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The Buying Perception of Book Blurbs: a Linguistic Study and Survey amongst
Sci-Fi/Fantasy Readers from all over the world

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Cover letter for Master Thesis

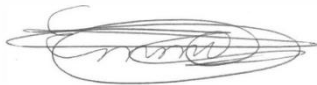
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Knygų anotacijos įtaka pirkėjui: lingvistinis tyrimas ir mokslinės bei maginės fantastikos skaitytojų apklausa visame pasaulyje

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Abstract

This master thesis *The Buying Perception of Book Blurbs* by Emma Diederik, aims to investigate how readers make their choice about the books they buy online. The goal of this research is to analyse the different and already existing categories of blurbs to see what their effect is on the consumer's perception to purchase. To ensure this research will fulfil its goal, the objectives of this thesis are the following:

- To identify categories that have impact on the buying perception of the target audience,
- To identify textual elements in blurbs in order to estimate the different types of existing blurbs,
- To identify and analyse elements of content of the blurb that could lead to increase (potential) customer buying perception,
- To compare behaviour of the target audience through the online ranking of blurbs.

To test the effectiveness of the blurb categories on the target audiences, an online survey was distributed to multiple Facebook groups dedicated to the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre. The survey was divided into two separate parts. The first of which would ask 'misleading' questions to establish insight into what participants felt like was the function and effectiveness of a blurb in general. The second part used a five-point Likert scale in which the participants had to rate individual blurbs based on how they felt about the effectiveness of that particular blurb. The blurbs used in this research were gathered and categorized based on a review of existing linguistic literature, after which random sampling was used to choose which blurbs would be in the survey.

As a summary for the results, three quarter of respondents say that blurbs help them deciding to buy a book, which means that blurbs are an effective marketing tool. When looking at the results of the second part of the research we see that the category 'curiosity arouser' has lots of positive votes. However, this is also the only category that creates a more positive than negative feeling for respondents. With a total of 639 votes going to the negative feelings and only 202 votes going towards a positive feeling when reading the blurbs, participants are mostly feeling negatively towards the blurbs used in the survey.

With blurbs from the category 'curiosity arouser' and 'complementing the book' appearing most though digital promotion, but category 'complementing the book' evoking a neutral feeling with the participants we can state that this category is not as effective with the target audience as expected. However, the blurbs from category 'curiosity arouser' do spark a more positive feeling in the participants. Unfortunately, the category 'curiosity arouser' does spark more negative feelings compared to positive feelings. So, in conclusion, there is not a clear relationship defined between frequency of category appearance in digital promotion of best-selling books and effectiveness according to the target audiences.

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List of abbreviations

Sci-Fi – Science Fiction

MIC – Master of International Communication from Geert Hofstede Consortium

IULM – name of university I attended in Milan

n.d. – No date (when a reference has no date)

1. Introduction

According to the Cambridge online dictionary, a book can be defined as ‘*a written text that can be published in printed or electronic form*’ but also as ‘a set of pages that have been fastened together inside a cover to be read or written’ (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). A book is therefore any written document, as also argued by DeSalvo (DeSalvo, 2017). Starting from these definitions, books have been around for as long as men can remember. However, different materials have been used to write upon throughout history. A few of the earliest signs of written text have been seen on bamboo, tree bark, or even clay tablets (DeSalvo, 2017). Same as the fact that humankind has evolved, books also evolved over the years to the formats we now know (DeSalvo, 2017). As our world is becoming more digitized, nowadays paper is only one of the materials most used for books. As a matter of fact, besides the printed books, we now have eBooks and audiobooks.

As a result, today there are many ways for readers to consume books. Therefore, the reader has many format choices. Besides those choices with the internet at a person’s disposal one hundred percent of the time, people consume most of their knowledge via the Internet (Koochang, Harman, & eds., 2008). This makes it no surprise that publishing companies, especially since the smartphone era, struggle to sell books on the Internet, spending a lot of money, time, and energy in devising effective communicative strategies to attract their potential consumers. These include designing appealing book covers and adding powerful though brief descriptions of the books.

The goal of this research is to analyse the different and already existing categories of blurbs to see what their effect is on the consumer’s perception to purchase. To ensure this research will fulfil its goal the objectives of this thesis are the following;

- To identify categories that have impact on the buying perception of the target audience,
- To identify textual elements in blurbs in order to estimate the different types of existing blurbs,
- To identify and analyse elements of content of the blurb that could lead to increase (potential) customer buying perception,
- To compare behaviour of the target audience through the online ranking of blurbs.

This research aims to investigating how readers make their choice about the books they buy online. More specifically, it will measure the role played by blurbs, the short descriptions of books provided by publishers on their websites, to promote book sales. It will look into different blurb categories already existing to see if there is a certain category that gives readers a higher buying perception. To ensure a most effective base for professionals this research used MA Lluïsa Gea Valor’s research on blurb categories as a ground plan on which to further build insight into effectiveness of blurbs. This will be measured by a haphazard survey that will be distributed amongst the target audience. Furthermore, the result of the

survey will then be compared with the behaviour that is shown online, though online ranking systems. This behaviour is a result of ranking the blurbs, so the blurbs that will be used in the survey are the top ranking blurbs under the first 10 books of the *Top 100 Science Fiction Fantasy Books to read in a Lifetime Reader Picks* list from Goodreads to test if people's buying perception of the blurbs are in line with their online behaviour. Given the limited time frame, this research will focus only on one genre, Sci-Fi / Fantasy.

Together with research into consumer behaviour and reading behaviour this research uses a multi-method quantitative design for its descriptive approach focussing on numerical data collection strategies by distribution the already mentioned survey to the target audience. Targeting them through Facebook Groups dedicated to readers and fans of the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre.

The outcome of this research will serve as a basis for communication and PR professionals in the publishing industry to help choosing and creating effective blurbs as promotion material when trying to get consumers to buy their book online since with the amount of content effectiveness is key.

Chapter two will give more insights in the existing research used to guide this paper through going into detail about aspects relevant to this research such as consumer behaviour, reading behaviour, the role of promotion when promoting books and most importantly it will explain about book blurbs themselves, their function and why they are important.

Moving on to chapter three which will start off with the problem statement after which the research aim, questions and objectives will be brought up. And the chapter will end with explaining the research methodological approach, methods of data collection, method of analysis, evaluation of methodological choice and ethical consideration.

Chapter four includes all the findings of this research, dividing the gathering of the blurbs and the Likert scale survey, after which all three research questions will be answered in as much detail as possible. And further remarks about the results will wrap up this chapter.

The fifth chapter will go into detail about the conclusions that can be drawn after this research as well as set some limitations.

The final chapter, chapter six will go into detail into the recommendations that are gathered during this research. The recommendations will be divided into recommendations for specific stakeholders.

2. Blurbs as a tool to change consumer behaviour

Since this research focusses on the effectiveness of certain blurb categories on the target audience it is vital to know the following information:

- Do readers rely on blurbs to make a purchase decision?
- What role do blurbs play in the decision making?
- Where are blurbs being read: online or offline?
- Which types of blurbs does the target audience think are effective to them?

These are all elements related to consumer, and to an extent, reading behaviour. This chapter will explain what is known about the relation between consumer behaviour and blurbs, reading behaviour and the role of promotion on both behaviours. Furthermore, this chapter will go into details about what blurbs are, what kind of research has been conducted on the topic as well as what this research is going to focus on as a result of previous research. Finally, this chapter will focus on the study by MA Lluïsa Gea Valor, as mentioned in the introduction, with explanation of the different categories and their linguistic features.

2.1 Consumer behaviour

From choosing a book to the experience of reading it, readers go through customer journeys. To sell a product, it is important to know the customer journey and consumer behaviour. But the way a consumer behaves is different for everybody (Solomon, 2013, p.3). For example, consumers can range from little kids to adults. The things they consume, in this case books, can differ in format (paperbacks, hardbacks, e-books or audiobooks). The desire and need also vary from wanting to improve one's reading skill to using the pleasure deriving from the text be it a literary or, more generally, cultural one, to evasion from reality. When knowing the behaviour of the target audience, persuading techniques can be used to make a product more attractive. Blurbs are an example of persuading techniques publishers can use.

The customer journey for buying books can be distinguished into two customer journeys: an offline and online journey.

Offline

To enhance the offline journey, publishers can use persuading techniques on the book itself, such as effective blurbs, a good summary, an attractive cover and an engaging title, or they can use in store promotion, such as banners and posters, to attract readers (Laing & Royle, 2013).

Online

Online promotion however, is far more complex than offline promotion since there are many strategies which publishers can use to engage and attract readers. For example, through social media, with online banners, through review sites (Goodreads and Amazon) or in online bookstores. Another thing that differs with offline journeys is that online bookstores usually

have more books to offer since they are not limited in shelf space and backroom space (Laing & Royle, 2013). Compared to physical bookstores, it is also easier to visit multiple online bookstores simultaneously and browse the web in search of the best prices of books. Finally, (potential) readers can also easily find out what others think about books.

According to Laing and Royle '*Online consumers take a more focused swifter approach to online shopping than traditional book shoppers who tend to towards a more time-consuming, serendipitous approach. [...] Overall, consumers online were less inclined to make unplanned purchases, and less inclined to be influenced by purchase prompts*' (Liang & Royle, 2013). The idea that online book consumers tend to be more focused is relevant to the present research, as it is its aim to investigate how the readers' interest can be sparked when promoting a book online.

Herd behaviour

However, Liang and Royle's research is over seven years old and lots has changed digitally for the online promotion of blurbs. For example, herd behaviour has become more and more common through online promotion of books, since review sites usually use ranking systems to show most liked reviews and blurbs (Goodreads and Amazon). The most voted reviews and blurbs get shown at the beginning, together with the number of votes, which indicates to readers that most voters agree with the review. Having an opinion being confirmed by lots of others, might influence the consumers decision to purchase or not, thus creating herd behaviour as described by Y. Chen in 2008 and M. Chen in 2009.

Word-to-mouth

Ranking behaviour influences the digital word-of-mouth principle as described by Chevalier in her 2008 research 'The effect of word-of-mouth on sales; Online book reviews', in which she investigates the already mentioned website Amazon, one of the leading online booksellers in America. According to the author 'evidence suggests that customer word of mouth affects consumer purchasing behaviour at the two Internet retail sites'. This is also in line with what is seen in the chosen Facebook group forums. In these forums, people often ask for recommendations from each other. Trusting that they would share the same opinion on a book, since members share a love of Sci-Fi / Fantasy and seem to have the same interest. The more people recommend a certain book, the higher the chances are that the member asking for the information will read/purchase the book.

If publishing houses know what kind of journey their readers take, they can have insight as to where they should advertise their books, and thus they know where to place effective blurbs to persuade the target audience into buying a book. It is then important to know if they are searching for books online or go to book stores, on whom do they rely for recommendations, how do they find out about new books, how do they decide if a book is worthy to buy or not. This is where research into reading behaviour comes into play since it is a deeper dive into the mind of a readers customer journey.

2.2 Reading behaviour

As mentioned, reading behaviour is an extent of consumer behaviour where the habits of a reader in the book buying process are being researched. Reading behaviour has significantly changed over the past few years. For example, in 2016 only 16% of 18- to 29-year-olds in America listened to audiobooks compared with 23% in 2018 (AAP Statistic, 2019), meaning that audiobooks are becoming more popular. Physical audio however has been decreasing with over 13% compared to 2019 (APP Statistics, 2020). This could be because of the lockdown, since the downloaded audiobooks have increased by 24,9% compared to 2019 (APP Statistics, 2020).

Making up 13% of the American book market in 2018, e-books have now become slightly more popular during the 2020 lockdown (APP Statistics, 2020). EBooks have been increasing in revenue by 14,2% on a year-to-date basis comparing January till July 2019 and 2020 (APP Statistics, 2020). Even though the numbers above are only based on American readers, the Audio Publishers Group of the UK confirms an increase in audiobook users (Cobb, 2019). A recent poll, done in one of the online Facebook groups, which is used in this research, showed that eBooks have gained more interest amongst readers of the Sci-Fi Fantasy genre internationally (appendix 9.1). Looking at this data, there is a clear increase in eBooks and audiobooks and thus the traditional ways of reading and buying books are shifting more towards non-traditional ways.

2.3 The role of promotion

Where you used to have to physically go to the bookstore and browse the shelves for the perfect book or to get a book your friends or family recommended, the Internet changed it all. Now there are online bookstores and online recommendation websites, so there are more ways for people to decide to buy books as well as more options as to where to purchase the book you want. This paragraph will focus on how and where people get informed about books. As well as discuss the main reason and deciding factors that push consumers to purchase books.

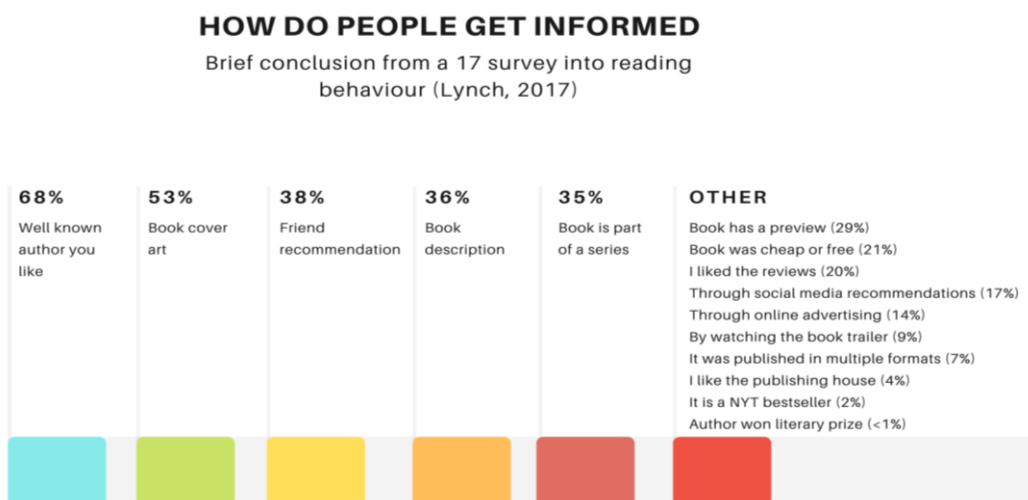


Figure 1 - How do people get informed (Lynch, 2017)

The main three reasons that people will buy a book are 1) an author they loved published a new book; 2) an attractive book cover and 3) friend recommendation (Griffs, 2018).

According to a poll done in 2019 in one of the Facebook groups used for this research, most people trust written reviews (36%) more than for example friend reviews (9%) (Estrada, 2019). Written reviews include reviewing sites like Goodreads and Amazon, as well as newspaper or magazine reviews and book blogs. The written reviews are where blurbs come into the picture. Which will be explained in the next paragraph.

2.4 Blurbs as paratext

According to Gérard Genette's book *Paratexts: Threshold for Interpretation* (Genette, 1997), all elements enabling a text to become a book, are called paratext. This includes everything regarding the book, except for the main text. Examples of paratexts are titles and dedications.

The first thing we see when searching for a book is its cover, it should be attractive to get the attention of the consumer. But to purchase the book, most consumers need more information for which they mostly look at the back of the book. Today information about the book can also be found on different websites. In fact, like most companies all over the world, publishing houses also make use of the internet to advertise their products and reach a wider audience. The short online descriptions that usually provide further information on the books are known as blurbs.

There is a big difference between printed blurbs and online blurbs. While the printed blurbs are chosen by the publisher before printing the book, the online blurbs can be written by everyone that has access to the internet. Therefore, online blurbs are more complex than printed blurbs since you can do much more with them, the interaction being a core element of online communication. Online you can share the blurbs through social media, you can like them, you can vote on them for which they then appear higher in the blurb list (Goodreads), you can print them on a background and hang them in your room, you can put them on bags or other material things (Redbubble). Online blurbs also have the possibility of using the "read more" or "read less" option, meaning the potential buyer has the power to choose whether he or she wants to read more or less about the book.

Unfortunately for this research, Genette's book was published before the Digital Age and therefore does not take online paratexts into account. Genette never wrote about online book blurbs. However, after looking at the different element definitions and requirements, it can be said that online blurbs belong to the category of "Public epitexts". An epitext is any paratextual element outside of the book itself, not limited to the text but can rather roam around on its own (Genette, 1997). Examples are interviews, social media texts, blurbs, and much more. Public epitexts are either open to the public or from the public (Genette, 1997). Since the online blurbs are usually made not by the publisher or author but rather by the public, online blurbs can thus be categorized as public epitexts.

However, blurbs are not only short descriptions of the book, but they can also be little recommendations from fellow authors, newspapers, or popular bloggers/vloggers. These recommendations could be about the book but also about the author. Blurbs can therefore function as a marketing strategy aimed to persuade a potential reader into buying the book by giving information that can be relevant for the consumer.

Blurbs themselves show different strategies and can thus be put into different categories. These categories have been outlined through the research of MA Lluïsa Gea Valor “*Advertising Books: A Linguistic Analysis of Blurbs*” (Valor, 2005) which will be discussed more in paragraph 2.6. For now, the focus will shift to what kind of research methods have already been used to analyse blurbs and which approach will then suit best with the aim of this research.

2.5 Literary approaches to blurbs

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is important to look at the different types of research approaches already used when investigating blurbs. The main three analysis methods used when researching blurbs are the genre analysis, diachronic analysis, and the linguistic analysis. All these approaches will be explained after which the approach for this research will be justified.

2.5.1 Genre analysis

As might be understood from the name, genre analysis focusses on the linguistic features of a certain genre. A genre, as defined by the Cambridge dictionary (n.d), is ‘*a style, especially in the arts, that involves a particular set of characteristics*’. With genre analysis however, may study not only the style adopted in literary text and in the arts but the codified structures displayed by any type of communicative output (Swales, 1990). As Bhatia (1993) argues; ‘*Most often it [genre] is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purposes.*’ (Bhatia, 1993, pp.13). It would then be suggested that a genre must be understood by members of the genre community, and have specific purposes. These communicative processes are reflected in the internal structure of a genre (1993, pp. 14-15).

The aim of genre analysis, in Bhatia’s (1993) work, used to tend towards it being more of a linguistic approach specified for different genres. However, other scholars such as Nielsen (1997, p. 208-209) argued that ‘*the main goal of a genre analysis is not to find out how genres are written, but why they are written the way they are*’, thus highlighting the sociolinguistic component and the role of the target audience.

Although the genre analysis approach that is adopted in this research, it will not investigate why the Sci-Fi/Fantasy genre is written the way it is. It will rather focus on the linguistic features and communicative intent shown by the blurbs written for books of this specific

genre, looking into their structure and linguistic features to study their effectiveness according to the target audience.

2.5.2 Diachronic analysis

According to Cambridge Dictionary (n.d), the definition of the word diachronic is; *relating to the changes in something, especially a language, that happen over time*. When using the diachronic analysis in research, research is being conducted either by comparing or recording changes made over time. As an example for a diachronic research related to blurbs, in 2006 Vesta Marčiulionienė researched 164 blurbs on English books of fiction published between 1929 and 2004 to see if she could detect changes in structure, content, and language of the blurbs. Therefore, if this research were to take a diachronic approach, the research would much more focus on the effectiveness of blurbs from different years, and test which blurb from which year would have the most effect on the current readers. Even though this might make an interesting research, it does not match with the aim of this research and therefore will not be used as a analysis approach.

2.5.3 Linguistic analysis

The word linguistic is defined by Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) as *'connected with language or the study of language'*. Therefore, a linguistic analysis focusses on analysing and studying language. With research done by Valor (2000, 2005, 2008 and 2009), Cacchiani (2007), Bednarek (2014) and Banari et al (2019), linguistic analysis is the most used approach when researching blurbs.

Starting with the most recent linguistic analysis of blurbs, the paper *'Exploring the Patterns of Evaluative Language in Applied Linguistics Blurbs: A Rhetorical Structure Analysis'* (Banari et al, 2019) explored patterns of applied linguistic using a qualitative approach. They studied multiple blurb strategies and found patterns of intensification and quantification when trying to promote a book. Their conclusion was that changing grammatical forms of attitude can change the meaning and feeling towards a book completely.

Other examples of linguistic analysis are papers written by MA Lluïsa Gea Valor. Valor is one of the main figures when it comes to researching blurbs linguistics since she has been researching them since 2000 and has written several of books about the topic including *"Advertising Books: An Linguistic Analysis of Blurbs"* (2005) on which this research is based on. Further work includes *"Dynamic Nature of Genre"* (2009) which was a collaboration with M. Ros and *"Pragmatic Approach to Politeness and Modality in Book Review"* (2000). Valor has therefore approached blurbs from multiple different perspectives and used her previous conclusions to explore new ideas and patterns.

2.5.4 Approach for this research

Because this research wants to investigate the effectiveness of different blurbs to see if there are certain categories, and therefore elements, that spark more interest amongst the target audience, a linguistic approach has been chosen. This research will take Valor's seven

categories as a base. The reason Valor's categories have been chosen, rather than other maybe competing theories, is because these categories have clear distinction between them, thus making it easier to see a clear difference between the categories, whereas competing theories have categories similar to each other such as the work of Cacchiani (2007). This does not mean that the other research and theories are less valid than Valor's, but for the sake of clearness this decision has been made.

Moreover, Valor has a similar approach on her research but researches the entire book genre range for specific publishing houses, whereas this research will go in to detail on the effect and/or effectiveness of the blurbs according to the predefined target audience. Because Valor's categories are the base of this research, the next paragraph will explain more about each category and their respective linguistic features.

2.6 Valor's categories

In her research Valor puts blurbs into seven different categories. Each category has a specific purpose. The seven categories are the following:

2.6.1 Complementing the book

This is a straightforward category in which the author of the blurb complements the book. Examples include the following:

"Just like The Lord of the Rings is the mother of all fantasy stories, 1984 is the mother of all dystopian stories. Neither of these books were the first in their respective genres, far from it, but both of them changed their genres into something more, and in many ways became the greatest works ever written" (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

"This is quite possibly THE best first book in a fantasy series I've ever read." (A Game of Thrones, by George RR Martin. Bantam).

"This is a phenomenal classic of literature" (Dune, by Frank Herbert. Ace Books).

2.6.2 Complementing the author

As complementing the book, this category is also straightforward. However, instead of complementing the book, the author gets complimented. Examples include the following:

"George Orwell got it right" (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

"Well NO ONE has ever done a better job than Orwell in showing the possible nightmare (and thus potential danger) of a society without basic civil liberties and a government with complete and unchallenged control" (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

"Bradbury wrote a classic that will stay with me forever and I wish I could give this more stars" (Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury. HarperCollins Publishers).

2.6.3 Complementing the book and author

This category is a combination of the previous two categories. Here both the author and the book get praised. Examples include the following:

“A delightful award-winning debut from an author who dances in the footsteps of PI Travers and Roald Dahl” (Harry Potter and the sorcerer's/philosopher's stone, by JK Rowling. Scholastics).

“The Hobbit defines the high fantasy genre along with its sequel, of course, and has been an inspiration to countless authors and readers alike. Tolkien, quite literally, kick-started a genre that would eventually capture the hearts of thousands of people. He changed the literary world. He made fantasy real.” (The Hobbit, by JRR Tolkien. Del Ray Books).

“It's also an amazing feat of world building. I was blown away by the amount of thought and detail that has gone into this-- and it is just the first book. Martin has considered details that would never have even crossed my mind - little sayings, folktales and quirks particular to the people of certain regions or certain houses - but it all serves to make a very rich and complex world that is all the more believable for it. He has created a whole new universe from scratch, one with thousands of years of history, and many different peoples and cultures. It's breath-taking, honestly” (A Game of Thrones, by George RR Martin. Bantarn).

2.6.4 Ellipsis

An ellipsis is a blurb that generally makes use of elliptical syntactic patterns, especially minor sentences with no verb. Ellipses are written to impact the reader and attract the reader's attention. Ellipsis can be compared to headlines and advertising slogans, they too are designed to catch the reader's eye (Valor, 2005).

Their other purpose is to imitate real speech. Carter et al. (Carter, 1997) state that ellipsis can be used “to create an illusion of closeness [...]. The reader is forced to adopt the same position as the writer that a speaker would adopt to a close friend in conversation.”. The function of an ellipsis can therefore be “a binding factor because ties between writer and reader are strengthened through the work that the reader has to do to fill the gaps”.

Ellipses are usually very pervasive in blurbs but are also good at omitting the subject (book, story, or author) which can remind us of spoken language. Examples include the following:

“Rich and engaging” (Ender's Game, by Orson Scott Card. Little Brown Book Group).

“Fabulous - great excerpts on every page - A STAND FOR INTOLERANCE!!” (Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury. HarperCollins Publisher).

“SMART sense of humour” (The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, by Douglas Adams. Random House).

2.6.5 Imperative

The category ‘imperative’ and the category ‘address form you’, which will be explained next, are similar in the fact that both seem to evidence a personalized relationship between the reader and writer (Valor, 2005). Both categories address the reader directly.

The persuasive function of the blurb becomes clear since the reader, and thus potential buyer, is addressed directly in a way to try and convince them to read the book. Examples include the following:

“When it is said that the book is 'haunting', 'nightmarish', and 'startling' any reader would have to agree! This well-known novel grip the reader from the beginning and does not even let go of the grip at the finished reading. A classic you won't want to miss if you haven't taken the time to read it yet.” (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

“If you haven't read it, you should. If you have read it, read it again” (Dune, by Frank Herbert. Ace Books).

“If you're looking for a fast-paced, believable space adventure set in the present day, this is your book.” (The Martian, by Andy Weir. Ballantine Books).

Valor also suggests that the imperative category uses politeness strategies, it would read as if you are invited to read the book because of the author's writing style and qualities (Valor, 2005). One such strategy is giving reasons before or after the imperative form.

2.6.6 Address form you

Although Valor defines this as a category of its own, the ‘address form you’ is very close to the category imperative, as already mentioned in the previous explanation (Valor, 2005). However, the term ‘you’ is used here to generalize the reviewer's emotions and reactions to the book rather than peremptorily telling the readers to buy it. According to Goddard (Goddard, 1998) blurbs often use the address form ‘you’ to involve the potential reader and to gain their interest. Examples are the following:

“You know what it's about. You know you should read it. You know people love it. What are you waiting for? It's not gonna show up on your doorstep begging to be read. Get out and go get it. Sit down and read it.” (1984, by George Orwell, Penguin).

“You'll either read the book or you won't. but you should: It's got direwolves” (A Game of Thrones, by George RR Martin. Bantarn).

“I love Fahrenheit 451. And I love you enough to demand that you read it. Reread it. Yes! This is wonderful! This is going to be one of the best days of your life. Maybe the best day of your life! Are you ready? Can you handle it?” (Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury. HarperCollins).

2.6.7 Curiosity arousers

Blurbs belonging to this category are used to pique the potential reader's interest. Most of the time, these blurbs are excerpts. Excerpts are short text from the book itself. These excerpts can be questions or meaningful sentences. They can also appear as rhetorical questions about the plot or characters, usually leaving the reader on a cliff-hanger. Curiosity arousers aim to capture attention and create interest in the story. Examples include the following:

“Who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the present, controls the past. There is no real truth. The "truth" is what the state says it is. Black is white, 2+2=5 if the state says so” (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

“In the battle for the throne, no one is safe, not even the good and honourable ones” (A Game of Thrones, by George RR Martin. Bantarn).

“To tell the crew or not? Imagine how bummed out, embarrassed, and guilty you might be on that ship (the Hermes) returning home, knowing you had left one behind. Might it affect your ability to take care of necessary business for the next bunch of months? Another question is whether to tell the public, and if so, when. How about getting help from other space-capable nations? Are any international dealings simple? There is also some in-house (NASA) staff manoeuvring that is wonderful to see.” (The Martian, by Andy Weir. Ballantine Books).

After explaining all the categories in detail, we can see that some blurbs might fall into different categories. To prevent confusion, the blurbs gathered have been categorized in a single category according to the category the researcher considers to be the prevailing mode. The researcher has gone over all blurbs multiple times to ensure the best and fairest categorization. After which a third party also categorized the blurbs, to ensure reliability and validity.

2.7 Linguistics of the blurb categories

After having looked at what separates the categories, it is time to take a deeper look into the linguistics of blurbs to gain more understanding of how blurbs are structured. Therefore, the following elements will be looked at:

- Pronouns,
- Length,
- Sentence complexity,
- Use of figurative language,
- Intensifiers.

2.7.1 Pronouns

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), the word pronoun has two definitions. The first definition of pronoun is “A word that is used instead of a noun or a noun phrase: Pronouns are often used to refer to a noun that has already been mentioned.”.

The second definition is the following: “Someone’s pronouns are the way they choose to be referred to according to their gender identity (=their feeling of having a particular gender)”.

When looking at existing blurbs, subject pronouns usually used are you, he, she, it, and we. The pronouns you and we are used to make the blurb feel like a conversation. They are used to create solidarity between the reader and the author (Chulanova, 2014). For example:

“George has an uncanny ability to get to the base of the human psyche, at times suggesting that we need to be at war for many different reasons, whether it's at war with ourselves or with others.” (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

“Is Orwell turning in his grave? Does his epitaph read. “I fucking warned you! Don't say I never told you so! “ Did he have a crystal fucking ball? If you want the truth, go out and see.” (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

The pronouns he and she are usually used to either describe the author or a character in the book. These pronouns are used to substitute the names to prevent the text from being read as repetitive and long. For example:

*“There’s a ridiculously powerful strength in the unpredictability of Martin’s storytelling; he doesn’t stick to the classic fantasy norm, what he wrote became the current fantasy norm instead. I’m serious, Martin pretty much shaped modern fantasy with *A Song of Ice and Fire*.” (*A Song of Ice and Fire*, by George R.R. Martin. Bantam).*

*“HP [Harry Potter] has all the makings of a classic... Rowling uses classical narrative devices with flair and originality... she is a first-rate writer for children.” (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerers / Philosophers stone*, by J.K. Rowling. Bloomsbury Publishing).*

The pronoun it uses the same strategy as the he and she pronouns but focuses on things such as the book itself. For example:

*“What does “Fahrenheit 451” mean to me? Most of all, it is a declaration of love for books in an era of fast entertainment and instant gratification as a means of political control of the masses.” (*Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury. HarperCollins.).*

Keeping in mind the current changes in the acceptance of non-binary people and transgenders and seeing a trend in publishing LGBT+ books (Aviles, 2019), one can expect a difference in pronoun usages in both books and blurbs. With non-binary people describing themselves with the pronouns they/them, one could suspect these pronouns to be more used in the future when writing blurbs.

2.7.2 Length

The length of a book blurb is one of the most important aspects of a blurb. As mentioned in the introduction the definition of a blurb is ‘a short description of a book or a small book recommendation’. In this definition, the length of the blurb is implied with the word ‘short’, but what is meant by short?

When looking at various websites, in which authors give best practice tips to other authors, most websites state that a book blurb is usually between one hundred and two hundred words long (Masterclass, 2020).

This specific number is given because in one hundred words authors should be able to describe the key elements of the book without giving much away about the plot. It should be no more than two hundred words as to not bore or overwhelm the reader. If the reader feels bored or overwhelmed, chances are that they will not pick up the book (Author Society, n.d.).

2.7.3 Sentence complexity

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, readers should not be overwhelmed or bored by reading the blurb since there would then be a higher chance of them not picking up the book. Sentence complexity has a big role in this as well. If a sentence is too complex, the reader might not understand or interpret the blurb of how it was meant. A complex sentence contains at least two different clauses; one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses (Silverman & Ratner, 1997).

Independent clauses are sentences that can stand alone such as “*Jack was fighting a monster*”. An independent clause is a sentence that contains a subject, verb, and expresses an idea (Gordon & al., 2004). An independent clause is a sentence that cannot stand on its own. Looking at the same sentence as the previous example the sentence with the independent clause will then be: “*Jack was fighting a monster, even though he was hurt*”. The independent clause in this sentence is “*he was hurt*”.

The words ‘even though’ in the sentence are subordinating conjunctions. A subordinating conjunction is used to connect independent and dependent clauses. The words ‘even though’ are not the only subordinating conjunctions, other words include but not limit the following words; although, because, if, since, before, before, when and until.

Complex sentences are included in blurbs to build a form of excitement and paint a more vivid picture in the reader’s head. In book blurb sentence complexity is common especially in category ‘curiosity arouser’ and ‘imperative’, but they also appear in other categories. The only category complexity sentences do not appear in is the category ‘ellipsis’ since this category does not have a verb in the sentence. Examples of blurbs with sentence complexity are the following, the complexity sentence will be bold, and the subordinating conjunctions will be underlined.

“Is Orwell turning in his grave? Does his epitaph read. “I fucking warned you! Don't say I never told you so! “ Did he have a crystal fucking ball? **If you want the truth, go out and see.**” (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

“Instead of a battle of good versus evil, Martin wrote a realistically grim story where characters were morally flawed and the vilest beings in the world may truly be human after all; the good doesn't always win, the bad could triumph.” (A Song of Ice and Fire, by George R.R. Martin. Bantarn).

