https://www.abk.bg/>

²¹ <http://hcd.hr/>

²² <https://mediafederatie.nl/>

²³ <https://www.bicherediteuren.lu/>

²⁴ <https://fibut.is/>

²⁵ <https://www.knigovishte.bg/>

²⁶ <https://lla.lt/>

²⁷ <https://lukukeskus.fi/>

²⁸ <http://www.apel.pt/>

²⁹ <http://www.izdavaci.rs/>

³⁰ <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/>

³¹ <https://www.stiftunglesen.de/>

³² <https://foreningenles.no/>

³³ <https://kustantajat.fi/>

³⁴ <https://www.sne.fr/>

next part of this project. The qualitative gatherings were carefully read and combined in thematic groups, following the similarities in the answers and identifying common traits. The patterns and themes from each analysis layer are described below.

Chapter III - Results and Interpretations

3.1. Quantitative Findings

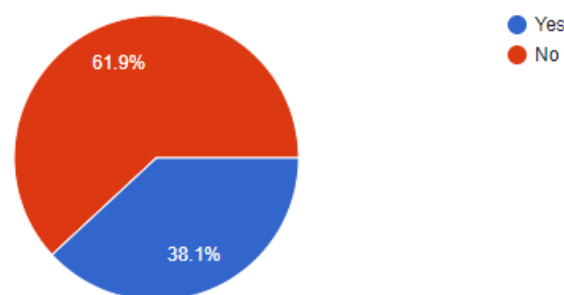
In the disseminated questionnaire there were 8 closed-ended questions, 7 of which were Yes-No questions and one was a scale question. These closed-ended questions provided the quantitative data for the case study.

When asked if the organizations they represent conduct surveys to examine the current reading habits of children and young adults in their country, as well as the factors that influence them, the larger portion of the respondents delivered a negative answer: 61.9% of the respondents stated that they do not conduct such surveys.

Figure 11: Quantitative Findings - Conduction of Surveys

4. Does the organization that you represent conduct surveys to examine the current reading habits of children and young adults in your country and factors that influence them?

21 responses

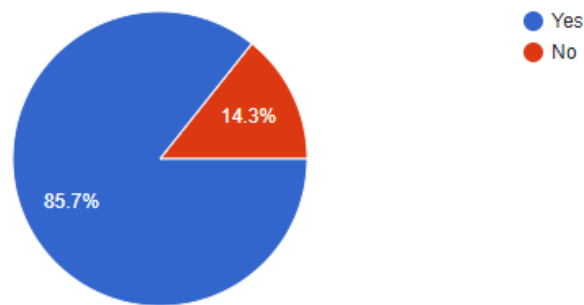


The percentage of respondents who affirmed that the establishments they represent do apply practices to promote book reading amongst children and young adults in the digital age context was 85.7%.

Figure 12: Quantitative Findings - Reading Promotion Practices

6. Does the organization that you represent apply any practices to promote book reading amongst children and young adults in the digital age context?

21 responses

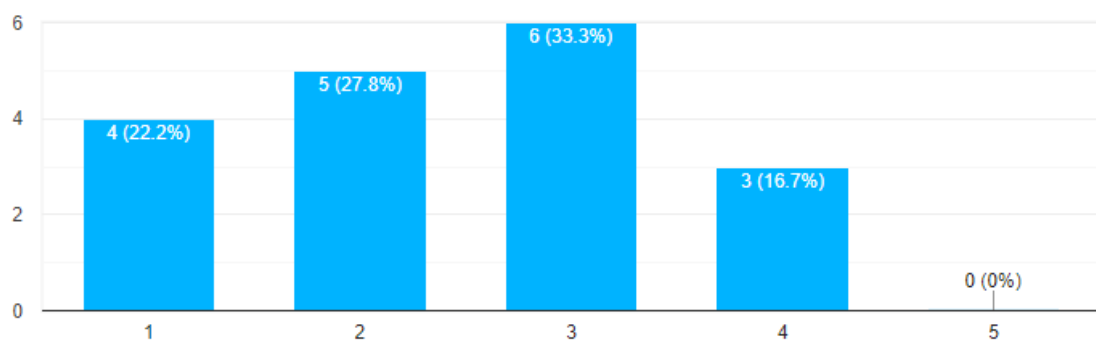


A 5-point Likert scale was used to inspect the scale of effectiveness, according to the respondents, where 5 was “Very effective” and 1 was “Absolutely not effective”. Most of the answerers expressed a neutral opinion, as 33.3% of them chose the midpoint in their answers, in this case this was point 3 - “Neither effective nor not effective”; 27.8% evaluated their book reading promotion practices as “Effective”; 22.2% as “Very effective”; and 16.7% as “Not effective”. No one answered with “Absolutely not effective”.

Figure 13: Quantitative Findings - Efficacy of Reading Promotion Practices

8. How would you evaluate the efficacy of those practices?

18 responses



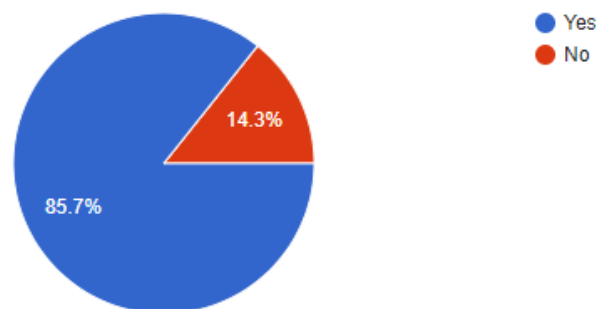
When asked if the organization that they represent organizes campaigns, initiatives, and other events at kindergartens and/or schools to help the development of independent reading habits,

the larger number of the respondents, 85.7%, expressed a positive answer while solely 14.3% or 3 respondents expressed a negative answer.

Figure 14: Quantitative Findings - Reading Happenings at Kindergartens and Schools

9. Does the organization that you represent organize campaigns/initiatives/events at kindergartens and/or schools to help the development of independent reading habits?

