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Book Lovers, Bibliophiles, and Fetishists: The Social Benefits of Heavy Book Usage

Johannes Kaiser and Thorsten Quandt
University of Münster

This study examines the motivation behind heavy book usage, which is a rarely researched form of extreme media usage. In this study, we develop an explanatory model for the phenomenon of heavy book usage by focusing not only on the immediate gratification of needs through the reading of a book (e.g., entertainment) but also on the motivation to use books for symbolic communication in social interaction. As a result, our model of heavy book usage includes several social benefits that are offered by books including the opportunity to express one's identity through the visible possession of books. To test this model, 613 heavy book users in Germany with varying sociodemographic backgrounds participated in online and offline surveys. Two multiple regression models show that both reading at a heavy level and the possession of large numbers of books can be explained by the need to express oneself in symbolic communication, whereas the motivation to gratify needs such as entertainment or relaxation does not lend itself to this explanation. A cluster analysis including personality traits indicates that different types of heavy book user use distinct patterns of communication via books. The results imply that book usage is more than simply spending time in the individual activity of reading; rather, books can help heavy book users to express their identity in social interaction.

Keywords: heavy book usage, social benefits, groups, emotional attachment, symbolic communication

Research on extreme media usage has focused mainly on the heavy usage of electronic and digital media devices such as TV (McIlwraith, Jacobvitz, Kubey, & Alexander, 1991; Sussman & Moran, 2013) or extensive video game usage (Festl, Scharkow, & Quandt, 2013), but not on heavy book usage. In research on extreme media usage, the humble book seems to have been ignored in favor of contemporary digital media, although there are large numbers

of heavy book users in existence. For example, a representative study in Germany showed that three percent of Germans (about 2.5 million people) were heavy book users, which is defined in this study as people who read at least 18 books a year (German Publishers & Booksellers Association, 2008).

Although psychological research on normal book usage does exist, this focuses mainly on the psychological processes of understanding texts (Rayner, Pollatsek, Ashby, & Clifton, 2012) or reading abilities (Bayliss, Jarrold, Baddeley, & Leigh, 2005; