https://www.doi.org/10.34120/0382-048-187-011

ARTICLES

Kuwaiti Commercial Publishers' Attitudes towards E-books*

Hayat Alyaqout**

Abstract

Objectives: This study investigates the attitudes of Kuwaiti commercial publishers towards e-book publishing. It aims to find out factors that drive as well as hinder them to publish e-books. **Method:** The study was based on Winston's model for the development and diffusion of communication technology. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to twenty Kuwaiti commercials publishers who are members of the Arab Publishers' Association. **Results:** It was found that 30% of surveyed publishers publish e-books. No correlation was found between publishers' years in operation and the decision to produce e-books. Nine barriers preventing or delaying e-book adoption were investigated: readers' preference of printed books was agreed by 90% of publishers, lack of demand by readers for e-books 70%, e-piracy 50%, lack of knowledge of e-book technologies 40%, difficulty in pricing e-books 35%, lack of knowledge of e-book marketing 35%, e-books being cheaper which decreases eventual revenues 30%, lack of knowledge about online money collection 15%, and difficulty writing contracts with authors 15%. Eight motivators promoting e-book adoption were investigated: e-books' ability to reach new markets 85%, eliminating book logistics 85%, availability of the Internet and e-reading devices 80%, overcoming book censorship 70%, e-books costing less that printed books 70%, wide market of Arabic speaking countries 60%, availability of effective technologies against piracy 50%, and author demand 10%. **Conclusion:** Publishers agree to almost all

* First place winning research for the supporting academic staff category from the humanities colleges in the scientific poster event at the Scientific Research Conference for the academic year 2022/2021, Research Sector, Kuwait University.

** Kuwait University, Email: hayat.alyaqout@ku.edu.kw

- Submitted: 4/10/2020, Revised: 24/1/2021, Accepted: 3/3/2021.

To Cite p.120

surveyed e-book production drivers. They are however deterred due to barriers, especially the ones related to readers' preferences to printed books, and book piracy.

Keywords: E-books, Digital books, Publishing industry, Commercial publishing, Kuwait.

Introduction

E-books are showing a global rise recently. The production of e-books entails several stakeholders: authors, publishers, libraries, selling outlets such bookstores/e-stores, and readers. Publishers stand in the middle, they link authors to the market, and knowing what they think of e-books is of paramount importance.

Current Status of E-books in Numbers

The Global eBook Report 2016 looked at the sales of the five leading publishing groups English language markets. In 2015, revenues from e-books constituted between 9-25% of their revenues (Wischenbart et al., 2016). The report grouped countries into three sections: English-speaking countries, Europe, and emerging markets which included: Brazil, China, India, Korea, Mexico, Russia, and Turkey. In 2017 version of the report, e-books constituted 15-25% of the sales of the largest publishers in USA and the UK. In Western Europe, it constituted less than 10% of trade publishing, this is a consequence of the economic crisis of 2008 (Global eBook 2017 Executive Summary, 2017).

In the USA, The Association of American Publishers (AAP) stated that e-book revenues were at $493 million for the first half of 2019, and e-books comprised 14.3% of the trade (Anderson, 2019). The percentage of e-books fluctuates though, for example in the first half of 2014 e-books comprised 26% of books, while it dropped to 18.3%, 17%, and 14.3%, in the first halves of 2016, 2017, and 2019 respectively according to AAP's surveys (Distribution of trade book sales..., 2019).

In 2015 Digital Census, 41.1% of publishers said that digital formats form over 20% of their sales, and 37.7% of publishers said that digital formats will account 21-50% of their sales by the end of 2020 (Holman, 2015).

In France, almost 7 out of ten publishers are producing e-books (KPMG, 2017).

In 2017, 94% of Canadian publishers surveyed by BookNet Canada (2017) produced e-books, and 23% of their sales came from e-books.

Coronavirus Pandemic and E-books

The Arab Publishers' Association (2020) conducted a survey to investigate the views of Arab publishers on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the industry. Two hundred ninety-two publishers from 16 Arab countries responded to the questionnaire. The survey showed that e-book sales constituted 10% of their total sales. Publishers pointed out that they witnessed 74% decrease in sales in the first and second quarters of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. Publishers who have e-books witnessed a 24% change in e-book sales in the second quarter of 2020.

In Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, e-book sales increased in volume and in value during the coronavirus lockdown which took place in mid-March and continued for six weeks. One category of note was juvenile and young adult e-books which had a 100% increase in value (revenue) and 115% increase in volume (copies sold) during the lockdown period. Audio books flat subscriptions witnessed growth by 23% during the lockdown (Wischenbart, 2020).

Books and E-books in Kuwait

Kuwait has 4.14 million Internet users (98% of population), and 3.9 million active social media users (92% of population) (Kemp, 2019).

The number of books deposited in Kuwait National Library in 2017 was 311 Arabic books and 17 English books (National Library of Kuwait, 2017). No statistics or studies about e-book production in Kuwait could be found.

In Kuwait in 2018, over 4000 books were banned from Kuwait Book Fair (Alkhuwaildy, 2018). However, officials belittle the impact of the number because it constitutes less than 0.5% of total books allowed (Hanafi, 2019). The effect of e-book adoption on censorship is worth investigating though, since there is no law in Kuwait that covers e-books per se, which means that printed books censored can go uncensored when published as e-book. It is noteworthy that when this paper was almost done, In August 2020, amendments were made by Kuwaiti Parliament to the press and publication law (Al Mulla, 2020). The new law revoked preceding censorship on books. Banning a book now will be something decided by courts not the Ministry of Information who used to censor books before libraries can put them on shelves.

Arabic is the official language in Kuwait, and in widely spoken. Arabic has "more than 422 million speakers in the Arab world and used by more than 1.5 billion Muslims" (UNESCO, 2012). This means that Arabic books and e-books will enjoy a wide market outside Kuwait. A point to be held in mind when thinking of producing e-books which have a better ability to move through borders compared to printed books.

Literature Review

E-books Advantages for Publishers and Drivers to E-book Adoptions

E-books have a lot to offer to publishers. With e-books, publishing process becomes faster since e-books are delivered to retailers or readers almost right away, the cost is cut because printing and shipping are no more needed, no physical storage is required, there are no leftover stocks to deal with, and publishers can track customers' reading habits (Rao, 2004; Maxim & Maxim, 2012).

E-books prices are 20-30% less than their printed versions (Kim et al., 2013) which means publishers can gain higher margins (Maxim & Maxim, 2012).

Rao (2003) points out that e-books never go out-of-print and are easier to distribute whether by direct marketing to customers online, via online distributors, or commercial affiliates. Kouis and Konstantinou (2014) add that publishers can reach a wider audience with e-books.

In Aptara's (2012) survey on e-books, increased customer demand and increased revenue were the first two drivers for publishers to produce e-books. Other drivers included announcement by competitors, and higher revenue margins.

Author expectation is a reason for some publishers to adopt e-books. In BookNet Canada (2017) survey, the 4th reason for adopting e-books among the surveyed publishers was author expectation (52%). The three main drivers were: increase sales (80%), customer demand (74%), and accessibility (70%).

Consumers today are receptive to e-books because of the Internet and mobile devices, readers are used to onscreen reading (PWC, 2010). The development of technology use in education adds to that as well (Nilsson et al., 2015).

E-books Challenges for Publishers and Barriers to E-book Adoption

The adoption of e-books does not go without challenges for publishers. Some readers still prefer "the familiarity and comfort of reading printed books over e-books" (Kim et al., 2013, p.57). DeFosse (2012) pointed out that although e-books are used, they are not yet gratifying to the readers. Reader preference to printed books was the main obstacle according to publishers in many countries such as Estonia (M& Felt, 2018), and Sweden (Wilson & Maceviciute, 2016).

Piracy of copyrighted books is a major issue for e-books. In Germany for instance, 60% of e-book downloads are pirated (Associated Press, 2011).

The lack of standard file formats, DRM (Digital Rights Management) for e-books, and interoperability issues are challenges that face e-books (Kim et al, 2013; KPMG, 2014; Maxim & Maxim, 2012). In Aptara's survey of publishers, the main challenge publishers face was content format and device compatibility issues, followed by distribution channel issues (Aptara, 2012).

The immaturity of business model and publishers' unfamiliarity of marketing e-books and choosing the right price for them is another problem (Fu et al., 2018; Lynch, 2012). According to KPMG (2017) only 38% of French publishers allocate resources to market e-books, the main reason for that is insufficient budgets. Pricing strategies vary between publishers. There is still a debate if the reader legally "purchased" the e-book or only has the license to use it, a debate which affects the VAT rate of e-books (Wischenbart et al., 2016) in the countries that impose taxes on books. E-books cost less than printed books, so selling e-books for very low prices will make them more popular. Yet that will mean on the long run that publisher will have less revenues. Finding a model to set the right price is still an experimental area (Lynch, 2012). PWC report (2010) pointed out that publishers that resist change and defend their existing business models will face the greatest risk.

Darnton's traditional communications circuit -that describes the circuit books goes through until they are published- has been disrupted due to new technology (Murray & Squire, 2013). Publishers of e-books do not need the services of printing presses, shippers, or warehousemen for instance, yet they deal now with new third-party partners to produce their e-books. Over half (54%) of the e-books of the publishers surveyed by Aptara (2012) are produced by third party vendors. The main reason for that was the lack of internal capability and/or resources (55%) (Aptara, 2012). Almost half of Canadian publishers (48%) said that their e-book sales are converted and distributed by a digital asset manager/ digital distributor (BookNet Canada, 2017).

Another challenge for publishers is self-publishing made possible with e-books, which means that authors can deal directly with retailers and publish their own books without publishers (Murray & Squire, 2013).

Distribution of e-books is not a straightforward matter for publishers. In a survey of small publishers, Collinson (2015) found out that 59.3% of them fully outsource their distribution. Only 13.6% do it inhouse, while 27.1% use a mix of both. The top retailers that distribute their books are Amazon, Apple, and Kobo, respectively. In Aptara's

(2012) survey, Amazon was the main distribution channel (68%), followed by Apple iBookstore (58%), Barnes & Noble eBook Store (52%), and publisher's own e-commerce site (52%). Global giants such as Amazon, Apple, and Google entrance to the e-book industry poses some concerns to publishers who could feel they are losing control (Wischenbart et al., 2016; KPMG, 2014; PWC, 2010). According to BookNet Canada Survey (2017), Canadian publishers think that Amazon benefited most from digital transformation (72%), followed by self-published authors (63%). Corporate publishers came in the fifth rank (30%). Almost all Canadian publishers (96%) are selling their books via e-book retailers amongst the different ways they use to sell their e-books. Kobo came first, followed by Amazon, and Apple.

Publishers also face legal difficulties such as contracts with authors (KPMG, 2014; Möldre & Felt, 2018).

Dealing with libraries is another challenge publishers face. Publishers fear that their profits from sale will decrease if unlimited loans for e-books are allowed in libraries (Nilsson et al., 2015).

Studies on Publishers' Attitudes Towards E-books

Wilson and Maceviciute (2016) studied publishers' attitudes towards e-books in three countries: Sweden, Lithuania, and Croatia, all of which have a small market due to language constraints. The study was based on Winston's theory of technological innovation that proposes that technological innovation is affected by *supervening social necessity* (drivers or promoters) and *the law of the suppression of radical potential* (barriers). The researchers listed 6 promoting factors: consumers' demand for a portable and convenient format (which was the main driver for publishers in this study), pressure from technology manufacturers, the economic potential of e-books for the publishing industry, copyright protection through DRM, the ability of authors to self-publish, and the development of technology use in education. The barriers to e-books production were: the limited size of the domestic market, the lack of an export market, readers' preference for printed books, the cost of e-readers or their alternatives, and the lack of a common model for library lending of e-books.

In a study investigating publishers' perspectives about e-books in Lithuania, researchers found out that 27% of publishers do not publish e-books and they don't plan to, while 43% don't publish e-books but plan to. (Gudinavièius et al., 2015). In the same study 56% of publishers pointed out that the market of e-books in Lithuania is likely to grow slowly. When it came to the factors affecting the development of e-books, 92% of them said that customers' need is the main factor, followed by the implementation of information technology in education. The barriers to e-book production were: the size of the market, the lack for export market, users' preference of printed books, price of e-book devices, and the lack of e-book loan through libraries. Most publishers said that publishers' own site is the most significant distribution channel, and that the customers of online bookstores are the most influential user group on e-book publishing.