“Some books define different aspects and periods of your life. **Ender's Game for me represents the loneliness of childhood when you're different.**” (Ender's Game, by Orson Scott Card. Little Brown Book Group).

2.7.4 Use of figurative language

Figurative language is using phrases and words in a way that goes beyond their literal meaning. It is used to paint a picture for the reader to get the authors' point across (Katz et al, 1998; Glucksberg and McGlone, 2001; Dancygier and Sweetser, 2014).

Figurative language exists in many forms, some are more used than others, but all are relevant when writing a blurb. In the table below, the most common types of figurative languages are described with explanations and examples to gain a better understanding.

Types of figurative language	Explanation	Examples
Metaphor	An explicit or implicit comparison, which is literally false (Katz, 1998 page 3).	The snow looks like a thick white blanket.
Metonymy	When a part of something is used to refer to the whole (Glucksberg & McGlone, 2001). Metonymy is based on a relationship between large and small subcategories in which the smaller category will stand for the larger one, taking on the label of the subcategory (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014).	I am only loyal to the crown. (Crown – in place of a royal person) You have my heart. (Heart – to refer to love or emotion) Can you give me a hand with the horses? (Hand – for help)
Onomatopoeia	It implies an imitative-driven transformation of a sound of	Water: splash, drip

	<p>nature into a word (Asseneo et al, 2011).</p> <p>Onomatopoeia is the name of a relationship between the sound of a word and something else (Bredin, 1996).</p>	<p>Vocal: growl, grunt, mumble, belch</p> <p>Collision: bam, clank, clap, clatter, screech, thud</p> <p>Air: gasp, swoosh, whoosh, whisper</p> <p>Animal: bark, buzz, chirp, meow, purr, neigh</p>
Oxymoron	<p>Oxymora are characterized by the fact that one or more of the features in the matrix of features of one of the concepts used is either negated or contradicted by the other one (Ruiz, 2015).</p>	<p>There was a deafening silence.</p> <p>It was their only choice.</p> <p>As she stood there in the small crowd.</p> <p>I am an honest thief.</p>
Paradox	<p>A situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).</p>	<p>That was the beginning of the end.</p> <p>The enemy of my enemy is my friend.</p> <p>If everyone is special, no one is.</p>
Personification	<p>The act of giving a human quality or characteristic to something which is not human (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).</p>	<p>The sun-kissed her hair.</p> <p>The wind howled.</p> <p>The sword called his name.</p>
Pun	<p>A pun is a play on words, and it exploits the different meanings of a word or its homonyms for a usually humorous effect (Masterclass, 2020).</p>	<p>"You can tune a guitar, but you can't tuna fish. Unless, of course, you play bass." - Douglas Adams</p>

Simile	A simile compares two unlike things with the aim of sparking the interest of a reader by using words as 'like' or 'as' (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014).	He fought like a beast. He was as brave as a lion. She felt as light as a feather.
Understatement	A statement that describes something in a way that makes it seem less important, serious, bad, etc. than it really is (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)	"I have to have this operation. It isn't very serious. I have this tiny little tumour on the brain." <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> , by J.D. Salinger

Table 1 - Types of figurative languages with explanations

Figurative language is used to create different tones in the story, paint a picture for the readers and engage them in the story. Using figurative language one can provoke thinking, inspire creativity, and spark a little humour. It is a dramatic and interesting way to describe situations or conversations when writing a book but also a blurb.

Blurbs frequently use figurative language to hype the reader for the book. As mentioned, figurative language is used to engage readers with the story. Examples of blurbs using figurative language will be placed below, the figurative part of the blurb can be read in bold.

*"More than anything, 1984 is the **core of dystopia**. It shows us everything that is wrong with our world, everything that has been wrong with it, and most importantly, everything that could go wrong in the future."* (1984, by George Orwell. Penguin).

*"There's a **ridiculously powerful strength** in the unpredictability of Martin's storytelling; he doesn't stick to the classic fantasy norm, what he wrote became the current fantasy norm instead. I'm serious, Martin pretty much **shaped modern fantasy** with *A Song of Ice and Fire*."* (*A Song of Ice and Fire*, by George R.R. Martin. Bantam).

*"Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is a **novel that transcends** its dystopian theme and delivers its cautionary message in a timeless fashion, what made this story compelling in 1953 **remains provocative**."* (*Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury. HarperCollins).

2.7.5 Intensifiers

As stated by Méndez-Naya in the second issue of English Language & Linguistics (Méndez-Naya, 2003) intensifiers are linguistic elements that convey the degree, or the exact value of the quality expressed by the item they modify. They are typically adverbs, [...] but adjectives may also fulfil this function.

Intensifiers are words that have none or little meaning themselves but are used to add force to other words. Examples of these words could be the following; extremely, strongly, great,

wonderful. Intensifiers are used to get the emotion across as well as to have the sentences sound more natural. Through intensifiers, authors can get their opinion across and set the tone of their story.

When writing blurbs authors mostly use intensifiers because they want to get their opinion across. They are used in all the known categories; examples will be shown below with the intensifiers being in bold.

*“A **Game of Thrones** is an **absolutely** stunning prelude to an incomplete legendary series.” (A Song of Ice and Fire, by George R.R. Martin. Bantam).*

*“One of the **greatest** milestones of the rare Sci-Fi comedy hybrids.” (The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, by Douglas Adams. Random House).*

*“A **glorious** account of a **magnificent** adventure, filled with suspense and seasoned with a quiet humour that is irresistible . . . All those, young or old, who love a fine **adventurous** tale, **beautifully** told, will take The Hobbit to their hearts.” (The Hobbit, by J.R.R. Tolkien. Del Ray Books).*

3. Methodology

3.1 Problem statement

Blurbs are being used as a persuasion technique trying to convince potential consumers to purchase a book (Darling, 2019). Research has been conducted on the type of blurbs and their meaning (Valor, 2005; Marčiulionienė, 2006; Banari et al, 2019) but no research is being conducted on the direct relation between blurbs and purchase rate. It is important to know if a blurb as persuasion technique is effective in its goal of persuading the target audience into buying the book. If the target audience is more prone to purchase after reading a specific type of blurb it might be in the best interest of the publisher to know which type works best and try to exploit this knowledge, resulting in a higher change of purchase intention therefore increasing sales potential.

3.2 Research aim, questions, and objectives

The following section explains the overall aim of the project, elaborates on the intent of the research, and will provide the research questions that drive this study. It will also describe the sub-sections with their personal argumentation and aim of the outcome.

3.2.1 Objectives

- To identify categories that have impact on the buying perception of the target audience,
- To identify textual elements in blurbs in order to estimate the different types of existing blurbs,
- To identify and analyse elements of content of the blurb that could lead to increase (potential) customer buying perception,
- To compare behaviour of the target audience through the online ranking of blurbs.

3.2.2 Research aim

The aim of this thesis is to identify the categories of blurbs that have an impact on the buying perception of Sci-Fi consumers.

3.2.3 Main research question

Which blurb category has the most impact on the buying perception of Sci-Fi/Fantasy consumers researching online blurbs?

3.2.3.1 Argumentation

- Buying perception will be measured by the preferences the target audience makes when conducting an A/B test and questionnaire.
- The Sci-Fi/Fantasy genre is chosen because it is a very broad genre and therefore has a lot of readers, which makes it easier to get a sample for this research.
- Online blurbs are chosen since they are more interactive and are available through more channels than traditional/printed blurbs.

3.2.3.2 Aim of outcome

The aim of this thesis/dissertation is to identify categories of blurbs that have an impact on the buying intention of Sci-Fi consumers.

3.2.4 Sub-question one

Which blurb categories are most used in promoting the bestselling books of the Sci-Fi/Fantasy genre researching blurbs from all seven of Valor's known categories?

3.2.4.1 Argumentation

Categories are based on the categories created because of the research from MA Lluïsa Gea Valor "Advertising books: a linguistic analysis of blurbs" in paragraph 2.4. Her research will be talked about in further paragraphs.

To answer this question, we first need to look at what blurbs are and what their purpose is. Therefore, a short introduction to the topic will be given based on existing research on the topic. These categories will give the reader more knowledge on the topic and a better understanding of the different categories' blurbs can be divided into.

3.2.4.2 Aim of outcome

With this question, a base will be made to conduct further research on the topic since this research requires to know the bases before continuing and drawing conclusions.

3.2.5 Sub-question two

Which blurb category is most effective on the target audience and is this in line with the audience's perception and definition of a blurb?

3.2.5.1 Argumentation

Effectiveness will be measured by the number of preferences during an opinion scale questionnaire where participants will be asked to rate the blurbs according to a rating scale from "not at all" to "very effective". There will also be an open question given as to what the participants' personal perception of a blurb is.

To get to know consumer behaviour and the process of consumer behaviour, the target audience will be defined. For this sub-question, an opinion scale questionnaire will be conducted amongst the target audience sample testing different blurbs belonging to different categories. The result of this test should give insight into which blurbs are making the target audience more prone to purchase based on the results of the choices the target audience makes during the test.

The opinion scale questionnaire will be conducted since it is an easy and fun test to take as a participant, limiting the choices the participant will not have to think hard about the choices he or she makes. It is also a lot less time-consuming method for the participant as well as for the researcher. Other research methods such as focus groups and interviews have been

considered but the participation rate is expected to be higher using the questionnaire rather than a focus group and / or interview.

Also considering the researchers' social anxiety, it would be more difficult and time consuming to go for the focus group and/or interview approach than by using the questionnaire method.

The questionnaire will most likely be where the participant will be asked what their perception is towards book blurbs. The following questions will be given.

- Where do you read blurbs?
- What is the function of a blurb according to you?
- Do you think reading blurbs helps you with the decision to buy books?

3.2.5.2 Aim of outcome

The aim of this sub-question is to gain insight into the perception of the target audience on blurbs.

3.2.6 Sub-question three

What is the relation between the frequency of category usage and its effectiveness on the target audience?

3.2.6.1 Argumentation

For this sub-question, the results of sub-questions one and two will be compared to see if there is any relation between the two. This will be done to research if the frequent blurb categorization is making the consumers more prone to buying or if other blurbs might be more effective to share more on the books and social media.

3.2.6.2 Aim of outcome

Finding an answer to whether there is a correlation between a high number of sales and frequently of blurb category usage.

3.3 Research methodology

In this part of the dissertation, the overall information about the research project will be described. This includes the methodological approach, method of data collection, method of analysis, and an evaluation of the methodological choices made.

3.3.1 Methodological approach

This research aims to identify categories of blurbs that have an impact on the buying behaviour of potential readers. It aims to understand if there is a difference between the eight categories and whether there are one or more categories that generate the most sales.

To conclude, primary and secondary research has been conducted to gain more understanding of the relation of blurbs to sales. Therefore, this research is based on a multi-method quantitative approach focusing on numerical data through the collection of two different datasets. The methodology adopted in the analysis of the seven categories of blurbs is a linguistic one. It was chosen because it had the most in-depth research into the different blurbs.

The first dataset is the collection of the blurbs needed for further research. The second dataset is the data gathered from participants of the survey.

3.3.2 Methods of data collection

As mentioned previously, there has been a collection of two datasets.

The first dataset has been gathered with a probability technique, in which 232 blurbs were randomly selected from the top 10 best scoring Sci-Fi/Fantasy books on Goodreads. These 232 were then divided into the seven categories predefined by MA Lluïsa Gea Valor in her paper '*Advertising Books: A Linguistic Analysis of Blurbs*' (Valor L., 2005). After the division, the randomizer function in Excel was used to choose two blurbs from each category using random sampling.

The random samples were put into a two-part survey. In the first part of the survey participants were given three 'misleading' questions to ease participants into the survey and to gain a better understanding as to what blurbs mean to them. The second part of the survey was a linear scale survey in which participants had to rank the random sampling of blurbs.

Furthermore, it could be that the participant feels rather positive or negative about the author or the book and will therefore create a bias when casting their vote during this survey. Therefore, the title of the book or the name of the author appeared in the blurb itself have been omitted as to not influence the participant of the survey.

The survey ran from September 14th till October 14th on several online Facebook Groups dedicated to the Sci-Fi/Fantasy book genre and generated 174 responses. The survey was placed in the groups and relied on haphazard sampling to generate enough samples.

3.3.3 Method of analysis

The blurbs were analysed by using a flowchart, based on Valor's categories, and the discursive, linguistic features of blurbs. The flowchart will be further explained in chapter 6.1.3. Upon categorizing the blurbs, blurbs from each category were put in a table in Excel. Excel is used as a data matrix program.

The quantitative data gathered through the survey was collected through Google Forms and analysed via Google Sheets. Google sheets is a Google-owned and Google-made tool to create spreadsheets. It is offered as part of Google Drive and is compatible with Microsoft

Excel (Google Workspace, 2019). Respondents who skip a question are also considered since they create a missing value.

3.3.4 Evaluating methodological choice

With the Corona pandemic happening during the process of this research, the research had to be fully online because of the corona rules and lockdown. Therefore, there were limited choices in the methodological approach. The methodologies that can be used for online research are for example online focus groups, online interviews, social network analysis, and an online survey.

The reason why the online survey was chosen as a methodological approach for this research is that the results can be generalized for this specific genre. A survey is also a non-time-consuming way for participants to show their point of view on the topics.

3.3.4.1 *Online focus group*

The main advantage of online focus groups is that they require less time than offline focus groups since they do not require viewing facilities to be booked in advance (Rezabek, 2000). Results are also available immediately. There are however also some disadvantages, which is exactly why this methodology was not chosen for this research. It is easy for online focus group participants to drop out of the research when they feel like the research is uninteresting or too demanding.

Another big disadvantage is that participants of online focus groups, compared to surveys, may not express their honest opinion or may be hesitant to express their thoughts and therefore can corrupt the outcomes (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). And the last big disadvantage is that participants of the online focus group need to be selected beforehand, which limits the diversity in the group (Edmunds, 1999). Also, the participants are selected by the researcher creating the possibility of bias choosing (Morgan, 1997).

3.3.4.2 *Online interview*

There are two types of online interviews. An online interview can either be a synchronous online interview or an asynchronous online interview (Salmons, 2009). Synchronous online interviews are received in real-time. This can be done via mediums such as online chats or videoconferences. Whereas asynchronous interviews happen via mediums like email, forums, or blogs. Here the respondents do not usually reply in real-time (Salmons, 2009). Some communications technologies, such as videoconferencing, can allow an interview to closely resemble natural face-to-face communication (Salmons, 2009). This also includes verbal and nonverbal signals. When considering asynchronous and synchronous online interviews, there are some disadvantages that resulted in this research not using online interviews as a method.

The main reason why this research did not use an asynchronous online interview as a methodology is that participants might take a long time to give their feedback. Moreover, an email might go unnoticed among all the other emails or end up in the spam folder. Another

reason not to choose the asynchronous approach is because of confusing replies. Some participants are very good at getting their opinion across in conversation but will write inconsistent or confusing emails. Asynchronous online interviews also lack spontaneity, meaning that the respondents have time to think about their answers or even look them up online. In this way, you do not know whether the answer given was from the participants themselves or from an online source.

3.3.4.3 Online text analysis

Online text analysis or online content analysis is a form of content analysis used to describe and make interpretations of Internet-based communication (McMillan, 2000). This form of analysis is an effective technique to investigate research on media effects (Riffe et al, 1998) and mass media (Jacobs, 1992) and is an extension of text analysis (McMillan, 2000). The problem with this research method is that, unlike offline content, online content frequently changes. According to the Internet Life Stats website (n.d.) on the 22nd of October the following content was uploaded within one second:

- 86.700 Google searches,
- 9.187 Tweets are sent,
- 1.025 Instagram photos are uploaded,
- 2.960.545 emails are sent.

The large and increasing volume of online content and the dynamic nature of the content makes it difficult for a researcher to get a reliable random sample. Furthermore, the content can also be altered, and therefore there is a need to archive the sample content to prevent sources from changing the sample (DiMaggio & Blei, 2013). For online text analysis, search engines such as Google can be used but these results are non-random making them unbiased and unreliable (Barberá, Bonneau, Egan, Jost, & Nagler, 2014). Getting a reliable sample is therefore very hard to obtain and it takes time to make sure the analysis is validated and reliable.

3.3.4.4 Social network analysis

Social network analysis can be compared with the online text analysis. Both are methods created to gain insight into internet usage behaviour. Social network analysis however is a method used to map and measure links (relationships or interactions) between nodes. Nodes is a term that means individual actors, people, or things within a network (Grandjean, 2016).

This research method uses existing data to form links between nodes through online data. The links will be often visualized through sociograms. Within the sociograms, nodes will be represented as points and the ties between them will be represented as lines (Grunspan, Wiggings, & Goodreau, 2014).

