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Bestselling Chronicles: The success factors of fantasy novels

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study focus Media and Communication Management

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Abstract

The purpose of this Bachelor's thesis is to investigate whether or not the potential success of fantasy novels can be scientifically predetermined. In order to validate this hypothesis general literature research about the book market is done. This provides key insights about the definitions of success and the qualities of a good book.

Furthermore, personal empirical research is conducted in an attempt to verify the hypothesis. Expert interviews with established publishers lead to understandings about the publishing industry and its possibilities and limitations. An additional survey among readers provides supplementary insights about the consumers point of view.

After extensive literature and exhaustive empirical research, the hypothesis has to be rejected. The findings indicate the possibility of anticipating the potential success of a newly published fantasy novel. They are unable, however, to provide a scientifically reproducible method in order to predetermine the potential success.

The thesis concludes with a provocative, philosophical thought. This thought questions the value of standardising an un-unifiable factor, such as creativity, for economic purposes. This value is being compared to the value of non-conformity, which is considered to be the essence of all creative goods. Therefore the potential sacrifice of creative value stands opposed to the common desire for economical exploitation.

Keywords

Bestselling novel, literary success, quality book, fantasy, scientific predetermination

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 General Overview	1
1.2 Methodology	2
2. The Book Market	3
2.1 Overview	3
2.2 The Mainstream Phenomenon	4
2.3 Abundance	5
2.3.1 Writers	5
2.3.2 Bestselling Strategies	6
2.3.3 Websites	6
3. Players in the Market	7
3.1 The Different Perspectives	7
3.2 Authors	8
3.3 Literary Agents	8
3.4 Publishers	8
3.4.1 Traditional Publishers	8
3.4.2 Self-Publishing	9
3.5 Distributors	10
3.6 Readers	10
3.7 Advocates	11
3.7.1 Professional	11
3.7.2 Non-Professional	11
4. Genres	12
4.1 Overview	12
4.2 Fantastic Literature	13
4.3 Fantasy	13
4.3.1 Characteristics	14
4.3.2 J.R.R Tolkien	14
4.3.3 The rise of Fantasy	15

5. Bestsellers	15
5.1 What is a ‚Bestseller‘?	16
5.1.1 What is a ‚good‘ book?	16
5.1.2 How can ‚success‘ be defined?	17
5.2 Bestselling Authors	18
5.3 Bestselling Books	18
5.4 Bestselling Lists	19
5.4.1 Variety of Lists	19
5.4.2 People’s Choice Award	19
5.4.3 Top books of 2016	20
5.5 Criticism	20
5.5.1 Earlier Attempts	20
5.5.2 Underwood Case Study	21
6. Empirical Research	21
6.1 Intention	22
6.2 Interviews	22
6.2.1 Initiation	23
6.2.2 Execution	24
6.2.3 Conclusion	29
6.3 Survey	30
6.3.1 Initiation	31
6.3.2 Execution	31
6.3.3 Conclusion	34
6.4 Assessment of Empirical Research	41
7. Conclusion	41
8. Outlook	43
9. Reference List	45

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Periods of Response (Survey)	34
Figure 2: Question 10: Personal Preference (Survey)	39
Figure 3: Question 10: ‚Bestseller Ranking‘ (detailed) (Survey)	40
Figure 4: Question 10: ‚Storyline‘ (detailed) (Survey)	40
Figure 5: Inverted Ranking of Preferences (Survey)	41

1. Introduction

“Nobody ever committed suicide while reading a good book, but many have tried while trying to write one.” (Byrne as quoted in Goldsmith, 2015, p.3)

This quote from the American author Robert Byrne provides an emotional initiation point for the course of this Bachelor thesis. It indicates not only the value of a good book but also the considerable effort, that has to be put into its creation. These aspects, among others, will be explained and investigated throughout the following paper.

1.1 General Overview

Cultural goods, such as art, music and literature have long been a cause for disruption. Their objective value as well as the unpredictability of their success has been the topic of investigation numerous times. However, some goods do turn out to be more successful than others, just like they are being of higher value to a considerable part of the population. These popular goods form the foundation on which this research was built.

The overall aim of this Bachelor thesis is to verify, or falsify, the following hypothesis:

“The potential success of a (fantasy) novel can be scientifically predetermined.“

In order to attempt this a variety of research questions was chosen, all of which refer to relevant underlying principles of the Hypothesis. They are as follows:

- Do specific criteria exist, that are iterative among successful (fantasy) novels?
- Can any criterion objectively classify a book as 'good'?
- Can a common scheme be identified among the overall success of (fantasy) novels?

The above stated hypothesis refers to the overarching difficulty of analysing the success as well as the qualitative objectivity of cultural goods. In order to investigate this issue further, the thesis will focus on the book market, with a special emphasis on fantasy. First the book market as well as all the individual players will be looked at in more detail, in order to provide an overview of the economical and social parameters. Afterwards a short insight into literary genres will be given, before a detailed explanation of fantastic literature, the fantasy genre and its importance will follow. Next, the core topic of this thesis will be introduced. By looking at the phenomenon of bestsellers, most of the theoretical facts and data can be gathered. Finally, after this thorough literature re-

search, the empirical part follows. Personal empirical research has been conducted in order to support or neglect the literary findings. Five interviews with established publishers were realised. Additionally 173 interested readers participated in a survey about their reading habits and preferences. These findings will then be woven into the results of the literary research. Lastly, a display of the most important external and internal success factors will be shown within the framework of a general conclusion, to sum up the outcome. A final outlook will also be provided, which offers additional investigative measures that could be taken. The thesis will close with a philosophical thought on creative value.

1.2 Methodology

In order to provide appropriate information for the assessment of the hypothesis a variety of research was necessary. First, a minor analysis of the existing materials, Bachelor thesis and journal entries on the topic of this thesis was executed. After a general insight was gained on the current status quo on bestsellers in the book market, a more in-depth literature research followed. The literature research included books, papers and journal entries throughout the past decades, in order to understand the development of bestsellers and genres. Additionally a smaller investigation of online sources was made. This multitude of websites, forums and blog entries provided complimentary insights and trends to the current status quo, as well as a potential outlook on the presumable future development.

Since studying the status quo was not sufficient, empirical research was included. Two empirical research methods were chosen, intending to provide a two-folded perspective. As first method expert interviews were used to gain an insight into the publishing side of the equation. Five publishers from established publishing houses were interviewed. A qualitative questionnaire, consisting of 27 questions resulted in several extensive interviews, of approximately 20 to 70 minutes each. A more detailed description will follow in the respective section of this paper.

The second method was a small-scale survey. 173 people that enjoy reading answered 10 questions about their reading habits and book preferences, providing the readers point of view. This method also be elaborated on in the according chapter of this paper.

Lastly, the findings of the empirical research were related back to the results of the literature research. This concludes the thesis in a scientifically justifiable explanation of the results as well as an educated evaluation of the hypothesis and a potential outlook.

2. The Book Market

Generally, it can be said that the book market, as most markets, especially most media markets, is subject to continuous change and requires a high degree of adaptability (Gesing, 2015). It is therefore imperative to stay current about its development.

2.1 Overview

The book market is comparable to other media markets in several ways. The most relevant one for this examination is the fact that the goods and services, that are sold, are not material goods but experienced goods (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). Experienced goods as opposed to material goods can usually not be classified or valued objectively. Therefore books, like any other form of creative good, such as art, music, motion pictures, or else, are bound to the individual consumer preferences in order to be successful (Reichert, 2017). So called 'cultural markets' (Kreuschnigg, 2012a) provide flawed information about their goods, due to subjectivity, which results in a noticeable consumer uncertainty. This uncertainty is reflected in the economical planning of offers. Kreuschnigg (2012a) shows that this causes a macro phenomenon of significant success concentration in cultural markets. Since market concentration is considered economical failure (Kreuschnigg, 2012a), it is crucial to operate against such 'winner-take-all' markets. Winner-take-all markets, as Reichert (2017) explains are markets where the majority of sales is hoarded by a minority of actors. This is the case in most creative markets.

Since such markets focus not only on economical value but on cultural value as well (Reichert, 2017), the protection of cultural goods has to be as relevant as the economical success (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). This inequality is intensified through the short product life cycles as well as the infinite diversity of offers in cultural markets.

Relating back to the consumers uncertainty, it can be said that this uncertainty is one of the primary reasons to cause economical inequality (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). If the consumers are unable to access all the necessary data to make an informed decision, they have to look for alternative decision helpers. Some of these helpers include market pres-

ence, literature reviews, bestselling lists and word of mouth marketing (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). This results in the increase of goods, which are already present, while goods that are not well known, are decreased further. And since any market is an economical institution, that aspires profitability, it is more time and cost efficient to promote things that are already popular, than to try and make unknown things popular in the first place (Kreuschnigg, 2012a).

One of the most important events for the German book market, is the Frankfurt Book Fair (Askani, as quoted by Creepy Creatures, 2016). It is the highlight of the literary year. While the Leipzig Book Fair is hosted for readers, the Frankfurt Book Fair is hosted for the business side of the book industry. It is decisive for the new creation of publishing programs for the following year (Askani, as quoted by Creepy Creatures, 2016).

2.2 The Mainstream Phenomenon

Just like other media markets, the book market is no exception to the 'Mainstream Phenomenon'. Even though there is no specific 'pop' genre, as there is in music, it is certain that trends and herd behaviour are as defining for the book market, as any other cultural market (Kreuschnigg, 2012a).

The snowball effect of popularity works for books, as it does anywhere else. A certain product (in this case: books) is launched and then marketed to a certain degree of popularity (Pouly, 2016). As soon as it is 'popular enough' the media coverage increases, which leads to increased word of mouth marketing, leading to a wider knowledge of the book and therefore to a decrease in product uncertainty (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). The social impact is decisive in this process. Social insecurity and a lack of information both lead to classical herd behaviour. Herd behaviour means that a small amount of people experiences a good, forms an opinion, spreads the opinion and causes all imitators to follow their opinion without questioning it (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). Since objective information is considerably harder to obtain than subjective information, and since people are creatures of habit and lethargy, herd behaviour is rather common. Especially in cultural markets where societal uncertainty is the norm. Consumers have the choice between either accepting someone else's opinion about what can be considered 'good', or they willingly take the risk of purchasing something with unknown quality and decide for themselves (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). The second option includes significant opportunity costs (time and effort invested into acquiring knowledge) and is therefore considered

unfavourable. In addition to this, Kreuschnigg (2012a) notes that it could be identified, that people enjoy 'popular' culture, since it creates the illusion of belonging.

Nowadays, this herd behaviour is mainly social media driven (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). In a society that defines itself about the amounts of 'Followers' and 'Likes', literary trends are as considerable as fashion trends (Gesing, 2015). It is all about social acceptance.

Markus Heitz, however, a German bestselling fantasy author, stated that current trends are solely important for 'copy-paste-authors' (personal communication, 2016). They are more likely to become a success, but also highly likely to be short term successes only, if even. Heitz explains that for himself, if an idea 'captivates' him, he will write it, regardless of trends or other factors (personal communication, 2016). So far, this method has proven to be successful, since he has been working as a full time author for several years now. As soon as an author is established and known to the market, however, the necessity of attracting mass attention decreases, due to increased reputation and the according loyalty of the existing fans.

2.3 Abundance

To conclude the general introduction to the book market a short overview of three additional topics will be given, that are to be considered in the context of this thesis.

2.3.1 Writers

One of the most common indicators when it comes to the classification of literature as a form of art, is the fact that 'writing' is considered a hobby, more than a career. Comparable to someone playing guitar or oil-painting, writing is belittled in an economical society, such as Germany. Typical sayings such as 'everyone can write' are common phrases aspiring authors are confronted with. Technically, such sayings are true. In America, on the other hand, creative writing is being taught, and socially accepted as a craft (Gesing, 2015). Therefore, since anyone *could* be writing, the competition is as high as it is in any field of arts. It is hence crucial to have either valuable connections or be a lucky person in order to become a successful writer (Gesing, 2015).

If neither is given, getting recognised will be a tiresome struggle (Gesing, 2015).

After all, hundreds and thousands of novels are written each year (Uzzell, 2013). Also, these numbers overlook the innumerable 'unofficial' authors of fan fiction, bloggers, or story tellers, who in the end, are writers and therefore potential novelists, as well.

2.3.2 Bestselling Strategies

Ever since any one can publish anything on the internet, it has been overlaid with unverified information. For the purpose of this paper several websites, blogs and articles were studied, that claimed to know 'how to write a bestseller'.

The findings were as diverse and untenable as such a quest would expect. Results varied from having to 'buy your way to the top' (BookPromotionHub, 2014), over excessive marketing (Howes, 2015), who actually did make it onto a bestselling list, all the way to concrete tips for creative writing from actual published authors (iUniverse.com, 2017).

Apart from these vague instructions, however, there are some more viable sources. One of them is a book called "Writing the Blockbuster Novel" from Alfred Zuckerman (2015). Zuckerman is a literary agent who worked with bestselling authors such as Nora Roberts and Ken Follett, both of whom personally recommend his book. His work will also be referred to, in the following chapters.

Last but not least a mention is due to a fictional book, that deals with the very same topic and was based on a true story. "The Bestseller" from Olivia Goldsmith, first published in 1996, digitally redistributed in 2015. In her book Goldsmith describes the struggles of aspiring authors. All five of the authors will be published, but only one will publish a bestseller. Goldsmith herself is a bestselling author and despite the fictitiousness of the book, the literature reviews about its accuracy about the publishing markets were predominantly positive. It is therefore a source of inspiration for aspiring authors.

2.3.3 Websites

When it comes to bestselling strategies, there are not only blog entries and private pages that focus on them, but also established website. For example, established publishing houses, such as Carlsen provide certain aid to aspiring authors. On www.carlsen.de there is an entire subsection about 'How to become an author'. It includes general FAQs about writing, Do's and Don'ts of manuscripts, workshops for creative writing and also a direct contact to the digital publishing section of Carlsen (im.press).

Apart from those, there are several websites that function as private advocates, which will be elaborated on further, later in the thesis. One of the major websites for readers, however, is www.goodreads.com. It has developed its own infrastructure and is sometimes referred to as a social media platform for book lovers. The main function is the unlimited catalogue of globally available books, which are all described, categorised

and reviewed. Any user may rate and review a book, recommend it, or even vote for it. Many authors are also featured on Goodreads. Some of them use it rather actively, to build a relationship with their readers, others are simply mentioned.

Last but not least one of the main websites for any aspiring author will be introduced: [www. nanowrimo.org](http://www.nanowrimo.org). This website accompanies a global challenge, which is called 'National Novel Writing Month'. It is a platform where any writer is invited to challenge his- or herself to 'exercise their creative writing muscle'. In November, every participant is challenged to write a manuscript draft with 50,000 words. Over 300,000 people participate in the NaNoWriMo each year. Additionally to the writing challenge, the website also provides inspirational pep talks and also support to personally reworking, editing and publishing the manuscript, that one has written. Numerous people have started their career because of this initiative. Some even turned out bestsellers.

One example would be Marissa Meyer, New York Times bestselling author of the Lunar Chronicles Series (NaNoWriMo, 2017).

3. Players in the Market

In addition to the general overview, a more detailed look at the different players as well as their respective roles in the book market will follow. From the very beginning, the author of the book, over the publishing and the distribution to the very end, the readers and even the professional and non-professional advocates, are being looked at.

3.1 The Different Perspectives

Reichert (2017) gives a short introduction to each of the players. According to him the authors are responsible for the literary production, while the publishers take care of the overarching selection as well as the materialistic production. The role of the literature critics also includes selective processes under the umbrella of symbolic production, this can be described as presenting the value to the public. Reichert (2017) further includes the distributors, where he differentiates between book shops, retailers and online shops. Lastly he mentions the readers, which in this case are classic examples for consumers.

All these different perspectives have diverse functions, but also one, that is common among all of the various players. Each and every one of them operate as some kind of 'Gatekeeper' (Reichert, 2017).

3.2 Authors

According to Reichert (2017) the authorial performance is the initiation point of literature. Writers are also considered commentators of society (Brown, 2006). Every author possesses a unique personality. This personality determines the path he or she may take. It influences the writing style, the process of writing, and the internal marketing of oneself as a brand (Uzzell, 2013). There is a debate as to whether writing is considered a craft (Ortlieb, Leung & Sampson, 2016) or an art (de Grandpair, 2011). Whichever opinion is represented, their common factor is passion. A writer has to be passionate about his or her doing in order to succeed (de Grandpair, 2011). Therefore, those who write because they are passionate about it tend to be more successful than those who write because they want to succeed (Gesing, 2015). An aspiring author needs to accept that they are not perfect and should refer to literary idols with the intention to challenge and improve themselves (Trautmann, 2008). Passion and talent, however, are no guarantee for success or payment. Authors, unlike traditional employees, are not paid according to their work or even their talent. Authors are paid according to how their talent compares to their competitors (Kreuschnigg, 2012a).

3.3 Literary Agents

Literary agents are on the one hand, simplifying the selection process for publishers by securing a better quality, but on the other hand they are a hinderance for any aspiring author, who cannot afford one (Reichert, 2017). However, no matter how they are perceived, they act as a middle man between author and publisher (Pouly, 2016). Their main task is to ensure that the author is being introduced to the publishing house that is the most suitable for him or her, personally as well as professionally (Reichert, 2017).

3.4 Publishers

The differences between traditional publishing and self publishing are still considerable, despite the ever advancing digitalisation of the book market. This step includes editors.

3.4.1 Traditional Publishers

The everyday life of a publisher revolves around the hypothesis of this thesis. There has to be some knowledge about how to identify manuscripts worth publishing. If there was

no such knowledge, all publishers would be bankrupt by now. Brown (2006) therefore describes publishers as venture capitalists. He claims that there will always be a certain risk, when publishing a new book, that it might fail the market and cause losses for the publishing house. In order to prevent that, most publishing houses have a broad variety of offered genres and programs. They also balance the publishing of existing authors, whose chances of success are potentially higher, and debut authors, who usually entail higher risks (Reichert, 2017). In trying to minimise such risks, each and every manuscript, that a publisher receives will be investigated to some extent (Trautmann, 2008). Its 'symbolic capital' (Reichert, 2017) has to possess enough potential to be turned into 'economical capital'. The key tasks of publishers include selection and investigation of new manuscripts, editing, publishing and also promoting the finished product (Kreuschnigg, 2012a).

3.4.2 Self-Publishing

Self-publishing has numerous advantages compared to traditional publishing, but also significant disadvantages (Gesing, 2015). Since the extensive analysis would exceed the scope of this paper, only the major differences are touched upon.

