# An Analysis of Fragmented Reading and Its Social Impact on College Students in the Era of New Media

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**Abstract:** In the era of new media, people's lifestyle, education and the like are inseparable from the Internet. At the same time, due to the emergence of smart devices such as mobile phones and tablet computers, people's reading habits have changed. Fragmented reading has become an important form of reading for college students. College students themselves have the strong ability to accept change, so fragmented reading has gradually become an important form of student learning. This paper mainly analyses fragmented reading by college students and its impact on society in the era of new media.

*Keywords: era of new media, college students, fragmented reading, social impact*

## 0 Introduction

With the advent of the era of new media, the lifestyle and learning style of college students have undergone tremendous changes. With the comprehensive coverage of mobile networks and the popularity of smart devices, college students have become excessively dependent on network technology. Reading, knowledge sharing and video browsing are accessible through the Internet. The emergence of these modern technologies has redefined people's reading skills. The information available in the Internet is more abundant and more convenient to obtain, which provides favourable conditions for fragmented reading. At the same time, fragmented reading not only affects students' reading approach and learning efficiency but also has a huge impact on the development of society.

## 1 Formal Analysis of College Students' Fragmented Reading

### 1.1 Fragmented Time

Traditional media such as quality newspapers and periodicals require expert journalists, editors and editorial boards to ensure systematic news publication and to provide readers with more thorough and accurate news reports. However, traditional media has a fixed production and printing cycle, which makes it impossible to publish real-time news reports [1]. Here, news reports can only be published after it has gone through editing and pre-press that includes typesetting. This additional time allows journalists and editors to scrutinize the authenticity and accuracy of the news being published so that it is both credible and can withstand the test of time. However, the emergence of new media has made information disseminate faster and readers can now obtain relevant information first through the Internet, which they can access in any place and at any time. This has become an important means of obtaining information for students during their leisure time such as between classes, before bed and while travelling; the usual large amount of reading time is now divided into fragments of time [2]. A survey of 100 students across five universities showed that a large number of students spend an extended amount of time reading (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Results of University Students' Reading Habits**

|  | Students who take an extended amount of time to read | Students who read in fragments |
|---|---|---|
| Number of students | 87 | 13 |
| Percentage | 87% | 13% |

## 1.2 Fragmentation of Reading Content

In the era of new media, anyone can become a producer and publisher of news. This has provided new opportunities for the public in terms of news production which, in turn, has tremendously increased news content. However, the quality of news is difficult to guarantee [3]. Those who participate in reporting an incident are merely expressing their own perspective, ideas and opinions. Some people may deliberately omit facts in their narrative with the aim to mislead the public on the causes and consequences of the incident, resulting in a lack of logical sequence for the public to imagine and make sense of [4]. In the context of new media, massive news information is fragmented in order to make its content unique. News creators tend to omit key information in their content, including the parties involved, in their headlines. This is done so there may be many versions of the revised news content that can be used according to the creator's needs.

## 1.3 Fragmented Attention

Attention is necessary for the earnest completion of a task, making it a valuable quality required for reading. Traditional print media creates an independent and quiet reading space for their readers, who can focus on reading the content while shielding away the outside world [5]. In the era of new media, information is generated and disseminated at a fast pace and readers no longer worry about meticulously reading all the information provided. With the overwhelming amount of incoming information, it is difficult for college students to concentrate on specific news items. When watching the news, they are often bombarded with countless other pop-up news headlines, which disrupts their thought process and attention on the news before them [6]. This causes students to have a short attention span during their reading, which is further deteriorated with fragmented news (see Table 2).

**Table 2 Survey of Students' Fragmented Attention during Reading**

|  | Students who read the full length of a news item | Students who read only the key facts in a news item | Students who read only news headlines |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of students | 21 | 62 | 17 |
| Percentage | 21% | 62% | 17% |

## 2 The Impact of Fragmented Reading on College Students

### 2.1 Influence on Students' Mode of Thinking

In the era of new media, college students acquire information mainly through the Internet, where information is diversified. They can find their desired content by entering keywords into a search engine. Moreover, these contents are multi-layered and multi-dimensional, which shape the students' development of logical thinking and ideas. Fragmented reading causes information to also be fragmented, which not only disrupts their reading comprehension but also their ability to construct reasonable logical thinking. As a result of fragmented reading, students' attention is scattered because they do not give their full attention to reading the content, which is not conducive to their development of thinking and, in turn, results in poor reading comprehension [7].

### 2.2 Influence on Students' Acquisition of Knowledge

College students read in fragmented time, which are relatively during quiet leisure or resting times and mostly in public places or vehicles. The environment of these places is somewhat noisy and disorderly, which disrupts their concentration during reading and subsequently affects their acquisition of knowledge. At the same time, the fragmented content provided to them requires their reading to be intermittent and short. Students are unable to read the content thoroughly, which affects their level of comprehension. While they can easily access various information through search engines, there is plenty of reading and comparison of content needed. Even though reading is more convenient with new media, there is a lack of skills specific for the effective reading comprehension of such content [8]. Fragmented time and content as well as reading from smart devices cannot achieve systematic reading. Moreover, effective reading is difficult to improve due to the incoherency and inconsistency of the content presented. Many students forget the content soon after reading it [9]. Therefore, in the long term, fragmented reading is not only unconducive to students' acquisition of knowledge but also affects the improvement of their learning skills.