21 responses

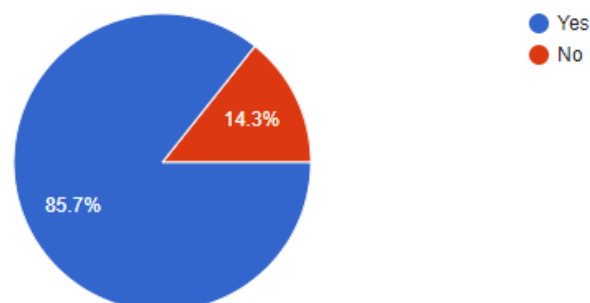


The question “Does the organization that you represent execute any marketing strategies and/or communication campaigns in the media?” received an identical answer.

Figure 15: Quantitative Findings - Marketing and Communication Strategies

12. Does the organization that you represent execute any marketing strategies and/or communication campaigns in the media (new and traditional)?

21 responses

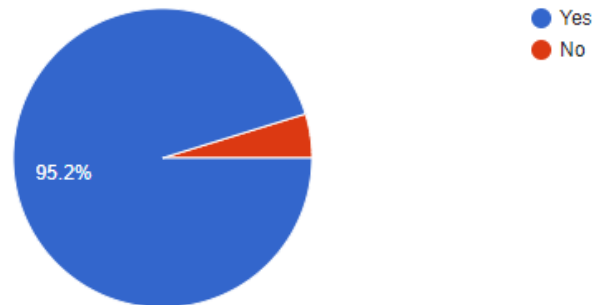


Concerning the public libraries and if they are actively engaged in the book promotion process that targets children and young adults, solely one respondent gave a negative answer while the remaining 20 respondents, representing 95.2% of sample, affirmed that public libraries in their countries are actively participating in promoting books to youngsters.

Figure 16: Quantitative Findings - The Role of Public Libraries

14. Are public libraries in your country actively engaged in the book promotion process that target children and young adults?

21 responses

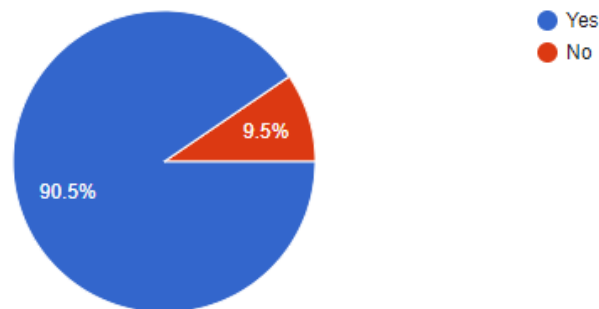


A high percentage of respondents claimed that schools in their countries do use digital means to enhance the learning process — 90.5% or 19 of the participants in the questionnaire. An identical answer was given to the question “Does the organization that you represent collaborate with government, national or/and international institutions/organizations?”, where solely two respondents expressed a negative answer.

Figure 17: Quantitative Findings - Digital Means Used at Schools

16. Do schools in your country use digital means to enhance the learning process?

21 responses



3.2. Qualitative Findings

Depending on the respondents' answers to the closed-ended questions, the skip logic implemented in the questionnaire's design led them to subsequent questions where they were asked to provide more details. These questions were the tool to gather qualitative data.

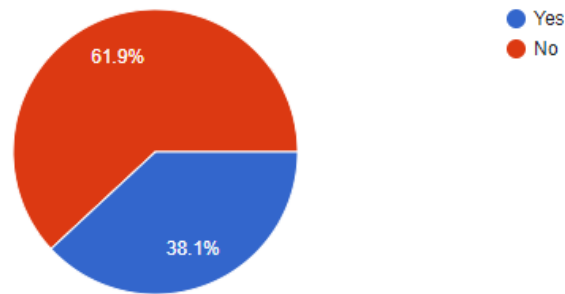
3.2.1. Surveys

The smaller portion of respondents stated that the organizations they represent do conduct surveys to examine the current reading habits of children and young adults in their countries, as well as their influencing factors — 38.1% or 8 respondent organizations.

Figure 18: Qualitative Findings - Conduction of Surveys

4. Does the organization that you represent conduct surveys to examine the current reading habits of children and young adults in your country and factors that influence them?

21 responses



It was discovered that some of the respondent organizations that do conduct surveys focus on the results and effects of their projects and campaigns. This trait was observed from the answers by the *Finnish Publishers Association*, the *Asociación Artística-Sociocultural Mestiza*, and the *Scottish Book Trust*.

The *Finnish Publishers Association* and the German *Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels* stated that they conduct general surveys, related to the book market in general, examining topics such as general stimuli for book purchasing, the most frequently preferred type of literature, the interest in audiobooks, and ebooks. Those surveys are not particularly investigating the current reading habits of children and young adults and the influencing factors, but they include those age groups as part of the general survey sample.

Common research topics outlined in the questionnaire results were reading promotion, reading habits and attitudes, readability of e-readings and ebooks, habits of buying and lending books, reading in schools, reading aloud, reading socialization.

3.2.2. Promoting Book Reading to Children and Young Adults. Challenges and Constraints

The examination of the obtained results outlined three major groups of practices applied by the respondents on a national level in order to promote book reading to children and young

adults. The methods were categorized in the following three groups: campaigns and initiatives; events; and digital approaches.

It was observed that reading aloud, a powerful practice that develops interest in book reading and independent reading habits (Canoy, van Ours and van der Ploeg, 2006), is applied as a major concept in many campaigns and initiatives held by the questionnaire respondents. Such are the *March of the Books*, organized by the *Bulgarian Book Association*, which endorses popular individuals from different fields who are invited to read to children and young adults, thus, becoming ambassadors of reading as a recreational activity; and the *Icelandic Publishers Association's* campaign within which frame authors visit schools in the country and discuss with youngsters, aged 16-19, topics related to reading, writing and books. Both campaigns are organized with the solid involvement of libraries, kindergartens, schools and teachers. The *Publishers Association in Iceland* also organizes the *Reading Marathon*, again in partnership with local schools.

Other campaigns and initiatives, held with the aim to popularize reading as a pleasant and beneficial activity to youngsters, are the *Reading Vacation*, managed by *The Finnish Publishers Association* in collaboration with libraries, booksellers and other branch organizations. The emphasis in the campaign is that it promotes any type of reading — traditional and digital, during schools autumn break. The *Slovenian Reading Association* manages the *National Month of Reading Together*, involving teachers and children book award-winning illustrators as ambassadors of joy of reading.