There is one main aspect to both the positive and the negative sides of self-publishing. These are accessibility and prestige. Accessibility on the positive side is self-explanatory. Anyone with internet access and some common sense is able to publish their own book. Especially since platforms such as Amazon entered the market, it is easier than ever to publish your own book (Amazon, 2017). Neither money nor quality are necessary in order to do so.

Prestige on the other hand remains a vital aspect to book publishing (Pouly, 2016). It is for one relevant whether or not the book is being published physically. This for example is not as easy through self-publishing, as simply producing an e-book. Having a traditional, established publishing house behind one's name also automatically improves the chances of success and recognition significantly (Zuckerman, 2015).

It therefore depends on the personality and also on the goals and expectations of each author individually, whether or not he or she considers self-publishing or traditional publishing to be more suitable for his or her purpose.

3.5 Distributors

The distributors of products are of more importance than the consumer might know. Often the distribution is considered a necessity, a platform to bring the products to the consumers. In the book market, however, the distributors have a considerable influence on the potential success of a book (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). The consumer is dependent on the choice the book store makes. The books, that the store chooses to acquire will be presented the most prominently. Considering the abundance of books on the market it is humanly impossible to know about every single one. The book market is therefore a standard example for market manipulation (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). It is sometimes called 'shelf-awareness'. Some bookstores, such as the American chain 'Barnes & Nobles' even sell shelf space. Kreuschnigg (2012a) hereby proves the importance shelf space has on the potential success of a book.

This assumption becomes obsolete, when looking at the online distribution of books. Since there are no virtual shelves, people who buy books online are dependent on different strategies to decide on a book (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). Some of these strategies include reviews, recommendations and bestselling lists. As the digital distribution grows, however, digital recommendation is growing as well. This leads to a higher consumer satisfaction, but also to a higher risk of manipulation (Reichert, 2017).

3.6 Readers

Hopper (2005) investigated the specific question 'Why do adolescents read' and came to the conclusion that their main reason is that they are growing up, which is difficult and stressful. Books are helping adolescents to manage the changes they face in life.

Birch (2009) extended this thought, proving that reading is an intense, unique experience, that creates considerable personal involvement. Saying that readers read solely for entertainment (Johnson, 2014), would be too restrictive. Through reading, readers, of every age, gain insights, understandings and new perspectives about the world they live in (Crossley, 1975). Crossley (1975) even went as far as saying:

"With access of knowledge and power readers may return to his own world, his consciousness of self, others and environment refreshed and cleansed." (p. 286)

Crossley hereby refers to fantasy reading in particular, but the underlying message remains applicable to the fascination of reading in general. To read is to grow.

Furthermore, readers are naturally the decisive factor for the incurrence of bestselling novels (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). Their perception, appraisal and personal propaganda are pivotal to the final success of a book (Reichert, 2017).

3.7 Advocates

The main function of advocates is the traditional word of mouth propaganda. By sharing personal experiences with a good, in this case a book, they market it to other potential consumers. Therefore they enhance potential sales and popularity.

3.7.2 Professional

Professional advocates refer mainly to literature reviews from experts and professional literature critics (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). Their task is to evaluate the symbolic, as well as the economical capital of a book and present their findings to the public (Pouly, 2016). This is done in order to simplify the decision process for potential customers. Listening to public advice is an ever growing trend in the current book market (Uzzell, 2013).

It is being differentiated however, between informative persuasion and opinionative persuasion (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). While some critics focus mainly on the mere existence of the advertised book, hereby informing the public, others focus on the actual evaluation of the content, hereby promoting their personal opinion. Generally speaking, it can be said that the overall opinion of experts is still highly valued in a cultural market (Reichert, 2017). However, it is difficult to say whether professional or non-professional advocates have a higher influence on the afore mentioned herd behaviour.

Here a differentiation between traditional earned media (professional critics) and social earned media (non-professional critics) can be made (Bao & Chang, 2014). Both methods significantly effect the sales and popularity of a book.

3.7.2 Non-Professional

Looking at non-professional advocates, this thesis focuses on the various kinds of online and social media influencers as well as recommendation websites.

As mentioned before, there are various websites, that demonstrate their opinion on books, rankings and other literary topics. The social media platforms for readers, Goodreads, also provides a multitude of personal rankings, lists and reviews. All their

information are based on several thousands of consumer votes and therefore offer a large variety of easily accessible, personal and authentic recommendations.

Bloggers and YouTube recommendations have also grown significantly important for the success of a book (Carlsen, 2017). The carlsen.de website specifically promotes book bloggers. 'YouTubers' that regularly recommend books on a highly personal level, are able to sell their own advertising space. Such personal recommendation has a considerably different perception compared to expert reviews (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). Where expert reviews appear to be of higher quality, personal recommendations are perceived as more trustworthy and authentic. This general differentiation is the core reason for the equal importance of both kinds of advocates.

4. Genres

Even though the distinction between different genres is highly discussed due to the impossibility of clearly defining the borders, they are still a necessary tool for general orientation in any media market.

4.1 Overview

In 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms', Baldick (2001) describes the term 'genre' as follows:

*"the French term for a type, species, or class of composition. A literary genre is a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common *conventions as will prevent the readers or audiences from mistaking it for another kind."* (p. 105)

Cawelti (2014) explains that different types of stories trigger different emotions and needs of the reader. Some stories focus on escapism, while others are solely concerned about the readers entertainment. The genre classifications work as indicators for the readers expectations (Cawelti, 2014). It is therefore imperative that certain genres fulfil certain expectations in order to satisfy the reader, hence the necessity of genres in general (Cawelti, 2014).

Fiction is one of the biggest groups in the book market, in terms of economical success (Reichert, 2017). 1/3 of the turnover of the book market are caused by fiction sales,

which include, among others, Narrative Fiction (51.9%), Suspense (26.2%) and Science Fiction & Fantasy (6.5%) (Börsenverein, 2014, as cited in Reichert, 2017). Also, 20% of the bestselling fiction hardcovers, are fantasy titles (Buchreport, 2015).

4.2 Fantastic Literature

“[F]antastic, the: a mode of fiction in which the possible and the impossible are con-founded so as to leave the reader with no consistent explanation for the story’s strange events.“ (Baldick, 2001, p. 94). It is important to differentiate between fantastic literature as a category and fantasy as a genre. Fantastic literature is an overarching category, that encompasses all writing, that possess fantastic elements, such as supernatural forces, magic, futuristic technologies, myths and legends (Todorov, 1975). Fantastic literature describes the undefinable (Timmerman, 1983). Fantastic literature can therefore be referred to as the general overhead topic, which includes three main genres: fantasy, science fiction and horror (Bemme, 2012). A rough differentiation should be made. Fantasy generally speaks of good vs evil, heroism, and supernatural forces that usually entails magic (Baldick, 2001). Science fiction on the other hand, is always based on existing human technology. It is therefore imperative for science fiction to be able to explain the ’how’s and the ’why’s of the world that is described (Baldick, 2001). If there is no reference to real technology, biology or physical reality, it should not be classified as science fiction. Last but not least, the horror genre. Horror, also known as ’the Uncanny‘ features disturbing emotions and events that intends to provoke strangeness and feelings of unease, fear and suspense (Baldick, 2001). It is therefore a genre that is hard to distinguish since it usually provides aspects of other genres and infuses them with the feeling of terror and disturbance.

Conclusively it can be said, that fantastic literature did not intend to be clearly defined and is to be seen as a general indicator (Jackson, 2003). Especially, since fantastic elements are a ’seductive subject‘ (Jackson, 2003), not least due to its lack of finality.

4.3 Fantasy

The father of fantasy, J. R. R. Tolkien (2014) once said in his speech ’On Fairy-stories‘: “But fairy stories offer also, in a peculiar degree or mode, these things: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation, (...)“.

4.3.1 Characteristics

“We love stories mostly for two reasons: our readiness to comfort and entertain ourselves with fantasy, and our curiosity and desire for insight about reality.” (Boulton, 2013, p.1). A story that is worth remembering, has to be built on note-worthy characters, morals and surprises, which have to be told with precision (Trautmann, 2008). The main reason, why fantasy is one of the most remarkable genres, is that it is in itself completely limitless (de Grandpair, 2011). There are no borders, restraints or limitations of any kind, when it comes to fantasy. It is built on human desires, dreams and idealised principles and uses these motives to create the illusion of the possibility of their realisation (Sullivan & White, 2014). This creates tension, identification and longing. It purposefully blurs the line between what is real and what is fiction and emphasises the grey zone of possibilities in between (Jackson, 2003).

Fantasy, or fairy stories, as Tolkien (2014) has described it is said to be “an unreal or incredible story“. They mostly revolve around a mortal man who is given heroic qualities, sent on an adventure and confronted with perilous dangers (Tolkien, 2014). It usually involves some form of supernatural monsters and magical abilities. Furthermore, even though it is not necessary, it is expected for a fairy story to have a happy ending. The final denouement at the end of the story creates the desired satisfaction and closure for the reader (Tolkien, 2014).

One topic for debates are 'dreams'. Since the nature of dreams is that anything is possible Tolkien (2014) explicitly states that dreams are not to be considered fantasy. This would also exclude the famous example 'Alice in Wonderland' by Lewis Carroll (1951). Nowadays, the unofficial conclusion has been made that even though the content of dreams may be considered fantastic, the element of dreams itself is to be excluded.

4.3.2 J.R.R. Tolkien

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892 - 1973) (Klett-Cotta, 2017) is officially the 'greatest influence within the fantasy genre' (Birch, 2009). His books 'The Hobbit', 'The Lord of the Rings' and 'The Silmarillion' have been translated into more than 40 languages and are supposed to have ignited the fascination for the fantastic (Klett-Cotta, 2017). The speech he gave 'On Fairy Tales' is considered the foundation of modern fantasy classifications (Birch, 2009). Three major factors are to be mentioned, that are reportedly re-

sponsible for the significant success of Tolkien. The first factor is the 'middlemen' character of the 'Hobbits' (Korpua, 2015). Without this familiar, almost-human factor of identification, it is probable that 'The Lord of the Rings' would not have become the 'cornerstone of the 20th century fantasy' (Korpua, 2015), that it is today. Secondly, Tolkien has an unmatched ability to make the ordinary things appear extraordinary (Crossley, 1975). This infuses the readers everyday life with unexpected beauty and richness. And thirdly, all of Tolkien's characters are strong and admirable, but they are also flawed (Trautmann, 2008). This last aspect adds to the human factor of identification, as do the 'Hobbits'. Since human kind is far from perfect, in order to be able to identify oneself with a character, it must not be perfect either.

4.3.3 The rise of Fantasy

The struggles of adapting fantasy into the mainstream began with the publication of 'The Lord of the Rings'. Despite its popularity, however, it was not essentially associated with fantasy itself. The fascination with the fantastic grew slowly but steadily over the 19th and 20th century (Birch, 2009). The discontent with everyday life and the escapism fantasy offered increased its popularity. A turning point was reached with the blockbuster motion picture adaptation of 'The Lord of the Rings' by Peter Jackson in 2001. The unexpected success of this movie adaptation caused a break-through for fantasy into the mainstream. The equally unexpected and timely success of the Harry Potter books as well as their motion picture adaptations pushed this movement ever further. Modern fantasy is therefore sometimes described as 'Post-Potter-Fantasy' (Buchreport, 2015). Since this ignition at the beginning of the 2000s, the art of fantasy has continued to grow. Not only the intriguing impossibilities of strange lands and magical abilities but also the moral values and happy endings are the reasons why fantasy perpetuated itself in modern cultures and societies (Sindelar, 2016). After all, who would not want a 'Happily Ever After'?

5. Bestsellers

The dilemma of bestseller-markets is that instead of absolute effort, only the relative effort is valued (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). That means, that books are not valued according to their objective quality, but rather according to their perceived value.

5.1 What is a 'Bestseller'?

Leonard Woolf (husband of Virginia Woolf) said in his biography that there are four key components for writing a bestseller. A touch of naivety, a touch of sentiment, narrative talent and a mysterious sympathy for the daydreams of ordinary people (as quoted in Gesing, 2015). Strictly speaking, a bestseller is a book that has been sold in a considerable quantity, regardless of quality or popularity (Parra-Membrives & Classen, 2016).

5.1.1 What is a 'good' book?

It is said that no matter how good the circumstances, if the story of a book is not 'good' it will never become a bestseller (Johnson, 2014). The question is: how can a book be classified as 'good', since it is a cultural good and therefore subject to personal opinion? As Kreuznigg (2012a) states, objective evaluation is only possible if rationally repeatable objectives are accessible. Since the main indicator for quality in arts, in this case books, is the subjective measure of enjoyment, however, it is near impossible to objectively classify a book as 'good'. This is the main point of conflict in cultural markets (Reichert, 2017), and is also the cause for unpredictable value discrepancies. Certain aspects that could be counted as generally accepted criteria, turned out to be only accepted in the respective fields, such as literary prizes and expert reviews (Reichert, 2017). There are nevertheless factors that can be analysed and standardised in order to create the illusion of objective criteria. Pouly (2016) refers to one of these criteria as the 'readability' of a book. It refers to the 'narrative drive', the author imposes on the reader and is a matter of literary talent. A distinctive combination of writing style, voice and originality in its idea are the basic preconditions (Pouly, 2016).

Gesing (2015) claims that writing is a craftsmanship, that can be taught and learned. He does state that mere craftsmanship is not sufficient to produce a bestseller, but it is a necessary requirement to seduce the reader with the written word. Uzzell (2013) on the other hand emphasises the importance of a 'good subject', which means a subject that is of interest to a considerable percentage of the population. De Grandpair (2011) disagrees as well, stating that the reader is first and foremost concerned about the acting characters and their personal means of identification. These chances of identification require a certain measure of stereotyping, which Cawelti (2014) expresses are the most relevant. Stereotypes, that are recognisable but reinvented in an original fashion in order

to create suspense. Suspense then again is Mehlers' (2013) most important value, as it is the suspense, that will keep the reader attached to the book.

All in all, it can be said that there are several distinguishable factors, that are relevant in order to make a 'good' book, but none of these are objectify-able. In the end, a consistent synergy between formal aspects, such as writing style, symbolic aspects, such as morals and values and content aspects, such as identification and interest is necessary to classify a book as 'good' (Kreuschnigg, 2012b). But whether or not these aspects have the desired effects on the reader, it is open to subjective and individual interpretation. And after all, just because a book can be said to be 'good', it is still no guarantee to become successful as well (Zuckerman, 2015).

5.1.2 How can 'success' be defined?

Elliot Fletcher once said "Have your own definition of success.. so you can fulfil your dreams, not someone else's expectations of your dreams." (featured on [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)). This quote captures in its way, the two viewpoints on success. The personal, symbolic value as opposed to the economical value (Pouly, 2016). Mayrhofer, Meyer & Steyrer (2016) go further by differentiating the two perspectives into objective and subjective success. Objective success relates to hard facts, such as income, sales, and recognition. Subjective success on the other hand considers personal development, reviews and contentment, which are only measurable by the respective person. This opinion about the two perspectives is generally supported. Reichert (2017), who refers to it as symbolical vs economic success (similar to Pouly, 2016), categorises them as recognition through people (symbolic) and recognition through profits (economic). The judgement, which success is 'better' or 'more correct' depends entirely on the context in which the question is asked. While publishers are generally more interested in the economic success of a book and authors tend to be more interested in its symbolic value, both have to consider the other side as well in order to stay successful. A third opinion, as suggested by the author of this thesis, is the synergy of both 'types of success'. A book that satisfies personal desires while being economically profitable could be considered the ultimate success. In a personal interview, the German bestselling author, Markus Heitz (2016) explained that to *him* his first book was a success, because he was published at an established publishing house (Heyne), even though economically, the book might not have been too 'successful', according to its overall sales (personal communication, 2016). In

order to be economically successful, the book has to be profitable to the publishers he states. The appreciation from fans is also considered to be a success, even though this is again personal more than professional. If all these factors are achieved, it is almost certain to be considered 'successful'. It nevertheless always depends on the perspective.

5.2 Bestselling Authors

In terms of bestselling authors Forbes announces a list every year, that ranks all authors according to annual sales in million US Dollars. The list of 2016 includes, among others, George RR Martin (\$15), JK Rowling (\$17), Suzanne Collins (\$20), John Grisham (\$26) and Steven King (\$39) (Forbes, 2016). Leading the list, as has been the year before, is James Patterson. He is the highest paid author world wide, with an income of US\$94 million in the year 2016 (In 2015 it was US\$89 million) (Forbes, 2016).

Despite their considerable payment, some of these authors have been turned down by several publishers, proving that bestsellers are not immediately recognisable. Among others J. K. Rowling (12 times) and Stephen King (more than 30 times) (AUTHORS Team, 2015). The German bestselling author Markus Heitz became internationally successful, after the series 'The Dwarves' was published (in accordance with the initial fantasy movement, 'The Lord of the Rings' had ignited) (Heitz, 2017).

5.3 Bestselling Books

Many bestselling books are short termed market peaks only. Even though they are aimed at long term success, only few achieve this (Pouly, 2016).

Two of the most significant examples of long-term bestselling books (in the fantasy genre) are 'The Lord of the Rings' series and the 'Harry Potter' series. More than 150 million copies have been sold of 'The Lord of the Rings' by J. R. R. Tolkien (1954), which has been translated into more than 40 languages (Publishing Perspectives, 2010). The total sales of the 'Harry Potter' series by J. K. Rowling (1997) exceed 450 million worldwide and have been translated into 79 languages (Rowling, 2017). 'Harry Potter' is therefore the bestselling book series in history. The first book sold more than 107 million copies (Publishing Perspectives, 2010). The final book of the series sold over 8.3 million copies in the US alone, within the first 24 hours. (Maloney, 2016).

5.4 Bestselling Lists

Reichert (2017) explains that bestselling lists are considered to be the most objective and informative portrayal of the value of a book. He based this statement on three assumptions. One, that the total of sales numbers is evaluated in the lists. Two the expectation that sales mirror the public opinion. And three, that these lists are unaffected by subjective influences. This assumption, however, is to be reconsidered.

5.4.1 Variety of Lists

Nowadays, there are bestselling lists in abundance (Uzzell, 2013). The most established one being the New York Times bestselling list (Kreuschnigg, 2012a). In Germany, the Spiegel bestseller list is the most well known. On top of these several other established publishers have their own lists, such as The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today (CNN.com, 2017). In Germany there is also the boersenblatt.net, which is a specific portal for the book industry, publishing weekly bestselling lists for fiction, non-fiction, crime, children's and young adult's books and more (boersenblatt.net, 2017). Non-professional websites also feature a variety of lists, such as Lovelybooks, Publishers-Weekly and, as mentioned before, Goodreads. And of course, there is the Amazon best seller lists, accounting for the individual sales via Amazon.

Despite, or possibly due to, the considerable amount of lists, the credibility has decreased significantly over the last years. The criticism goes as far as Jeff Bercovici, writer for the Forbes website, who explains how one can buy their way onto the best-selling list, if you know the right people and have sufficient financial resources (Bercovici, 2013). Numerous other online articles report about the corruptness (Groins, 2016) of bestselling list, their influence-ability and their inaccuracy (Grahl, 2016).

In contrast to the general criticism, bestselling lists still serve as public guidelines for 'what's hot' in the book market (Sorensen, 2007).

5.4.2 People's Choice Awards

A different approach to displaying the popularity of books are the 'People's Choice Awards' from the Goodreads website. They host an annual voting for each genre, where people can vote online for their favourite book of any genre, as well as propose new books to the voting (Goodreads, 2017). The total number of votes for the Awards in 2016 is 3,560,369 in all categories. On average there were 300,000 votes per category.

The number one book in the category 'Fantasy' of 2016 is 'Harry Potter and the Cursed Child' by Jack Thorne (and J.K. Rowling) with 128,543 votes, which is half of the total amount in that category. These awards may not be as prestigious as the classical best-selling lists, but they are highly valued among readers, since they are solely based on a considerable amount of personal consumer opinions.

5.4.3 Top books of 2016

In addition to overall bestselling lists, most platforms publish an annual ranking of 'best books'. These are chosen according to different characteristics, ranging from sales over reviews to subjective opinions. Amazon for example provides several lists, from 'editors' picks' to 'most wished for' and classical 'sales'. The New York Times publishes a list of '100 notable books of 2016' - clearly stating, that they are 'notable' and not 'the best' - correctly referring to the selection through New York Times book reviews.

5.5 Criticism

The artificial creation of bestsellers has been subject to investigations several times before. Not only in the literary market, but across all media (or generally creative) markets, the question about 'recipes for success' circulates.

5.5.1 Earlier Attempts

A Bachelor thesis, written by Bayer in 2014, analyses the example of the bestselling novel 'Die Vermessung der Welt' (Measuring the World) by Daniel Kehlmann from 2005. The bottom line is that there is a significant amount of influenceable factors, yet there are too many unpredictable factors for the success to be artificially recreated. The thesis puts a special emphasis on the writing quality in terms of its' analysis.

There is also a book, published in 2013 from Mehler, who has written and published several bestsellers before. It is called 'How to write a bestseller' and provides a detailed overview of his writing, publishing and marketing processes. However, even though he describes all aspects in a way that portrays them as influenceable, he still refers to various factors that are dependent on un-influenceable external factors, such as social perception, timing and current trends.

5.5.2 Underwood Case Study

There was one example nevertheless, that offered a new perspective to the discussion of artificially create-able bestsellers. A personal study, by Brent Underwood, a marketing agent and an outspoken critic of bestselling lists and the bestseller status in general. The emotional title of his experiment is 'What does it take to be a bestselling author? \$3 and 5 minutes'. Apart from criticising the bias of the currently prestigious bestselling lists, such as New York Times and Amazon, he also pities the deterioration of the term 'best-seller' or the title 'bestselling author' itself (Underwood, 2016). Since the term 'best-seller' is not objectively quantifiably regulated, Underwood (2016) claims that it is therefore 'meaningless'. In an attempt to prove this provocative opinion he executed an experiment of publishing a fictitious book, promising to make it a bestseller. Since a detailed insight of the experiment would exceed the capacities of this paper, the official source, featuring the entire experiment can be found in the reference list. The bottom line, however, is that Brent Underwood managed to self-publish a book on Amazon, which had no other content than a picture of his own foot. It was openly accessible to the public and became the #1 bestselling book of its category after only a couple of hours of existence. There is no prestige to the category, and no achievement to that 'success', but the official title of 'Amazon #1 bestselling author' is a clear insignia for Underwood to market himself with. He thereby confirmed not only the simplicity with which a supposed 'bestseller' can be artificially created, but also his earlier claims that the term 'bestseller' or 'bestselling author' are basically vacuous nowadays.

6. Empirical Research

Since the mere recapitulation of existing research is unable to provide sufficient insights for the investigation of the hypothesis, extensive additional empirical research was conducted. In the following chapter the choice of the research methods as well as a detailed description of the individual executions and the according findings will be given. In order to prove the usefulness of this research, its reliability as well as its validity are considered. Reliability refers to the possible repetition from someone who was not primarily involved in this research. Validity verifies whether or not the results of the research show, what they were intended to prove in the first place. The research methods and

their findings will therefore be analysed in their applicability to the underlying hypothesis and research questions of this thesis.

6.1 Intention

There are various ways in approaching the validation of any hypothesis. Choosing a suitable one, however, can be difficult. For the hypothesis of this Bachelor thesis: “The potential success of a (fantasy) novel can be scientifically predetermined.” two options seemed appropriate. A content-analysis of numerous bestselling fantasy novels or a more industrial approach of investigating the publishing sector and their working methods. Due to the extensive prior knowledge of bestselling fantasy novels from the author, the first method could be discarded after a short additional literature research. The internal structures, formalities and qualities of bestselling novels were soon discovered to be too diverse to be suitably compared with hope for satisfactory results. Hence, the second option was chosen instead: a personal investigation of the publishing industry and their working habits. Since publishers make a living out of producing novels that are economically viable, they ought to be able to provide a revealing insight about the predictability of success. In order to acquire the desired information five extensive expert interviews were conducted with publishers from the fantasy section of established publishing houses. In addition to this method, a supplementary survey was held among readers. The purpose of the survey was to provide an insight from the readers point of view about their personal preferences and expectations about books. After all, it is the readers who decide about the success or failure of a book.

6.2 Interviews

As explained above, the first empirical research method that was chosen are expert interviews. An 'expert' is classified as a person who has particular knowledge or insights about a topic or process, which he or she is willing and able to share with others if necessary (Gläser & Laudel, 2010). The interview partners were chosen according to this description. In an attempt to obtain as much information as possible partially standardised questions were used as well as a 'golden thread motive' (Gläser & Laudel, 2010). This means that the questions were identical for every interview, but the interviewee was free to answer the questions according to personal aspiration. Further, situational

diversions from the original questions were allowed in order to extend the provided information even more. Afterward, a qualitative content analysis was applied. The results of this analysis enabled further conclusions about the hypothesis as they were put into context. Qualitative content analysis holds the risk of subjective distortion of the findings (Gläser & Laudel, 2010). Since the individual answers will be related to each other as well as the primary findings of this thesis however, a reasonable interpretation of the findings should be provided.

6.2.1 Initiation

After the hypothesis, the research questions and the desired outcome of the interview were defined, the according questions were formulated. 23 diverse questions were stated on the final questionnaire. Since only parts of the questions will be featured in the execution, the complete questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. The interviews had an intentional length of approximately 15 minutes each, which turned out to be an underestimation. The average length of an interview was approximately 35 minutes. The extensive knowledge of the interview partners, as well as the curiosity of the interviewer prolonged the interviews notably, but also informatively.

The acquisition of interview partners was a combination of personal involvement and personal contacts. The efforts resulted in five qualified publishers from established publishing houses, which have been working in the industry for several years. Due to data protection, the interview partners and the publishing houses will be named but not connected to the respective findings in the execution. The interview partners are:

- Natalja Schmidt, Dromer Knaur
- Pia Cailleau, Carlsen
- Stephan Askani, Klett-Cotta
- Holger Kappel, Blanvalet / Limes / Penhaligon (Random House)
- Sebastian Pirling, Heyne (Random House)

For simplification purposes, the interviewees will be referred to as “A“, “B“, “C“, “D“, and “E“ in a randomised order, throughout the evaluation of the results. The specific dates will not be noted either, for data protection and simplification. All interviews were executed in January 2017 and will henceforth only be labeled ‘2017‘.

The desired goal of these expert interviews was to find out whether or not there are certain objective criteria, which publishers relate to in order to minimise the risk of a newly

published novel and maximise the chances of its success. Also, if such criteria were to exist, an explanation and investigation of each would be anticipated.

6.2.2 Execution

The intention of the first questions was to secure that all interviewees were chosen according to the requirements for this Bachelor thesis. It could be verified, that all interviewees were suitable, as each one confirmed to be actively working in the field of editing for the fantasy section of an established publishing house. Some positions included other fantastic literature, such as science fiction. One of the interviewees stood out, because the person was working primarily with digital publishing. Additionally, some interviewees were not only editors but also program manager of the fantasy section (personal communication, 2017).

In addition to their position, the next question addressed the main everyday tasks, their job entails, to confirm their potential knowledge about the assessment of manuscripts further. The outcome of this question reinforced their qualification. Even though the specific tasks varied slightly, the general requirements were congruent. They all are responsible for the acquisition of new manuscripts, some also of the purchasing of foreign licenses, the maintenance of author relationships, the structuring of the new literary programs, the actual editing and publishing process as well as occasional cooperation with the marketing & sales departments (personal communication, 2017).

The next paragraph of the questionnaire was implemented to create a reference to the survey, that was conducted among readers. It focuses on the publishers reading preferences, providing an insight about their perception of the fantasy genre.

All interviewees confirmed their passion to read, claiming that 'no one works in publishing, that does not like to read' (personal communication, "E", 2017). An average on how much the individuals read could not be given. However, they commonly agreed, that since they work in publishing, their personal reading has decreased. It could furthermore be confirmed, that all participants enjoy reading fantasy, despite working with it constantly. Fantasy offers to 'look at that which is possible through the veil of impossibility, while expressing that which is impossible, with the means of what is possible' (personal communication, "B", 2017). Fantasy has accompanied many participants since they were children and still fascinates them as adults, by offering new and

original perspectives of looking at life (personal communication, 2017). When looking at the measures of orientation for choosing a new book, publishers, as well as readers, listen mainly to recommendations of the people they trust, or that share their personal taste. In addition to that, publishers benefit from their extensive knowledge of the book market and also orient themselves on the competitors (personal communication, 2017).

The third section concentrates solely on the assessment of new manuscripts. All interviewees do personally deal with the analysis of manuscripts that seek to be published. Generally speaking, ranges the amount of manuscripts from 15 to 40 per month for the Fantasy section in total (personal communication, 2017). The variance results from seasonal discrepancies as well as contractual differences. In the digital publishing sector the amount is generally higher, since the overall work flow is faster and 'softer' than in traditional publishing. This means that the guidelines are not as inflexible and that there is more room for manoeuvre for the assessment procedure (personal communication, "C", 2017). All of the interviewees are in a considerably high position and therefore only deal with a pre-selected portion of the manuscripts, the publishing house is being sent. They confirmed nonetheless that all manuscripts are being looked at to some extent (personal communication, 2017). The different steps of the selection, vary slightly. A significant difference in the assessment of a manuscript is made during the very receiving of it. Manuscripts that are being sent via literary agents or on the request of the publishers, are already valued higher than so called 'unwanted' manuscripts, that are being sent in by authors themselves (personal communication, 2017). Those 'unwanted' manuscripts are not immediately rejected, but they are looked at more intensely than those that have already surpassed the first quality control of a literary agent. The first step, in every analysis is the overall formatting and professionalism of the author. It is therefore imperative for any manuscript to show a general capability of working with language. Afterwards the overall writing style and the basic story line are looked at. The story has to keep to the underlying framework of fantasy but present sufficient original traits to be intriguing. As for the writing style the ability to create suspense and interest as well as offer the possibility for the reader to identify themselves with the protagonist (the leading role in a story (Baldick, 2001)) are vital (personal communication, 2017). This is also referred to as 'narrative quality' (personal communication, "A", 2017). Another considerable aspect is whether or not the manuscript is suitable for the publishing

house. Since every publisher has certain characteristics and motives, not every publisher is interested in every manuscript (personal communication, “B“, 2017). It is undeniable, that the subjectivity of the editor influences his or her assessment of a manuscript. Long term experiences as well as a certain degree of ‘detachability‘ and professionalism however suggest the attempt of objectivity. This attempt is reinforced through additional opinions. As soon as one publishers finds liking to a manuscript, this may be due to personal preference, recognition of literary talent or other reasons, he or she will hand the manuscript on to equally qualified people for a second and a third assessment. Being considered to be a ‘good‘ manuscript however, is not only difficult and partially subjective, but also insufficient in terms of publish-ability. As mentioned before the narrative quality is a significant indicator (“A“). Also the experience and the assessment of the book market are to be considered (“B“). The author also need to show, that he or she has ‘control‘ over the story, which means that there has to be an underlying message, the reader can still be curious about after several hundred pages. The authenticity of the authors’ voice is another aspect that is relevant for the makings of a ‘good‘ book (“C“). However, all those aspects are solely the basic requirements. The next consideration is about the potential publish-ability of the book (“D“). The story has to be suitable for the mass-market in order to become a success. It has to be market-able and sell-able (“E“).

When talking about specific requirements or even objective criteria that might be consulted during the assessment of a manuscript, the answers were unspecific and potentially negating. In terms of successful creative writing, especially writing fantasy, all factors that are to be considered are conceivably subjective. The reader has to be able to identify his- or herself with the protagonist (“C“). The internal logic and world building of the story has to be convincing and easily understandable (“B“). The characters, story and progress of the story have to be suited for the readers’ expectations (“D“). It all depends on the preferences of the individual target group (“E“).

The next question concerned the differences between the publishers expectations towards a book as opposed to the readers expectations. Here the responses varied notably. While one of the publishers emphasised the importance of seeing things from the reader’s perspective (“A“), stressing that there should be no different expectations, others disagreed noticeably. Some of the interviewees explained that while the reader is con-

cerned about the entertainment value of a book, the publishers have to be concerned with the economical value of the book, since they are commercial entities after all (“C“, “D“ & “E“). The last interviewee shared both opinions, pointing out that it is sometimes possible to align the different points of view, even though this may not always be the case (“B“).

Afterwards, two external factors were investigated towards their relevance for the success of a book. The first one was ‘current trends‘. Three out of five publishers explained that current trends are highly significant in terms of the potential success of a newly published book (“B“, “C“ & “D“). The market has to be ‘ready‘ for the new book. This means that if a ‘good book‘ was to be published at the ‘wrong time‘ it might end up as a failure, even though it might have had the potential to become a bestseller (“D“). One of the publishers on the other hand stated that trends are helpful, since the amount of satisfied readers is proportional to the books’ success, but not necessary. The underlying assumption was that new trends could be born or old ones reignited with the right book, despite the primary lack of its desire in the market (“E“). The last interviewee expressed his disregard for trends. They are to be acknowledged but not decisive. There are two kinds of books, the interviewee stated (“A“). Short term and long term bestsellers. Short term bestsellers are driven by existing trends. Long term bestsellers either establish new trends, or are entirely trend-less, solely convincing through their quality.

The second external factor that was analysed, was ‘luck‘ and its influence on the potential success of a (fantasy) novel. This question aimed at the overall influence-ability of success and the consideration of factors that cannot be artificially recreated. ‘Luck‘ in this case refers to fateful coincidences that positively, yet unintentionally influence the success of a book. For this question all interviewees were in agreement. Luck is undeniably a considerable factor. There are numerous aspects about a book that can be influenced, and that should be influenced to the author’s and the editor’s best capabilities. But whether or not the book turns out to be successful or not depends on the constantly changing market. What is happening on the market? What is trending? What is desired? How desperate is the market? (“C“). All such questions can be anticipated but not predicted. One has to do their best, and then hope for the best (“B“). The factor luck is also seen in relation to the risks a new novel entails. Several interviewees expressed their

fascination as well as their willingness to take risks, as sometimes, this is what is needed in the market (“E”).

As for the predictability of the success of a novel, the opinions again varied considerably. First of all, the term ‘success’ was analysed by most of the interviewees. They differentiated between economical profitability and personal fulfilment (“C”).

Regardless of the definition of success however, the opinions about its’ predictability were still divergent. One of the interviewees claimed that a tendency could certainly be predicted (“C”). Another mentioned the high risk of debut authors, whose success could be anticipated but not foretold (“B”). Yet another explained how, sometimes, success could indeed be predicted, elaborating on an example where the publisher was so convinced by a manuscript and its success that the conviction was turned into a marketing strategy, resulting in a long term, best selling fantasy novel (“A”). One of the publishers disagrees strongly, stating that since as a publisher, they only release books that they consider ‘good’, all of their books should be best sellers. Since this is not the case, a ‘good’ book has been proved to be a condition more than a guarantee for its success (“D”). Last but not least, the final interviewee confirms that most correctly predicted success stories, were based on the pre-existing success of an author and that debut author always bear high risks (“E”).

Conclusively, the interviewees were asked not only about whether or not the potential success of a fantasy novel *could* be predetermined, but more so which criteria they consider to be the most influential. The narrative quality (“A”) as well as the literary craftsmanship (“D”) were two internal factors that were highlighted. Also, the specific personality of the author has to match the story of the book in order to create authenticity (“E”). The expectations of the readers have to be fulfilled as well as shattered (“B”). Any reader should furthermore be able to identify his- or herself with either the protagonist or an alternative leading role of the novel (“A”). In addition to these, several external factors were accentuated. No matter how good the story is, it has to be presented accordingly in order to attract readers. Marketing is therefore mentioned by three different interviewees as a key component to the success of a novel (“C”, “D” & “E”). Furthermore pre-existing success and prestige of the author are influential to any potential

successive success (“C”), as are trends and the current market situation. Last but not least, ‘luck’ was again mentioned three times (“B”, “D” & “E”).

This closes the general overview of the interviews and the answers that were given. Following is a summarising analysis of the findings, put into context of the hypothesis and the research questions.

6.2.3 Conclusion

One of the interviewees said: “If I *knew* how to produce a good book, I would not be employed anymore.” (translated by the author; personal communication “D”, January 2017). Since this quote comes from someone who has been working in the publishing industry, successfully, for several years, it is a reasonable indicator to the overall conclusion of this research method.

Several things can be deduced from the comparison of the various responses of the interviews. The overarching conclusion is that the success of a book is dependent on a multitude of factors. Some of which are influence-able, and other which are not or only partially. This research therefore suggests the rejection of the hypothesis: “The potential success of a (fantasy) novel can be scientifically predetermined”.

