

novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Colombian Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez.

The book, written in the style of mystical realism and full of symbolism and metaphors, follows seven generations of a family in a fictitious South American town.

Videos related to the book vary widely. The most popular is "Interpreting the story of 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' — I prepared the video for a month." A related recommendation is "Explaining 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' in five minutes: What does Márquez want to tell his readers?"

Márquez's magnum opus, which has been translated into 46 languages and sold 50 million copies, is considered one of the most significant works in world literature. It has long been a reader favorite in China, where a translation in simplified Chinese has sold more than 10 million volumes.

The novel, according to writer and professor Ge Fei, has inspired many young Chinese writers to undertake a journey.

"It is a journey where you start out to see the world, to see different cultures, to blend in different civilizations, and then finally you go back to your own culture, to

the starting point," Ge said.

Maybe it is a similar journey for Chinese where traditional Chinese culture is concerned.

In a separate survey on reading, the Chinese Academy of Press and Publication reported that paperbacks are still public favorites.

According to the survey, Chinese adults read, on average, nearly five paperback books and about three e-books last year.

About 45 percent of the interviewees said they preferred to "hold a book physically in hand" when reading, a rise of 2.2 percentage points from 2020. Others said they read on smartphones, e-readers, computers and by listening to audio books.

"I think reading on electronic gadgets is more for fragments of time, such as during the commute to work or while waiting for someone," said Yu Rongrong, a white-collar worker who has been working from home since early last month.

"Now under lockdown," he said, "I need to work only in the morning and have plenty of time to myself. I finally have time for books that have been on my bookshelf for a while. I still find reading a paperback more enjoyable than reading on smartphones, not to mention that it is also more eye-friendly."



A boy reads a comic book about Chinese history at a bookstore in the Hebei Province city of Dingzhou. A Bilibili report on 2021 reading-themed videos found that people are generally more interested in the past than in the present or future.



Digitalization helps more people in China discover joy of reading

CHENG Zhiwu, a 70-year-old from central China's Hubei Province, has downloaded some 600 digital books on a reading app on his tablet computer.

"I've found so much joy in reading or listening to digital books as a way to keep up with the times and enrich my golden years," said Chen, adding that he spends four to five hours a day on the reading app.

With advances in technology and the popularization of the mobile Internet, digital reading has become a new driving force to encourage people of all ages in China to read.

According to the China digital readership report 2021 released during the recent National Conference on Reading in Beijing, the number of digital book readers in China reached 506 million in 2021, up 2.43 percent year on year.

The overall scale of China's digital reading market reached 41.57 billion yuan (US\$6.3 billion) last year, marking a year-on-year growth of 18.23 percent, according to the report mainly compiled by the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association.

As a growing trend, audio reading attracted more than 800 million active users in China last year, an increase of 230 million from 2020, said Fan Weiping, president of the China Federation of Radio and Television Associations.

Noticeably, audio reading functions as a bridge over the "digital gap" for elderly readers like Cheng, and a number of e-book platforms have focused on optimizing the audio reading experience.

"We provide personalized booklists for aged members, and the AI technologies we utilize can convert text into audio content in real-time without the need for human voice recording," said Liu Xin, general manager of Migu Culture Technology Co, while introducing a tailored version of their reading app for elderly.

Industry insiders pointed out that audio reading products, such as audiovisual novels, interactive picture books and short dramas, have become an important resource for cultural IP (intellectual property) development and formed a mature IP incubation system.

Meanwhile, young people

still dominate China's digital reading market. More than 70 percent of digital book readers were under the age of 25 in 2021, the aforementioned report shows.

Digital reading has also helped with the popularization of classic books among the young. Cheng Wu, CEO of China Literature, said that last year, "The Analects of Confucius" was the most popular e-book on its platform with nearly 30 million views, and more than 80 percent of its readers were under 30 years old.

China's digital reading products, especially online literature, have become more and more popular in overseas markets. More than 400,000 Chinese digital books were released abroad last year, with fantasy and martial arts among the most popular themes, according to the industry report.

"In the future, the digital reading experience will be further transformed," said Liu with Migu. "A book will no longer be just a book. It will be a constant flow of thinking, writing, sharing, socializing, marketing and other activities."

(Xinhua)