Figure 19: Qualitative Findings - The National Month of Reading Together Campaign in Slovenia



Everybody Reads is the response of the *Association of Belgian Publishers* to the worrying statistics by the *PIRLS* (2016), according to which 10-year-old Belgian students were the lowest readers in the European Union. In order to draw attention to this concern, the *Association of Belgian Publishers* launched the campaign *Everybody Reads* with the slogan *15 Minutes of Reading Every Day*. The appeal is to *Stop everything to read for 15 minutes every day and test the benefits of daily reading*. Within the campaign, participating school teachers offer students 15 minutes of reading every day, within a month.

Figure 20: Qualitative Findings - The Everybody Reads Campaign in Belgium



Events with different plots and concepts were also outlined in the questionnaire as a popular mean to promote book reading to children and young adults, as they give the youngsters the chance to get the taste of reading in a livelier atmosphere and often directly from the creators of the books — authors, translators, illustrators, publishers. It was discovered that such meetings are often realized in the frames of big events for the branch, such as the *Lisbon Book Fair*³⁵ (held by *Portuguese Publishers and Booksellers Association*), the *Sofia International Literary Festival for Children and Young Adults*³⁶ (organized by *Bulgarian Book Association*), the *Children's Book Week in Serbia* (held by *Publishers and Booksellers Association of Serbia*), and *Lithuania Reads* (organized by *Lithuanian Publishers Association*).

Another common trait that was observed was introducing events that involve competition which is motivating for the youngsters. The German *Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels*, the *Icelandic Publishers Association*, as well as the *French Publishers Association* all started to regularly organize reading competitions among children and young adults as a means to promote book reading to those age groups. The competition held by the

³⁵ <https://www.feiradolivrodelisboa.pt/>

³⁶ <https://kids.literaryfest.org/>

French Publishers Association is a reading aloud competition. The participants in the competition are children in the fifth grade who are invited to read in public a short text of their choice, taken from a literary fiction work, for a maximum of 3 minutes.

In the context of the digital age, it was observed that more and more organizations introduce digital approaches in the process of book reading promotion to children and young adults. The Bulgarian *Knigovishte* is a digital platform which also applies the competitive competition approach. It is a quiz-platform with questionnaires on books, short stories, and texts from the first to fifth-grade literature textbooks. Each user has their personal profile within the platform where quiz results are collected, thus taking part of an ongoing competition on reading comprehension, much resembling an online game. The platform is offered to parents and to school teachers to be incorporated in the educational system.

Another example of a digital approach implemented in school classrooms is the initiative *Reading Creates Digital Bridges*³⁷. It is launched by the *Croatian Reading Association* with the goal of exploring different possibilities for improving reading comprehension among fourth grade pupils by using interactive online reading. In particular, the goal of the initiative is to observe how regular interactive online reading sessions could help pupils to further develop their literacy skills, reading comprehension, and storytelling.

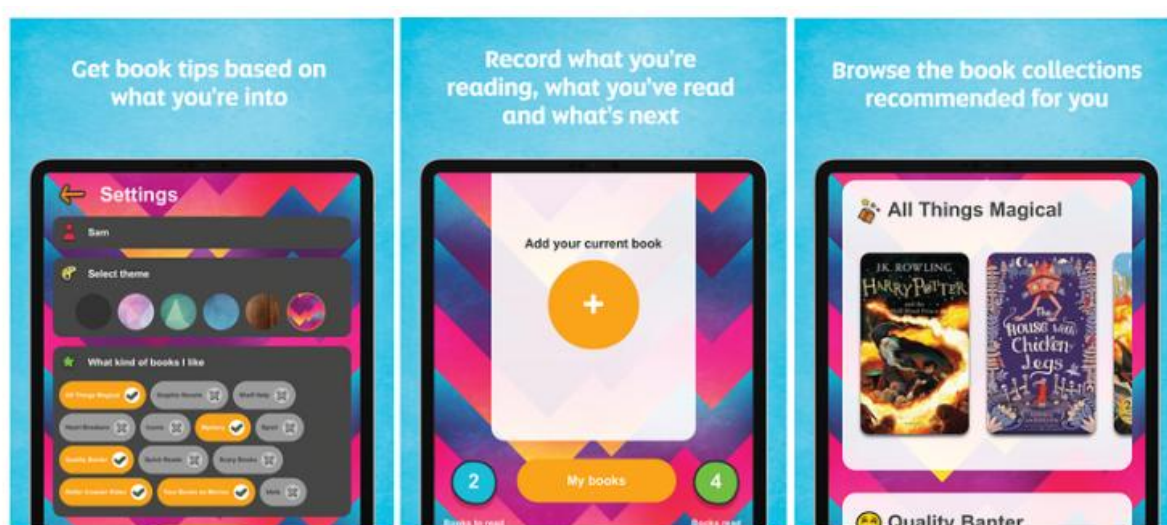
Figure 21: Qualitative Findings - The Reading Creates Digital Bridges Initiative in Croatia



³⁷ <https://www.bib.irb.hr/1135557>

In accordance with the increased demand and interest in apps, the *Scottish Book Trust* launched the *Bookzilla* app³⁸. It was developed by young people for young people in order to encourage pupils to read for pleasure, whether they are already regular readers or just in the beginning of their reading journey. The app provides book recommendations and book challenges to its users. The launch of the app derived from the belief that any type of reading is a good reading.

Figure 22: Qualitative Findings - The the Bookzilla app in Scotland



The German *Stiftung Lesen* also invests efforts in digital applications. In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Read with Apps*³⁹ was introduced. It is a digital family service that compiles applications which help children to read and learn. It consists of numerous apps in various categories, including reading aloud, reading assistance, literacy development, evaluation and encouragement of pronunciation and spelling.

³⁸ <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/reading-and-stories/bookzilla>

³⁹ <https://www.stiftunglesen.de/loslesen/unsere-highlights/lesen-mit-app>

Figure 23: Qualitative Findings - The Read with Apps in Germany



Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Spanish *Asociación Artística-Sociocultural Mestiza* shifted their focus and started various digital reading promotion activities, targeting youngsters. Those activities are realized through videos, Zoom activities and reading promotion platforms using digital books from different publishers. At the same time, *Lukukeskus*, the *Finnish Reading Center* offers young adults an online literary magazine, which communicates with the youngsters through social media accounts, including an Instagram reading group, and a podcast.

Publishing houses are responsible for the book production but also play a major role in the promotion of book reading. Therefore, the participants in the questionnaire were asked what book promotion approaches and strategies the publishers and book traders in their countries apply when targeting children and young adults.

The results of the questionnaire led to the observation that the publishers and the book traders apply similar approaches to the ones practiced by the organizations engaged in the book promotion to youngsters. The practices applied can be categorized in three groups: events; digital approaches; and specialized actions.

The respondents shared that the most frequent book promotion approach which publishers and book traders use to target youngsters is organizing events. Most of the event types overlap with those managed by the organizations, such as participation at book fairs and literary festivals that have a program for children and young adults; informal meetings between the young readers and authors and illustrators; book readings, that are once again practice of the reading aloud; authors visiting schools, similar to the *Bulgarian Book Association's* and the *Icelandic Publishers Association's* initiatives, observed in the previous part of the project; book promotions with the participation of the writer and/or illustrator; workshops; quizzes and prize games.

In the context of the digital age, the other observed similarity was the exploitation of digital channels by publishers and book traders when targeting children and young adults. This approach consists of a strong application of social media possibilities, including digital influencers. In this case, when selected rightly the digital influencers play the role of ambassadors of reading and endorse it as a fun but also beneficial activity. This approach was detected in some of the previously examined initiatives, such as *The March of the Books*⁴⁰.

The other common trait that we outlined is the collaboration between publishing houses and bookstores and/or libraries. It was stated that many of the specialized events described above have their realization precisely at bookstores and/or libraries. What is more, it was mentioned that some publishers have a special section at the bookstores with an appropriate and appealing appearance where they display their books, as an additional aspect of the partnership. Another specialized approach when targeting children and young adults is giveaways to the young readers or book donations to libraries, bookstores or similar sites. This practice is limited to the publishers and is not used by the organizations that promote reading because it works as advertising and Public Relations technique for the publishers by fulfilling two goals: helping the reading promotion by donation and attracting media attention to their brand.

Executing campaigns that aim to promote book reading to children and young adults and to positively impact their reading habits is a timely process that involves many stakeholders. Therefore, the respondents were asked to share what are the main difficulties that they face

⁴⁰ <https://www.abk.bg/articles/view/319>

when working on such campaigns, according to their experience. The discussed themes are home and school environments as influential factors; the challenge to compete with the countless digital means of entertainment; the lack of national surveys on this subject; availability of books; and practical issues, such as financial constraints, collaboration with institutions and the media.

In this topic, once again home and school environments were pinpointed as essential factors. According to the respondents' answers parents and surrounding relatives should be speaking about reading in a positive manner and should realize their role as role models who can encourage children to read even after they have grown up, in order for the campaigns to have a meaning to the children and young adults. The organizations' respondents highlight that the school as an institution bears a relevant responsibility as well. They suggest that the school system should focus more on reading for pleasure instead of reading for learning, as there is a strong perception among children and young adults that books and reading are solely associated with a form of studying. The role model concept was again raised in the school system context. Some respondents argued that teachers have the leadership to encourage young people to read but at the same time they are not always able to provide book suggestions according to the young people's interests because they are not always acquainted with contemporary books and authors. Therefore, they often fail to deliver intriguing book recommendations which could result negatively in the interest of the youngsters towards reading.

In general, it was observed that the organizations experience difficulties to make books appealing to the youngsters and to craft the suitable message to reach the target audience, especially in the context of the digital age. The challenge, outlined by multiple respondents, is the competition of books with the Internet, social media and numerous digital entertainment platforms, such as Netflix and Spotify. The availability of so many digital options for amusement in everyday life, and the high volume of visual and textual information in the digital environment result in shorter attention span, making reading a less preferable leisure activity.

A large number of the respondents pointed out that their campaigns and initiatives to promote book reading to children and young adults would not have any significance if the targeted audience does not have access to books. Shortage of access to books is a problem, especially

in the disadvantaged communities, some of the respondents stated. In order for any reading campaign to be successful, books need to be available for everyone and everywhere, regardless of their social status, background, and location.

According to the questionnaire results, a smaller portion of respondents is engaged in conducting surveys that measure children's and young adult's reading habits and attitudes, in this part it was outlined that organizations experience difficulties to plan campaigns without survey findings. In addition, the lack of such surveys or evaluation studies on a national level limits them in measuring the impact of their efforts, delivered in the form of campaigns, initiatives, events, etc.

When it comes to the practical side of the book reading promotion realization, it was stated that financial constraints, disinterest of politicians or policy-makers, lack of cooperation between culture and educational institutions, and lack of media space due to dominant commercial content are commonly encountered obstacles.

3.2.3. Communication Campaigns. Marketing and Advertising Strategies

The impact of different communication campaigns on the benefits of book reading was already observed in the previous parts of this project. Because of their importance, the respondents were asked to name specific communication campaigns the organizations they represent execute, in addition to the already discussed positive practices. Marketing and advertising are inseparable elements of the promotion of any product. Even though books bear intellectual value and are the result of the efforts of many artists and experts, they are in the market and have a price. These two aspects make them goods. Therefore, the respondents were asked to describe what marketing and advertising strategies the organizations they represent use when managing communication campaigns, related to books and reading and targeting children and young adults. They were also asked to describe how they interact with the media, new and traditional.

The *Finnish Reading Center* claimed to organize exclusively survey-based communication campaigns and *Lukuviikko*⁴¹ (*Literacy Week*) was pointed out as one of those campaigns that

⁴¹ <https://lukuviikko.fi/>

aims to promote reading and literacy. During the *Literacy Week* in Finland, external organizations are invited to participate with their own events, and thus the *Literacy Week* gains large visibility, being communicated through multiple channels.

Figure 24: Qualitative Findings - The Lukuviikko (Literacy Week) in Finland



The German *Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels* manages a nationwide campaign for promotion of book reading named *Book Now!*. The campaign involves major players from the branch, such as book traders, bookstores, and publishers in Germany, joining forces with the mission to arouse curiosity towards books and reading. *Book Now!* aims to remind that books and reading are part of everyday life and aims to give the book the attention it deserves.

The *Portuguese Publishers and Booksellers Association* annually organizes *World Book Day*. The campaign spreads throughout the whole country and multiple events take place within its frame. The mission behind *World Book Day* is to provide every child and young adult with a book of their own. Meetings with authors and illustrators and book readings, among many other events, occur.

In Finland and Iceland, a not so customary book promotion practice was observed — book prizes. The *Finlandia Prize (Finlandia-palkinto)*⁴² is a literary award in Finland, held by the *Finnish Book Foundation*. It is awarded annually to the author of the best novel written by a Finnish citizen. There is also a special category for children's books, named *Finlandia Junior Award*⁴³. The third category is for non-fiction books, the *Tieto-Finlandia Award*. In

⁴² <https://kirjasaatio.fi/finlandia/kaunokirjallisuuden-finlandia>

⁴³ <https://kirjasaatio.fi/sivut/10/finlandia-junior/>

Iceland, among other literary prizes, there is one exclusively for children's books, the *Reykjavík Children's Book Awards*⁴⁴. The award is a result of a merger between the *Reykjavík Scholastic Children's Literature Award* and *Dimmalímm*, the *Icelandic Illustrators' Award*. The awards are organized in three categories: for original Icelandic children's books; for an outstanding translation of a foreign children's book; and for illustrated children's books.

Figure 25: Qualitative Findings - The Finlandia Prize (Finlandia-palkinto) in Finland



A second unconventional approach is practiced by the *Icelandic Publishers Association*. The association issues its own annual magazine, called *Book-news*. The magazine is in print and is distributed to each and every Icelandic home before Christmas. *Book-news* features introductions to books published throughout the year, and one third of the content is an introduction to books for children and young adults. The *Icelandic Publishers Association's* approach is significant in two ways. Firstly, the magazine directly enters the citizens' homes, leaving no chance to be neglected, which is the case in all types of media, especially digital based. Secondly, the distribution time is very strategic, as during Christmas gifts are traditionally given, especially within the members of a household, thus the magazine plays the role of a reminder that books would make a valuable Christmas present.

The approach to establish one's own media was observed in other respondents' answers. The German *Österreichisches Bibliothekswerk* issues a book review magazine, *bn.bibliotheks-nachrichten*⁴⁵, and distributes it to librarians. Among others, the magazine features information on newly-published titles from the world of children's and young adults' literature. The magazine can also be found in a digital format. The *Federation of Book*

⁴⁴ <https://bokmenntaborgin.is/en/literature-web/literary-awards/reykjavik-childrens-book-award>

⁴⁵ <https://www.biblio.at/literatur/bn/index.html>

Publishers from Luxembourg issues a catalogue of all the children's and young adults' books published by all the publishing houses in the county.

Figure 26: Qualitative Findings - The Österreichisches Bibliothekswerk magazine in Germany



In order to market their activities, the respondents use different types of media, traditional and new. When it comes to traditional media, television, radio and newspapers all come up from the results. Many of the organizations state that they disseminate press releases to suitable media and organize media appearances, mostly through interviews. When digital media is concerned, the larger number of the respondents stated that they are active on social media and use channels such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. One respondent stated that they pay for advertisements on Google ads. Many respondents claimed to work in partnership with certain websites for advertising purposes and for wider visibility of materials for the importance of reading, such as interviews with psychologists, teachers, children book writers, illustrators, and librarians. Another example of collaboration with external websites is publishing a weekly best-seller list for youngsters and adults, again working as an advertising technique to promote certain titles but also books in general.

3.2.5. The Role of the Educational System and the Public Libraries

The environment of kindergartens and schools and its significance in shaping children and young adults into future independent readers was repeatedly discussed in this project.

Therefore, the questionnaire respondents were asked to share what campaigns, initiatives and events to help develop independent reading habits among youngsters the educational system organizes. In addition, they were asked to describe how public libraries are involved in that process, since this particular institution plays a vital role in promoting literacy and reading, as already discussed.

Multiple common traits regarding the type of events that help the development of independent reading habits among youngsters held at kindergartens and schools were observed in the questionnaire results. Those are author's visits and informal meetings, readings and reading aloud practices (*March of the Books* by Bulgarian Book Association, *Read to Me* by Croatian Reading Association), literature-related workshops, school literature awards. The respondents share that they promote a lifelong love for literature to the youngest readers or readers-to-be through reading aloud, music, art, and games.

Figure 27: Qualitative Findings - The Read to Me campaign in Croatia



In the digital age context, gamification of reading was also observed in the questionnaire results as an approach, especially by the Bulgarian *Knigovishte*. *Knigovishte* is a platform that works on an annual subscription basis and aims to engage one whole school class and their lead teachers. The class subscription is the most effective pricewise, but also carries the social effect of including all children in the class, no matter of their social background. The teachers receive additional digital educational tools, such as quiz-for-homework or digital rewards, thus the children can compete for additional rewards each month as one team.

Some of the other respondents also target teachers and parents, realizing their significant role as role models in the shaping of reading habits and attitudes towards books and reading among the youngsters. In addition, teacher trainings are organized in the public libraries, as well as lectures for parents and guardians. Their goals are to encourage those role models, parents and teachers; to give their children/students a book as often as possible; to read to them and with them; to understand the children's reading interests and give book recommendations according to them, and to express a positive attitude towards books and reading. These, among other, influencing factors are discussed further ahead in the project.

Libraries, especially the public ones, have the social responsibility of providing access to materials at different levels of media and various approaches towards reading activities both digitally or on paper (Bokan and Cupar, 2017). They are in the front line when it comes to book promotion. When the respondents were asked how libraries are engaged in the book promotion process that targets children and adults, it was observed that they organize or host authors' and illustrators' visits; reading aloud practices in various forms and formats; interactive activities with books, such as drawing contests inspired by favorite titles; literary competitions for children, such as reading aloud contests; illustration art shows that bind the art of the written text with the art of the accompanying graphics; and reading clubs.

The questionnaire also reveals that libraries often collaborate with kindergartens, schools and organizations engaged in the reading promotion, such as the questionnaire respondents, to jointly manage events, as described above. Particular campaigns, in which libraries are actively involved, some of which were already mentioned, are: *Reading Vacation*, promoting any type of reading during schools autumn break, held by the *Finnish Publishers Association* in collaboration with libraries, booksellers and other branch organizations; *The March of the Books*, applying the endorsement technique of famous individuals from different fields, organized by *Bulgarian Book Association* in collaboration with public schools and kindergartens; *Reading Competitions*, held by *Icelandic Publishers Association* in partnership with local schools; *National Month of Reading together*, organized by *Slovenian Reading Association*, in collaboration with school teachers; *Closed Children's' Book Fair* for all school libraries in the country, where their staff can meet authors, translators, illustrators and publishers, held by the *Icelandic Publishers Association*, in partnership with local schools; and *Lithuania Reads*, a 2-week event with a diverse program, consisting of informal meetings

between writers and children and young adults, organized by the *Lithuanian Publishers Association*, in partnership with publishing houses, libraries, local schools.

In the digital age context, two campaigns were described. The first one is the campaign *Reading Creates Digital Bridges*, organized by members of the *Croatian Reading Association*. *Reading Creates Digital Bridges* explores the prospects of boosting reading comprehension among pupils in 4th grade by applying interactive online reading. Its goal is to investigate how systematical interactive online reading could benefit the development of pupil's literacy skills, reading comprehension, and storytelling. The initiative demonstrates a fruitful collaboration between students and information science teachers.

The second campaign is *Digital Collection of Students' Picture Books*⁴⁶, again realized in Croatia, by a member of the *Croatian Reading Association*. Within the campaign, a librarian and a group of students digitize picture books, and the collection is then available on the school's library website. Then, the digitized picture books are read regularly at *Readers' Club* meetings and classes at the school, as well as at numerous workshops and professional gatherings through presentations and practical workshops, encouraging fellow librarians to do the same.

A few of the respondents claimed that libraries in their respective countries organize professional seminars and conferences for teachers and educators in order to exchange good practices for book promotion to children and young adults, to educate them how to promote e-reading.

3.2.6. Influencing Factors upon Children and Young Adults' Reading Attitudes and Habits

The respondents were asked to share their experience about the most important factors that influence the reading attitudes and habits of children and young adults. All answers to this significant question were united around the belief that children start to learn from the people who surround them in the home setting, most particularly their parents, before they enter the academic system, as concluded by Kloosterman (2010). In particular, the answerers stated that love for reading, hence reading habits, are to be developed from the earliest age possible.

⁴⁶ <https://www.ifla.org/node/92353>

Additionally, parents are the first and most important role models for their children. The respondents stated that actions by individuals inspire the young to read, therefore, interest in reading is often sparked by role models, similarly to Hyunjoon's (2008) conclusion that the positive attitudes of parents toward reading has a positive impact on the reading performance of children.

The home and kindergarten/school environment, respectively the attitudes towards books and readings of family, peers, and teachers, were also pointed as highly influencing factors on the reading attitudes and habits of youngsters. A home environment with enough books and early contact with books is a major component of the early development of reading habits. This conclusion corresponds to the concept of active home literacy environment (HLE) which is an environment rich in literacy-related activities and materials, an environment that provides the children with opportunities to develop their own literacy skills (Baroody and Diamond, 2012). In that regard, one of the respondents suggested that there should be more campaigns and activities targeting parents and making them aware that they have an important role to play in encouraging reading.

Reading aloud is another factor around which many respondents united, stating the correlation between the reading aloud practice and the development of positive reading attitudes and independent reading habits. The reading aloud practice keeps appearing in the questionnaire results in different contexts: as an object of research, as a book reading promotion practice inside and outside the home, as an activity integrated into book promotion events, and as a factor that influences children's and young adults' attitudes towards reading and books.

Some of the questionnaire respondents stated that more book reading campaigns should be realized in various places and formats. An intriguing conclusion by one of the respondents stated that books should be more integrated in the mainstream and people reading should be shown in popular media, such as television, non-book related ads, and social media. This way, reading would be presented as an amusing activity, and books would be perceived as part of everyday life. Also in the context of the digital age, digital influencers are massive role models for the youngsters, therefore they should be involved in the book promotion process.

Last but not least, the content of the books and readings was pinpointed as an important factor that influences children's and young adult's reading attitudes. Here once again surfaces the importance of parents and teachers who play the role of peculiar book curators.

The book reading promotion campaigns, practices, initiatives, and events and the marketing strategies launched and managed by the questionnaire respondents would be more challenging without the cooperation with other national, international and government institutions and organizations. This makes these collaborations a factor that influences the book and reading promotion in the respective countries.

Most often the organizations engaged in the promotion of book and reading to children and young adults shared that they collaborate with the respective ministries of education and culture, state governments and local municipalities, national literacy centers, national libraries, public libraries and librarians' associations, private foundations and Non-government organizations, operating in the field of reading, literacy and culture.

Solely three (3) respondents, of the total of 21, shared that their respective countries have a specific national strategy connected to literacy and/or reading. Those are the *National Literacy Strategy* (Finland), the *National Reading Plan* (Portugal) and the *National Strategy to Revive Book Reading* (Croatia). The *Finnish National Literacy Strategy*⁴⁷ is an ongoing government project that aims to expand the concept of literacy and to bring forward the importance of both multiliteracy and multilingualism. The launch of the project is a reaction to the decreased number of highly skilled readers and the decrease of literacy skills among the youngsters. The guidelines of the *National Literacy Strategy* intend to inspire children and young people to read, to encourage communities to support literacy, and to create structures that promote reading.

The *Portuguese National Reading Plan*, already discussed previously, takes place in phases every 10 years, where the current being is the *Portuguese National Reading Plan 2027* (from 2017 to 2027). The *Plan*'s main objectives are to provide access to reading, respectively to knowledge; to increase the reading rates and habits of the population; to improve the literacy of the Portuguese people; to promote recreational reading; and to raise appreciation about the

⁴⁷ <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Finland-2020.pdf>

value and significance of reading on a national level, among others. In practice, these objectives are fulfilled by supporting and promoting programs for social integration through reading, including different segments of the population with the means of workshops that improve literacy among students; annual events celebrating the *International Children's Book Day*; a *Reading Week*; and the already mentioned *Reading Aloud Week*.