A more detailed look at the research questions reinforces this suggestions. As for the specific criteria that are iterative among successful fantasy novels, it can not be answered extensively, since the chosen research method only covers part of the necessary investigation. An additional content analysis of a significant sample of successful fantasy novels would be needed to provide a more suitable insight. The tendency, that can be derived from the interviews, however, is that there are hardly any common criteria. This can be concluded from the findings that several of the supposedly necessary criteria for successful novels are either, not definable enough to standardise them, or too fluctuating to be considered relevant.

Similar realisations account for the next question. Whether or not any criterion can ,objectively classify a book as ‘good’. The term ‘good’ is in its nature subjective and therefore impossible to objectify. There are, nevertheless, criteria that can determine the literary value, such as narrative quality and the ability to create suspense, that are often

considered to be common classifications for a 'good book'. The possibility of objective criteria, however, can, according to the responses from the interviews, be discarded.

Third, the question of an overarching common scheme among successful fantasy novels was looked at. This question may appear to be redundant to the afore mentioned investigations. There is, nevertheless, a notable difference. The 'common scheme' this question asks for, includes not only the internal factors of the book itself, but also entails the external influential variables as well. These external variables have also been explained throughout the interviews. The most mentioned of which was the overall marketing of a book. However, there were examples stated which oppose the verification of this last question as well. Generally speaking, the common scheme could be classified to consist of three factors. The basic requirement is a 'good book', that is, one that is well written, offers possibilities for identification and provides an original perspective. In combination with intense marketing, in order to make the book accessible and known to a vast majority of potential readers, which is the second factor. The last factor is 'luck', hoping for the best, that the readers would accept the book as anticipated. There are noteworthy exceptions however, which became successful without marketing, such as the best-selling series in history 'Harry Potter'. 'Harry Potter' did not receive proper marketing, until it was already successful, proving that marketing can be obsolete.

The underlying tone of the results nevertheless was that common factors can be identified, but they can not be classified or purposefully be recreated at will.

6.3 Survey

In addition to the expert interviews a second empirical research method was chosen: a survey. This was done in order to provide an additional insight into the readers point of view. It focusses on their reading habits and preferences and is supposed to indicate whether or not the perspectives of readers and publishers intercept. As opposed to expert interviews, which were qualitative empirical research, the survey provided a quantitative insight into the matter. As Brosius, Koschel & Haas (2016) explain, the main difference between quantitative and qualitative is the scientific replicability. The expert interviews describe a complex and extensive phenomenon which varies according to extrinsic factors, such as mood, time span and personal connection. The findings are therefore qualitatively irregular (Brosius et. al., 2016). A survey, on the other hand, is

usually analysed by the numbers, figures and overall quantify-able data. It is therefore less complex and more objective in its interpretation.

6.3.1 Initiation

As with the expert interviews, the survey was created in a deductive way, which means that the research methods were chosen in accordance to the existing hypothesis (Priest, 2010). Since the success of a novel is lastly dependent on the reader's acceptance of it, their point of view was taken into consideration with a short online survey. The intended amount of participants was 100-300 people. After approximately one month of being online, 173 people had participated and the survey was closed. The survey consisted of 10 questions, and had an average duration of 5 minutes per participant. In accordance with the intention: to analyse the reader's perspective and the goal: to find out whether or not the reader's expectations are considerable for the publishers, the survey was conducted among readers only. In total, the survey was promoted three times in order to attract sufficient participants. The first time, it was featured on a general social media page, the second time in a forum for writers and readers and the third time, it was amplified via a specific group for book lovers and reflected readers.

Due to the limitations of scope for this thesis, this chapter will only feature the most relevant insights from the entirety of survey results. The unrestricted survey, including the questions that were eliminated from the final questionnaire, can be found in the Appendix. Furthermore, all accessible data, including the 173 individual results, will be featured on the attached CD.

6.3.2 Execution

This first question concerned the age range of the participants. Its purpose was to provide an insight about the age distribution of readers, as well as to uncover potential differences in reading preferences according to age. Overall, the general age range was 19-35 (60.23%). The second largest group is 36-55 (34.88%). Only 4.66% of all participants were either younger than 19 years or older than 56 years.

Next, the average reading frequency was analysed. Participants were asked to give a rough estimation of their monthly reading average. 34.68% claim that they read 2-3

books per month. 32.94% read one book or less per month and 32.37% read more than 4 books per month.

Complimentary to the average reading frequency the next question looked at the total books read so far. 8.14% stated that they have only read a maximum of 10 books so far. 22.1% say to have read 11-100 books so far. But the considerably highest percentage of participants (69.77%) claim to have read more than 100 books so far.

Question 4 was a further addition to overall reading behaviour. It investigated the trend of 'to-read' lists. Lists, which readers have to keep track of the books, they still want to read. 11.56% do not have a reading list at all. However, 88.44% do have a 'to-read' list. these lists feature various quantities of books. 26.01% state that they also have more than 100 books on their 'to-read' list.

The next question asked for the participants' favourite genre in order to prove or reject the assumption of fantasy being a popular genre. Fantasy did rank highest with 23.84%. Most other genres, that were listed were insignificant, apart from crime (13.95%) and romance (9.30%). A significant amount also chose either 'Other/Not listed' (13.95%), or claimed that they do not have a favourite genre (20.35%).

Since the thesis puts a special emphasis on the fantasy genre, the next question investigated the participants' associations with 'Fantasy'. Participants were able to choose their three most important traits out of ten different options. Magic (54.34%), strange creatures, such as dragons, (53.76%) and strange worlds, such as Middle Earth, (52.60%) were ranked highest. While other aspects such as strange races, such as Elves, (41.62%) and myths and legends (25.43%) were also significant, some aspects appeared almost indifferent.

After choosing their three favourite traits of 'Fantasy', the next question asked for the participants' key motives *to read*. The reader's motivation to read were chosen in order to be comparable to the 'qualities' a 'good book' is supposed to possess.

Twelve different motives were given, including the option 'Others', which had to be specified. The top three motives were: Entertainment (61.27%), Relaxation (54.91%)

and 'because I just love it' (52.02%). Aspects such as Escapism (31.21%), Inspiration (30.64%) and Learning new things (24.86%) also ranked significantly. The option 'Other' was chosen 6 times. The answers are:

- 'profession (bookseller)'
- 'To give books a better feeling'
- 'I enjoy reading about (often heroic) characters striving to overcome stronger adversaries /difficult circumstances for what they consider to be a good / necessary cause. So, there is a moral aspect combined with a fantasy setting (with unusual races / creates / magic) and a feel good factor if / when the hero(s) prevail against the odds.'
- 'Validation I guess? Like when u can identify with a character a bit'
- 'When I stay reading the world is in book and the real problems don't exist for that time'
- 'To learn a new view about some things. There are books that changes my way of thinking completely without being 'a heavy book'.'

Questions 8 and 9 offered the participants a list of ten different novels, out of which they were supposed to chose their favourite. Alternatively, if they did not know any book on the list, they were required to chose any book that appeals to them the most.

The list that was chosen for question 8 was the New York Times (NYT) combined print & e-book Fiction bestseller list of December 11th of 2016. Question 9 was based on the Young Adult Hardcover bestseller list of December 11th of 2016. The order of the list was changed, but the top ten titles remained as possible answers.

The purpose of these two questions was to compare the official ranks of these book titles, according to the NYT bestselling status, to the perceived ranks of a small sample of independent readers. This comparison might provide several insights, which will be elaborated on in the next section. Since the lists also featured recent bestsellers, some book titles were not known, which caused 4 people to skip question 8 and 12 people to skip question 9. On the first list, with the overall bestselling fiction, "The Girl on the Train" by Paula Hawkins ranked highest (21.89%) as opposed to the official #1, which was "The Whistler" from John Grisham ([NYT.com](http://www.nytimes.com), 2016). The second list shows that "This is where it ends" by Marieke Nijkamp was voted highest (15.53%). "Courage to soar" by Simone Bliess and Michelle Burfond, however, which was the official #1, ranked lowest in this list (1.86%) ([NYT.com](http://www.nytimes.com), 2016).

The last question will be left out of the execution. Its absolute results, the statistical numbers, are flawed, due to executional controversies. It will nevertheless be analysed in detail in the next section of this thesis. The in-depth analysis did provide usable insights, contributing to the validation of the hypothesis.

6.3.3 Conclusion

The following section looks again at each of the individual questions from the survey and the respective results, with the addition of applying the knowledge to the underlying hypothesis and research questions of this thesis.

Before the questions are looked at, however, an overview about the survey responses will be given. The following graphic shows the three time periods where the survey was promoted. The first block refers to the initial, unspecified posting, the second to the specialised posting in a readers/writers forum and the third block, which is highlighted (98 results, Monday 09.01.2017, referring to the respective week), shows the time when the survey was promoted in the official ARD - readers group on Facebook (“ARD Buffet - everything concerning books“). The fourth section is overflow from the third promotion. This graphic will be referred to again, for the dissection of the tenth question.

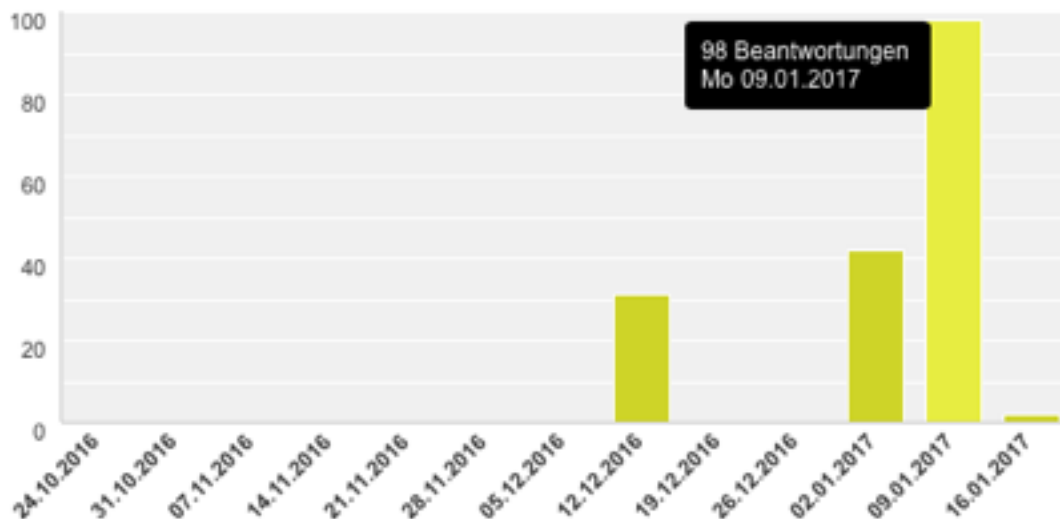


Figure 1: Periods of Response (Survey)

(source: Survey, SurveyMonkey.de, 2017)

The first question, concerning the age, is helpful in terms of target market. A key target market of readers aged 19-55 can be assumed. This insight is considerably broad, but it nevertheless provides a basic orientation in terms of market-ability. In order to become successful as a fantasy novel, the book needs to satisfy this target market. Its broadness

reflects the necessary commonality, the novel has to possess, considering broad scale success instead of targeted, specialised, smaller success.

Questions 2, 3 and 4 refer to the afore mentioned 'type' of reader. Generally speaking, it matters solely *if* a person reads, while the *how much* can be neglected. In terms of preferences and reading quality however, the reading quantity can be a significant indicator. The participants are therefore categorised as light, medium or heavy readers. The definitions of these types are imprecise and fluctuate, depending on the context. The terms nevertheless regard a certain degree of averageness. Medium readers, refer to the mean, the average. These readers tend to enjoy the pursuit of reading, but no more or less than other favourable activities. Light readers therefore refer to those, who do read at occasions, but usually only if it is inevitable or a special incentive is given. They usually prefer other activities, when given the choice and hence do not overly care about the quality of a book. In contrast to that stand the heavy readers. This group refers to people who, when given the choice, would prefer reading to various alternative activities. They therefore read the most books, compared to the other groups. It can be suggested, that their indulgence leads to a higher sensitivity for the quality of a book, considering their means of experience and comparisons. However, an opposing opinion exists, claiming that heavy readers care *less* about the quality of a book, since they read, for the sake of reading, implying that they chose quantity over quality. This debate will be further investigated towards the end of this section.

Looking at the three questions, they can be easily categorised as light, medium and heavy. Since medium refers to the average, the middle three answers refer to medium readers (for question 4, options 3,4 &5 are counted). The first option (or the first two, for question 4) are considered light readers, while the last choices refer to heavy readers. This classification is meant as an indication only, and not supposed to suggest strict guidelines. In order to present a percentage overview of how the participants can be classified, the respective percentages of the responses have been added up, and divided by three (since three 100% figures are taken into account). The results are as follows: Light readers: 16.2% ; Medium readers: 46.86% ; Heavy readers: 36.94%

Since the survey was aimed at people who like to read, these results indicate a general tendency of the reading intensity of the potential target group of a (fantasy) novels. It

can be deduced, that medium to high involvement can be expected from the target group. Involvement in this case refers to their desire for knowledge before buying a book. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the book market has a significant information gap for consumers. This survey supports the assumption that if no suitable information is available, the readers will turn to alternative means of orientation, such as bestselling lists. A tendency for herd-behaviour can hereby be supported.

As for question 5, the favourite genre, its key purpose was to confirm the market interest in the genre fantasy. Since fantasy ranks the highest, this assumption can be confirmed. The considerable amount of 'no favourite genre' however indicated that a genre label might not be overly significant for the decision for or against a book.

The purpose of question 6 was to verify the so called 'entry barriers' for the fantasy genre (personal communication, January 2017). 'Entry barriers' can be understood as underlying assumptions and expectations a person connects, usually subconsciously to a specific genre. Every genre has its own entry barriers. They function as means of genre distinction and differentiation. For fantasy, the key identification factors include magic, strange creatures, such as fairies, strange worlds, such as Narnia and strange races, such as Orcs. These entry barriers need to be included in any potentially successful fantasy novel in order to be successful. As consumers rely on their experiences and expectations that these aspects are featured to some extent, they might consider a book a failure, if it does not fulfil these requirements, regardless of the content and quality of the book.

The 7th question focussed on the participants' motives for reading. The motive is an indicator for the desired effect, the book is supposed to have. According to the various answers, there is a multitude of effects, the consumption of a book may have. These include: Distraction, Amusement, valuing the art of writing or even to be 'up to date' with current reads. Depending on the readers motive, a book may be written as well as marketed in a specific way to fulfil exactly these requirements. For example, a book written to entertain the reader is created and positioned differently than one that is also supposed to teach something to the reader. Books that offer escapist potential vary distinctly from ones that want to inspire the reader. The easiest and also the most difficult motive to work with, has the third largest ranking: 'because I just love it'. This option was

included for heavy readers mainly, for whom books have become part of their everyday lives. Reading therefore has several effects on them and they do it for various motives. But apart from these motives, they read, for the sake of reading. Why it appears to be the easiest and the hardest motive for the prediction of success is quickly explained. It is easy, because it implies that there is no special requirement, what the book has to achieve in order to be successful. Anything can be successful. This, on the other hand, is precisely the reason, why it is the most difficult motive. While increasing the chances of success, it decreases the possibility of *defining* the reason for success. It therefore also complicates the potential prediction of success.

The individually given answers in this section were insightful but not significant. They proved some previous assumptions, such as the importance of identification ('Like when u can identify with the character a bit') or escapism ('the real problems don't exist for that time').

Questions 8 and 9, as mentioned before, were meant to compare the official bestseller ranking of different books to their perceived ranking among readers. Since the numbers of this survey are not big enough to be considered scientifically viable, the intention is not to reveal actual discrepancies but foremost a tendency, that could be considered.

The explicit findings of these questions were already mentioned and will not be repeated in detail. This section will focus solely on the indications, the results make. As question 8 referred to the general bestselling list, it could have been expected, that the results would be more congruent. Since they were not, the results were analysed further in an attempt to explain this discrepancy. The outcome, that "The Girl on the Train" ranked highest, presumably resulted from the recent release of its' motion picture adaptation. This could be a hint towards the 'Mainstream Phenomenon', where it is less about quality than about prominence.

The second list, which featured a more specific list of young adult titles, gave less insight for potential tendencies, since the results were distributed almost evenly. The one striking ranking, however, was the lowest one: "The courage to soar", which was also the highest ranking one, according to the New York Times. After further investigations about the different books, that were featured on the list, a possible explanation occurred. Since this list was about Young Adult books, but not specifically fantasy, fantasy titles were mixed with other fiction or even non-fiction. "The courage to soar" is a non-fiction

book, about the personal story of a girl and her way to the Olympics. Since biographies tend to be difficult in sales and marketing, it is presumable the book sold well, to the according target group, which was supposedly not the mainstream market. Due to the fact that the survey focussed on the mainstream market however, it is possible, that the respective target group was simply underrepresented in this study.

This insight proves, that the fact that a book is featured #1 on the most prestigious best selling list, does not mean, that it is also the most well known or desired in the market.

The highest rated book on the other hand, “This is where it ends“, which had an average rating on the New York Times list, is not a fantasy book either. It is realistic fiction about a controversial topic: school shootings. Does this mean, that the survey just happened to capture one target group, and not the other? Or could this imply, that controversial topics receive higher awareness? This second thought can be supported by the general claim: ‘any publicity is good publicity’. Publicity is no guarantee for sales, as neither is controversy, but they are undeniably a higher guarantee for awareness, than niche topics. The question remains, however, how a niche book can have higher overall sales, than one that appears to have a higher overall awareness. This insight appears to contrast the original findings from the first list, that was investigated, where “The Girl on the Train“ ranked highest. However, the awareness a book receives because of its controversy, is different to the attention a book gains from its motion picture adaptation.

As for the final question, which was left out during the ‘execution‘ section, the execution and therefore the findings were flawed, which made the analysis difficult and almost rendered the question entirely obsolete. It was possible nevertheless, by looking at a diversified display of the results, to benefit from the question after all.

The question offered 15 different attributes in terms of the potential quality of a book. These included aspects such as overall topic, relate-ability, novelty and writing style. The participants were asked to rank these 15 attributes according to their personal perception of their importance. The goal of this last question was to uncover specific qualitative elements, that were considerably important to the reader. This would hence enable writers and also publishers to put special attention to these aspects.