If the current research were to answer in detail how a reading platform such as Goodreads would contribute to the sales of books, this method would be highly relevant. But for the research aim now, this is less relevant and therefore not the current methodology used.

3.3.5 Ethical consideration

This research should not in any way embarrass, harm, discriminate, or disadvantage the research participants in any way (Saunders, Lewis, & al, 2016). To ensure this research has been conducted in an ethically correct way, the opinion scale survey has informed participants on the intention of the data usage after completion. We informed the participants of what the research was about. Furthermore, the survey ensured participants their data would be anonymous; therefore, no names or other personal information was requested.

Before the survey was placed in a Facebook group, the administration of that group was messaged to ask whether the survey could be posted within the group.

Some administrators however did not reply to the message, in which case another administrator was contacted.

If the second administrator also did not reply within a week, the survey was posted in the Facebook group with a disclaimer that the researcher asked the administration but had not got a reply yet. The following statement would then be made: "I tried to contact admin but didn't get a response so if not allowed feel free to delete".

In some Facebook groups, surveys and any other research forms are not allowed. Hence the fact that permission was always asked beforehand as not to go against the rules of the groups. With the sentence 'if not allowed feel free to delete' administrators and moderators were given the opportunity to delete the post if the post was not in line with group rules.

The message sent to administrators and moderators can be found in appendix 9.2.

4. Findings

In this chapter, the results of the research, including sample, results, and learnings of the online survey and the gathering of blurbs will be shown.

4.1 Gathering of blurbs

The purpose of the gathering of the blurbs is to see whether there already a preferred category of blurbs is used to promote bestselling books as well as using the gathered blurbs for the survey.

4.1.1 Gathering design

To answer research question one, blurbs had to be gathered from online sources. Amazon and Goodreads are both international companies known as a place for readers to look at honest reviews, therefore it would be a logical choice to gather digital blurbs from these two websites. However, Amazon divides its books on the format as well, which is something Goodreads does not do. Therefore, for the purpose of clear research, the choice has been made to only gather the online blurbs of the Goodreads website.

The blurbs chosen were copied and pasted into an Excel document to await categorization.

4.1.2 Sample used

The books from which the blurbs were taken should be bestsellers. Therefore, the blurbs were gathered from the top ten books in Goodreads' *Top 100 Science Fiction Fantasy Books to read in a Lifetime Reader Picks*.

All blurbs have been taken from the first page of the community review section of each of the 10 books. The reason the first page was chosen, is because other people can like and therefore upvote reviews. This means that the reviews with the most likes appear in order of popularity meaning that the blurbs on the first page have been liked the most by the community.

Since the meaning of the blurb usually is to sell a book, only neutral and positive reviews were used in this sample. Goodreads uses a five-star rating system, meaning that the reviews used for the sample had a minimum of three stars.

As some reviews were full paragraphs, the reviews were not copied word by word but instead, fragments of the reviews were transferred to the Excel document. A total of 232 blurbs have initially been gathered.

4.1.3 Assigning categories

With the explanations given by Valor about her categories in chapter 2.4 and the detailed linguistic features explained in chapter 2.5, a basis to divide the gathered blurbs was given. To divide the blurbs into the right category, a flowchart was made.

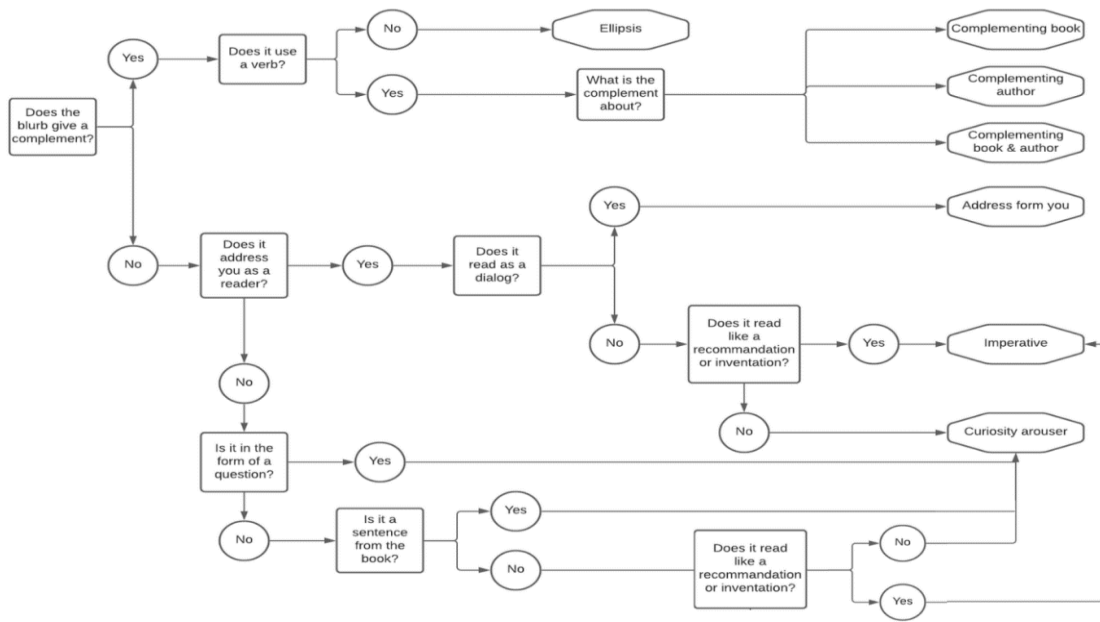


Figure 2 - Valor's blurb categories Flowchart

Blurbs were categorized according to this flowchart. Blurbs can fit into different categories, seeing as some categories have similarities, but a decision has been made to put them in one category as to not confuse the participants of the survey and to get better and more clear results. The blurbs have therefore been categorized according to the category the researcher considers to be the prevailing mode.

4.1.4 Findings

After categorizing the blurbs gathered, it became clear that there is a big difference in the frequency of the appearance of the blurb categories. There are two categories that have a high frequency in appearing: 'complementing the book' (58 appearances) and the 'curiosity arouser' (72 appearances). Another interesting thing to see is that complementing the author (and book) is not used that often, which is strange since you usually see a lot of blurbs praising the other on books.

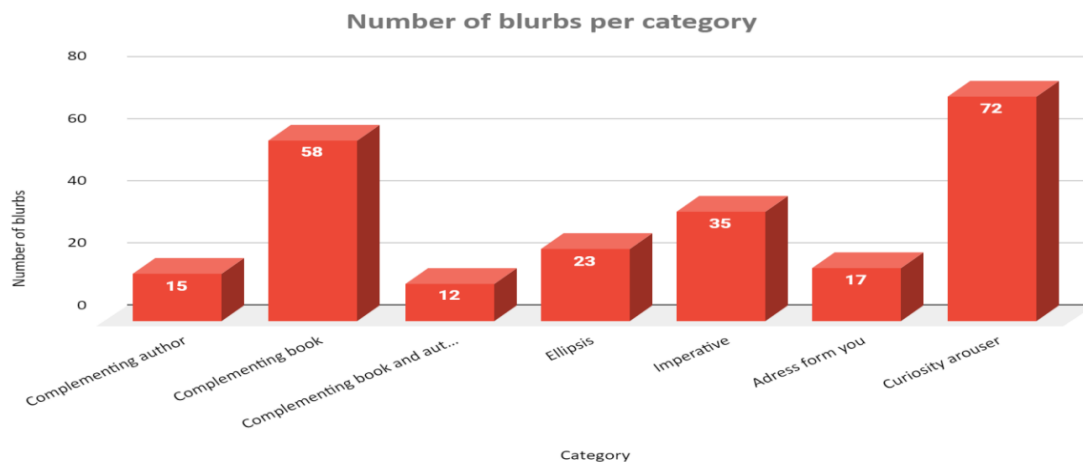


Figure 3 - Number of blurbs per category

Since the gathered blurbs are taken from top comments, one could be theorized that the two categories that have a high frequency should therefore also be the most popular categories for readers to read. To test this theory, a survey has been made and distributed to Sci-Fi Fantasy readers from around the world.

4.2 Likert scale survey

For this research, a five-point Likert scale survey was used. A five-point Likert scale is an opinion scale survey ranging from ‘not at all effective’ to ‘very effective’ (Dawes, 2008). It is used to measure the ‘frustration level’ of the participants (Babakus & Mangold, 1992) or in this case the opinion of the effectiveness of the blurbs according to the participants.

4.2.1 Survey design

The survey is a two-part survey. In the first part of the survey participants are given three introduction questions of which some can be considered as ‘misleading’. These questions are asked to ease participants into the survey, and they give insights into understanding what blurbs mean to the participants.

For the second part of the survey, a five-point Likert scale was used to gain a more solid understanding as to which kind of blurbs participants find effective.

4.2.2 Testing sample

The survey participants will be members of online Facebook groups dedicated to Sci-Fi / Fantasy readers. These Facebook groups are the following:

- Fantasy Book Club,
- Fantasy-Faction – Fantasy Book Discussion,
- Sci fi and Fantasy Book Club,
- Sci-Fi & Fantasy.

Members of these Facebook groups are from different countries all over the world. However, the language used in the group is English, therefore a member should be able to read basic English.

4.2.3 Findings survey section one

In the first section of the survey ‘misleading’ questions were used to ease the participants into the survey. Even though they are not the most important part of the survey, insight can still be gathered from them.

Where are you most likely to read the blurbs?

This question raised discussion in the comment section of the post on the Facebook groups since most participants said that they would read the blurbs both on the book itself and online. With the participants now having only one option, they, therefore, had to choose which platform they would use more. As seen in the results below, most participants are more likely to read blurbs on the book itself rather than online.

Where are you most likely to read the blurbs?

172 antwoorden

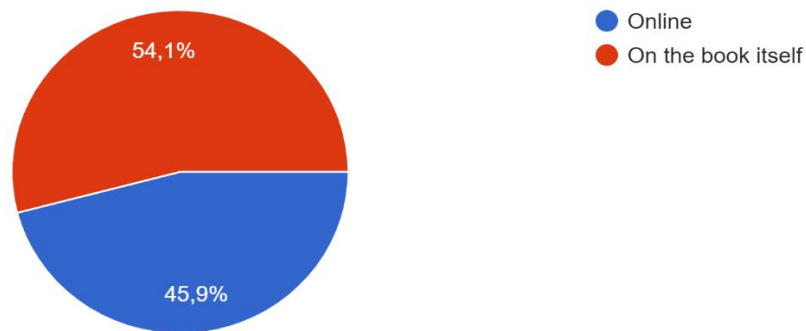


Figure 4 – Results: Where are you most likely to read blurbs?

What is the function of a blurb according to you?

The aim of this question is to understand what the readers' definition of a book is, what are they looking for when they read a blurb. This question is therefore very important in understanding why certain categories have greater effectiveness than others.

What is the function of a blurb according to you?

174 antwoorden

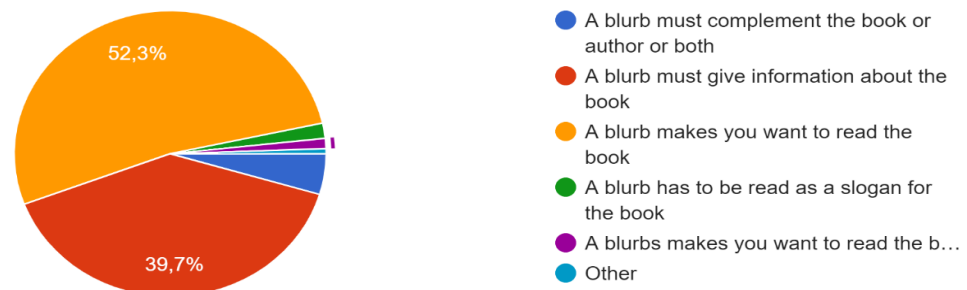


Figure 5 - Results: What is the function of a blurb according to you?

As can be seen in the image above, the results are rather one-sided. More than half of the respondents think that the function of a blurb is that it must make you want to read the book. They see a blurb as a sales or marketing tool. It is clear from the results that people do not see a blurb as a slogan since only 3 people voted for this. Neither do they think it should be used to complement the author or book since eight persons voted for this.

From these results, one could speculate that therefore the blurbs who complement the author and/or book should have lots of negative votes. Continuing this thought pattern one could

therefore then also argue that the categories ‘imperative’ or ‘curiosity arouser’ should then have the most positive votes in the next part of the survey.

Do you think reading blurbs helps you with the decision to buy the book?

This question is important since it will reveal whether this research is relevant. If people do not read blurbs or do not think they help them with deciding, one can question the relevance of blurbs. Therefore, despite not being considered an important question, this might be the most important one of them all.

Luckily for this research, as you can see in the image below, a little less than three-quarters of the participants think blurbs do help them choose whether or not to buy a book.

Do you think reading blurbs helps you with the decision to buy the book?
171 antwoorden

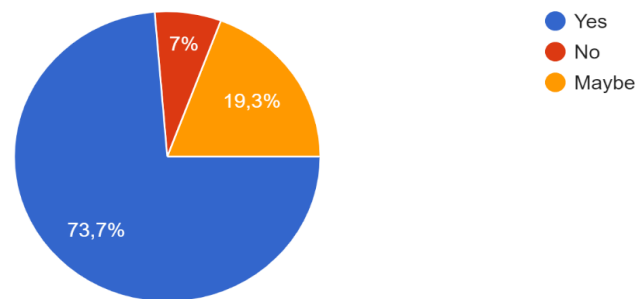


Figure 6 - Results: Do you think reading blurbs helps you with the decision to buy the book?

Nearly twenty percent of participants checked the box for maybe. Therefore, one can speculate that these participants either do get influenced by blurbs but are doing so on a subconscious level or they already made up their mind about a book, and reading the blurbs is a confirming factor.

4.2.4 Findings survey section two

In the second part of the survey participants were shown fourteen blurbs books to rate according to whether they would want to buy the book after reading the blurb. Two blurbs of each of the seven categories of Valor were randomly chosen through the randomizer function of Excel. The individual blurb results will be shown first, after which these results will be analysed per category.

For each blurb, an average was calculated. If the average leans towards 1, this means that people feel very negatively about it. If the average leans towards 5, this means that people feel very positive about it. If the average stays close to 3, this means that people feel neutral about it.

Category	Blurb number	Total number of votes	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Mean
Address form you	1	174	100	42	17	8	7	1.7
Address form you	2	164	69	50	36	8	1	1.9

Complementing the author	1	174	19	40	45	56	14	3.0
Complementing the author	2	174	40	40	46	39	9	2.6
Complementing the book	1	174	47	47	37	35	8	2.5
Complementing the book	2	174	42	34	47	36	15	2.7
Complementing book and author	1	172	21	29	36	59	27	3.2
Complementing book and author	2	174	36	37	39	36	26	2.9
Curiosity arouser	1	174	55	52	47	17	3	2.2
Curiosity arouser	2	174	14	18	31	55	56	3.7
Ellipsis	1	174	71	45	37	16	5	2.1
Ellipsis	2	174	30	29	58	40	17	2.9
Imperative	1	172	59	40	33	36	4	2.3
Imperative	2	172	36	53	40	33	10	2.6

Table 2 - Number of votes per individual blurb

The first two blurbs belong to the category ‘address form you’. Both blurbs show a very strong negativity vote. The first blurb has a mean of 1.7, meaning that the average of participants feels negative towards the blurb. The second blurb has a mean of 1.9 This is also shown in Figures 7 and 8 below.

"You know what it's about. You know you should read it. You know people love it. What are you waiting for? It's not gonna show up on your doorste...read. Get out and go get it. Sit down and read it."

174 antwoorden

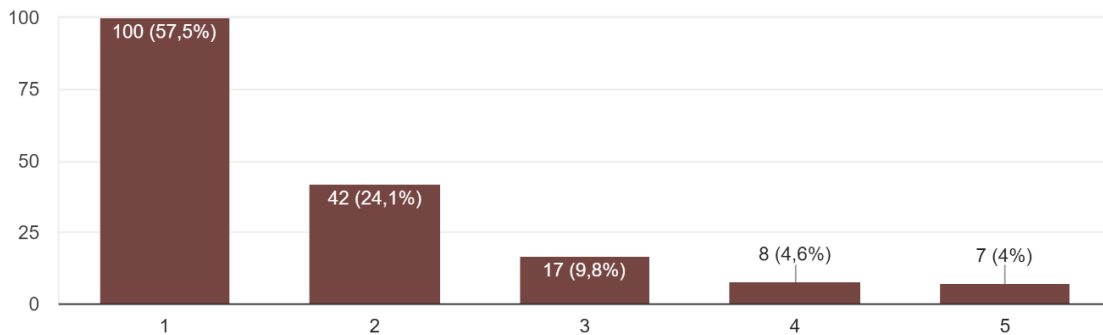


Figure 7 - Results category 'address form you' - Blurb one

I suggest you read it. If only so you can see Star Wars in a pretty different light.

164 antwoorden

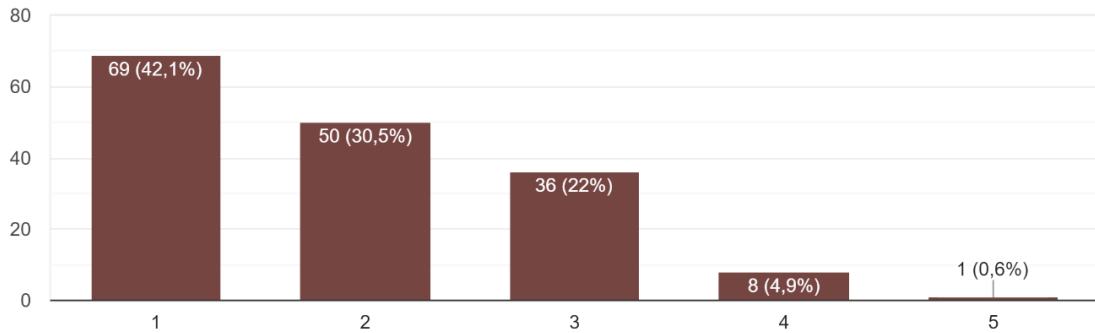


Figure 8 - Results category 'address form you' - Blurb two

When looking at the first blurb specifically, we see that nearly 60% of participants feel strongly negative about the blurb, whereas the second blurb has a more gradual rise in negative votes. Looking at the second blurb in more detail, it shows that there is one participant that finds the blurb very effective. This vote thus gives a result of 0.6 percent and is therefore negligible.

Moving on to the individual blurbs of the 'complementing the author' category, the first blurb shows an average of 3.0 and the second blurb shows an average of 2.6 in table 2. This means that participants feel neutral towards the blurb. This is also shown in Figures 9 and 10 below.

"[author] created a vast and complex system of ancient spatial politics and peoples, then set them at one another's throats over land, money, and drugs."

174 antwoorden

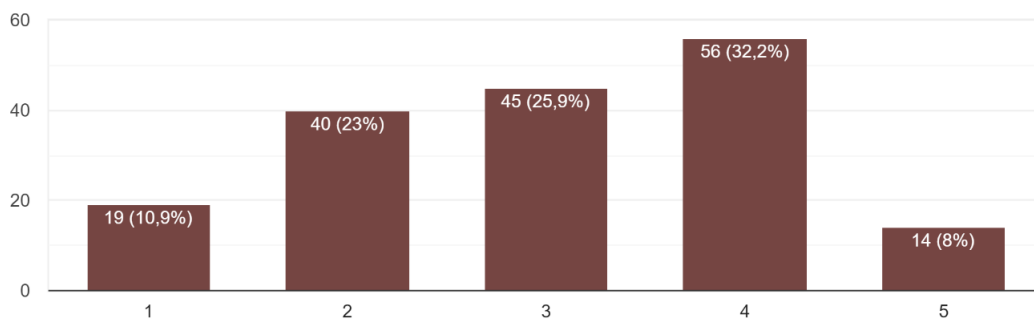


Figure 9 - Results category 'complementing the author' - Blurb one

"Well NO ONE has ever done a better job than better [author] in showing the possible nightmare (and thus potential danger) of a society without ...vernment with complete and unchallenged control."
 174 antwoorden

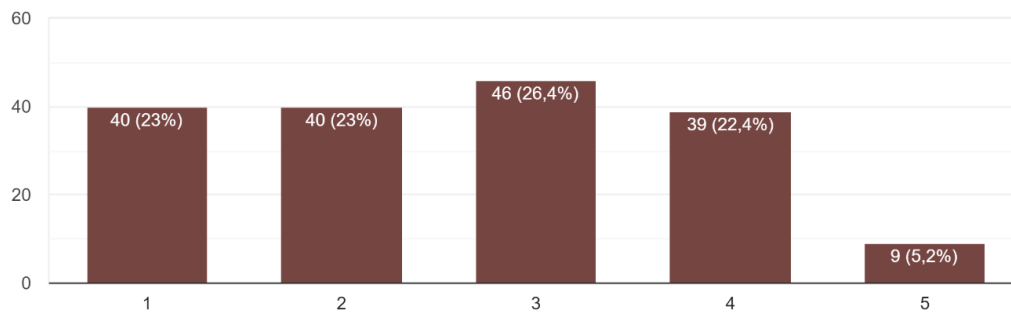


Figure 10 - Results category 'complementing the author' - Blurb two

What is interesting about both figures is that they both lean more towards the negative feelings on the blurbs. However, the number shows neutrality in feelings. In the case of the first blurb, this mainly is because of the number of votes for the fourth star. When looking at the second blurb, however, it is a little harder to see how the average here is neutral.

The next two blurbs belong to the category 'complementing the book' and the average between them is close. With the first blurb having an average of 2.5 and the second blurb having an average of 2.7, the blurbs show a neutral feeling towards the blurb.

"No wonder this (book) is widely regarded as not just a Science Fiction masterpiece, but a literary achievement as well."
 174 antwoorden

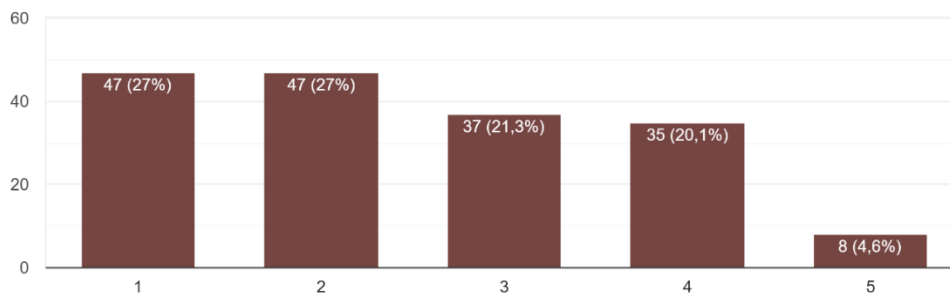


Figure 11 – Results category 'complementing the book' - Blurb one

"[book] is to science fiction what The Lord of the Rings is to high fantasy; it is the novel that officially, and unarguably, defines the genre."

174 antwoorden

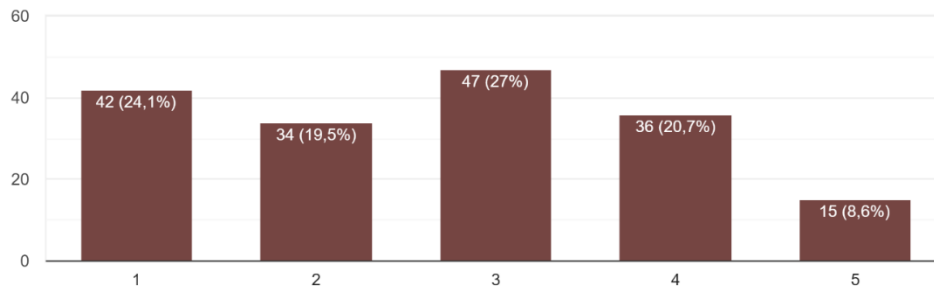


Figure 12 - Results category 'complementing the book' - Blurb two

As can be seen in the figures above, the results show a difference between the amount of positive and negative feelings towards the blurb as well.

In the next category 'complementing the book and author' however, there is an increase in positive feelings towards the blurbs as can be seen in figures 13 and 14.

Machiavellian intrigue, mythology, religion, politics, imperialism, environmentalism, the nature of power. All this set in a mind-boggling, frightening... as an "effort at prediction". [book] had me hooked!

172 antwoorden

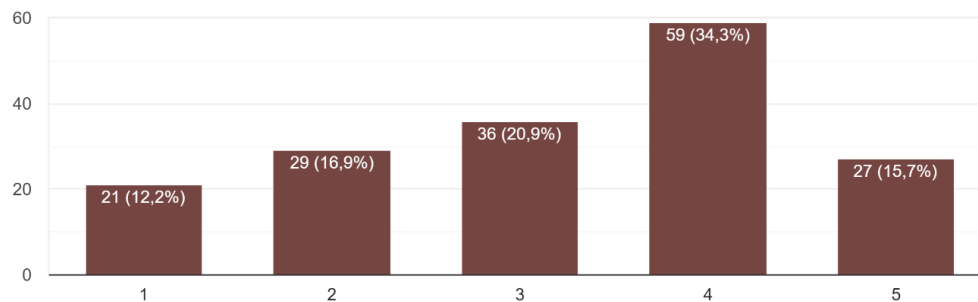


Figure 13 - Results category 'complementing the book and author' - Blurb one

"[book] defines the high fantasy genre along with its sequel, of course, and has been an inspiration to countless authors and readers alike. [author], q... changed the literary world. He made fantasy real."

174 antwoorden

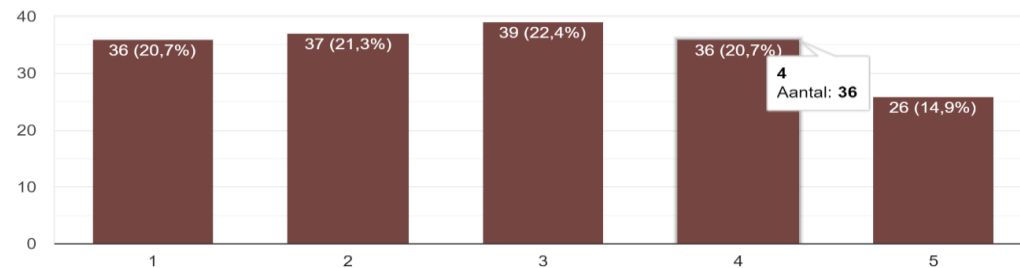


Figure 14 - Results category 'complementing the book and author' - Blurb two

When looking at the average feeling in figures 13 and 14 we see that they are neutral as well. Figure 13 scored an average of 3.2, which is the second-best rating for an individual blurb. It

is also one of the best-rated blurbs in the whole research as you can see in table 2 on page 40. Figure 14 scored an average of 2.9 in and the figure shows that all ratings have similar amounts of votes. It is therefore one of the most neutral blurbs since there is no sign of a big difference between the scales.

This is however the case for figures 15 and 16. Both belong to the same category but show the complete opposite when showcasing participants' feelings towards them.

"Just about everything [author] says in [book] is a maniacal truism. In some twisted form, everything reflects the truth of reality."

174 antwoorden

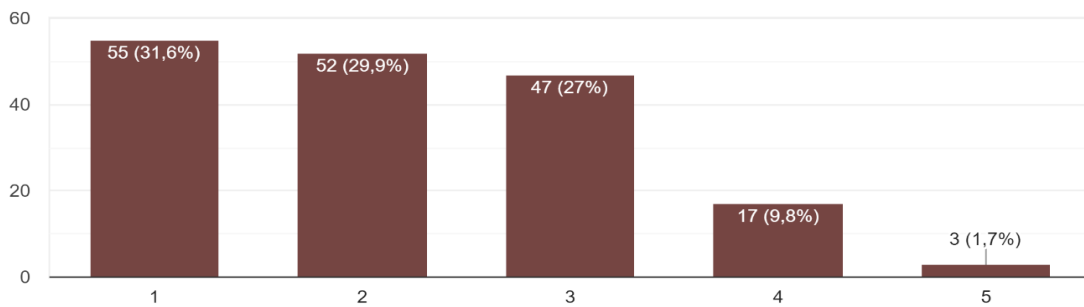


Figure 15 - Results category 'curiosity arouser' - Blurb one

"It's terrifying to think of a world in which your own children are spies for the government and can turn you in, where cameras are watching you 24/7, ...an increase in heartbeat that may incriminate us."

174 antwoorden

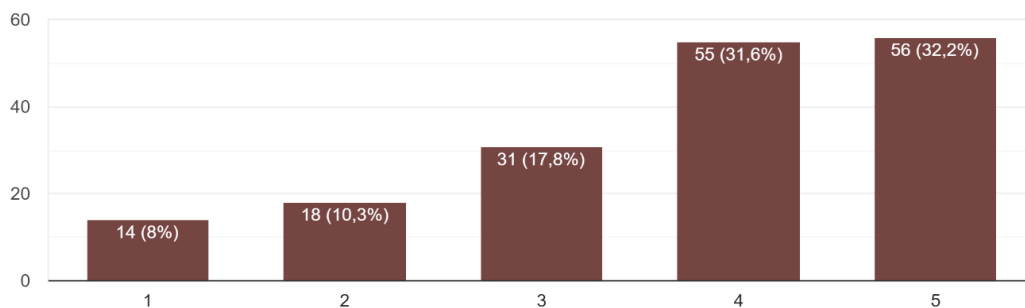


Figure 16 - Results category 'curiosity arouser' - Blurb two

The difference is also shown in their averages since the blurb in figure 15 shows an average of 2.2 whilst the blurb in figure 16 has an average of 3.7. Meaning that the blurb in figure 15 gives participants a neutral feeling whereas the blurb in figure 16 has the most positive ratings of all 14 blurbs and is the only one that makes participants feel positive.

Moving on to the blurbs of the category 'ellipsis', in the first blurb, we see a clear linear function in figure 17 where the number of votes gradually declines as the effectiveness scale moves up. It, therefore, should not come as a surprise that the average of voting has a score of 2.1, meaning that this blurb is seen as negative when talking about effectiveness.

"SMART sense of humor"

174 antwoorden

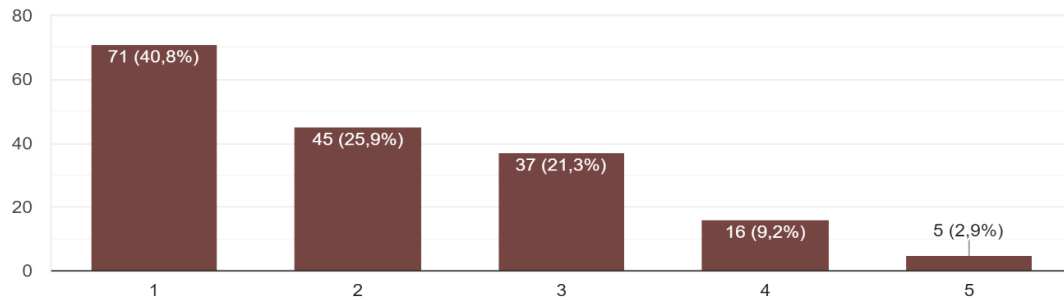


Figure 17 - Results category 'ellipsis' - Blurb one

When looking at the second blurb within the 'ellipsis' category, shown in figure 18, we can see a bell curve. With the middle section, and thus the most neutral section, getting the most votes, it is also not a surprise to see that the average of this particular blurb is 2.9.

"Mystery, magic, a spectacular cast of characters and a splendid plot"

174 antwoorden

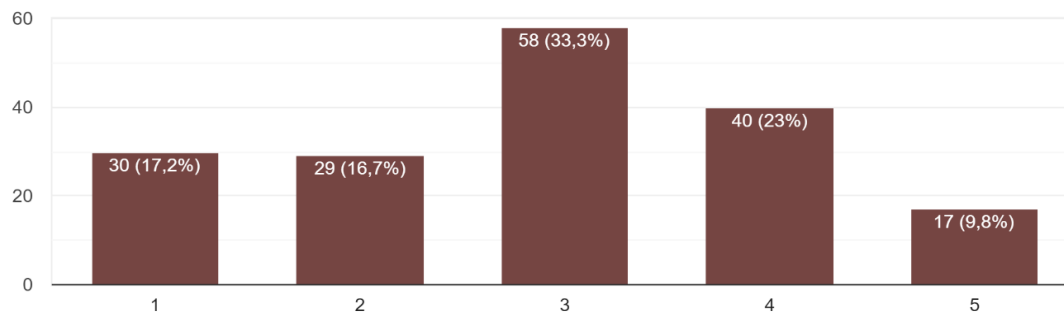


Figure 18 - Results category 'ellipsis' - Blurb two

Looking at both individual blurbs within the category 'ellipsis' we see a difference in voting pattern. With some people disliking the shorter ellipsis but feeling neutral about the longer version, one can argue that the category 'ellipsis' can be relevant to the participants as long as it is not a short sentence.

Finally, the individual blurbs of the category 'imperative' will be discussed. As shown in their respective graphics below, both blurbs have a clear negative spike and are therefore leaning towards a more negative view. This is also shown since after calculation figure 19 scores a 2.3 and figure 20 scores a 2.6.

The closing lines still come to me sometimes and remind me of depths that I can only imagine.

172 antwoorden

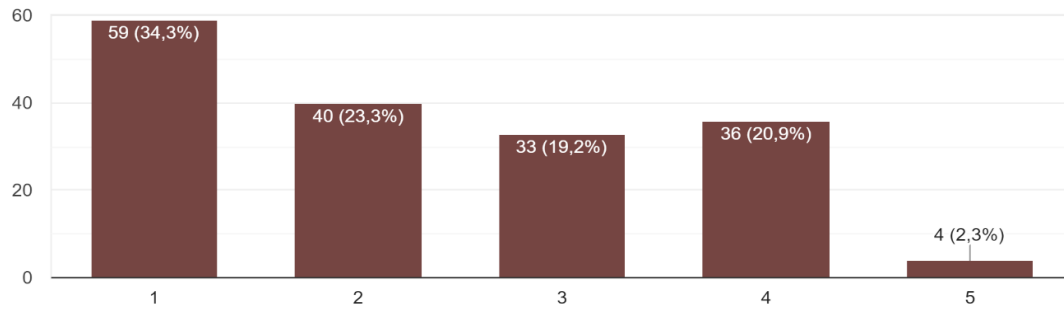


Figure 19 - Results category 'imperative' - Blurb one

The interrelations between all the invented names and languages make [literary world] feel real, in a way no other fantasy world ever has.

172 antwoorden

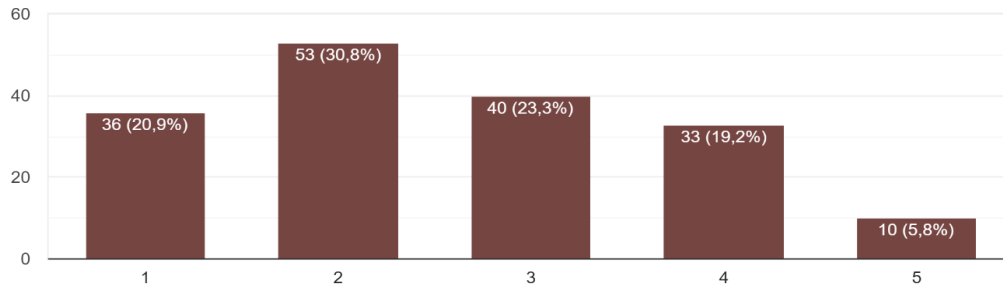


Figure 20 - Results category 'imperative' - Blurb two

After a month of the survey being online, there were a total of 164 participants that completed the survey and 174 participants that started the survey. The results of the survey were unexpected since there was only one category that has more positive votes than negative ones, which is the category 'complementing the book and author'.

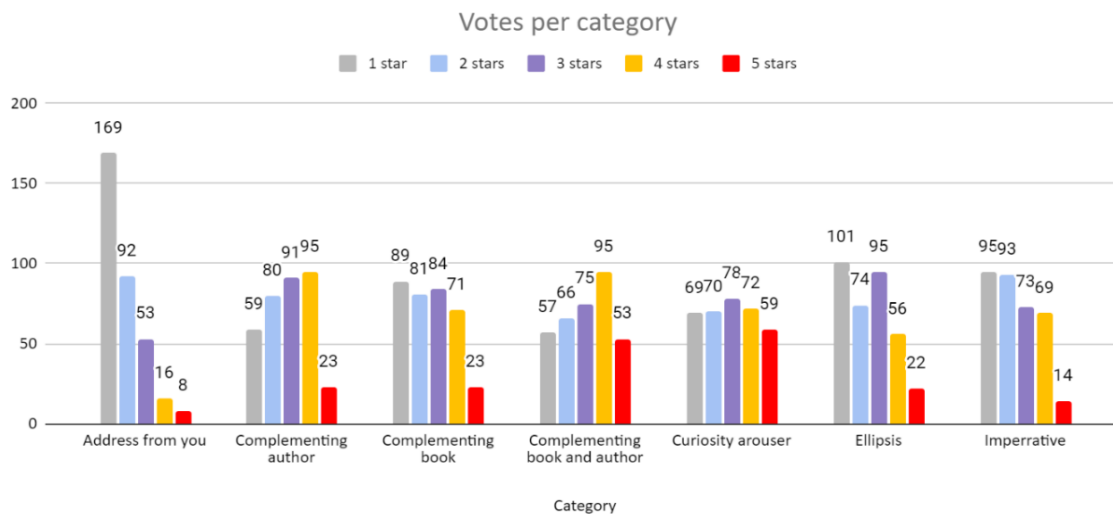


Figure 21 - Results: Votes per category

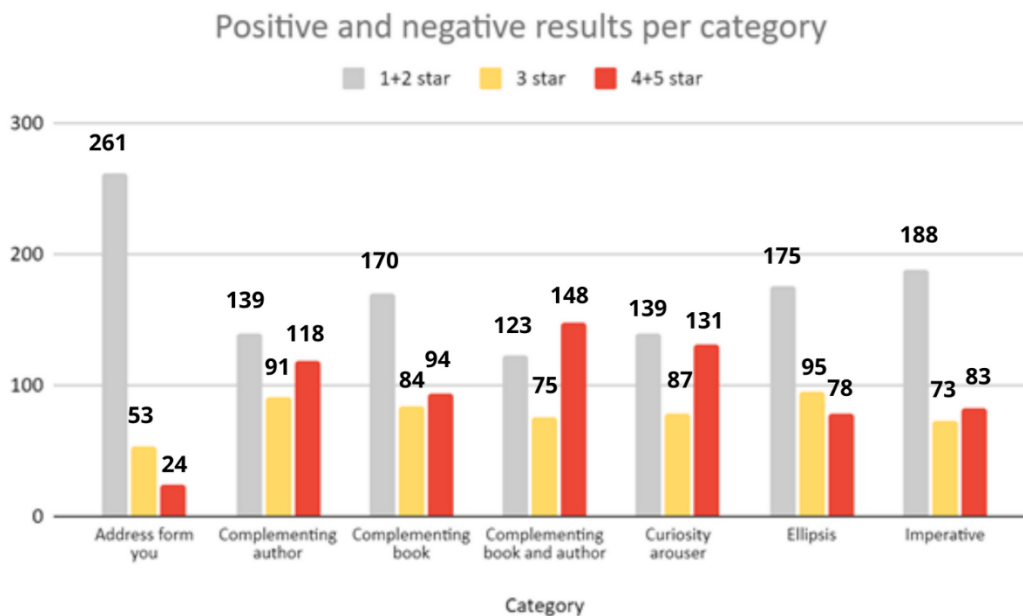


Figure 22 - Positive and Negative results per category

It appears that the category ‘address form you’ is the least effective according to the vote results. With a total of 169 one-star votes and 92 two-star votes, it is by far the category with the most negative results as can be seen in figure 8. This category also holds the least amount of three, four- and five-star reviews and is therefore also the category with the least positive reviews.

Category	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Total votes	Mean
Address from you	169	92	53	16	8	338	1,8
Complementing author	59	80	91	95	23	348	2,8
Complementing book	89	81	84	71	23	348	2,6
Complementing book and author	57	66	75	95	53	346	3,1
Curiosity arouser	69	70	78	72	59	348	2,9
Ellipsis	101	74	95	56	22	348	2,5
Imperative	95	93	73	69	14	344	2,5

Table 3 - Number of votes per category

Moving on to the category ‘complementing the author’, figure 8 shows that this category has one of the highest neutral votes (91). Even though there are more negative votes than positive votes, the category ‘complementing the author’ still belongs somewhere in the middle of all the results. The reason why this category belongs in the middle is that it has the third-lowest negative votes (139) and the third-highest positive votes (118).

When looking at the category ‘complementing the book’, it got more negative votes than positive votes. It scores the perfect position in the middle of the ranking of negative votes

(170), it scores in the top 3 of neutral votes (84) and scores the middle position in the positive votes (94). Therefore, we can conclude that this category is seen as neutral by participants.

The category ‘complementing the book and author’ shows a spike in four-star votes. The category has, together with ‘complementing the author’, the most four-star votes and is also the only category with more positive (148) than negative (123) votes as seen in figure 8.

Category ‘ellipsis’ is one of the categories that score very high on negative votes and very low on positive votes. It is, therefore, safe to say that this category is disliked by most of the participants and therefore target audience. With this category also scoring high on the neutral opinion of the blurb, one can speculate that this category would not be effective at all and can therefore be skipped when seeking promotion material for a book.

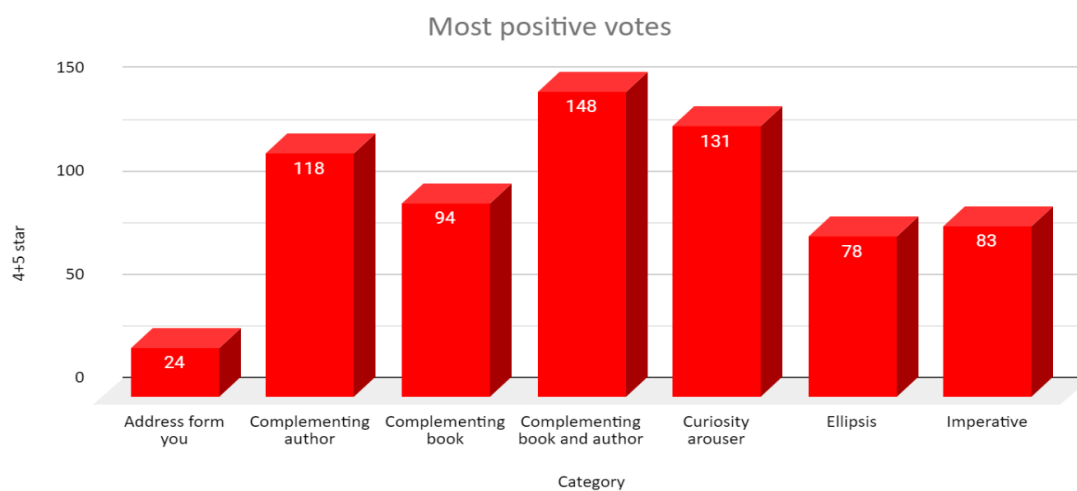


Figure 23 - Total of positive votes per category

Category ‘imperative’ as the category ‘ellipsis’ and ‘address form you’, belong to the categories with the most negative votes. With a total of 188 negative votes, the category ‘imperative’ gets the second place as most negative votes behind the category ‘address form you’ which has a number of 261 votes. With category ‘imperative’ also having the third place in the least numbers of favourite votes (83) it is safe to say that this category, along with the category ‘ellipsis’, could also be skipped when seeking promotion material for a book.

4.3 Research question one

Which blurb categories are most used in promoting bestselling books of the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre, researching blurbs from all seven of Valor’s known categories?

The gathering of blurbs in the first part of the research shows that there is a big difference in the frequency in the usage of the categories. Since the blurbs are gathered from the most liked comments on each book, one might argue that the most frequent blurbs are the ones that the target audience wants to read. To test this theory, research must be conducted on the preferences of the target audience. So, the next step is to answer the question: “Which blurb

category is the most effective on the target audience and is this in line with the audience's perception and definition of a blurb?".

4.4 Research question two

Which blurb category is most effective on the target audience and is this in line with the audience's perception and definition of a blurb?

When letting the target audience define their perception of the function of a blurb around 72 percent of the survey participants said that a blurb should make you want to read the book. Therefore, one can speculate that the categories 'imperative' and 'curiosity arousers' should be most effective according to the participants.

Only eight people voted that a blurb must complement the book and / or author.

Looking at the results of the second part of the survey, we can see that the category 'curiosity arouser' has gotten the most 5 stars votes and is, therefore, voted most effective. However, despite assumptions previously made, both categories 'complementing author' and 'complementing book and author' received the most 4-star votes and the category least liked is the 'address form you' category.

When looking at negative versus positive results per category we can see that 'complementing book and author', together with the category 'curiosity arouser', has the biggest number of positive reviews. It can therefore be concluded that these two categories are most accepted and therefore most effective with the target audience. Since only 8 of the 174 participants voted for the option that a blurb should be giving complement, the results of the second part of the survey should therefore be contradictory.

When focusing on the category 'curiosity arouser', it was already suspected that this category would have a high number of positive votes because of the results from the first part of the survey. Here was predicted that the category 'curiosity arousers' would gain a lot of positive votes due to the category having the aim of trying to engage the reader with the story, leaving them to want to read more. With the category placing second winning the second most positive votes, this would be in line with what was previously expected.

However, results also show that the category has more negative votes than positive ones. The total positive votes (voted with a 4 or 5 star) for this category is 131 whereas the total amount of negative votes (voted with a 1 or 2 star) is 139. This difference of 8 votes might be considered minimalistic but should nevertheless be considered.

The answer to the research question is therefore the following: The most effective blurb categories according to the audience are 'complementing the book and author' and 'curiosity arousers'. The results of the second category are in line with the target audience definition of a blurb however, the results of the most effective category are not.

4.5 Research question three

What is the relation between the frequency of the category usage in the promotion of bestselling books and the effectiveness of the target audience as shown in the results of the survey?

When gathering the blurbs, the category ‘curiosity arouser’ and ‘complementing book’ are the overall most appearing blurb categories through digital book promotion. Looking at the category ‘complementing the book’, this category appeared a lot throughout the gathering of digital promotion of the books but was very neutral in the results of the survey.

Looking at the results of the survey, we can see that the category ‘curiosity arouser’ does come into the second place of having the highest rate of positive votes and having one of the least amounts of negative votes as well. The only problem with the results of the category ‘curiosity arouser’ is that there are more negative votes than there are positive ones.

The answer to the research question is the following, there is not a clear relationship defined between the frequency of the category usage in the promotion of bestselling books and the effectiveness on the target audience as shown in the results of the survey.

However, ignoring the fact that all but one category has higher negative votes than positive votes, one could say that for the category ‘curiosity arouser’ a relationship between frequency and effectiveness can be found. Nevertheless, since this is the only case that in which such a relationship can be found the conclusion is indefinite that there is no relationship between frequency and effectiveness.

4.6 Further remarks

The survey results also show the fact that all but one category received more negative votes than positive ones. Keeping in mind the remarks made by participants in the comment section of the survey posts on the Facebook groups, there could be an explanation for these results.

In the remarks, participants frequently state they do not like blurbs in general and would much rather read more about the storyline and writing style than have read about the author or book being praised. For example, these are real comments made by participants and you can find them in appendix 9.7.

‘I hate the praise and comparison blurbs. I’ve almost never read the books they compare with, so it’s completely irrelevant, and what does the author have to do with anything, other than if you’ve read their other books you know whether or not their writing style works for you. [...] Let me know what kinda world it’s about, is it serious, humorous or in-between? Is it a standalone, trilogy or a saga of twenty + books? Are we following one character or are we shifting perspective and timeline every other chapter?’

‘I’m generally of the opinion that if I want to know more about the author, I can look them up. My first and second priorities are genre/subgenre, and what the book is actually about.’

'I can't stand the current trend of uninformative blurbs/comments/praise! I want a paragraph or 2 outlining what the story and main character are about.'

'I get tired of endless praise for the author when all I really want to know is – what is this book about.'

'Don't like when it talks about the author either. An author can write a really great story and then a really bad one.'

Not only comments on the praising of authors or blurbs in books were made, but there were also comments suggesting solutions. Most people stated that they base their decision of buying a book on the plot summary. They want to know how the story is written; first person, third person, one point of view, dual point of view or multi point of view. They are also interested in knowing the subgenre, which is relevant for the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre since there are many sub genres. They want to know the writing style; is it written with humour or is it serious?

Furthermore, people want to know what they can expect from reading the book in terms of commitment; is it a standalone, a duology, a trilogy, a five-book series or a saga with more than 20 books? They want to know if the book is following a chronological structure or if it shifts timeline every couple of chapters.

And finally, they want to know more about the main character; what kind of person is he/she, what are their goals and why are they the main character of the story? What makes the main character compelling and the book worth reading? In conclusion, they would rather receive more practical information about the book than praise for the author.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

The blurbs used in this research were gathered and categorized based on a review of existing linguistic literature, after which random sampling was used to choose which blurbs would be in the survey. Three quarter of respondents say that blurbs help them deciding to buy a book, which means that blurbs are an effective marketing tool.