The *Croatian National Strategy to Revive Book Reading*⁴⁸ is a government initiative that proposes to contribute to the development of the reading culture and to enable reading enjoyment to as many people in Croatia as possible. The initiative was started to answer the need of a unified strategy devoted exclusively to the development of reading culture and literacy in the country in the context of the decreased interest in books and reading, the changed reading behavior in the digital environment and the insufficient literacy. The *Strategy's* aim is to connect and harmonize the actions of all involved factors, from the author and the book to the reader. The *Croatian National Strategy to Revive Book Reading* outlines three goals: to establish an effective social frame-work as a support to reading; to develop reading literacy and encourage readers to active and critical reading; and to increase the availability of books and other reading materials.

Figure 28: Qualitative Findings - The Croatian National Strategy to Revive Book



Internationally, the organizations participating in the questionnaire join forces with *EURead*, the *Federation of European Publishers*, the *Federation of European Literacy Associations*, and the *International Literacy Association*. The consortium *EURead*, previously discussed, has 30 members, all of which are European reading promotion non-profit-organizations united

⁴⁸ <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/the-national-strategy-to-revivebook-reading/16776>

around the belief that reading is a compulsory condition for full participation in today's media-led and culturally diverse society. The main objective of *EURead* is to jointly develop new strategies for reading promotion amongst all age groups by exchanging knowledge, experiences and concepts.

Similarly to *EURead*, the *Federation of European Publishers (FEP)* is a major European umbrella organization which currently unites 29 national publisher's associations based in the old continent and active in the field of books and educational content in all formats operating nationally, regionally and locally. *FEP* members are united by the major mission to promote reading as a key ability and a fundamental right to the human condition and citizenship, embracing children, young adults and adults by boosting the use of books and libraries as sources of knowledge and culture.

The major goal of the *Federation of European Literacy Associations (FELA)* is universal literacy in Europe. To achieve it, the Federation organizes conferences, seminars and exchange programs, and supports research so that best practices and great ideas can be spread.

In addition, many of the respondents state that they partner with recognizable international book fairs, such as the world largest — *Frankfurter Buchmesse*⁴⁹, and *Bologna Children's Book Fair*⁵⁰, the leading professional fair for children's books in the world.

Figure 29: Qualitative Findings - The International Frankfurter Buchmesse and Bologna Children's Book Fair



The long list described above comes to demonstrate that promotion of book reading to children and young adults is a mutual mission and a question of mutual efforts and agenda that takes place on various levels and layers of the countries and the societies.

⁴⁹ <https://www.buchmesse.de/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/en/home/878.html>

Chapter IV - Discussion and Conclusions

4.1. Findings Overview

After exploring the data collected from 21 questionnaire respondents, multiple common traits were observed and combined in theme groups: factors that influence children's and young adults reading habits and attitudes; reading promotion practices and communication campaigns, marketing and advertising strategies; main difficulties in performing them; the roles of the education system and the public libraries; and conduction or lack of conduction of surveys.

A young reader is raised in the environment and under the influence of their home and family. This was concluded after observing the answers given by the organizations that participated in the survey. Love for reading, hence reading habits, are developed from earliest age, in the home environment where parents are the first and most important role models for their children. A home environment with a sufficient amount of books and early contact with books were outlined to be major components of the early development of reading habits. The attitudes of the parents towards books and reading also have a crucial effect on the attitudes of their children.

In the questionnaire data, as in the bibliographical review earlier, we concluded that the practice of reading aloud has a very strong correlation with the development of positive reading attitudes and independent reading habits. The respondents unite around the conclusion that the development of individual reading habits should start at home and then be transferred to the kindergarten and the school system. The subsequent role models for children, after they had left the home setting and had entered the education system, are the teachers and peers, firstly, in the kindergarten, and afterwards in the school environment.

A significant amount of the questionnaire respondents affirmed that the establishments they represent actively apply practices to promote book reading amongst children and young adults in the digital age context. The larger portion of them evaluated those practices as "Neither effective nor not effective". The claimed evaluation is a result of the insufficient knowledge of the respondents about the surveys which exist that would allow them to trace the effectiveness of the applied book and reading promotion practices. However, the common

reading promotion practices identified by the questionnaire respondents are the reading aloud practice; endorsement of reading from famous persons, including informal meetings with the book creators: authors, translators, illustrators, publishers; competition events, such as reading and reading aloud competitions; digital approaches, from the utilization of social media to the introduction of apps and gamification of reading. The book publishers and book traders, also responsible for the promotion of reading to, but not solely, children and young adults, engage in similar approaches, as the organizations respondents suggest.

It was examined that the most common communication campaigns managed by the respondents are informational campaigns that highlight the importance of reading and that encourage reading on a daily basis. Most frequently, parents, teachers and educators would be the target audience for those campaigns. Other observed marketing and advertising strategies include awarding book prizes with special categories on children's literature; own media, such as catalogues and magazines distributed directly to readers or to libraries and book traders; and usage of social media channels in their variety, including involving digital influencers. The larger proportion of the respondents claim to apply a mix of traditional media, including television, radio, print, with digital media, most frequently websites and social media. It was also observed that several organizations introduce apps and other digital means, such as reading gamification, to promote reading to the youngsters.

The main difficulties the respondents in the questionnaire claim to face when realizing their book reading campaigns are the challenge to compete with the countless digital means of entertainment; the lack of national surveys on these subjects; the limited access to books some children and young adults face; the home and the school environment and the participants in them who often times do not realize their role in the process. Last but not least, practical issues are also pinpointed as a constraint, such as financial shortage and poor collaboration with institutions and the media.

As highlighted above, the educational system, with its teachers and peers, is the second influencing environment in the life of children and the second one to have a crucial role in the development of their reading habits and attitudes. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the larger number of the organizations do organize campaigns, initiatives, and other events at kindergartens and/or schools to help the development of independent reading habits. Those include author's visits to the educational establishments and informal meetings with the pupils

and students; book readings and reading aloud practices with participation of famous figures; literature-related workshops; and school literature awards. The respondents share that they promote a lifelong love for literature to the youngest readers or readers-to-be through reading aloud, music, art, and games.