In an attempt to illustrate the dilemma of understanding, analysing and interpreting this data, three graphics were chosen: (*see the next page*)

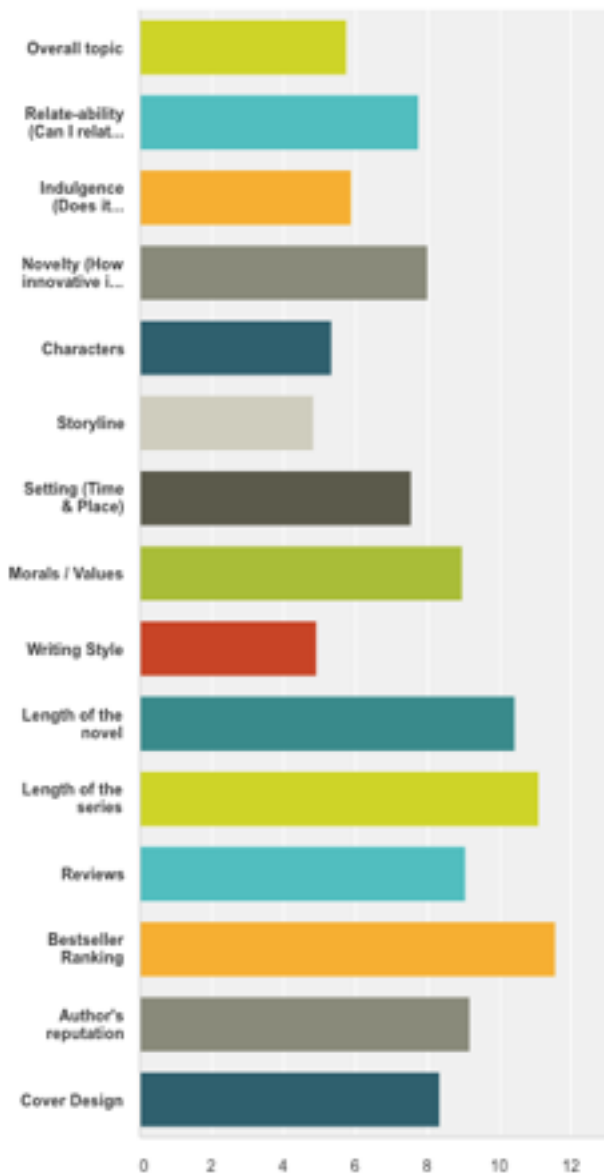


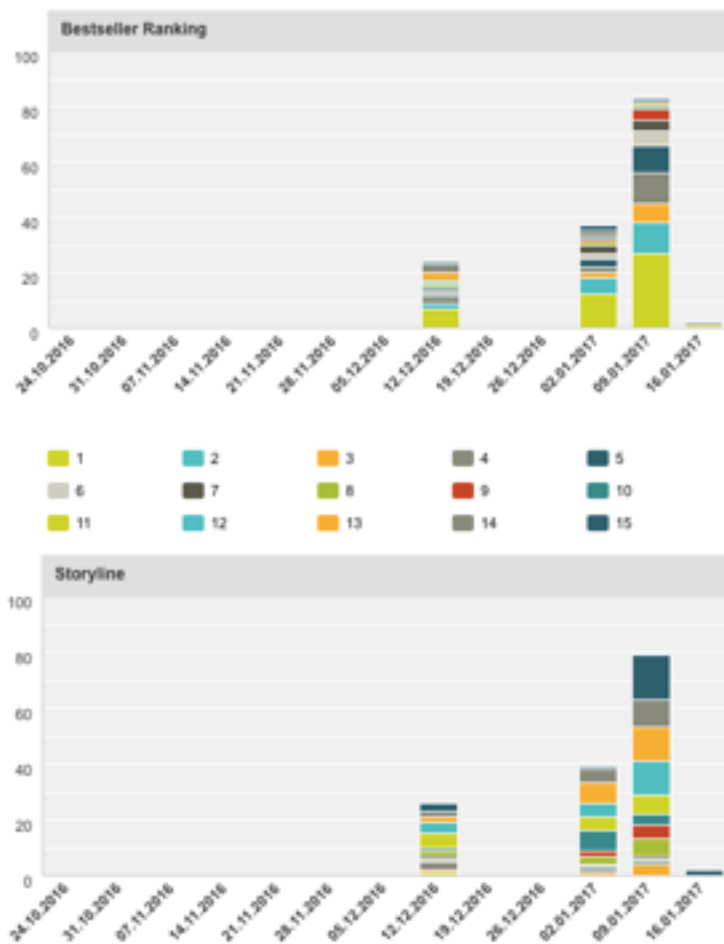
Figure 2: Question 10: Personal Preference (Survey)

(source: Survey, [SurveyMonkey.de](https://www.surveymonkey.de), 2017)

The first one shows the absolute evaluation of all votes for question 10:

According to this graphic, the most relevant factors would be 'Bestseller Ranking', 'Length of Series' and 'Length of Novel'. This in itself may be possible, but all common sense and market experience object to the possibility, that 'Overall Topic', 'Storyline' and 'Writing Style' are supposed to be the least important. In order to prove this assumption, the detailed analysis of each individual answer was consulted. The second and third graphic therefore show the expanded analysis of the factors 'Bestseller Ranking', which supposedly ranked highest, and 'Storyline', which supposedly ranked lowest. The graphics show the individual percentages of each rating value, given to the qualitative aspect in question: (see the next page)

The differently coloured blocks indicate the amount of people, who chose the according rank for the respective aspect. From the lowest (1) on the bottom, to the highest (15) on the top of the pillar. These graphics therefore clearly prove the previous assumption, that 'Storyline' should rank significantly higher than 'Bestseller Ranking'. Looking at the graphics in more detail, one can see that for 'Bestseller Ranking' a considerable amount of participants chose the value '1' or similarly low values, with few exception. This indicates, that 'Bestseller Ranking' is NOT important for the participants. Opposed to that, when looking at 'Storyline' is can be seen that the majority chose values '10' and higher with a significant amount of '13' and '15'. This again implies, that 'Storyline' is generally of a HIGH importance to the participants.



Figures 3 + 4: Question 10: 'Bestseller Ranking' + 'Storyline' (detailed depiction of the individual results) (Survey)

(source: Survey, SurveyMonkey.de, 2017)

After further investigations to the displayed discrepancies, it was found out, that the programme did not rank the values according to the accumulated points, but that its internal algorithm weighted '1' the most and '15' the least. The question was hence answered 'inversely' due to a conceptual misunderstanding of the program. Despite the flawed display of the absolute results, however, due to the detailed display of each possible answer, the question could nevertheless be evaluated properly. Since the entire inversion of the question, the responses and the ranking depends on the internal algorithm of the program, it is not applicable. For additional reference, all individual detailed survey results can be found in the Appendix. For the progress of this paper, a general overview of the reinterpreted (inverted) results will be given below. (It is to be considered, that the following ranking is not absolute and may vary in its accuracy. It is based solely on the inversion of the current rank. The intention of the inverted ranking below is merely to provide a more appropriate overview of the general tendency, this question is supposed to show.)

The newly interpreted findings of this question indicate a distinct preference of different characteristics of a novel, for the readers. It is clearly shown, that the internal factors, such as 'Storyline', 'Writing Style', 'Characters', 'Overall Topic' and also 'Indulgence' (referring to the 'unputdownable-ness' of a book) are of major importance for the readers. Extern factors on the other hand, such as 'Reviews', 'Authors' Reputa-

1.	Storyline	9.	Cover Design
2.	Writing Style	10.	Morals/Values
3.	Characters	11.	Reviews
4.	Overall Topic	12.	Authors Reputation
5.	Indulgence	13.	Length of the Novel
6.	Setting	14.	Length of the Series
7.	Relate-Ability	15.	Bestseller Ranking
8.	Novelty		

Figure 5: Inverted Ranking of Preferences (Survey)
(table created by author, source: Survey, 2017)

even though the factors themselves can be identified (for example 'Storyline'), the interpretation of these factors cannot be standardised at this point in time. The lack of a potential standardisation also prevents its recreation as well as a sophisticated attempt of scientifically predetermining the success of a (fantasy) novel.

tion' 'The length of the novel/series' and also the 'Bestseller Ranking' are generally negligible.

In terms of the hypothesis, the following assumptions can be derived from the findings of the survey. There are general factors identifiable, that readers expect and value in a book. However,

6.4 Assessment of the Empirical Research

Looking at the overall outcome of the empirical research of this thesis, valuable information could be gathered from it. Both chosen methods proved to be valid and beneficial to the investigation of the research questions as well as the hypothesis.

The initial choice to use expert interviews instead of a content analysis was questionable and therefor entailed several risks. However, the insights of these interviews provided an extensive understanding of the occupational conventions of publishers as well as their influence and restrictions in terms of predicting the success of a novel.

The survey on the other hand, which was chosen for additional information rather than pivotal understandings, also delivered significant insights about the consumers point of view, their reading behaviour and desires. These finding are also to be considered in order to assess the potential of predetermining the 'success' of a (fantasy) novel.

7. Conclusion

Throughout the conclusive chapter of this Bachelor's thesis, several factors will be recapitulated on. First the research questions and the hypothesis will be stated and explained again shortly. Further a brief summary of the most important internal and external success factors, according to the findings of this thesis will be given. Then the rele-

vance of the empirical research will be evaluated in relation to the final conclusion about the hypothesis. A last statement from Markus Heitz will conclude this chapter.

The literary as well as the empirical research of this Bachelor thesis was guided by the following three research questions:

- Do specific criteria exist, that are iterative among successful (fantasy) novels?
- Can any criterion objectively classify a book as 'good'?
- Can a common scheme be identifies among the overall success of (fantasy) novels?

Their investigation was crucial for the validation of the underlying hypothesis:

“The potential success of a (fantasy) novel can be scientifically predetermined.“

The 'Fantasy' factor is placed in parenthesis because it was assumed that most findings would refer to the potential success of novels in general. It was included however, for the purpose of exemplification. The diverse investigation of the success of books in general, in addition to all specific genres would have exceeded the permitted scope.

Generally speaking, it can be said, that the success of a book depends on the emotions it stirs within the readers (Zuckerman, 2015). It is not sufficient to create a 'good' book, the book has to appeal to others, in order to sell (Gesing, 2015). Since the behaviour of consumers, however, can be anticipated but hardly be predicted, a successful book is not easily identifiable (Johnson, 2014).

Concerning the internal factors, which are the ones, that are influenceable by the author as well as the editors, several aspects have to be considered. The book has to be aesthetically (the perception of beauty, Baldick, 2001), rhetorically (exploration of written eloquence, Baldick, 2001) and figuratively (a comfortable pattern in writing, Baldick, 2001) appealing. A story has to be narratively and logically flawless (Todorov, 1975). Lastly, the author has to be a storyteller. Knowing such parameters is not sufficient, one has to be able to execute them as well. If an author is unable to do that, he or she may fail regardless of skill and knowledge (Ken Follett, as quoted in Zuckerman, 2015).

There are also two external success factors of a (fantasy) novel that are to be considered. These factors are not, or only partially influenceable. The first one is marketing. To understand the market and know its requirements can be crucial to the success of a book (Uzzell, 2013). The readers have to be analysed, so that the right products can be presented to them in the right way (Brown, 2006). Having a strong social network as an author and a dedicated sales and marketing department is an unmatched tool for recognition and therefore success as an author (Heitz, personal communication, 2016). The most significant external factor however, which is basically un-influenceable, is the perception of the reader, which is decisive for the success (Reichert, 2017).

After the thorough investigation of the hypothesis in terms of exhaustive literary research, extensive expert interviews and an obstinate survey, a final conclusion can be made. The hypothesis can, at this point in time and research, be rejected.

All various research results indicate that certain aspects, that are significant for the success of a (fantasy) novel can be identified and therefore the potential success may be anticipated. It can not, however, be scientifically infallibly predicted.

The personal interview with Markus Heitz (2016) concluded in him stating that there is certainly no 'recipe for success for creative writing'. If there were, he claims, then everyone would be successful, which they are not, hence there cannot be a recipe. After all, despite all predictions and all marketing measures, luck is a significant factor. 'The right book, has to be presented the right way, at the right time. Whatever that means.'

8. Outlook

This final chapter provides thoughts about possible extensions to the research of this Bachelor thesis as well as a philosophical consideration about the value of subjectivity.

On the basis on this research, further investigations could be made in terms of attempting to standardise the uncovered factors. This could be done by extensive literature studies of successful (fantasy) novels, further, broader surveys about the consumers expectations towards the respective qualities, or thorough analysis of literature and online reviews. Also, bestselling lists could be investigated further, or the research could be ex-

tended into the general metrics of 'trend research' in an attempt to apply overall rules about social trends to the art of literature.

Throughout the research for this thesis, the initial inclination to verify the hypothesis faded. Not only, because research was indicating strongly towards its rejection, but also on a personal level. Since this Bachelor thesis is a scientific work, with the intention to provide economically viable insights, the personal level was neglected during the investigation. However, as this thesis is coming to an end, and endings should provide not only results but also a thought-provoking-impulse, the personal/philosophical realisation will be stated and explained as well.

There have been numerous attempts of creating standardised formulas for success, in a field where standardisations have failed various times, throughout history, in arts. It can therefore be assumed, that such a standardisation is not possible, regardless of the additional research that could be done. This assumption is based on the underlying principles of subjectivity and personal taste, in terms of creative arts. Since the unpredictability of creativity and human taste is considered the essence of art, a standardisation of it, or even the attempt of it, may cause its demise. Is it therefore truly desirable?

The rejection of this Bachelor thesis' hypothesis may therefore be considered economically unfortunate, but it could also be considered creatively valuable and insightful.

To summarise the conclusive outcome of this thesis, that a combination of both, creating a book that is as objectively 'good' as possible, in addition to 'hoping for the best' in terms of social acceptance, a famous quote from the Roman philosopher Seneca is cited:

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”

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Appendix

Table of Contents

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire

Appendix 2: Interview: Markus Heitz

Appendix 3: Survey Questionnaire (Uncut)

Appendix 4: Survey Evaluation (Standard)

Appendix 5: Survey Evaluation (Detailed)

Appendix 1
Interview Questionnaire

Expert Interviews - Bachelor thesis - final questionnaire

- What is your Full Name?
- Whom are you working for exactly?
- What exactly is your position at this company?
- What are your main tasks?

- Are you a reader yourself?
- How much do you read?
- Do you have a favourite Genre?
- Do you like fantasy? If yes, why?
- What are you looking for when searching for a new book?

- Do you deal with the evaluation of new manuscripts?
- How many manuscripts do you get on average? (monthly)
- How many manuscripts do you look at, in depth?
- What are the different stages of the selection process?
- What do you look for in a manuscript?
- How do you determine whether or not a manuscript is ,worth investing in‘?

- Do you think, that there is a ,recipe to success‘, when it comes to writing?
- Are there any specific criteria for writing fantasy? (Major Differences?)
- What aspects, do you think are crucial for a fantasy novel to be successful?

- Do you think that the readers expectations and the Publishers requirements overlap?
- Are there any factors, that might be important to the reader, that are not as important to the publisher?
- And vice versa?

- Would you say, that ,luck‘ is a considerable factor, for the success?
- How important are ,current trends‘ for the success of a novel?

-Do you think, that the extension of a ,franchise‘ is directly relateable to the success of the novel itself? (eg. Harry Potter - theme parks, et al.)

-Do you think, that the success of a fantasy novel can be predetermined?

-If yes, are there any specific criteria that are absolutely crucial?

-If no, are there any criteria that have a major influence on the *potential* success?

-How safe, can such a prediction be?

Appendix 2
Interview: Markus Heitz

Interviewfragen - ‚Autoren-Interview‘ - Markus Heitz

Interview questions have been responded to via e-mail.

-Dein Vollständiger Name?

+++Markus Heitz. Es hat leider nur für einen Vornamen gereicht. Ist bei Autoren halt nicht ganz so schick, wenn man keinen mystischen Mittelnamen hat, den man abkürzen kann

-Warum schreibst du? (Wieso hast du damit angefangen?)

+++Die Frage hat sich für mich nie gestellt. Es macht Spaß. Ich kann auch gar nicht anders. *lacht*

-Wie lange bist du schon Schriftsteller? (Wie lange schreibst du schon?)

+++Hauptberuflich seit 2004, mein erstes Buch habe ich 1999 fertiggestellt. Aber mit dem Schreiben selbst ging's los, als ich 14 Jahre alt war. Hat seitdem nicht mehr aufgehört mit den Ideen.

-Betrachtest du das ‚Schreiben‘ als deine Berufung? (Seit wann?)

+++In der Antwort vorher steckt bereits diese Antwort drin: Ja, das scheint meine Bestimmung zu sein. Allerdings würde ich es auf kreatives Geschichtenerzählen ausdehnen. Dazu gehören unter anderem Musicals, ein Fantastical, die Zusammenarbeit mit Computerspiel-Leuten. Es dreht sich immer um's Storytelling.

-Liest du gerne in deiner Freizeit?

+++Würde ich gerne, habe aber keine Zeit, weil ich entweder in Projekten stecke oder mal wieder was recherchiere. Doch, halt! Habe mich dazu überredet, das Buch „MOGADOR“ zu lesen. Schöne Sprache, die da gepflegt wird.

-Wie viel liest du ungefähr?

+++Zur Recherche: fast immer jeden Tag irgendwas, quer durchs Internet oder durch meine Bücher.

-Hast du ein Lieblingsgenre?

+++Nein. Auch nicht beim Schreiben. Ich würde die Phantastik als Schwerpunkt bezeichnen.

-Warum ist dieses Genre für dich besonders interessant?

+++Beim Schreiben: Weil alles möglich ist - solange ich es gut genug beschreiben kann. Sonst komme ich ins Schleudern, und die LeserInnen steigen aus. Ansonsten gilt: Es gibt keine Grenzen des Machbaren.

-Wenn du auf der Suche nach einem neuen Buch bist, woran orientierst du dich?

+++Zum Lesen - ganz klar: Es darf nichts mit den Genres zu tun haben, die ich selbst schreibe. Damit sind Phantastik und Thriller raus.

-War dein erstes Buch erfolgreich?

+++Es hatte eine Startauflage von 2500 Stück. Sagen wir mal so: Es hat sich alles verkauft, und es ging in eine 2. Auflage. Das war vor dem Bestseller. Das Buch heißt „Schatten über Ulldart“, und es wird immer noch gedruckt und verkauft.

-Wann hast du angefangen dich als Autor ‚erfolgreich‘ zu fühlen?

+++Das spielt für mich keine Rolle, wenn wir das Wirtschaftliche außen vor lassen. Mein erstes verlegtes Buch WAR ein Erfolg, auch mit nur 2500 Stück. Weil ich von einem namhaften Verlag gedruckt wurde (Heyne). Was kann es denn Besseres geben?