A study was conducted by Möldre and Felt (2018) to learn about Estonian publishers' perceptions and experiences regarding e-books. 70% of publishers surveyed believed that e-book publishing in Estonia in going to increase. Some of main drivers for that were: the development of the habit to use e-books, buyers becoming interested in e-books, and the development of subscription services. The first main three problems related to e-book production were: the non-profitability of e-book publishing, high VAT, and copyright problems. While the main three problems related to e-book sales were: the limited market for Estonian language, buyers' preference for printed books, and buyers' preference for free e-books. The main reason e-book publishing did not meet publishers' expectations was buyers' lack of the habit of e-book reading.

In their study investigating the attitudes of academic publishers in China towards e-books, Fu et al. (2018) found out that 98% of academic publishers in China published e-books. The vast majority of publishers priced their e-books less than print ones. Half of them said that e-books can inhibit printed book publishing. According to the study, the main two factors that encouraged science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) academic publishers to produce e-books were promotion by technology manufacturers, and author self-publishing development. And the main two factors that encouraged social sciences and humanities (SSH) academic publishers to produce e-books were customers' needs, and usage of technologies in education. The main hindrance for both types of publishers was the preference for printed books by the readers.

Buschow et al. (2014) investigated the German publishers and e-book adoption. In Germany, only 1.2% of books are available as e-books. The study looked into three perspectives: micro (individual), meso (organisational), and macro (environmental). The study compared between the characteristics of publishers that adopt e-books and those who do not. The study found out that the characteristics of management, corporate culture, and organisational communication with industry and partners are predictors of e-book adoption. Yet, the study also found out that non-adopters -surprisingly- have "high levels of innovativeness and expertise in digital publishing" (p.71).

Research Questions

Little is known about the situation of e-books in Kuwait. This research aims to investigate commercial e-book production in Kuwait from the point view of publishers. To achieve that, answers for the following questions were pursued:

1- Do commercial publishers in Kuwait produce e-books?

2- What platforms are used to produce e-books?

3- Is there a correlation between publisher's years of operation and the decision to produce e-books?

4- What are the barriers that prevent or delay publishers from publishing e-books?

5- What reasons drive publishers to publish e-books or consider doing so?

Conceptual Framework

Winston (2003) came up with a model for the development and diffusion of communication technology. He pointed out that a technology is surrounded by what he calls supervening social necessities that accelerate its growth from a mere prototype into an invention and then help its diffusion. Yet it also faces what he calls the law of the suppression of radical potential that "ensures any new communication technology takes decades to be diffused." (p.13) He pointed out that "constraints operate to slow the rate of the diffusion so that the social fabric in general can absorb the new machine and essential formations such as business entities and other institutions can be protected and preserved" (p.11).

These two conflicting forces that Winston proposed can be considered as accelerators or *drivers* that promote e-book adoption and prevalence, and the constraints or *barriers* that prevent or slow down e-book production. This research aims to investigate the attitudes of Kuwaiti commercial publishers to know what are the most influencing drivers and barriers that push publishers to adopt e-book or deter them from doing so.

This model was used in several studies to look into the attitudes of publishers towards e-books. This includes Gudinavièius et al. (2015), Nilsson et al. (2015), and Wilson & Maceviciute (2016).

Methodology

To obtain publishers' views, a questionnaire was designed. The first section of the questionnaire included questions about publishers' profiles. The second section included questions to know if publishers produce any e-books, and what future trends they have. Sections 3 and 4 of the questionnaire had statements that tackle the drivers and barriers of e-books production, and used a 5-point Likert scale to further gauge the direction of the respondents' of opinion. The statements were adapted from previous studies and modified according to the study context. Moreover, additional statements were added to reflect the factor discussed in the literature review that guided the development of the questionnaire.

Sample Choice

There is no local association/union/syndicate for publishers in Kuwait. Finding the real number of commercial publishers was not a straightforward task. After consulting the website of Arab Publishers' Association (www.arab-pa.org), it was found that there are only 25 publishers from Kuwait who are member in the Association, which is far less than the real number of publishers.

It was not possible to know the real number of publishers according to commercial records. After consulting the website of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (https://kuwaitchamber.org.kw), it turned out that commercial publishers are categorized under "publishing houses and distribution" license, which is not exclusive to publishing books, but includes other activities that entail printing and publishing. Furthermore, not all entities that were granted this license are actively using it; some of them have other types of licenses and that are active in these areas, and not in publishing books. The number of commercial entities found on the website was 938 companies, and knowing which of them publishes books require contacting each of them to verify, a task unattainable in the time of Coronavirus pandemic when this study was conducted, with many businesses not attending to calls.

Results

Data Collection and Analysis

All 25 publishers who are members of Arab Publishers' Association were contacted, 24 of which responded. However, some merging was done to avoid redundancy and inflating the data. One publisher has been listed twice in the list of Arab Publishers' Association once as a bookstore and once as a publishing house. After verifying with the publisher, they confirmed that it is the same entity, so one response was requested. Another publisher has three sub-publishers that are registered as separate companies and are listed as separate entities in the Arab Publishers' Association's list. After contacting the owners, they confirmed that the three companies work under the main publishing house, they share the same headquarters and staff and most importantly follow the same policy with regard publishing. So, one response was requested from the main publisher representing the four. This trimming reduced the sample to 21 publishers, 20 of which have answered the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 95.2%

An online questionnaire in Arabic was designed on QuesionPro (www.questionpro.com). Ten publishers answered the questionnaire online, while the other ten chose to give their answers via phone calls. Publishers who produce e-books were approached via phone to know what platform they use to publish their e-books. Data was analyzed using both QuestionPro and SPSS.

Publishers Profiles

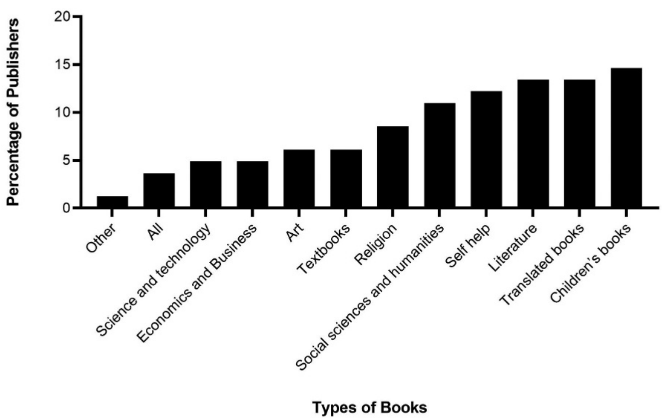
Publishers were asked to provide the number of books they have published as show in in Figure 1, what types of books they produce as shown in Figure 2, and the year their business was established.

Figure 1

Number of Books Published by Surveyed Publishers

Figure 2

Type of Books Published by Surveyed Publishers



Year of establishment was used to know the businesses' years of operation, or their "age" so to speak. The sample had publishers as young as 2 years and as old as 46 years as shown in Table 1. These data were used to see if newly established publishing companies have more tendency to embrace new technologies like e-books compared to older ones (See Table 1). Spearman's test was run through SPSS, and the significance level was 0.605 (where below 0.05 is considered significant), and the correlation coefficient was -.123-, which means that the "age" of the publisher and the decision to produce e-books do not correlate.

Table 1
Publishers' Years in Operation, and E-book Publishing

Year of Establishment	Years in Operation	E-book Publishing
1972	48	No
1981	39	Yes
1984	36	No
1986	34	No
2003	17	No
2004	16	No
2005	15	No
2008	12	Yes
2008	12	Yes
2009	11	No
2009	11	Yes
2010	10	No
2011	9	No
2015	5	No
2015	5	No
2016	4	No
2016	4	No
2017	3	Yes
2018	2	Yes
2018	2	No

Format Competition

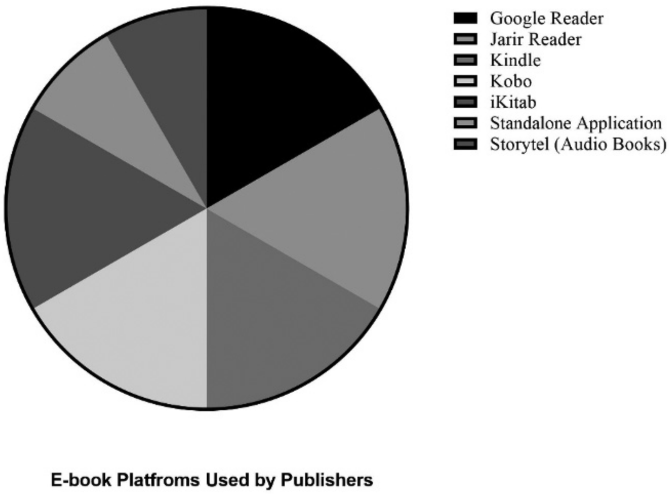
In terms of printed books versus e-books competition, 55% of publishers said that producing e-books will not affect the sales of printed books, 40% said that it will reduce the sales of printed books. While 5% said it will increase the sales of printed books.

E-book Production and Platforms

Six out of 20 of the publishers (30%) publish e-books. As shown in Figure 3, Google Reader, Jarir Reader, Kindle, and Kobo were used by two publishers each. iKitab was used by one publisher. One of the publishers have cherrypicked some of their titles and published them as standalone phone applications. Only one publisher has digital audio-books, using Storytel to do that.

Figure 3

E-book Platforms Used by Publishers



Twenty-one point four per cent 21.4% of publishers who do not produce e-books plan to publish e-books within one year or less, 28.6% within one to two years, 14.3% within two years or more. While 35.7% do not plan on producing e-books in the future altogether.

Coronavirus and Future Plans

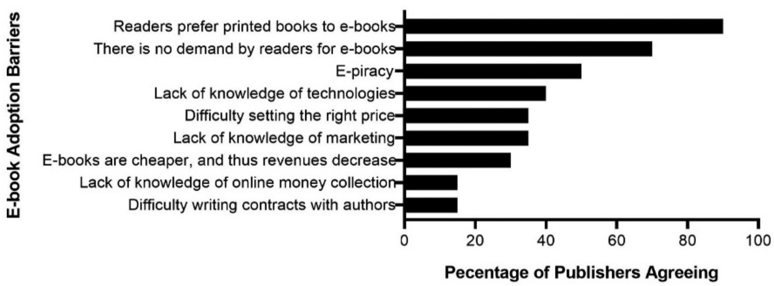
Since the study was conducted during the Coronavirus pandemic with lockdown affecting printed book sales, it was worthwhile investigating the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on publishers' attitudes to see if it led any publishers to consider adopting e-books. Forty-five per cent (45%) of publishers were pro producing e-books, and the pandemic reinforced their view. While the rest are still holding their opinions, none of them reported that they had a change of mind because of the pandemic. Twenty per cent (20%) of the publishers have not yet formed an opinion though.

Barriers

Nine statements that constitute barriers to e-book productions were listed. Publishers were asked to give their opinion about them by choosing one of the following: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. Figure 4 shows the barriers ordered by the percentage they received, while Table 2 displays the barriers and their mean scores, and standard deviation scores.

Figure 4

Barriers Hindering E-book Production



Note. *Percentages calculated from strongly agree* and *agree* answers by respondents.

Table 2
Ranking of Barriers

Item	Mean	SD
Readers prefer printed books to e-books.	4.45	0.826
There is no demand by readers for e-books.	3.65	0.875
E-piracy.	3.05	1.432
Difficulty setting the right price.	2.80	1.056
E-books are cheaper, and thus revenues decrease.	2.75	1.372
Lack of knowledge of the technologies.	2.70	1.218
Lack of knowledge of marketing.	2.70	1.174
Difficulty writing contracts with authors.	2.30	0.923
Lack of knowledge of online money collection.	1.80	0.951

Note. Strongly agree is 5, agree is 4, neutral is 3, disagree is 2, strongly disagree is 1.

The vast majority (90%) of publishers confirmed that readers still prefer printed books, with 60% of them strongly agreeing on that. Five per cent (5%) disagreed, and 5% were neutral.

