

## Handout Module 5: Appraising evidence exercise

The following is a collection of excerpts from UNESCO (2014) *Reading in the Mobile Era. A study of mobile reading in developing countries*. Paris UNSECO. Accessed 28 August 2014: [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002274/227436e.pdf](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002274/227436e.pdf)

### Excerpts

#### Context:

Drawing on findings from a year-long study, this report explains the habits, preferences and demographic profiles of mobile readers in seven developing countries. By painting a picture of how mobile reading is practiced today and by whom, it offers insights into how mobile technology can be leveraged to better facilitate reading in countries where literacy rates are low.

To better understand how technology can facilitate reading, UNESCO, in partnership with Nokia and Worldreader, developed a survey to learn about the habits, preferences and attitudes of mobile readers. Specifically, the survey was designed to discover who reads on mobile phones and why; **if and how mobile reading changes reading habits and attitudes towards reading**; what people read and want to read on their mobile phones; what the central barriers are to mobile reading; and what factors predict people's intentions to read and keep reading on mobile phones.

The survey was completed by over 4,000 people in seven countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe) and supported by qualitative interviews with **numerous respondents**.

#### Claims:

The findings are significant. Among other conclusions, UNESCO has learned that people read more when they read on mobile devices, that they enjoy reading more, and that people commonly read books and stories to children from mobile devices. It is not hyperbole to suggest that if every person on the planet understood that his or her mobile phone could be transformed – easily and cheaply – into a library brimming with books, access to text would cease to be such a daunting hurdle to literacy.

A revolution in reading is upon us thanks to the massive proliferation of mobile technology

#### Methods:

Quantitative data were gathered using two methods: 1) a survey delivered through Worldreader Mobile, a mobile reading application (app), and 2) usage tracking on Worldreader Mobile servers. Qualitative telephone interviews were subsequently carried out to add context and depth to the quantitative findings.

The survey tool was written in English and comprised thirty multiple-choice questions, approximately half of which were five-point Likert items aimed at gauging the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement with certain statements (see Appendix A for a sample survey). **Hint: Can an illiterate person fill out the survey? Does one need a data-enabled cellphone?**

The survey invitation included the offer of a small financial incentive of US\$0.50, given in mobile credit, to users who completed the survey. **Hint: Will this make it likely people report negative findings?**

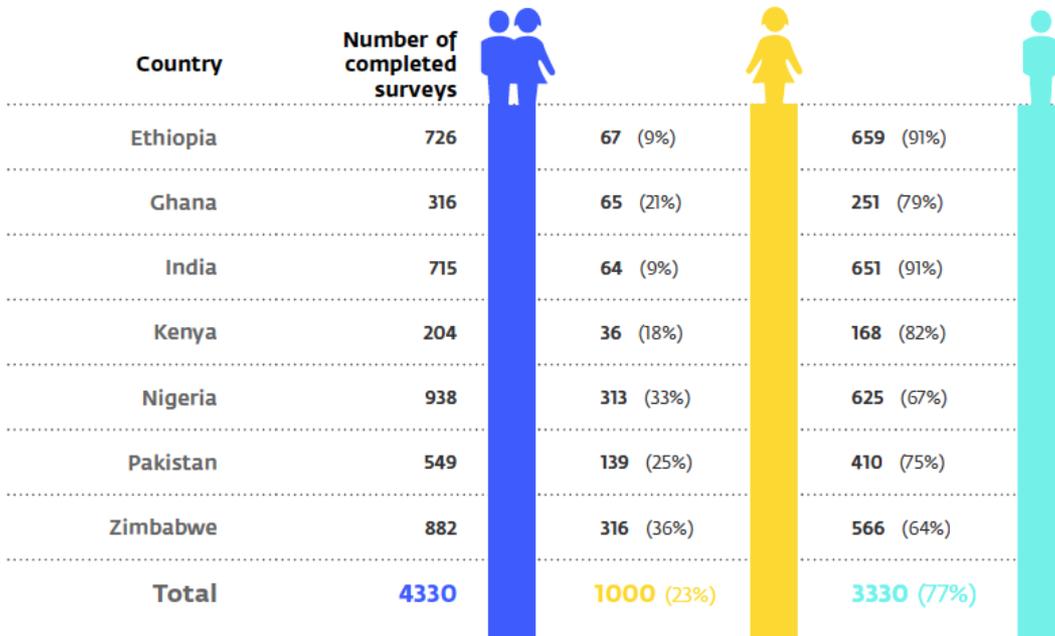
Survey respondents who were **classified as Frequent Readers** were invited via email to participate in a telephone interview conducted at their convenience. Only participants who agreed to be contacted were interviewed. Ultimately, researchers completed seventeen interviews with respondents from Ethiopia (3), Ghana (4), India (2), Nigeria (4) and Zimbabwe (4). No one in Kenya or Pakistan agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted in English, comprised 15 questions and lasted approximately 10 minutes each. **Hint: 15 questions in 10 minutes? Did they choose people for the interview which were likely to report positive opinions about mobile reading?**

Questions for discussion:

Q1: Is the sample population likely to be representative of people in developing countries?

**FIGURE 3**

**Number of completed in-app surveys by country**



Q2: Was this sample representative of the wider population?

Q3: Regarding the below finding – how long do individuals read per day? Why would the study report data per month?

*On average, women spent 207 minutes per month reading on their mobile phones during the three-month period of the study. Men, by contrast, read about 33 minutes per month.*

Q4: Regarding the below finding – is it surprising that women dominate mobile reading?

*Although men currently make up the majority of mobile readers, women clearly dominate in terms of both frequency of app use and time spent reading. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that women read more than men.*

*80 per cent of World Reader’s content can be classified as romantic fiction.*

Q5: Regarding the below interview quote - what kind of responses do you envisage the interviewees might give? Can we trust the response?

*When asked 'Do you think that you read more now that you can read on your mobile?' Nancy replied, 'I do not think that I read more – I know that I read more.'*

Q6: Regarding the below finding – is this a surprise, is this in any way special to **mobile** reading?

*The data indicate that certain demographic groups are more likely than others to read on their mobile phones: specifically, being female, highly educated and a teacher all correlate with higher intentions to adopt mobile reading.*

Q7: All in all, if you go back to the above claims, do you think the study can back these up with reliable evidence?

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