### 2.3 Influence on Students' Media Literacy

Media literacy refers to the ability to select, interpret, question and judge information presented in mass media. In traditional print media, information is printed on paper, which readers must read in full to get its complete and coherent message. Therefore, when reading, readers must concentrate on a fixed area and the information printed on it in order to grasp the overall meaning and enhance their comprehension and judgment of the information. However, due to the hypertext used in new media, students may be easily distracted when reading and, consequently, be unable to comprehend and analyse a problem in depth [10]. Furthermore, college students have minimal social interaction and their media literacy is inadequate. Thus, fragmented reading is not only unconducive to their cultivation of media literacy but it also easily affects their ability to question and select information. This results in them skimming through their reading content, which negatively impacts their reading process, quality and objectives, all of which leads to poor reading comprehension.

# 3 The Social Impact of Fragmented Reading on College Students

In the era of new media, smart devices have become a necessity for students. These devices have become their main form of communication with the outside world, in addition to acquisition of knowledge. The current lifestyle of college students involves "waking up in the morning to your mobile phone and using it until night time, without which it is hard to wake up again in the morning" (see Table 3). With a mobile phone to access the Internet, they lack a goal to pursue and would rather interact with their mobile phone by staring at the screen or watching videos on the latest happenings. Fragmented reading changes students' perception of their society, which consequently creates social implications.

**Table 3 Survey of Students' Mobile Phone Habits**

|  | Browsing the Internet right after waking up in the morning | Browsing the Internet for information before going to bed | Using the phone all throughout the day |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of students | 92 | 94 | 84 |
| Percentage | 92% | 94% | 84% |

## 3.1 Fragmented Reading Provides Students with Different Perspectives

The emergence of new media is neither a denial nor a replacement of traditional media. Rather, it is a form of development in the diversification of media that is driven by continuous movement and development in human and social organization. In the era of new media and public discourse, newscasters are no longer the main source and conveyor of news. Compared with traditional print media, which comprises clear levels of hierarchy, the public have more say in the era of new media [11]. The traditional "front page headlines" have lost the inability to gain people's attention and influence. However, in fragmented reading, the content and format of news often lack uniform and standardized rules; this seemingly disorganized form of information reflects the development of contemporary times. From the social development perspective, new media is consistent with the changes in contemporary society. Through new media, college students can observe contemporary changes in China's development prospects. At the same time, everyone can participate in providing news reports, followed by posting their personal opinions and comments. In the era of new media, news coverage by the public has a wide range of audience, and the changes of information are also associated with a strong personality. Personalized fragmented news will inevitably evoke intense personal and emotional problems. Such emotions and speeches will provoke strong public reactions and incite social risks. Therefore, in this regard, it is necessary to bring attention to this matter.

## 3.2 Fragmented Reading Aggravates Students' Anxiety

In the era of new media, bloggers have become the new conveyors of information, seizing the opportunity to stimulate the public's desire to read. Many websites now rearrange fragments of various news contents to form a seemingly coherent and complete news item. However, the repetitiveness and lack of substantiality of such information have caused students to believe that all of their reading contents are identical. This is why their minds remain blank despite repeated readings. In other words, while students appear to have "nutrients", they are in fact "hungry" for food [12]. Although fragmented news reflects the all-encompassing world,

this nutrient-free content can easily aggravate students' anxiety. In order to improve their readers' click-through rate and attention span, many websites will produce numerous attention-grabbing "hot news" or public opinions as well as violent content and gossips. At the same time, some of the more kitsch content cannot be properly screened, resulting in a large amount of useless and obscene information occupying cyberspace. Some students lack the judgement and self-control of processing such information when reading and, in turn, can easily become addicted. College students are the reserve force of social development and their ability or inability to distinguish and make wise decisions in the types of information they are exposed to will inevitably affect the development of society.

### 3.3 Fragmented Reading Causes Students to Lose their Realistic Sensibility

In the era of new media, fragmented information is visually appealing, making students accustomed to taking pictures while reading. This disrupts their reading comprehension and deep thought processes, resulting in waste of valuable time and sense of reality [13]. A large amount of fragmented content is presented on the surface, causing many rich and interesting content in the world to remain obscured. Just as in the real city life, while there are many magnificent shopping malls, theatres and bright neon lights at night, there are also many dark corners. The more beautiful colours and buildings can hardly cover the shadows of pedestrians in the dark corners, diminishing the overall image of the city. In the era of new media, college students' browsing of negative fragmented news will also make it difficult for them to comprehend and accept positive and meaningful news. At the same time, under the influence of fragmented news, they will change their behaviours and ways of thinking in real life due to the influence of long-term virtual activities. For example, they may be enthralled by the hobbies and lifestyle of celebrities online but are completely ignorant of their parents' birthdays and likings. They may be passionate about the stars living on the other side of the globe but turn a blind eye to the warmth and joy of the people around them. Such virtual activities lead to the weakening of realistic sensibility in college students in terms of their observation of life, receptiveness to people around them and overall social indifference.

## 4 Conclusion:

In summary, fragmented reading in the era of new media has become the main reading mode of current college students. Fragmented reading involves fragmentation of time, content and attention. Through fragmented reading, students are provided with more reading time and opportunities. However, at the same time, it also has certain negative influences that may affect the students' learning, thought process and formation of ideas, all of which will directly affect the development of society. Due to the increasing extent of fragmented reading nowadays, teachers are encouraged to be a positive guide for college students.

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