Seventy per cent (70%) of publishers agreed (10% of which strongly agreed) that there is no demand from the readers for e-books. Fifteen per cent (15%) disagreed, and another 15% were neutral.

Book piracy was a deterrent to half of the publishers from adopting e-books, with 15% of them strongly agreeing, and 35% agreeing on that. Twenty per cent (20%) strongly disagreed, another 20% disagreed, and 10% were neutral. Also, 60% of surveyed publishers reported that some of their printed books were pirated and published online.

In terms of knowledge of the technologies available to publish e-books, 40% of publishers agreed that they lack this knowledge. Thirty per cent (30%) disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, and 10% were neutral.

Knowledge of e-book marketing was a challenge only to 35% of publishers who agreed on that. While 25% disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, and were 20% neutral.

When it comes to pricing e-books, 35% of publishers agreed that it is difficult to set the right price for e-books, 35% disagreed, 10% strongly disagreed, and 20% were neutral.

E-books are sold for lower prices than e-books, that could be a concern on the long run for some publisher as it means less revenues are collected eventually. This -however- was not a concern to the surveyed publishers, only 30% of them (15% strongly agreeing, 15% strongly agreeing) said that e-books are sold for lower prices compared to printed books which decreases their revenues. Thirty per cent (30%) of them disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, and 20% were neutral.

Surveyed publishers did not think that writing contracts with authors about publishing their e-books is difficult. Only 15% agreed that they have difficulty writing these contracts, while 55% of them disagreed, 15% strongly disagreed, and 15% were neutral.

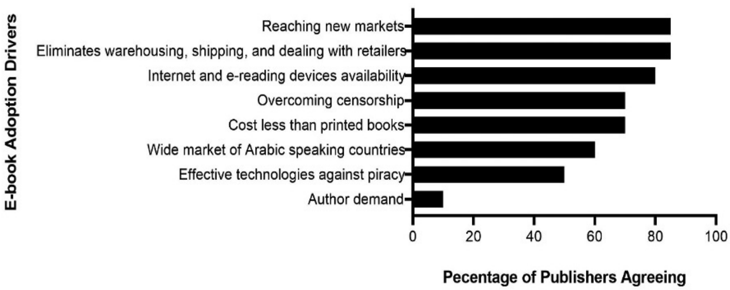
Online money collection was not an issue to 85% of publishers, with 45% strongly disagreeing on the statement, 40% disagreeing, 10% agreeing, and 5% neutral.

Drivers

Eight statements that constitute drivers to e-book productions were listed. Publishers were asked to give their opinion about them by choosing one of the following: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. Figure 5 shows the barriers ordered by the percentage they received, while Table 3 displays the barriers and their mean scores, and standard deviation scores.

Figure 5

Drivers Promoting E-book Production



Note. Percentages calculated from *strongly agree* and *agree* answers by respondents.

Table 3
Ranking of Drivers

Item	Mean	SD
Reaching new markets.	4.10	0.912
Eliminates warehousing, shipping, and dealing with retailers.	4.00	1.026
overcoming censorship availability.	3.90	1.210
Internet and e-reading devices availability.	3.85	0.933
Cost less than printed books.	3.80	1.056
Wide market of Arabic speaking countries.	3.45	1.050
Effective technologies against piracy.	3.15	1.182
Author demand.	2.25	1.118

Note. Strongly agree is 5, agree is 4, neutral is 3, disagree is 2, strongly disagree is 1.

Eighty-five per cent 85% of publishers think that e-books help them outreach markets that printed books do not reach, with 35% of them strongly agreeing, and 50% agreeing on that. Ten per cent 10% disagreed, and 5% were neutral.

Most of the surveyed publishers confirmed that e-books rid them of the logistics of printed books (warehousing, shipping, and dealing with retailers and bookshops). Fifty-five per cent 55% of them agreed to that, and 30% strongly agreed. Five per cent 5% strongly disagreed, 5% disagreed, and 5% were neutral.

The availability of the Internet and e-reading devices (like smart phones and tablets) with consumers was an encouraging factor to 80% of publishers (60% agreeing, 20% strongly agreeing). Fifteen per cent 15% disagreed, and 5% were neutral.

Seventy per cent 70% of publishers confirmed that e-books rid them of censorship and book banning, with 40% of them strongly agreeing on the statement, and 30% agreeing. Five per cent 5% strongly disagreed, 10% disagreed, and 15% were neutral.

Seventy per cent 70% agreed that the cost of publishing an e-book is lower than printed books, with 45% agreeing, and 25% strongly agreeing. Twenty per cent 20% were neutral, 5% strongly disagreed, and 5% disagreed.

E-books can secure a wide readership if the language of the book is spoken outside the country of the publisher. Sixty per cent 60% of publishers (50% agreeing, and 10% strongly agreeing) believed that Arabic e-books have a wide market that includes all Arabic speaking countries. Fifteen per cent 15% strongly disagreed, 20% disagreed, and 5% were neutral.

Publishers are almost split over the effectiveness of the means used to protect e-books against e-piracy. Forty per cent 40% agreed that there are effective means to do that, 10% strongly agreed, 35% disagreed, 5% strongly disagreed, and 10% were neutral.

Author demand is the least encouraging driver for publishers. Only 5% strongly agreed that authors ask for their books to be published as e-books, and 5% agreed. Thirty per cent 30% strongly disagreed, another 30% disagreed, and 30% were neutral.

Adopters and Non-adopters: A Comparison

The answers of e-book adopters and non-adopters were identical in some statements and extremely apart in others as shown in Tables 4 and 5. Percentages on this section were calculated by adding *strongly agree* and *agree* answers together for each group.

Table 4

Barriers Comparison Between E-book Adopters and non-adopters

Barrier	Adopters	Non-Adopters
Readers prefer printed books to e-books.	100%	85.7%
There is no demand by readers for e-books.	50%	78.6%
E-piracy.	33.3%	57.1%
Lack of knowledge of the technologies.	33.3%	42.9%
Lack of knowledge of marketing.	33.3%	64.3%
Difficulty setting the right price.	16.7%	42.9%
E-books are cheaper, and thus revenues decrease.	16.7%	35.7%
Difficulty writing contracts with authors	0.0	21.4%
Lack of knowledge of online money collection	0.0	14.3%

Note. Percentages calculated from *strongly agree* and *agree* answers by respondents.