Furthermore, more than half of the respondent's thing that the function of blurbs is that it must make you want to read the book. They see a blurb as a sales or marketing tool. It would then be logical for the categories 'imperative' and 'curiosity arouser' should gain mostly positive votes within the second part of the survey. When looking at the results of the second part of the research we see that the category 'curiosity arouser' indeed has lots of positive votes. However, this is also the only category that creates a more positive than negative feeling for respondents. With a total of 639 votes going to the negative feelings and only 202 votes going towards a positive feeling when reading the blurbs, participants are mostly feeling negatively towards the blurbs used in the survey.

With blurbs from the category 'curiosity arouser' and 'complementing the book' appearing most though digital promotion, but category 'complementing the book' evoking a neutral feeling with the participants we can state that this category is not as effective with the target audience as expected. However, the blurbs from category 'curiosity arouser' do spark a more positive feeling in the participants. Unfortunately, the category 'curiosity arouser' does spark more negative feelings compared to positive feelings. But it has to be taken into account that some blurb categories still can sell well online despite these results. This is because with digital blurbs, readers can give blurbs they like a vote, thus readers will see the most liked blurbs first. The reader thus takes into account the opinion of others, and therefore relying on others decisions, which is herd behaviour (Chen, Y., 2008; Chen, M. et al, 2009), to make a decision. However, it must be taken into account that this research was based on the individual person's thinking, the participant was not shown how others might feel about the blurb, thus giving his or hers personal opinion.

So, in conclusion, there is not a clear relationship defined between frequency of category appearance in digital promotion of best-selling books and effectiveness according to the target audiences.

5.2 Limitations

It is important to take the limitations of this research into consideration.

First, the restrictions of this research. This research is a graduate project at Master level; therefore, it has restrictions in time as well as in funding and inside data. With the researcher being one student, not working for or with a company or enterprise, important market data is difficult to access. Therefore, information about buying behaviour and / or online and offline sales are harder to gain access to.

Secondly, through one online survey only, the research produced a limited amount of numerical data. Therefore, after a mere quantitative analysis of the data the qualitative analysis is mostly based on the interpretation of the researcher, however, confirmed by the opinions expressed by some respondents. This means that specific reasons why a potential reader prefers one blurb over the other cannot be defined with 100% certainty.

Thirdly, the research uses haphazard sampling. This research method is prone to create unrepresentative samples because of selection bias (Hall, et al 2001). For this research words that could trigger biases have been left out and replaced by [book], [author], or [title].

Fourthly, the research is fully written and executed in the English language. Therefore, this research only considers (international) Sci-Fi / Fantasy readers who have a minimum of B1 CEFR level. According to language training centre EF, English level B1 is “the third level of English in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

At this level, a person with a B1 level is beyond the basics of the English language, but they are not able to work or study exclusively in English” (EF, 2020). Depending on which types of books the respondents read, they should have a minimum of B1 CEFR level to be able to participate in the survey.

Finally, this research is part of a learning process aimed at acquiring a scientific approach as well as develop critical thinking. The research has been conducted to the best of the researcher’s knowledge and limited expertise. In conclusion, this research can be regarded as ground research for further and deeper investigations into the full potential of blurbs.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for further research

As mentioned above, this research can be used as ground research to gather more information about the potential of blurbs. I would recommend continuing investigating blurbs to see if their full potential can be reached. Therefore, new research could be conducted on the following topics:

- What is the reason behind potential readers favouring the ... blurb category? (Qualitative research)
- Are blurbs relevant enough to put them onto the book cover or can we use them more as an online tool to stimulate sales?
- Can a linguistic analysis of most effective blurbs be used to create a guideline for book publishers to ensure the effectiveness of the blurbs?

Whilst posting the survey in the different Facebook groups, the comment section was left open for participants to give tips and / or share their views on the topic. Multiple participants have indicated that they dislike blurbs in general, they are more prone to buy a book if it has 'an intriguing plot summary or clip on the back'. Therefore, research can be done comparing the effectiveness of books with blurbs on the back or summary on the back to see which one will be sold more.

6.2 Recommendations for professionals in the publishing industry

For professionals in the publishing industry, this research shows that it is important to know which preference of category for blurbs the target audience has, as well as the fact that popular blurbs do not necessarily pursue the target audience in buying a book. Therefore, a suggestion would be to hold a similar research for your target audience to get to know their preferences. Furthermore, for professionals working with the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre a recommendation would be to use curiosity arousers in online blurbs to engage (potential) readers. Also, analyse blurbs of books that sold well online and see if the blurbs used can fit into a certain category which you then can use to promote similar books. Try using AB testing on target audiences to see which work best.

6.3 Recommendation for authors

This research shows that there are many categories of blurbs authors can use to promote their books. As a writer of blurbs, it is also important to keep this in mind. Try to write different categories of blurbs for each book and see which ones work best for your target audience.

7. Summary

This Master thesis *The Buying Influence of Book Blurbs; a Linguistic Study and Survey amongst Sci-Fi/Fantasy Readers from all over the World* written by Emma Diederik, explores the relation between blurb category and the effectiveness on the target audience, focussing on the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre. The study aims to test effectiveness of certain blurb categories for the target audience, which should bring more insight as to which blurbs to use for promotion.

To test the effectiveness of the blurb categories on the target audiences, an online survey was distributed to multiple Facebook groups dedicated to the Sci-Fi / Fantasy genre. The survey was divided into two separate parts. The first of which would ask ‘misleading’ questions to establish insight into what participants felt like was the function and effectiveness of a blurb in general. The second part used a five-point Likert scale in which the participants had to rate individual blurbs based on how they felt about the effectiveness of that particular blurb.

The blurbs used in this research were gathered and categorized based on a review of existing linguistic literature, after which random sampling was used to choose which blurbs would be in the survey. Three quarter of respondents say that blurbs help them deciding to buy a book, which means that blurbs are an effective marketing tool.

Furthermore, more than half of the respondent’s thing that the function of blurbs is that it must make you want to read the book. They see a blurb as a sales or marketing tool. It would then be logical for the categories ‘imperative’ and ‘curiosity arouser’ should gain mostly positive votes within the second part of the survey. When looking at the results of the second part of the research we see that the category ‘curiosity arouser’ indeed has lots of positive votes. However, this is also the only category that creates a more positive than negative feeling for respondents. With a total of 639 votes going to the negative feelings and only 202 votes going towards a positive feeling when reading the blurbs, participants are mostly feeling negatively towards the blurbs used in the survey.

With blurbs from the category ‘curiosity arouser’ and ‘complementing the book’ appearing most though digital promotion, but category ‘complementing the book’ evoking a neutral feeling with the participants we can state that this category is not as effective with the target audience as expected. However, the blurbs from category ‘curiosity arouser’ do spark a more positive feeling in the participants. Unfortunately, the category ‘curiosity arouser’ does spark more negative feelings compared to positive feelings. So, in conclusion, there is not a clear relationship defined between frequency of category appearance in digital promotion of best-selling books and effectiveness according to the target audiences.

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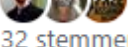
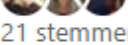
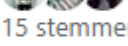
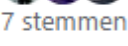
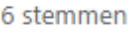
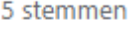
9. Appendix







9.1 Facebook polls

**Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion**

**Cisco Javier Estrada** heeft een poll gemaakt. ...
 Visuele verhalenverteller
· 22 november 2019 · 

Poll time! So, you're unsure about whether you want to read a certain book. Maybe you need book recommendations or want to know whether the book you have is any good. Who do you (typically) trust or go to in order to inform your decision about whether or not to check out a book?

- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Written Reviews (Goodreads, Amazon, etc.)  ...
130 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Posts on this Group  ...
75 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Book Description  ...
50 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Friends  ...
32 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Mark Redman](#)
Trust my own judgement  ...
21 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Author Reviews and Recommendations  ...
15 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Video Reviews (Booktubers, Top Lists, etc.)  ...
7 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Sergej Odström](#)
quality of the cover  ...
6 stemmen
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Family Members  ...
5 stemmen

- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Family Members  5 stemmen ...
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Librarians  4 stemmen ...
- Toegevoegd door [Lia Matera](#)
Audible sample  3 stemmen ...
- Toegevoegd door [Holli Lyndora](#)
Wikipedia plot summary  3 stemmen ...
- Toegevoegd door [Mike Voss](#)
Kindle sample  3 stemmen ...
- Toegevoegd door [Margaret Karaba](#)
Bibliography websites (Fantastic Fiction,
fiction db)  1 stem ...
- Toegevoegd door [Cisco Javier Estrada](#)
Publishers ...



Sci fi and Fantasy Book Club



Eggizō Entertainment heeft een poll gemaakt.

3 juli · 🌐



QUICK READER POLL:

Do you prefer physical paperback novels
or
Kindle digital E-Book Novels?



Toegevoegd door [Eggizō Entertainment](#)
Paperback



76 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Eggizō Entertainment](#)
Ebook



46 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Randy Link](#)
Hardbound Editions



27 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Brian P Sullivan](#)
Audiobooks



17 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Brittany Bell](#)
Hard bound books, paperback, or ebooks
but no audiobooks.



8 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Sarah Mussett Arnette](#)
All of the Above



7 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Percival Blakeney](#)
E-books from Library



2 stemmen



Toegevoegd door [Marry Powder](#)
It depends on the circumstances.



1 stem

Een optie toevoegen



7

19 opmerkingen 1 keer gedeeld

9.2 Message to Facebook group administrators / moderators

Dear [group name] moderator / administrator,

I am currently writing a Master thesis on the effect of digital book blurbs on the buying behaviour of potential readers. For this thesis, I am to administer a survey to Sci-Fi / Fantasy readers to see if some blurbs are more effective than others. Would it be okay if I ask the members of this group to participate in the survey? The survey will be taken anonymously, and the results will also be anonymous.

For further information about the research, feel free to contact me and I will send over the research proposal. You may also contact my supervisor at mara.logaldo@iulm.it.

Kind regards,
Emma Diederik
Master student

9.3 Message in the Facebook groups



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Emma Diederik heeft een link gedeeld.

18u · 🌐



Getting tired of unnecessary blurbs on the back covers of books or in online bookshops? With my Master thesis I want to find out exactly which blurbs work for you as a reader! (And hopefully inspire publishers to only use the blurbs you want to read)

Let me know what you think about blurbs!

Please help a girl out with filling in a survey on online blurbs of SciFi & Fantasy books: <https://forms.gle/xksbEydkcJHBry9R9> ✓

Permission from admin.



Your opinion on blurbs

✎ For those of you who don't know what a blurb is, it is a short description of a book or a small book recommendation.
• For this quiz, it is important to let us know how effective you think the shown blurb is.
• Remember, all answers are correct! Have fun.

* Required

Where do you read blurbs?

Online

On the book itself

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

Your opinion on blurbs

✎ For those of you who don't know what a blurb is, it is a short descripti



8

34 opmerkingen 1 keer gedeeld


👍 Leuk

💬 Opmerking plaatsen


➦ Delen


9.4 Survey


9.4.1 Questions part 1



Your opinion on blurbs

 For those of you who don't know what a blurb is, it is a short description of a book or a small book recommendation.

 For this quiz, it is important to let us know how effective you think the shown blurb is.

 Remember, all answers are correct! Have fun.

*Vereist

What is the function of a blurb according to you? *

- A blurb must complement the book or author or both
- A blurb must give information about the book
- A blurb makes you want to read the book
- A blurb has to be read as a slogan for the book


Do you think reading blurbs helps you with the decision to buy the book?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Where do you read blurbs?

- Online
- On the book itself

9.4.2 Questions part 2



Your opinion on blurbs

*Vereist

Please rate the following quotes according to how effective you think it is towards you?

For the next part of the survey, you will be shown a number of blurbs to rate according to whether you will buy the book after reading the blurb. Does the blurb motivate you to buy the book? Remember there are no wrong answers

"You know what it's about. You know you should read it. You know people love it. What are you waiting for? It's not gonna show up on your doorstep begging to be read. Get out and go get it. Sit down and read it." *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

"Well NO ONE has ever done a better job than better [author] in showing the possible nightmare (and thus potential danger) of a society without basic civil liberties and a government with complete and unchallenged control." *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

The interrelations between all the invented names and languages make [literary world] feel real, in a way no other fantasy world ever has. *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

"[book] is to science fiction what The Lord of the Rings is to high fantasy; it is the novel that officially, and unarguably, defines the genre." *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

"[book] defines the high fantasy genre along with its sequel, of course, and has been an inspiration to countless authors and readers alike. [author], quite literally, kick started a genre that would eventually capture the hearts of thousands of people. He changed the literary world. He made fantasy real." *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

I suggest you read it. If only so you can see Star Wars in a pretty different light. *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

"No wonder this (book) is widely regarded as not just a Science Fiction masterpiece, but a literary achievement as well." *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

"SMART sense of humor" *

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

Machiavellian intrigue, mythology, religion, politics, imperialism, environmentalism, the nature of power. All this set in a mind-boggling, frighteningly original world which [author] ominously terms as an "effort at prediction". [book] had me hooked! *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

"Mystery, magic, a spectacular cast of characters and a splendid plot" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

"[author] created a vast and complex system of ancient spatial politics and peoples, then set them at one another's throats over land, money, and drugs." *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

"It's terrifying to think of a world in which your own children are spies for the government and can turn you in, where cameras are watching you 24/7, where one could be accused of committing a "facecrime" or having an "ownlife", a world in which we live nervously worrying about whether the sensitive machinery that is watching you will pick up an increase in heartbeat that may incriminate us." *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

The closing lines still come to me sometimes and remind me of depths that I can only imagine. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

"Just about everything [author] says in [book] is a maniacal truism. In some twisted form, everything reflects the truth of reality." *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective


9.5 Blurb means

Category	Blurb number	Total number of votes	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Mean
Address form you	1	174	100	42	17	8	7	1,7
Address form you	2	164	69	50	36	8	1	1,9
Complementing the author	1	174	19	40	45	56	14	3,0
Complementing the author	2	174	40	40	46	39	9	2,6
Complementing the book	1	174	47	47	37	35	8	2,5
Complementing the book	2	174	42	34	47	36	15	2,7
Complementing book and author	1	172	21	29	36	59	27	3,2
Complementing book and author	2	174	36	37	39	36	26	2,9
Curiosity arouser	1	174	55	52	47	17	3	2,2
Curiosity arouser	2	174	14	18	31	55	56	3,7
Ellipsis	1	174	71	45	37	16	5	2,1
Ellipsis	2	174	30	29	58	40	17	2,9
Imperative	1	172	59	40	33	36	4	2,3
Imperative	2	172	36	53	40	33	10	2,6

9.6 Facebook comment section


9.6.1 Fantasy Book Club

**Fantasy Book Club**

**Gwen Farrand**
I read them both online and on the book itself. I strongly prefer the blurb to be some sort of plot summary instead of an opinion about the book.
[Leuk](#) · Beantwoorden · 4 w  2

**Emma Diederik**
Gwen Thank you for your insight, that's very helpful and much appreciated 😊
[Leuk](#) · Beantwoorden · 4 w  1



Schrijf een antwoord...    

**Giovanna Gozze**
Done.  1
[Leuk](#) · Beantwoorden · 4 w

**Emma Diederik**
Giovanna thank you so much for participating!
[Leuk](#) · Beantwoorden · 4 w  1



Schrijf een antwoord...    

**Lorraine Abrams**
Good luck!  1
[Leuk](#) · Beantwoorden · 4 w

**Emma Diederik heeft geantwoord · 1 antwoord**

**Danielle Fanello**
It should be a intriguing plot summary or clip from the book. It is what make me put money and time into actually reading the book rather then going for another one. I hate how now so many just have other people's reviews of the book. I don't know the people or their taste so what they think is great I might hate. It's not helpful at all and doesn't actually give you any useful information.
Don't like when it talks about the author either. An author can write a really great story and then a really bad one. I can see on the front of the book who the author is already.

9.6.2 Fantasy Faction



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion

13

43 opmerkingen 1 keer gedeeld

Leuk

Opmerking plaatsen

Delen



Ruth Weatherstone

I've filled it in for you

I get tired of endless praise for the author when all I really want to know is - what is this book about...sigh!

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w

4



Linda Åkerman

I want to know what the book is about. I do not care about the author. I can read that inside. I also despise if you loved Hunger Games and Thornbirds then this is for you. It truly never is

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w

6



Emma Diederik

Linda thank you for your opinion!

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Schrijf een antwoord...



Melissa A Mattes

Just give me an idea what the book is about, the subgenre and style. I don't need praise for the author's other works.

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w

3



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Tammy M. Eldred

Filled it out. It's funny that most of the time I have to turn to groups like these if I want to know anything about a book.

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Emma Diederik

Tammy thank you for your help!

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Tammy M. Eldred

Emma Diederik no problem. Glad to help! 🙏

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Schrijf een antwoord...