-Was bedeutet es für dich ein ‚erfolgreicher‘ Autor zu sein? Ist es messbar? (Verkaufszahlen, Geld, Fans, Kritiken, Bestseller Listen, ...)

+++Nach rein wirtschaftlichen Maßstäben ist „Erfolg“ messbar. D.h. es wird ein Überschuss für den Verlag und den Autor erwirtschaftet. Ein anderer Erfolg ist der Zuspruch der Fans und dass ich Menschen mit meinen Geschichten erreiche, um ihnen ein paar schöne Stunden oder Tage bereite, je nach deren Lesegeschwindigkeit. Wenn beides passt, ist es umso besser.

-Gibt es deiner Meinung nach ein Erfolgsrezept, wenn es um das Schreiben geht?

+++Nein. Sonst gäbe es nur erfolgreiche AutorInnen und Verlage. Als Autor muss ich sagen: Ich mache mein Ding, setze meine eigenen Ideen um. Das zumindest hat mich seit 2004 entspannt über Wasser gehalten. Aber ich traue Erfolg niemals. Musik und Buch sind sich sehr nahe: Man macht was Neues, und die Fans finden es weniger gut, und damit hat der Kreative ein Problem. Da heißt es dann: Augen zu und durch.

-Gibt es besondere Unterschiede, wenn man Fantasy schreibt?

+++Nein. Eine Story ist eine Story, das gilt für alle Bereiche. Das Setting ist lediglich ein anderes. An die aufgestellten Gesetze des Settings muss man sich halten. Das war's auch schon.

-Welche Aspekte machen deiner Meinung nach einen ‚guten‘ Fantasy Roman aus?

+++Darüber mache ich mir keine Gedanken. Ich schreibe, nach was mir der Sinn steht, und zu meinen Romanen zumindest gehören Helden und Schurken, Gefahren und Rätsel, Intrigen und saftige Schlachten. Ab und an breche ich dann meine eigenen Regeln mit absolutem Vorsatz, und auch DAS kommt zu meiner Freude gut an.

-Denkst du, dass die Erwartungen der Leser und die des Verlages konform gehen?

+++Wie gesagt: Ich kümmere mich wenig um die Erwartungen von Verlag und Leserschaft. Klingt komisch, ist aber so. Ich schreibe für mich, und zwar genau DIE Geschichten, die ich erzählen möchte. Aus Spaß. Bisher ist die Schnittmenge von meinen Ideen sowie den Erwartungen von Verlag und Leserschaft erfreulich hoch. Kann gerne so bleiben.

-Gibt es Faktoren, die für die Leser wichtig sind, aber nicht für den Verlag?

+++Ich denke nicht.

-Und umgekehrt?

+++Auch nicht.

-Und wo stehst du bei der Affaire als Autor? (Zwischen Leser- und Verlags- Erwartungen)

+++Die Frage zu den Erwartungen hat, glaube ich, diese Antworten bereits gegeben.
lacht

-Würdest du sagen, dass ‚Glück‘ ein relevanter Faktor für den Erfolg ist?

+++Ein weiser Mensch sagte mal: Erfolg ist Vorbereitung plus Gelegenheit. Und natürlich spielt Glück bei den Kreativen immer eine Rolle, aller Macht des Marketings zum Trotz. Harry Potter hatte anfangs kein Marketing und wurde ein Erfolg. Und mancher gigantische Flop zB an der Kinokasse ließ sich auch durch Marketing nicht retten. Manche Erwartungen erfüllen sich, manche nicht. Woran es immer liegen mag - ach ja: Glück. Ich hatte das Glück, dass nach der Verfilmung vom Herr der Ringe neue Leserschichten entstanden, die sich plötzlich für Fantasy interessierten. Das war vorher nicht der Fall, und daher kommt der Erfolg von der DIE ZWERGE-Reihe.

-Wie wichtig sind deiner Meinung nach, die ‚aktuellen Trends‘ für den Erfolg? (Vampire, Werwölfe, Internate, Königshäuser, ...)

+++Für Copy-Paste-Autoren: sicherlich hoch. Die sogenannten Me-too-Bücher sind während des Trends erfolgreich und dienen dazu, einem Verlag und einer/m KollegIn die Kasse zu füllen, aber nach dem Trend sind sie meistens vergessen. Deswegen warne ich davor, auf solche Züge aufzuspringen. Man muss selbst sein eigener Zug sein, und manchmal steigen sehr viele Menschen ein. Künstlerschicksal.

-Denkst du, dass der Erfolg eines Fantasy Romans vorausgesagt werden kann?

+++Nein. Außer bestimmte Copy-Paste-Werke, bei denen die Wahrscheinlichkeit etwas höher ist, siehe die Me-Too-Bücher rund um „Shades of Grey“.

-Falls ja, welche Kriterien sind dafür ausschlaggebend?

+++Marketing spielt dabei eine Rolle, aber nicht die entscheidende.

-Falls nicht, gibt es Kriterien die definitiven Einfluss auf den möglichen Erfolg eines Romans haben?

+++Marketing, ein starkes Netzwerk der/s AutorIn, guter Vertrieb.

-Wie sicher sind solche Voraussagen deiner Meinung nach?

+++So wahrscheinlich wie Lotto-Gewinne. Kann passieren - muss aber nicht.

-Wenn du einen neuen Roman beginnst, wie gehst du vor? —>Schreibst du einfach das, was dir gefällt, und hoffst auf das Beste?

+++Am Anfang ist die Idee. Sie kann mich überall überfallen. Sie ist das Wichtigste, die Basis für eine Story. Ich schreibe sie und alles, was mir dazu einfällt, aufschreiben, aufschreiben, aufschreiben, und auch gerne völlig ungeordnet.

Dann: ordnen nach Priorität, gliedern.

Danach heißt es: Ab an den Feinausbau, wie zB. die Charaktere, die ich ersonnen habe, mit allen ihren Eigenheiten. Das reicht vom Äußeren bis zur Frage nach Vorlieben, ihren Ängsten etc. Danach kommt die Welt. Generell gilt: Wie sieht es aus? Und wie riecht es? Was hört man? Geht die Story mehr in die Phantastik, kann man sich noch mehr Gedanken machen: Welche Ausdrücke benutzen die Menschen, die dort leben, für was? Ich beginne mit einem kleinen Fokus, meinetwegen der Stadt/dem Dorf/der Siedlung, in dem alles beginnt, und ziehe die Linse immer weiter auf, kreierte das Umgebung, das Land, die Nachbarländer, den Kontinent, die Nachbarkontinente. Welche Götter gibt es? Wie sind sie entstanden? Wie ist ihre Beziehung untereinander und wie verhalten sich die Gläubigen jeweils zueinander? Wie verhalten sich die Länder untereinander? Wenn es Rivalitäten gibt, woher stammen sie? Dann zeichne ich Karten von der „Welt“.

So: Ideen, Charaktere, Setting.

Nun geht es darum, daraus einen Plot, einen Handlungsablauf, einen Fahrplan zu gestalten. Damit ich weiß, wo sich welche Person herumtreibt, was sie tut, was als nächstes kommt. Der Roman steht daher vor Beginn des ersten Satz von Anfang bis zum Ende. Und in knappen 2 Monaten ist der erste Durchlauf eines Romans fertig. So einfach kann's sein. Meistens. *lacht*

-Oder gibt es besondere Faktoren, die deine Geschichte beeinflussen?

(Trends, Fans, Freunde, Verleger, ...)

+++Nein. Die Idee, die ich habe, muss mich packen. That's it.

Appendix 3
Survey Questionnaire (Uncut)

Survey Questionnaire (Uncut)

The questions that were discarded are italicised.

**What is your gender?*

-male

-female

**What is your age range?*

-younger than 13

-13 - 18

-19 - 25

-26 - 35

-36 - 45

-45 - 55

-55+

**What is your main occupation?*

-Student (School)

-Student (University)

-Working

-Others/None

**On average, how much do you read?*

(Remember: This is an average. Forget about times where you don't read, and times where you read non-stop. Generally speaking, what is your overall book consumption average?)

-less than 1 book a month (some per year)

-1 book a month (a couple per year)

-1 - 3 books a month (several per year)

-3 - 5 books a month (almost one every week)

-more than 5 books a month (more than one book a week)

*Roughly, how many books have you read so far?

(Only counting books that you wanted to read. No school books or required readings, please.)

-0-10 books

-10-25 books

-25-50 books

-50-100 books

-100+

*Roughly, how many books are on your 'to read' list?

-I don't have a 'to read' list

-1-10 books

-10-25 books

-25-50 books

-50-100 books

-100+

*What is your favourite Genre?

-Fantasy

-Science Fiction

-Romance

-Adventure

-Mystery

-Historical Fiction

-Crime

-Horror

-Non-Fiction

-Others/Not listed

-I don't have a favourite Genre

*What do you associate most strongly with the genre 'Fantasy'?

(chose a maximum of three)

-magic

- supernatural powers
- strange creatures (dragons, mermaids, fairies, ...)
- strange races (Elves, Warlocks, Vampires, ...)
- strange worlds (Narnia, Middle Earth, ...)
- different time periods
- action/adventure
- captivating stories
- diverse characters
- myths/legends

*Chose your **top three** motives for reading:

- Entertainment
- Relaxation
- Distraction
- Escapism
- Inspiration
- Amusement
- Learning new things
- to be ‚up to date‘ with the current reads
- to know what your friends talk about

*Out of the following, which is your **favourite** book?

(if you don't know any, chose the one which you would be most likely to read)

- „No man's land“ by David Baldacci
- „Two by Two“ by Nicholas Sparks
- „The Girl on the Train“ by Paula Hawkins
- „Prince Lestat and the realms of Atlantis“ by Anne Rice
- „Cross the line“ by James Patterson
- „A man called Ove“ by Frederik Backman
- „The Whistler“ by John Grisham
- „Turbo Twenty-Three“ by Janet Evanovich
- „Night School“ by Lee Child
- „The wrong side of goodbye“ by Michael Connelly

*Please chose your **favourite** again.

(if you don't know any, chose the one which you would be most likely to read)

- „Moon Chosen“ by P. C. Cast
- „Heartless“ by Marissa Meyer
- „Children of Eden“ by Joey Graceffa
- „Courage to soar“ by Simone Blies with Michelle Burfond
- „Lady Midnight“ by Cassandra Clare
- „The sun is also a star“ by Nicola Yoon
- „Star Wars: Ahsoka“ by E. K. Johnston
- „Scythe“ by Neal Shusterman
- „This is where it ends“ by Marieke Nijkamp
- „Dan and Phil go outside“ by Dan Howell and Phil Lester

Out of the following, which book do you think is the most **successful?*

- „No man's land“ by David Baldacci
- „Two by Two“ by Nicholas Sparks
- „The Girl on the Train“ by Paula Hawkins
- „Prince Lestat and the realms of Atlantis“ by Anne Rice
- „Cross the line“ by James Patterson
- „A man called Ove“ by Frederik Backman
- „The Whistler“ by John Grisham
- „Turbo Twenty-Three“ by Janet Evanovich
- „Night School“ by Lee Child
- „The wrong side of goodbye“ by Michael Connelly

And out of these, which book do you think is the most **successful?*

- „Moon Chosen“ by P. C. Cast
- „Heartless“ by Marissa Meyer
- „Children of Eden“ by Joey Graceffa
- „Courage to soar“ by Simone Blies with Michelle Burfond
- „Lady Midnight“ by Cassandra Clare
- „The sun is also a star“ by Nicola Yoon
- „Star Wars: Ahsoka“ by E. K. Johnston

- „Scythe“ by Neal Shusterman
- „This is where it ends“ by Marieke Nijkamp
- „Dan and Phil go outside“ by Dan Howell and Phil Lester

*Please look at the following aspects and rate their importance for **your personal choice of book**:

- Overall topic
- Relate-ability (can I relate to it?)
- Indulgence (how captivating is it?)
- Novelty (how innovative is the idea?)
- Characters
- Storyline
- Setting (Time & Place)
- Morals/Values
- Writing Style
- Length of the novel
- Length of the series
- Reviews
- Bestseller Ranking
- Cover Design
- Author's reputation

*Now please look at the following aspects and rate their importance for **overall success**:

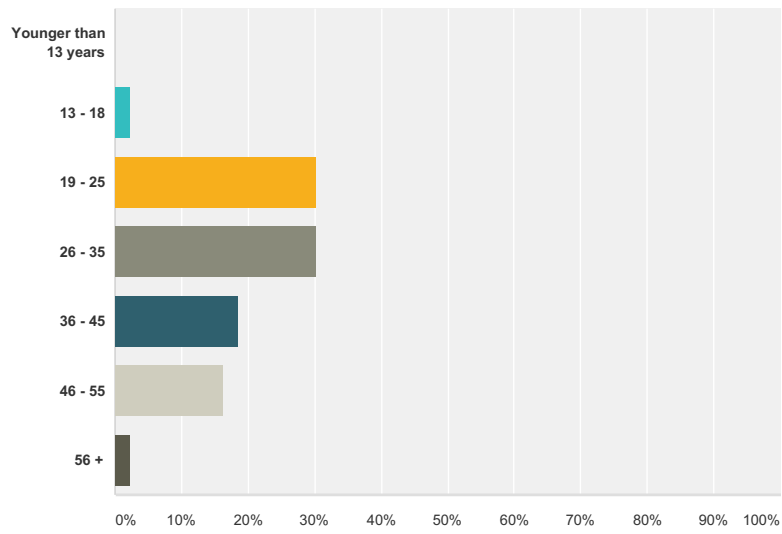
- Overall topic
- Relate-ability (can I relate to it?)
- Indulgence (how captivating is it?)
- Novelty (how innovative is the idea?)
- Characters
- Storyline
- Setting (Time & Place)
- Morals/Values
- Writing Style

- Length of the novel*
- Length of the series*
- Reviews*
- Bestseller Ranking*
- Cover Design*
- Author's reputation*

Appendix 4
Survey Evaluation (Standard)

Q1 What is your age range?

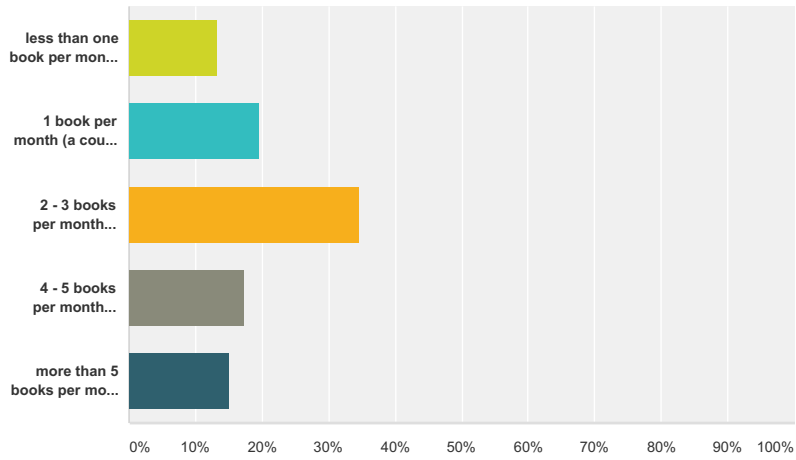
Beantwortet: 172 Übersprungen: 1



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen
Younger than 13 years	0,00% 0
13 - 18	2,33% 4
19 - 25	30,23% 52
26 - 35	30,23% 52
36 - 45	18,60% 32
46 - 55	16,28% 28
56 +	2,33% 4
Gesamt	172

Q2 On average, how much do you read? (A rough guesstimation will do just fine!)

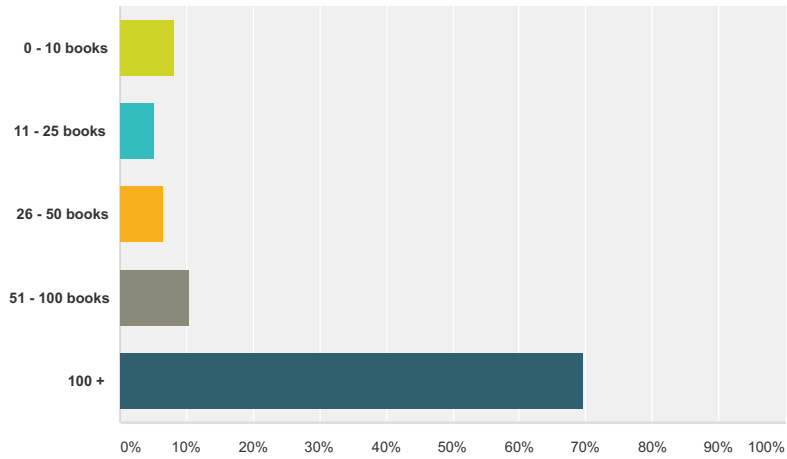
Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen	
less than one book per month (some per year)	13,29%	23
1 book per month (a couple per year)	19,65%	34
2 - 3 books per month (several per year)	34,68%	60
4 - 5 books per month (almost 1 per week)	17,34%	30
more than 5 books per month (more than 1 book per week)	15,03%	26
Gesamt		173

Q3 And how many books have you read so far? (Again, a rough guesstimation is totally fine!)

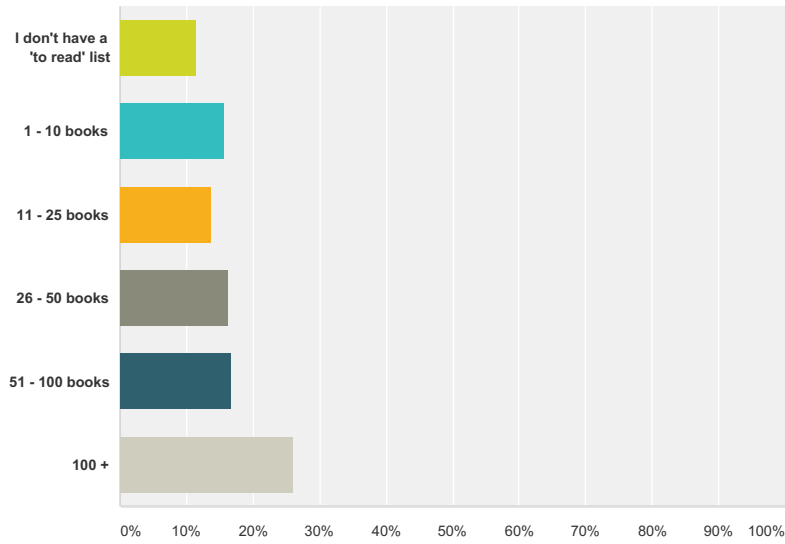
Beantwortet: 172 Übersprungen: 1



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen	
0 - 10 books	8,14%	14
11 - 25 books	5,23%	9
26 - 50 books	6,40%	11
51 - 100 books	10,47%	18
100 +	69,77%	120
Gesamt		172

Q4 Once again, roughly, how many books do you have on your 'to read' list?

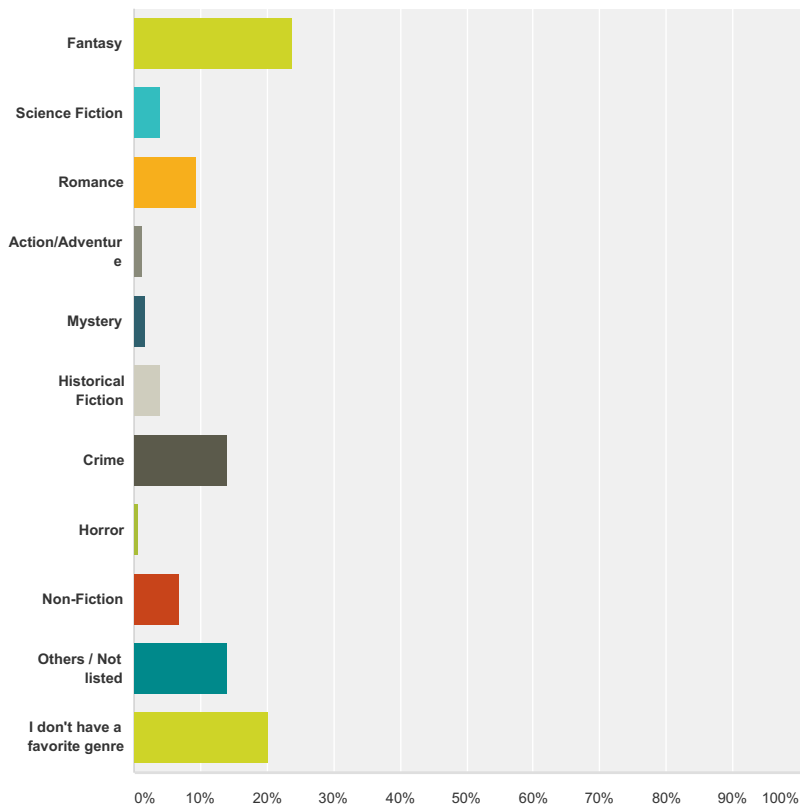
Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen	
I don't have a 'to read' list	11,56%	20
1 - 10 books	15,61%	27
11 - 25 books	13,87%	24
26 - 50 books	16,18%	28
51 - 100 books	16,76%	29
100 +	26,01%	45
Gesamt		173

Q5 What is your favorite genre?

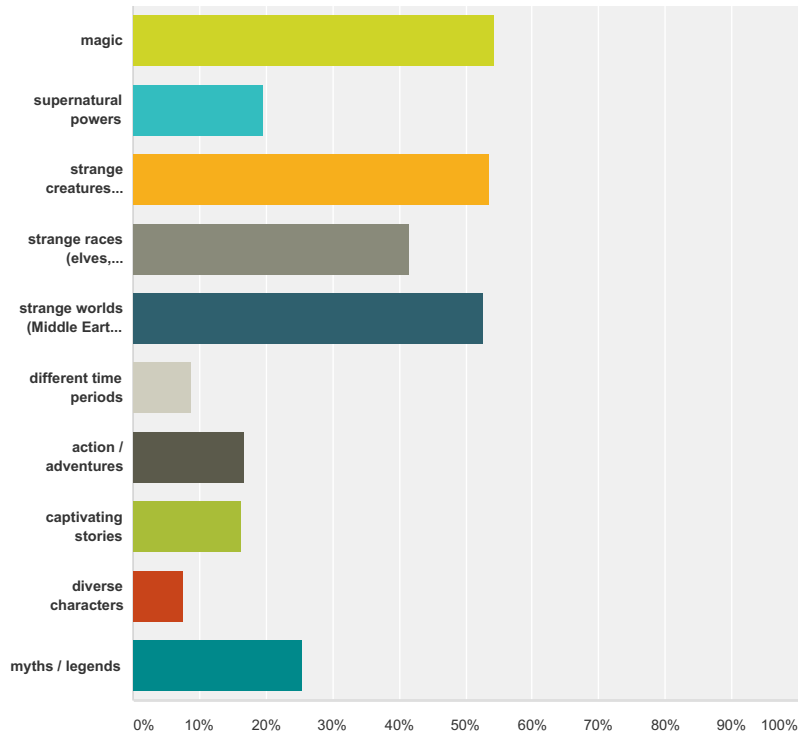
Beantwortet: 172 Übersprungen: 1



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen	
Fantasy	23,84%	41
Science Fiction	4,07%	7
Romance	9,30%	16
Action/Adventure	1,16%	2
Mystery	1,74%	3
Historical Fiction	4,07%	7
Crime	13,95%	24
Horror	0,58%	1
Non-Fiction	6,98%	12
Others / Not listed	13,95%	24
I don't have a favorite genre	20,35%	35
Gesamt		172

Q6 What do you associate most strongly with the genre "Fantasy"? (please choose three)

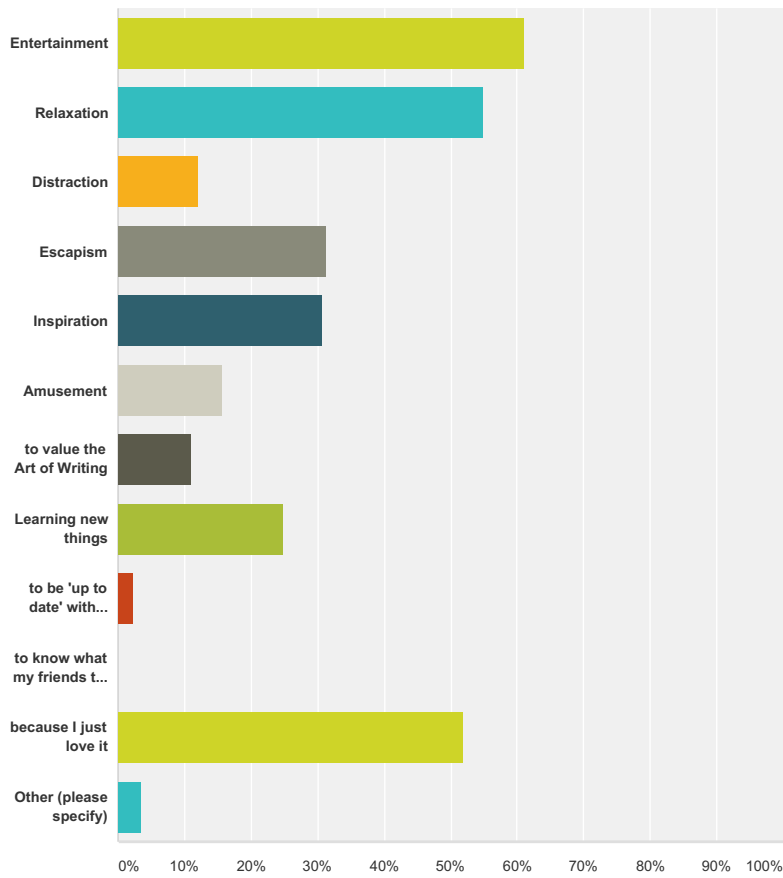
Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen
magic	54,34% 94
supernatural powers	19,65% 34
strange creatures (dragons, mermaids, fairies, ...)	53,76% 93
strange races (elves, dwarves, vampires, ...)	41,62% 72
strange worlds (Middle Earth, Narnia, ...)	52,60% 91
different time periods	8,67% 15
action / adventures	16,76% 29
captivating stories	16,18% 28
diverse characters	7,51% 13
myths / legends	25,43% 44
Befragte gesamt: 173	

Q7 Please choose your top three motives for reading:

Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen
Entertainment	61,27% 106
Relaxation	54,91% 95
Distraction	12,14% 21
Escapism	31,21% 54
Inspiration	30,64% 53
Amusement	15,61% 27
to value the Art of Writing	10,98% 19
Learning new things	24,86% 43
to be 'up to date' with current reads	2,31% 4
to know what my friends talk about	0,00% 0
because I just love it	52,02% 90
Other (please specify)	3,47% 6
Befragte gesamt: 173	

Nr.	Other (please specify)	Datum
1	profession (bookseller)	14.01.2017 15:22
2	To give books a better feeling.	14.01.2017 14:44
3	I enjoy reading about (often heroic) characters striving to overcome stronger adversaries / difficult circumstances for what they consider to be a good / necessary cause. So, there is a moral aspect combined with a fantasy setting (with unusual races / creatures / magic) and a feel good factor if / when the hero(s) prevail against the odds.	11.01.2017 21:06

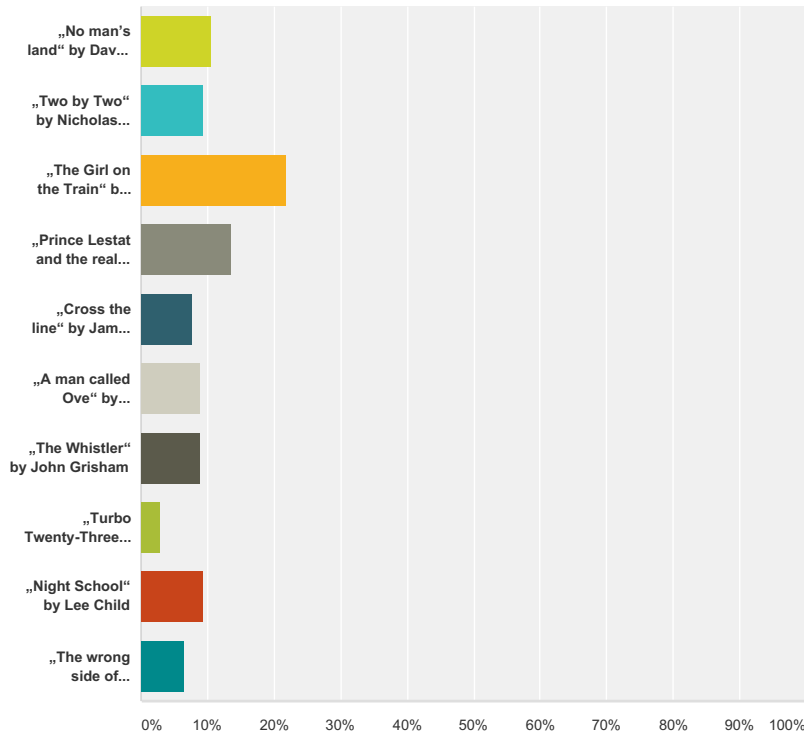
Tell Me: How do you read?

SurveyMonkey

4	Validation I guess? Like when u can identify with a character a bit	03.01.2017 21:12
5	When I stay reading the world is in book and the real problems don't exist for that time	03.01.2017 13:58
6	To learn a new view about some things. There are books that changed my way of thinking completely without being "a heavy book".	13.12.2016 23:11

Q8 Out of the following, which is your favorite book? (if you don't know any, choose the one that appeals to you the most)

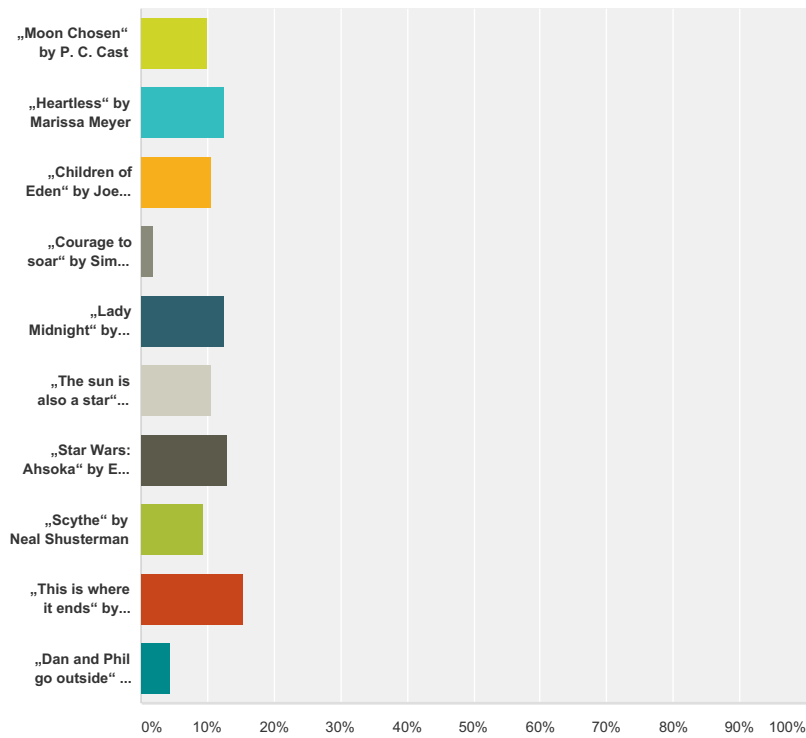
Beantwortet: 169 Übersprungen: 4



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen
„No man's land“ by David Baldacci	10,65% 18
„Two by Two“ by Nicholas Sparks	9,47% 16
„The Girl on the Train“ by Paula Hawkins	21,89% 37
„Prince Lestat and the realms of Atlantis“ by Anne Rice	13,61% 23
„Cross the line“ by James Patterson	7,69% 13
„A man called Ove“ by Frederik Backman	8,88% 15
„The Whistler“ by John Grisham	8,88% 15
„Turbo Twenty-Three“ by Janet Evanovich	2,96% 5
„Night School“ by Lee Child	9,47% 16
„The wrong side of goodbye“ by Michael Connelly	6,51% 11
Gesamt	169

Q9 Please choose your favorite, again.

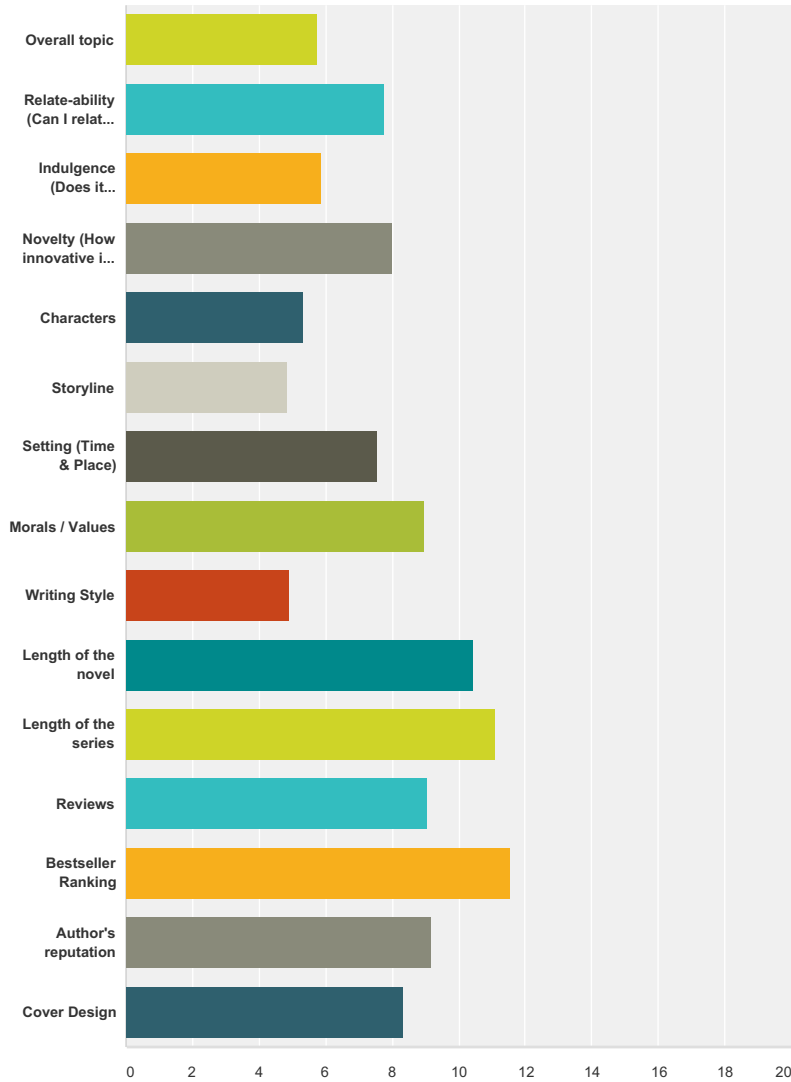
Beantwortet: 161 Übersprungen: 12



Antwortoptionen	Beantwortungen
„Moon Chosen“ by P. C. Cast	9,94% 16
„Heartless“ by Marissa Meyer	12,42% 20
„Children of Eden“ by Joey Graceffa	10,56% 17
„Courage to soar“ by Simone Blies with Michelle Burfond	1,86% 3
„Lady Midnight“ by Cassandra Clare	12,42% 20
„The sun is also a star“ by Nicola Yoon	10,56% 17
„Star Wars: Ahsoka“ by E. K. Johnston	13,04% 21
„Scythe“ by Neal Shusterman	9,32% 15
„This is where it ends“ by Marieke Nijkamp	15,53% 25
„Dan and Phil go outside“ by Dan Howell and Phil Lester	4,35% 7
Gesamt	161

Q10 Please rate the following aspects, according to your personal preference of importance, when choosing a new book. (The most important = 15 points; the least important = 1 point!)