Table 5
Drivers Comparison Between E-book Adopters and non-adopters

Driver	Adopters	Non-Adopters
Internet and e-reading devices availability.	100.0%	71.4%
Eliminating warehousing, shipping, and dealing with retailers.	83.3%	85.7%
Reaching new markets.	83.3%	85.7%
Wide market of Arabic speaking countries.	66.7%	57.1%
Cost less than printed books.	66.7%	71.4%
Overcoming censorship.	66.7%	71.4%
Effective technologies against piracy.	50.0%	50.0%
Author demand.	16.7%	7.1%

Note. Percentages calculated from *Strongly agree* and *agree* answers by respondents.

Interestingly, 100% of e-book adopters said that readers prefer printed books (50% strongly agreed, and 50% agreed), while 85.7% non-adopters did.

Half of e-book adopters said that there is no demand on e-books by readers, non-adopters were less optimistic with 78.6%.

E-piracy was more intimidating to non-adopters, 57.1% of which said that it prevents them from publishing e-books, compared to 33.3% in the case of e-book adopters.

Lack of knowledge of e-book marketing, and lack of knowledge of the e-book technologies was a barrier to 33.3% of e-book adopters. To non-adopters, these two factors scored 64.3% and 42.9% respectively.

When it comes to e-book pricing, 16.7% of e-book adopters though it is difficult to set the right price for e-books, while 42.9% of non-adopters did.

Selling e-book for lower prices decreases revenues was a concern to 16.7% of e-book adopters, while 35.7% of non-adopters thought likewise.

None of those publishers who adopted e-books have issues with online money collection or writing contacts with authors, while those publishers who did not produce e-books did, 14.3% and 21.4% of them respectively either strongly agreed or agreed with these factors.

The availability of the Internet and e-reading devices was an encouraging factor to 100% of e-book adopters, and 71.4% of non-adopters.

Reaching new markets was a driving factor for 83.3% of e-book adopters and 85.7% of non-adopters.

Eliminating book logistics (warehousing, shipping, and dealing with retailers) was a driving factor for 83.3% of e-book adopters and 85.7% of non-adopters.

Overcoming censorship was a driver to 66.7% of e-book adopter, and 71.4% of non-adopters agreed to.

E-book costing less than printed books was a driver that 66.7% of e-book adopter, and 71.4% of non-adopters agreed to.

Having a wide market of Arabic speaking countries was a driver that 66.7% of e-book adopters, and 57.1% of non-adopters agreed to.

Half of both adopters and non-adopters said that there are effective technologies against e-book piracy.

When it comes to authors demanding their books published as e-books, 16.7% of adopters, and 7.1% of non-adopters said that there is such demand by authors.

To sum up, when it came to drivers, both adopter and non-adopters had very close opinions (less than 10% difference between percentages). The only driver that had a higher difference was the availability of the Internet and reading devices and its effect on promoting publishers to adopt e-books, 100% of adopters agreed on it, while 71.4% of non-adopter agreed, with a difference of 28.6%.

Bigger differences (between 9.1% to 31%) show up when we compare barriers. It appears that the impact of barriers is more evident with non-adopters. Nevertheless, one interesting factor stood out different. All of e-book adopters (50% strongly agreed) said that readers prefer printed books, while 85.7% of non-adopters thought so. This is the only barrier with which e-book adopters were more challenged than non-adopters.

Discussion

As discussed in the results section, only one third of publishers produce e-books. Others are still reluctant, almost one third of which are not planning to adopt e-books in the future. This takes us back to Winston's model for technology dissemination to see what factors accelerate e-book adoption, and what factors hinder it and make these publishers hold their grounds.

Considering what Winston calls *law of the suppression of the radical potential* or barriers as called in this research, 9 barriers have been measured in the survey. Five of which are related to the publishers themselves (difficulty setting the right price, lack of knowledge of e-book technologies, lack of knowledge of e-book marketing, difficulty writing contracts, and difficulty in online money collection), 2 related to e-book itself (book piracy, and less price of e-books effect on eventual revenue), and 2 related to readers (readers preference to printed books, and lack of readers demand). The average mean scores of these 3 groups were 2.46 for publisher-related barriers, 2.9 for e-book-related barriers, and 4.05 for reader-related barriers. Clearly, the two barriers related to readers had the highest scores with a noticeable difference from the other 2 groups. These two barriers -albeit look the same- have a fine difference. Readers' preference to printed books is what publishers think readers prefer, it is a guess that can be an informed one in some cases, or subjective and a projection of their own habits and preferences in other cases. Readers' demand is different. Readers could prefer printed books, but still ask publishers for e-books for many different such as being in a different country than the publisher, or needing a softy copy to facilitate search or many different reasons that can be discussed in another research that tackles readers attitudes toward e-books. Reader demand is less subjective. When a reader approaches a publisher wondering if they will offer a soft copy of a certain book, this is something that the publisher can refer to. And as we can see from the statistical analyses, reader preference had a mean score of 4.45, while reader demand had a mean score of 3.65, both of which are still the highest of all the 9 barriers surveyed. A finding that makes future study on readers in Kuwait highly recommended.

And considering what Winston calls *supervening social necessities* or drivers as called in this research, we can see that out of the 8 drivers measured in the survey, 5 drivers are related to e-book itself as a technology (reaching new markets, logistics elimination, overcoming censorship, costing less, and availability of anti-piracy measure). The remaining 3 drivers are related to the situation of the market or society in general (availability of the Internet and reading devices, wide Arabic readership, and author demand). The average mean score for the technology related drivers is 3.79, while the average mean score for the society related drivers is 3.18. The numbers are not hugely apart, yet this finding is accentuated further when we take into consideration that both e-book adopters and non-adopters closely agreed on the drivers (less than 10% difference in percentages), and out of the 8 drivers, 7 had 50% or more agreeing on them from both parties (See Table 5). It seems that publishers are not skeptical about e-books as a technology with a decent potential to offer.

The above-mentioned results discussed cannot be conformably generalized for the following limitations:

1- Research did not include all commercial publishers in Kuwait.