Hayley Roberts

Awesome survey, it would be interesting to see the outcome. I agree with the others that I don't really care much about the author, I just want to get a feel for what the book will offer me in terms of plot and genre. I also struggled to answer the question about where you tend to read blurbs because both apply for me. If I see a book recommendation I will usually read the blurb in goodreads, but if I'm in a bookshop or libraries browsing physical books then I will read the blurb instore

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Emma Diederik

Hayley thank you for your kind words. And for the feedback. If you want I can sent you a general conclusion once I'm done 😊

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Hayley Roberts

Emma Diederik that would be great if it's not too much trouble 😊 I always find these sorts of things interesting. Good luck with the study!

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Melissa A Mattes

Hayley Roberts - I had the same issue with the first question. I read blurbs in BOTH places with near



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion

interesting. Good luck with the study!

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Melissa A Mattes

Hayley Roberts - I had the same issue with the first question. I read blurbs in BOTH places with near equal frequency. I randomly chose one, and I'm not sure I remember which I picked!

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Jennifer Ivins 🌟

If you want you can post the results here too. Good luck with your research! 😊

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Emma Diederik

Hayley Jennifer yes I will post the results on here 😊 thanks so much for the interest

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Abby Goldsmith

Emma Diederik I am also interested in seeing the results.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Schrijf een antwoord...



Matthew Cavanagh

I would note that most book readers don't read more than 4-6 books a year. So a fantasy forum of people who probably read more than that may get differing results.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Katrina Evans

Matthew Cavanagh 4-6 books A YEAR?!? I can't even imagine....

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Schrijf een antwoord...





Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Danni Ritter

This'll be interesting, since in the indie author world, we have the fact that we must get the cover, the keywords and the blurb perfect to make a sale, and without these three things we will utterly fail drilled into us constantly. There are literally people out there charging money to write these blurbs, or to coach us on how to write our own.

So to find out ya'll couldn't care less about what's on the back of the book is an interesting twist. If you are not into what usually goes on right now, what do you actually want?

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w · Bewerkt



Danni Ritter

Keep in mind, I'm talking about all the text on the back of the book, the synopsis/pitch, not specifically the accolades.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Vinca Russell

I think you've read the comments very differently to the way I read them. What I take away from the comments on this, and on an earlier post, is that people often couldn't care less about a lot of the quotes from random people/places and endless compar... [Meer weergeven](#)

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



5



Melissa A Mattes

Exactly what **Vinca Russell** said. The blurb is a critical selling point for me.

However, if it's just empty praise and comparisons to other authors, then I'm not interested. I want to know what the book is about. What type of world, the characters, a... [Meer weergeven](#)

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



4



Susanne Christensen

A good blurb is extremely important, unfortunately it's changed from info about the book to info about the author, the book's history, the book's



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion

compare meer weergeven

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Melissa A Mattes

Exactly what Vinca Russell said. The blurb is a critical selling point for me.

However, if it's just empty praise and comparisons to other authors, then I'm not interested. I want to know what the book is about. What type of world, the characters, a hint of the style, and what makes this one different from the rest. That's the work a good blurb does to draw me in.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Susanne Christensen

A good blurb is extremely important, unfortunately it's changed from info about the book to info about who else likes the book/which books it compares to.

I want info about the book, not the other nonsense. I don't care if it's the bestseller, or whic... **Meer weergeven**



seal-of-unknown

me, begging, tears in my eyes:
please. please just tell me what
the book is about. the plot. please
a book annotation on the cover,
unfazed: A Subversive Masterpiece.
A Deep And Touching Story. The New
York Times Bestseller. Go Fuck
Yourself

118,775 notes



Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Schrijf een antwoord...





Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Jessica Smith

I'm generally of the opinion that if I want to know more about the author, I can look them up. My first and second priorities are genre/subgenre, and what the book is actually about. When I had more time I consumed a book a day (unfortunately much less lately due to life obligations), and many of the blurbs were effectively useless for conveying actual information.



3

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Joshua Able 🍷

Well Emma, the 2nd page didn't work out for me.

When it comes to blurbs it often doesn't matter WHAT they say, what matters to me is if an author/person I respect says something.

* Examples:

"Great read" from JoeBob @ sfffxcrazypants means zip to me.

"Great read" from BestBooksRus booklist means nothing.

"Great read" from Mark Lawrence will cause me to take a closer look.



2

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w · Bewerkt



Emma Diederik

Joshua I'm sorry it didnt work out for you. I understand what you are saying but for the purpose of my research I will solely focus on the blurbs themselves apart from their author. Thank you anyway for taking the time to fill out my survey and thank y... **Meer weergeven**



1

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Joshua Able 🍷

Emma Diederik no worries 😊 good luck!



1

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Emma Diederik

Joshua thank you!

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Susanne Christensen

I hate the praise and comparison blurbs. I've almost never read the books they compare with, so it's completely irrelevant, and what does the author have to do with anything, other than if you've read their other books you know whether or not their writing style works for you. Give me info. Let me know what kinda world it's about, is it serious, humorous or in-between? Is it a standalone, a trilogy or a saga of twenty+ books? Are we following one character or are we shifting perspective and timeline every other chapter? What genre and development-level are we talking about? Who is the main character(s)?

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Emma Diederik

Susanne I totally agree with you! Thank you for sharing 😊

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Schrijf een antwoord...



Peter Solberg 🇳🇱

The short blurb recommendations from trusted sources and authors I dig is hugely influential to me. For instance Fantasy Book Review UK and The Onion AV Club are always spot on IMO. I remember when TNoTW came out by Rothfuss the AV Club said something ... **Meer weergeven**

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w · Bewerkt



Peter Solberg 🇳🇱

If Abercrombie, Rothfuss, Lawrence or GRRM rec a book there is a 100% chance I will read it.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Susanne Christensen

Just saying, this study brought this to mind - I hope your results can get blurbs back into info about the actual



Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Larissa Beale

I side with the majority here - I miss a blurb where it gives you a glimpse at the story inside. I bought Name of the Wind purely off the blurb:

'I have stolen princesses back from sleeping barrow kings. I burned down the town of Trebon. I have spent the night with Felurian and left with both my sanity and my life. I was expelled from the University at a younger age than most people are allowed in. I tread paths by moonlight that others fear to speak of during day. I have talked to Gods, loved women, and written songs that make the minstrels weep.

My name is Kvothe.

You may have heard of me'

Completely sold the book to me. It was enough to show me what the writing and story would be like. If there's a recommendation make it a short one liner after the blurb. Or on the front cover

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w · [Bewerkt](#)



Abby Goldsmith

I did the survey. My responses were all 1 2 or 3. I did not have any 4 or 5 on there.

I guess I am a super picky reader. Also jaded.

For me, I also look at reviews on Goodreads; long ones with nuance and depth. I avoid spoilers. But I've become pretty good at figuring out if it's my cup of tea or not. If the glowing reviews are all about the prose and not about story, I will usually take a pass. And if there is talk about morally grey characters, I find that the characters are often too unlikable for me to pick it up. Things like that.

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w



Emma Diederik

Abby thanks for filling in the survey! And thank you for the little insight on your reading habits 😊

[Leuk](#) · [Beantwoorden](#) · [Delen](#) · 2 w





Fantasy-Faction - Fantasy Book Discussion



Josie MacLachlan

I completed your survey. I hope it is helpful.

I can't stand the current trend of uninformative blurbs/comments/praise! I want a paragraph or 2 outlining what the story or main character are about.

I will occasionally note if one of my favourite authors has recommended the book. But I know a lot of that is nepotism and not genuine. Most of the time they are represented by the same agent or publisher and that is why they recommend the book. So I have learned to be sceptical about those as well. 😞

So if a book does not have a "proper" blurb I have to seek out reader reviews to decide if I am interested in buying the book. It makes the purchase decision more laborious than it needs to be. I am considerably less likely to buy a book that I have to go research because it doesn't offer any kind of hint as to what it is about. If the next book has a well written informative summary I am much more likely to buy that one.

And I indicated that I read most blurbs online. That is mostly due to 2 factors. The pandemic and the fact that I live in a small town now that doesn't have a bookstore. Usually I would drive to one or two of the larger cities nearby to do book shopping. But that is not currently recommended. 🙄



Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w



Angelica Lichtner

I tried to fill it out but I realized that I couldn't as I haven't read blurbs in years as they give away 50% of the book so no point of reading the first half (more or less). I would like short ones that don't give away too much. It's hard to tell enough but not too much but a lot of books build up the story in the beginning and the "twist" or action is sometimes later but the blurb goes there right away so you know what is gonna happen and I get bored of it. So I stopped reading it and pick my books from what people recommend, covers and "books similar too" books I have already read and enjoy



Leuk · Beantwoorden · Delen · 2 w

9.6.3 Sci Fi and Fantasy Book Club



Sci fi and Fantasy Book Club



Joanna Melfka Maciejewska

Done.

Just a note: in the second part, almost none of the excerpts felt like a blurb to me. They sounded like slogans, endorsements, and review snippets. (I realize that a broader definition of a blurb includes endorsements/slogans too, but I was surprised that none of the excerpts was an actual blurb.)

Leuk · Beantwoorden · 6 w



Andrew Horton

Joanna Melfka Maciejewska I felt the same, none of the excerpts gave a short idea of the story just praise from other people. I dislike any blurb which doesn't tell me a thing about the story, it makes me think the story isn't all that good or interesting.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · 6 w



Joanna Melfka Maciejewska

Exactly. And when you think about it, I have not seen a single blurb for fiction that would not have an enticing story description. Editorial comments and endorsements were always secondary.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · 6 w · Bewerkt



Andrew Horton

Joanna Melfka Maciejewska I am not swayed by the praise because of course they are only going to put glowing reviews on, no book has ever had "well I suppose it was ok - The Guardian" on the cover.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · 6 w



Joanna Melfka Maciejewska

Andrew Horton Same here. Endorsements from media or other authors do little for me. Over-hyped books might be relatively good, but usually are a disappointment to me.

Blurb presenting the story in a clear and enticing way plus reading an excerpt of the book (to check if writing matches the promise) is how I decide.

Leuk · Beantwoorden · 6 w



Joanna Melfka Maciejewska

Emma Diederikh When I look at any fantasy or science fiction book, it looks like this: 2-4 paragraphs describing the actual story (not "enticing characters with splendid world building" but "All Frodo wants is a quiet life, but if he doesn't find a way to throw a certain ring in a volcano..." 😊).

1-2 lines with short endorsement from main media or a well-known writer ("A splendid read! Couldn't put it down / Famous Author". or "Author does it again, delivering thrilling action and deep insights into a human condition / Big Media")

All of your samples lack the first part which--I'd wager--is crucial for most SFF fans. So it looks like you actually don't have all categories, and the research seems to be ignoring the one that would probably turn out the most effective.

To me, all of your examples were the same: someone else telling me how good the book is.

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10. Learning statement

Leeds Beckett University, IULM University & Vilnius University

MA/MSc in International Communications

Postgraduate Dissertation

Word count: 1447

10.1 Approach to research

It all started as a practice research proposal as an assignment from professor Ardizzone and professor Mortara during the lectures of Research Methodology for Business back in January 2020 at the IULM University. Since I always have been interested in the publishing industry, and having previously worked there, it did not come as a surprise that I wanted to write my thesis on a communicative problem within that field. Taking in to account the international aspect of the Master, the thesis could go two ways. On one side, the research could focus on an international promotion strategy used by most publishers; blurbs and how they are promoted. On the other side, the research could focus on the ways these blurbs would affect consumers. After much debate, looking at previously conducted research and looking at the available means for this research, it was decided to go with the second approach.

When writing the research proposal, I have done a lot of brainstorming. Asking help with the brainstorming phase from classmates, family and my supervisor as to come up with the best way to structure this research ensuring the best outcome in the short amount of time I had. This resulted in a structure with a timeline in which I had to complete the research.

This timeline was then structured in specific task belonging to each phase and each task also had some subtasks. Making a global planning based on every little detail of the work that needed to be done, I started my first phase, and I am now in my final phase with little to none unexpected events.

10.2 Achieved learning

Writing this dissertation allowed me to develop myself academically. Even though I already wrote a dissertation before, this one challenged me in ways the other had not. First of all, I gained insight in linguistics. Since I have always been interested in the publishing industry, I always am eager to learn more about linguistics for professional as well as for personal development.

Secondly, I learned how to conduct a structured research. I especially struggled with writing the research methodology chapter since I did not have to write one before. I also feel like I have developed my communication skills clearly communicating myself and the problems I had to my supervisor as well as writing down specifically how I envisioned this research. And finally, I think working on this dissertation has made me critically aware of my sources, my structure and planning and my own writing.

I really liked dealing with both positive and negative feedback on my work. I really felt the meaning behind the phrase 'kill your darlings' especially in the final stages of my dissertation because of feedback I had received from my supervisor. But I feel like I learned to handle it better as time grew. In the beginning I would be very upset if one of my darlings was killed, but during the final stages I feel like I could let go better and focus on the task ahead.

The analytical approach of this research is one that I was already familiar with because of my work as a digital marketer. However, criticizing work of others or of yourself in a company setting is different than criticizing work in an academic setting. That is why I feel like I did learn more about being analytical in my work.

10.3 Views and feelings towards the dissertation

Personally, I feel positive towards my dissertation. Since the beginning I had a clear idea in my mind and people helped develop this idea to create the research that is written in this document today. Getting feedback from my peers that have no experience with the topic was very interesting since they gave me new perspectives on how to outline my writing. Even though I had to wait a long time before getting a supervisor, and thus having to write most of my proposal by myself, I do feel very positive about the supervisor experience. With my supervisor being a professor in linguistics and therefore not being a lecturer in the faculty I am studying in, also gave fresh new insights I would not have been able to get if I were to get a supervisor from my faculty in my opinion.

Despite my positive feelings towards the dissertation, there were some aspects of it that gave me negative feelings. For example, it was a challenge to keep my focus with the project, especially towards the end of the dissertation because of the minimum amount of words I had to write. Towards the end it felt like a big chore to me, instead of a really interesting research. In my opinion, the wordcount we have to uphold is way too high since I really struggled getting the right amount of wordcount, focusing more on how to get the wordcount up rather than focusing on delivering a quality dissertation.

I also felt like the communication from the dissertation committee was sometimes too late or unclear.

10.4 Practical, ethical issues/problems encountered

I encountered two practical and ethical issues during my dissertation. The first one being the lack of responses from Facebook group administrators and moderators when asking to publish my survey in their groups. The second one being the wordcount of this dissertation.

The first concern came to light during the spreading of the survey amongst the Facebook groups. For ethical purposes, administrators and moderators were asked in advance whether or not the survey could be posted in the forums as to not go against the group rules. From the five groups contacted, only three responded within three weeks of contacting. A fourth one gave permission, but only after the deadline of the survey ending. Due to this late

confirmation, the survey was not posted in this group. This results in a missed opportunity to recruit respondents for the survey.

Two weeks before the deadline, the survey had 98 participants. The goal was to get at least 100 participants to participate in the survey and the survey at that time was only posted in two of the five groups. The third administrator confirmed my request, a week before the deadline, resulting in an additional 76 participants, making the total participant count 174. So, because of the third administrator confirming, the goal for participants for the survey was met and surpassed.

Moving on to the second concern of this dissertation, this concern appeared during the final stage of writing the dissertation. Already including all the necessary paragraphs and writings needed to justify this research, the minimum wordcount was not yet met. The total wordcount was then around 13.000 words, but to meet the minimum requirements for all universities, the wordcount should be at least 15.300 words.

To resolve this issue, I reread all the text written to add any useful information. Furthermore, I asked several people not involved in this research to read my work and point out any sentences or paragraphs that may require further information or are unclear. I also took another look at my findings, trying to gain more information about the results. I also looked critically at my literature review and noticed I missed some useful background information about research on blurbs as well, so that was later added.

10.5 Perception of current and future value of dissertation

In my personal opinion, the dissertation does help develop analytical capabilities and it provides new insight on an academic level. However, I do not feel like writing a dissertation really helped me developed myself as a Master student. Yes, the dissertation helps you discover how to write academically, but in my opinion, this is a niche in the field. Personally, I do not feel like being an academic researcher in the communications field. And therefore, did not really see the value of the dissertation.

In my opinion, it might be better to test progress of student by actually giving them field experience. For example, they could help the universities with a current communication problem as to showcase their learnings instead of a dissertation. In this way, they master students get to take their learnings into practice and develop themselves more within the field.

This year was the first year were an internship was not mandatory, but I feel like that has been a mistake since you actually get to practice what you learn in the master at your internship.

In general, I feel like I did not get as much out of the dissertation than I got out of doing the project for IKEA.