Public libraries are in the front line when it comes to book and reading promotion. Thus, it was surveyed how actively they execute their role, especially concerning book and reading promotion towards children and young adults. According to the survey results, public libraries are actively engaged in the book promotion process that targets children and young adults. It was analyzed that public libraries most often organize or host authors' and illustrators' visits; reading aloud practices in various forms and formats; interactive activities with books, such as drawing contests inspired by favorite titles and literature characters; literary competitions for children, such as reading aloud contests; illustration art shows that bind the art of the written text with the art of the accompanying graphics; and reading clubs.

A positive and less common manner of engagement of public libraries in the book and reading promotion chain was identified in the few of the respondents' answers. A small portion of them shared that public libraries in their respective countries organize and host professional seminars, trainings and conferences for teachers and educators in order to exchange good practices for book promotion to children and young adults, and to educate them how to promote e-reading. These initiatives are prompted by the concept that teachers are powerful role models for their students and represent a highly influential factor when reading attitudes are concerned.

A shortage of surveys on current reading habits and attitudes of children and young adults and factors that influence them in the countries of the organizations that participated in the questionnaire was observed. The smaller number of respondents who stated that such surveys are conducted in their countries, affirmed that they contemplate their operations towards reading promotion to youngsters accordingly. Common research topics outlined in the questionnaire results were: reading promotion; reading habits and attitudes; readability of e-readings and ebooks; habits of buying and lending books; reading in schools; reading aloud; and reading socialization. The larger number of respondents who stated that such surveys are not conducted in their countries also stated that they struggle to evaluate the effect of their operations towards reading promotion to youngsters.

4.2. Limitations of the Findings

The main limitation of the current case study was the amount of the questionnaire participants. Should such a case study be repeated in the future, it would benefit from featuring a larger number of respondents, ideally having at least one organization from every European country. In this way, the discussed topics could be generalized in the context of the situation in the whole continent. In addition, it would be interesting to replicate the questionnaire after a certain amount of time in order to follow whether and how traits change.

The other significant case study limitation was the time constraint. Due to the amount of time available to complete this case study, solely a month was given to the targeted respondents to answer the questionnaire. Should the time frame have been larger, possibly more respondents would have participated, giving a more diverse overview of the findings.

4.3. Conclusions and Answers to the Research Questions

Having in mind the remarkable benefits that book reading has on children's development, this project aimed to answer the following research questions: what is the overall state of the reading habits of European children and young adults?; how is reading encouraged and promoted to children and young adults in the digital age?; what marketing and advertising strategies and initiatives are being introduced and practiced in Europe to encourage and promote reading among children and young adults?

Leading European organizations engaged in book and reading promotion were targeted in order to observe answers to the previously stated research questions. The data analysis concluded that there is a lackage of national surveys that study the children's and young adult's reading habits and attitudes, as well as knowledge about the factors that influence them. However, based on the respondents' experience and expertise, it was outlined that the most influential factor on youngsters' reading habits and attitudes is the environment and the participants in it. Primarily, this is the home environment and the role model of parents and other family members; and secondly, the educational system environment with its teachers and peers.

Operating in the context of the digital age, it was concluded that organizations and other stakeholders in the book promotion process introduce apps to encourage youngsters to read. These apps would give book recommendations and frequently would feature a gamification and competition element. Both organizations and publishing houses stated that they use social media to reach their target audience and involve digital influencers who play the role of ambassadors of reading.

The educational system and the public libraries proved to be very actively engaged in the book and reading promotion process. It was stated that these institutions often organize or host various books and literature events for children and young adults, such as book clubs, informal meetings with authors and/or illustrators, different initiatives where reading aloud practice is applied.

4.4. Ideas for Future Research

In case a similar case study is to be repeated in the future, it would be beneficial to include a larger sample size. This project is focused on Europe, therefore it is suggested that at least one organization from each European country participates in future research, so that the results would reflect the situation on the old continent at its full scale. In the current case study, participants in the questionnaire were organizations that are actively engaged in the book reading promotion. For a larger study, representatives of book publishing houses, book traders, public libraries and the educational system could also be invited to participate in order to gain insights from multiple angles.

The current project represents a single research. In case a study with a similar focus is conducted in the future, it would be interesting to replicate it throughout multiple time frames, especially considering the swift development of the digital environment and its increasing role in everyday life. Having a repeated survey would us allow to follow how traits change. An unanticipated finding was the vast introduction of apps and the gamification of book reading, which was pointed by many of the respondents as an approach they use to promote reading to children and young adults. Another possibility for future research in the field would be to focus more on this innovation and gather more insight about it. In particular, it would be beneficial to follow how these digital innovations influence the reading habits and attitudes of the youngsters in the long run.

Conclusion

The major part of human's natural intellect is being developed until the age of eight. Early reading predetermines a child's desire and attitude towards learning, developing functional literacy which is solid ground of one's ability to excerpt information from different sources, to analyze it and to make well-grounded assessment (Stoeva and Filipova, 2018). Reading is a form of active learning, it is a key competence that improves levels of literacy, but also mentally stimulates the human brain and is beneficial for concentration and focus, memory and analytical thinking. Hence, being read to when very young and the cultivation of reading habits are two vital elements of every child's and young adult's development and education.

The promotion of literacy abilities and practices is an important matter for public authorities world-wide, deriving from the recognition of their major significance for the development of both individuals and societies. There are plenty of national book associations and non-government organizations that are engaged in the field of books as educational content. Their main goals and focus of work are to encourage reading for pleasure, to increase the reading habits of the population, and to acknowledge the value and significance of reading, by collaborating with multiple national and international institutions and partners and introducing good practices.

Books are a source of knowledge and culture, but in the highly digitalized society there is a strong competition for children's and young adults' attention. That is why smart and innovative marketing approaches and institutional strategies for book promotion should be created and crafted by research-based conclusions.

Nevertheless, all adults, participating in children's lives: parents; relatives; educators; librarians; social media influencers should be conscious about their powerful influence of role models over the shaping of the attitudes of youngster's toward reading.

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