2- The research was done during coronavirus pandemic. Publishers were asked how this pandemic affected their businesses and how that changed their view to e-books. Yet the research does not look thoroughly about the effects of the pandemic on e-book adoption by publishers.

3- The research did not take an in-depth account from the 6 publishers that produce e-books. This can be done in a focus group in a future research to further know about their experience and insights on the matter.

Conclusion

Although it is on the rise, e-books have not become common place to the point of replacing printed books. The status e-books differs greatly from one society to another. Where in Canada 74% of publishers think that there is user demand for e-books (BookNet Canada, 2017), in Kuwait it is almost the opposite. The survey revealed that 70% of publishers thought that there is no user demand for e-books, and 90% thought that readers prefer printed books to e-books. This is to be coupled with the fact that only 10% of publishers reported that authors demanded that their books are published as e-books. These assumptions -although revealing- are yet subjective and impressionistic at least in the case of Kuwait. A thorough study of the readers' preferences is needed, especially that publishers do not seem to be willing to spearhead the change, but rather prefer to be receptive to it only when it takes place.

The issue of book piracy should be addressed. Fifty per cent (50%) of surveyed publishers regard it as a barrier against e-book adoption, yet 50% think that there are effective ways to prevent it. This is not a local concern. It is an area that publishers worldwide need to work on.

Admitting the virtues of the e-books goes unchallenged as we have seen from the survey results. However, taking the extra mile to implement them is a decision still tethered by the saying "capital is a coward".

A light at the *beginning* of the tunnel is publishers' admitting that e-books cost less, and also thinking that this does not affect their revenue. They also did not seem overly concerned about a competition between print and e-book, with over half of them thinking that e-books will not affect printed book sales.

The Coronavirus pandemic was not a game changer, not yet at least. Publishers need more compelling reasons to wholeheartedly adopt e-books. A change in reading patterns among consumers will make the difference, something that cannot be gauged without further studying readers in Kuwait to explore their habits, preferences, and expectations.

REFERENCES

Alkhuwaildy, M. (2018, September 13). Alriqabah fi alkuwait tamnaa akthar min 4 alaaf kitaab [Censorship in Kuwait bans over 4000 books]. *Asharq Alawsat*, (14534). https://tinyurl.com/v6d3s3q

Al Mulla, Y. (2020, 20 August). *Kuwait National Assembly amends publication and press law*. Gulf News. https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-national-assembly-amends-publication-and-press-law-1.73314616

Anderson, P. (2019, August 28). *AAP's statshot report January to June 2019: $6 billion in US book revenue*. Publishing Perspectives. https://publishingperspectives.com/2019/08/aap-statshot-report-for-january-to-june-2019-shows-6-billion-in-revenue/

Aptara. (2012). *Revealing the business of ebooks: The fourth annual ebook survey of publishers*. https://www.aptaracorp.com/sites/default/files/ebooks-survey-4-revealing-business-ebooks-2009-2012.pdf

Arab Publishers' Association. (2020). *Istibyaan Ra'y 'an tada'iyat azmat virus corona 'ala alnashir alarabi* [Questionnaire on the implications of the Coronavirus crisis on Arab publishers].

Associated Press. (2011, October 11). German book association decries e-book piracy. *The Washington Times*. https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/oct/11/german-book-association-decries-e-book-piracy/

BookNet Canada. (2017). *The state of digital publishing in Canada 2017*. https://www.booknetcanada.ca/state-of-digital-publishing

Buschow, C., Nölle, I., & Schneider, B. (2014, March). German book publishers' barriers to disruptive innovations: The case of e-book adoption. *Publishing Research Quarterly, 30*(1). 63-76. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-014-9342-y

Collinson, S. (2015). *The Small publisher ebook report, 2015*. http://simoncollinson.com/report/index.html

DeFosse, E. (2012). *Ask not what e-books do for people, but what people do with e-books: An exploration of the uses and gratifications theory in regards to e-book technology* [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University]. ProQuest.

Distribution of trade book sales in the United States from 1st half 2011 to 1st half 2019, by format. (2019, October 15). Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/639075/book-format-market-share-usa/

Fu, W., Zhang, M., & Yan, L. (2018). Academic e-book publishing in china: An investigation of current status and publishers' attitudes. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 44*(1), 15-24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.12.008

Global ebook 2017 Executive summary. (2017). Rüdiger Wischenbart Content and Consulting. https://www.wischenbart.com/upload/GlobalEbook2017_-press-release_selected-findings_01.pdf

Gudinavičius, A., Šuminas, A. & Maceviciute, E. (2015). E-book publishing in Lithuania: The publisher's perspective. *Information Research, 20*(2), paper 672. http://InformationR.net/ir/20-2/paper672.html

Hanafi, M. (2019, November 18). Alriqabah istabadat nisfa bilmiah faqat min Alkutub [Censorship excluded only 0.5% of books]. *Alqabas*. https://alqabas.com/article/5726712

Holman, T. (2015, October 29). Digital census 2015: Five key findings. *The Bookseller*. https://www.thebookseller.com/insight/digital-census-2015-five-key-findings-315594

Kemp, S. (2019, January 31). *Digital 2019: Kuwait*. DataReportal. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-kuwait

Kim, C., Jeong, O., Choi, J., & Kim, W. (2013). E-books on the mobile e-reader. *Mobile Information Systems, 9*(1), 55-68. https://doi.org/10.3233/MIS-2012-0148

Kouis, D., & Konstantinou, N. (2014). Electronic textbooks advantages and challenges for the hellenic higher education and publishing community. *Library Review*, *63*(6/7), 531-543. https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-06-2014-0074

KPMG. (2014, March). *Baromètre 2014 de l'offre de livres numériques en France* [2014 barometer of the supply of digital books in France]. Youscribe. http://www.youscribe.com/catalogue/tous/litterature/barometre-kpmg-offre-de-livres-numeriques-en-france-2410821

KPMG. (2017, September). *Baromètre 2017 de l'offre de livres numériques en France* [2017 barometer of the supply of digital books in France]. https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/fr/pdf/2017/10/fr-barometre-offre-livre-numeriques-2017.pdf

Lynch, K. (2012). E-books: The future for publishers and libraries. *Collection Building, 31*(2), 78-80. https://doi.org/10.1108/01604951211229872

Maxim, A., & Maxim, A. (2012). The role of e-books in reshaping the publishing industry. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 62*, 1046-1050. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.178

Möldre, A. & Felt, K. (2018). E-book publishing in Estonia: Publishers' perceptions and experiences. *Knygotyra, 70*, 154-176. https://doi.org/10.15388/Knygotyra.2018.70.11813

Murray, P. R. & Squires, C. (2013). The digital publishing communication circuit. *Book 2.0, 3*(1), 3-23.