Beantwortet: 171 Übersprungen: 2



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Gesamt	Bewertung
Overall topic	5,97% 8	0,75% 1	4,48% 6	2,99% 4	4,48% 6	3,73% 5	5,22% 7	4,48% 6	5,22% 7	5,22% 7	7,46% 10	7,46% 10	12,69% 17	9,70% 13	20,15% 27	134	5,76
Relate-ability (Can I relate to it?)	2,92% 4	3,65% 5	7,30% 10	5,11% 7	7,30% 10	8,03% 11	10,95% 15	6,57% 9	6,57% 9	12,41% 17	5,84% 8	6,57% 9	8,76% 12	2,92% 4	5,11% 7	137	7,76
Indulgence (Does it captivate me?)	3,60% 5	4,32% 6	1,44% 2	2,88% 4	5,04% 7	2,88% 4	3,60% 5	6,47% 9	5,76% 8	9,35% 13	11,51% 16	10,07% 14	6,47% 9	12,23% 17	14,39% 20	139	5,88
Novelty (How innovative is the idea?)	5,34% 7	3,82% 5	4,58% 6	8,40% 11	6,87% 9	9,92% 13	6,87% 9	5,34% 7	13,74% 18	6,87% 9	6,87% 9	6,87% 9	6,11% 8	3,82% 5	4,58% 6	131	8,03

Characters	0,00% 0	2,82% 4	0,70% 1	2,82% 4	6,34% 9	2,82% 4	2,82% 4	3,52% 5	8,45% 12	11,97% 17	7,75% 11	13,38% 19	13,38% 19	14,08% 20	9,15% 13	142	5,35
Storyline	0,68% 1	0,00% 0	4,11% 6	2,74% 4	1,37% 2	2,05% 3	1,37% 2	7,53% 11	4,79% 7	8,22% 12	11,64% 17	14,38% 21	14,38% 21	11,64% 17	15,07% 22	146	4,85
Setting (Time & Place)	0,70% 1	3,52% 5	6,34% 9	2,11% 3	2,82% 4	6,34% 9	14,08% 20	12,68% 18	12,68% 18	11,27% 16	11,27% 16	6,34% 9	6,34% 9	2,82% 4	0,70% 1	142	7,54
Morals / Values	5,59% 8	5,59% 8	8,39% 12	5,59% 8	7,69% 11	12,59% 18	10,49% 15	10,49% 15	8,39% 12	9,09% 13	3,50% 5	4,90% 7	3,50% 5	3,50% 5	0,70% 1	143	8,96
Writing Style	0,65% 1	2,61% 4	0,65% 1	2,61% 4	1,96% 3	1,31% 2	3,27% 5	5,23% 8	9,15% 14	6,54% 10	11,76% 18	15,03% 23	13,07% 20	11,11% 17	15,03% 23	153	4,91
Length of the novel	12,33% 18	13,70% 20	9,59% 14	10,96% 16	11,64% 17	9,59% 14	4,79% 7	9,59% 14	2,74% 4	1,37% 2	2,05% 3	3,42% 5	2,74% 4	2,74% 4	2,74% 4	146	10,45
Length of the series	16,78% 25	18,12% 27	13,42% 20	10,74% 16	6,71% 10	6,04% 9	9,40% 14	4,03% 6	0,67% 1	2,01% 3	1,34% 2	2,68% 4	3,36% 5	1,34% 2	3,36% 5	149	11,10
Reviews	2,04% 3	7,48% 11	14,29% 21	8,84% 13	9,52% 14	9,52% 14	6,12% 9	10,20% 15	6,80% 10	4,76% 7	4,76% 7	4,08% 6	5,44% 8	2,72% 4	3,40% 5	147	9,05
Bestseller Ranking	32,19% 47	13,01% 19	6,16% 9	10,96% 16	9,59% 14	5,48% 8	5,48% 8	0,68% 1	3,42% 5	2,05% 3	1,37% 2	0,68% 1	2,05% 3	4,11% 6	2,74% 4	146	11,55
Author's reputation	5,23% 8	7,84% 12	8,50% 13	10,46% 16	13,73% 21	9,15% 14	7,19% 11	7,19% 11	3,92% 6	5,23% 8	6,54% 10	3,92% 6	3,92% 6	4,58% 7	2,61% 4	153	9,20
Cover Design	9,26% 15	3,70% 6	6,17% 10	8,64% 14	6,17% 10	10,49% 17	8,02% 13	4,32% 7	4,32% 7	11,11% 18	4,32% 7	7,41% 12	4,94% 8	4,94% 8	6,17% 10	162	8,33

Appendix 5
Survey Evaluation (Detailed)

F1 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

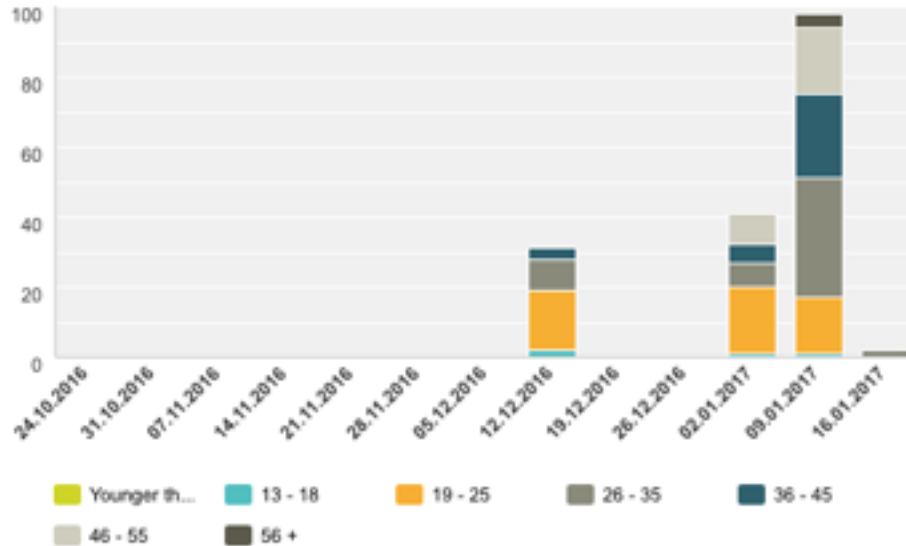
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

What is your age range?

Beantwortet: 172 Übersprungen: 1
 Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



Wöchentlich (beginnend am Datum)

F2 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

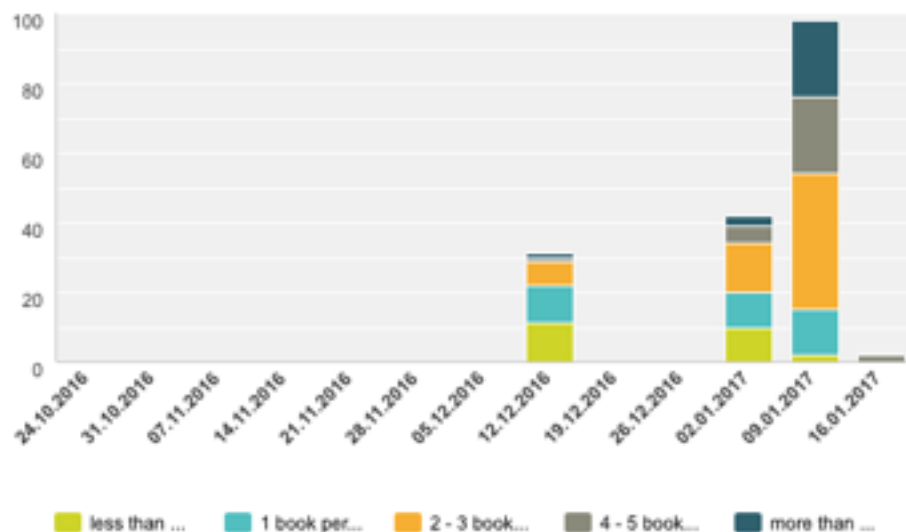
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

On average, how much do you read? (A rough guesstimation will do just fine!)

Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0
 Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



Wöchentlich (beginnend am Datum)

F3 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

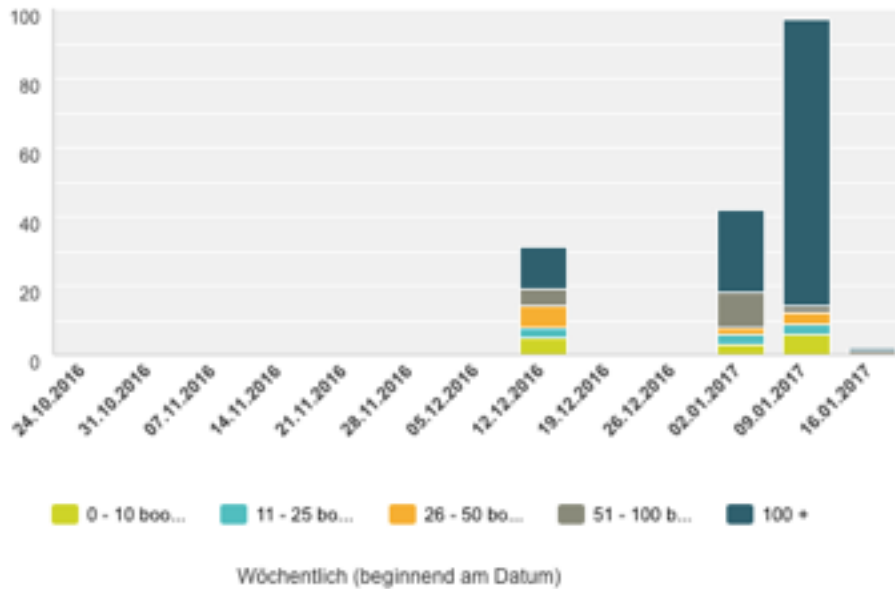
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

And how many books have you read so far? (Again, a rough guesstimation is totally fine!)

Beantwortet: 172 Übersprungen: 1
Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



F4 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

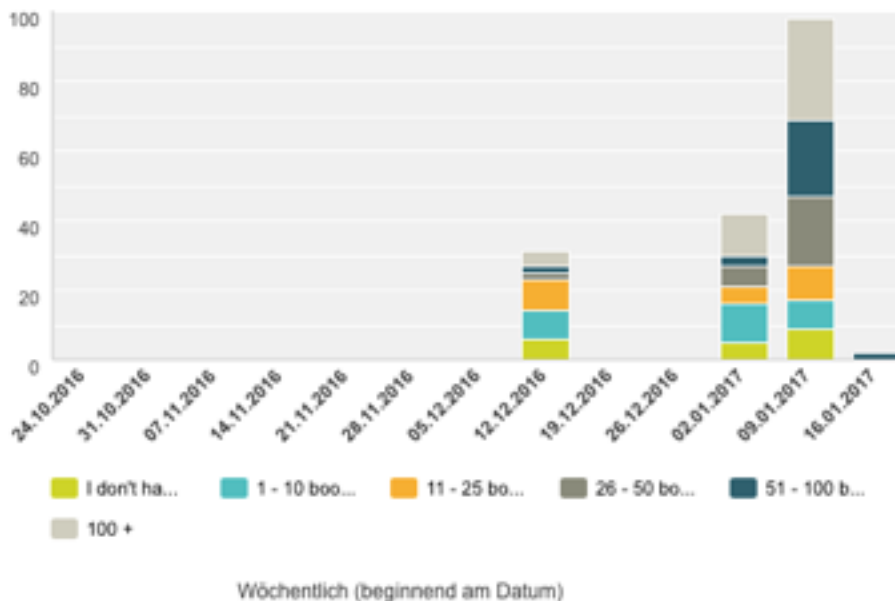
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

Once again, roughly, how many books do you have on your 'to read' list?

Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0
Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



F5 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

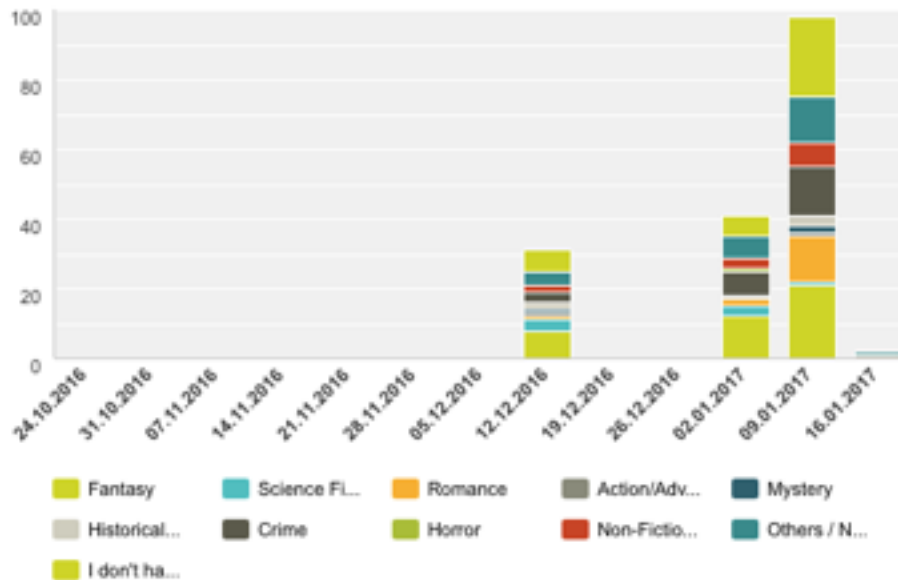
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

What is your favorite genre?

Beantwortet: 172 Übersprungen: 1
 Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



Wöchentlich (beginnend am Datum)

F6 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

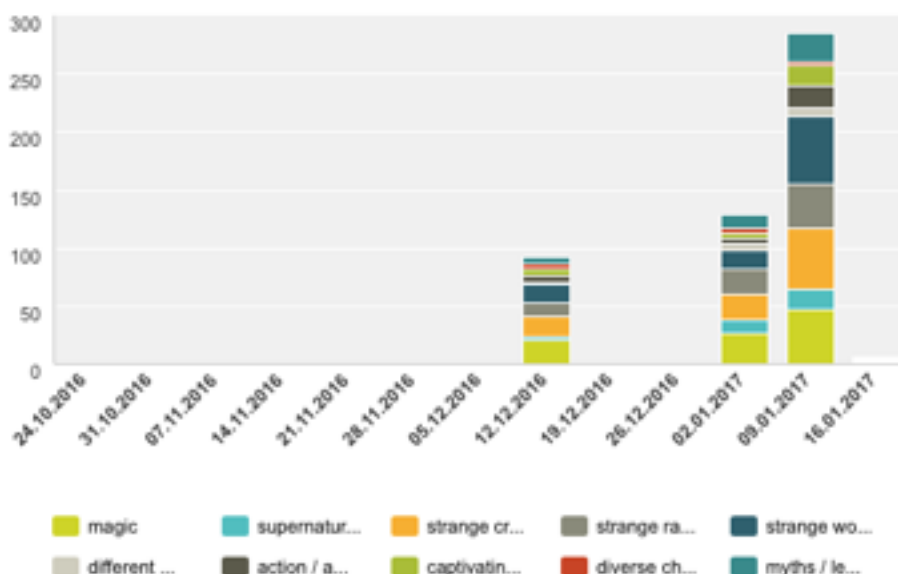
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

What do you associate most strongly with the genre "Fantasy"? (please choose three)

Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0
 Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



Wöchentlich (beginnend am Datum)

F7 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

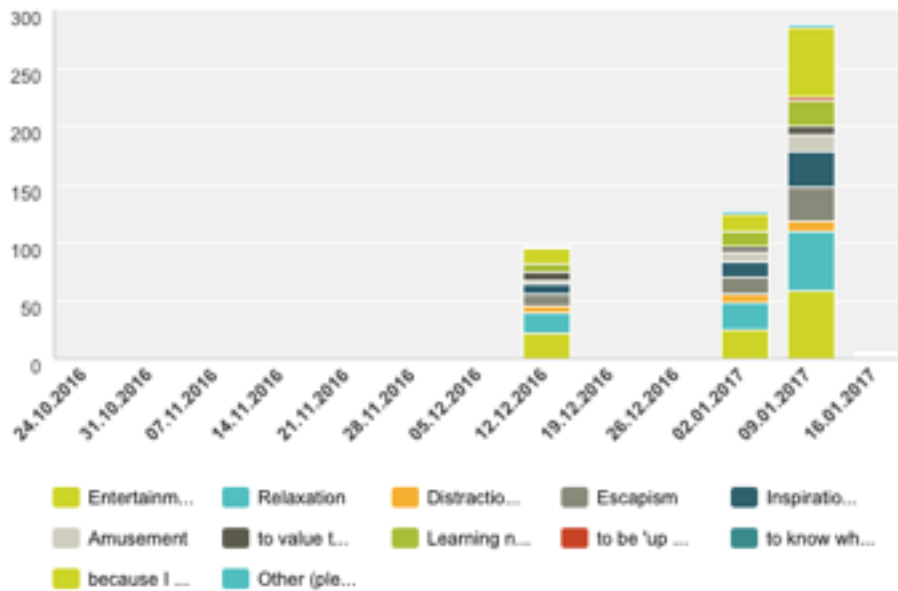
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

Please choose your top three motives for reading:

Beantwortet: 173 Übersprungen: 0
 Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



Wöchentlich (beginnend am Datum)

F8 (nach Woche)

Diagrammtyp ▾

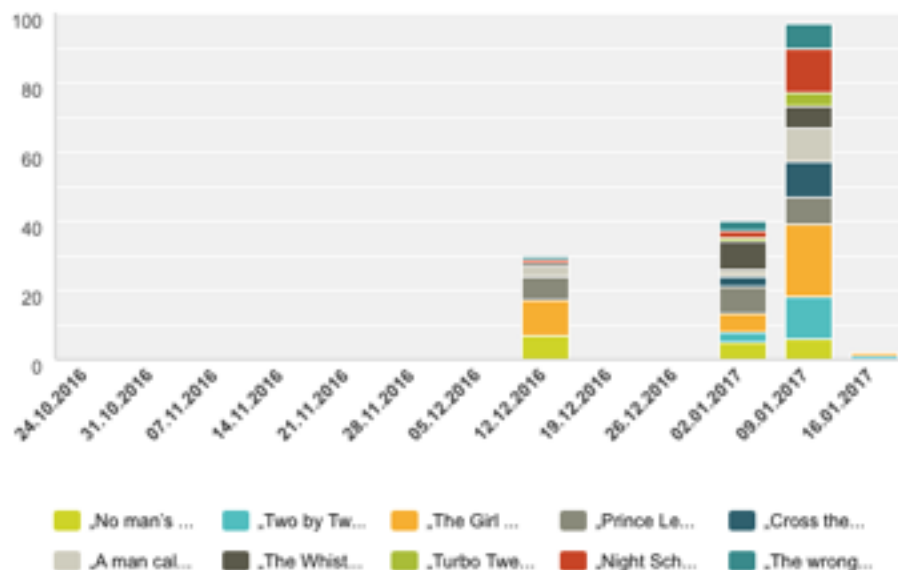
Anzeigeoptionen ▾

Trend nach... ▾

Zoom ▾

Out of the following, which is your favorite book? (if you don't know any, choose the one that appeals to you the most)

Beantwortet: 169 Übersprungen: 4
 Erste Beantwortung: 13.12.2016 Zoom: 24.10.2016 bis 16.01.2017



Wöchentlich (beginnend am Datum)



Sworn Statement

I, _____
born on _____

hereby declare that I have prepared this Bachelor's thesis independently and without external assistance. In doing so, I have not used any aids other than those mentioned in the enclosed list of sources.

All points that have been taken from publications literally or adapted form have been identified as such by me.

.....
[Place]

.....
[Date]

.....
[Signature]