National Library of Kuwait. (2017). *Depository publication 2017*. https://www.nlk.gov.kw/Upload/Bibligra/may2017815201985604AM.pdf

Nilsson, S., Maceviciute, E., Wilson, T., BergstrA., & HL. (2015, June). The tensions of e-book creation and distribution in a small-language culture. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook, 13*(1), 29-47. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.13.1.29_1

PWC. (2010). *Turning the page: The future of ebooks*. https://www.pwc.co.uk/assets/pdf/ebooks-trends-and-developments.pdf

Rao, S. S. (2003). Electronic books: A review and evaluation. *Library Hi Tech, 21*(1), 85-93. http://search.proquest.com/docview/57513892

Subba Rao, S. (2004). Electronic book technologies: An overview of the present situation. *Library Review, 53*(7), 363-371. https://doi.org/10.1108/00242530410552304

UNESCO. (2012, December 18). *World Arabic language day*. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-arabic-language-day-2012/

Wilson, T.D. & Maceviciute, E. (2016). Publishers' responses to the e-book phenomenon: survey results from three 'small language' markets. *Information Research, 21*(4), paper 725. http://InformationR.net/ir/21-4/paper725.html

Wischenbart, R. (2020). *The digital consumer book barometer (Covid-19 special edition)*. Rüdiger Wischenbart Content and Consulting. https://www.wischenbart.com/upload/DigiBaro-Covid_07_final.pdf

Wischenbart, R., Carrenho, C., Chen, D., Celaya, J., Kong, Y, Kovac, M., Mallya, V., Coufal, J., & Krenn, J. (2016). *Global ebook: a report on market trends and developments*. Rüdiger Wischenbart Content and Consulting.

Winston, B. (1998). *Media Technology and Society A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*. Routledge.

توجهات دور النشر التجارية الكويتية نحو الكتاب الإلكتروني*

أ. حياة الياقوت**

ملخص

الأهداف: تستقصي هذه الدراسة توجهات دور النشر التجارية الكويتية نحو الكتاب الإلكتروني. وتهدف لمعرفة العوامل التي تشجع الناشرين على نشر الكتب الإلكترونية، أو تثبطهم عن ذلك. **المنهج:** بُنيت الدراسة على نموذج وِنْستون الخاص بتطور تقنيات الاتصالات وانتشارها. صُممت استبانة إلكترونية ووُزعت على عشرين دار نشر تجارية كويتية من الأعضاء في اتحاد الناشرين العرب. **النتائج:** خلصت الدراسة إلى أن 30% من الناشرين المشاركين في الاستبانة ينشرون كتباً إلكترونية. لم تتوصل الدراسة لوجود ارتباط بين سنوات عمل دار النشر وقرارها بنشر الكتب الإلكترونية. استقصت الدراسة 9 معوّقات لنشر الكتب الإلكترونية: تفضيل القارئ للكتاب الورقي (الذي حاز اتفاق 90% من الناشرين)، وعدم وجود طلب من القارئ (70%)، وقرصنة الكتب (50%)، قلة المعرفة بتقنيات نشر الكتاب الإلكتروني (40%)، وصعوبة تسعير الكتاب الإلكتروني (35%)، وقلة المعرفة بتسويق الكتاب الإلكتروني (35%)، وانخفاض سعر الكتاب الإلكتروني؛ مما يخفض العوائد (30%)، وقلة المعرفة بطرق تحصيل الأموال إلكترونياً (15%)، وصعوبة صياغة العقود مع المؤلفين (15%). كما استقصت الدراسة 8 محفِّزات لنشر الكتاب الإلكتروني: قدرة الكتاب الإلكتروني على النفاذ لأسواق جديدة (85%)، وقدرة الكتاب الإلكتروني على تخليص الناشرين من لوجستيات الكتاب

* حاز البحث على المركز الأول عن فئة الهيئة الأكاديمية المساندة من الكليات الإنسانية في فعالية الملصق العلمي في مؤتمر البحث العلمي للعام الأكاديمي 2021/2022، قطاع الأبحاث، جامعة الكويت.

** جامعة الكويت، الإيميل: hayat.alyaqout@ku.edu.kw

– تُسلّم البحث في: 4/10/2020، عُدّل في: 24/1/2021، أجيز للنشر في: 3/3/2021.

للاستشهاد بهذه المقالة انظر ص.120

الورقي (85%)، وتوفر الإنترنت والأجهزة الإلكترونية لدى القراء (80%)، والتخلص من الرقابة على الكتب (70%)، وانخفاض تكلفة الكتاب الإلكتروني مقارنة بالورقي (70%)، ووجود سوق واسع من الناطقين بالعربية (60%)، ووجود تقنيات فعالية للحماية من القرصنة (50%)، وطلب المؤلفين نشر كتبهم إلكترونياً (10%). **الخاتمة**: يتفق الناشرون على كل محفزات نشر الكتب الإلكترونية المذكورة في الاستبانة تقريباً. لكن معوّقات أخرى تمنعهم، خاصة تلك المتعلقة بتفضيل القارئ للكتب الورقية، وقرصنة الكتب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتب الإلكترونية، الكتب الرقمية، النشر الإلكتروني، صناعة النشر، النشر التجاري، الكويت.

Hayat Alyaqout, Master’s Degree in Library and Information Science, Kuwait University, 2004. Senior Teaching Assistant, Department of Information Studies, College of Social Sciences, Kuwait University. Research interest: E-publishing, E-books, and digitization.
E- mail: hayat.alyaqout@ku.edu.kw

To Cite:

Alyaqout, H. (2022). Kuwaiti Commercial Publishers’ Attitudes towards E-books. *Journal of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, 48*(187), 91-120.

https://www.doi.org/10.34120/0382-048-187-011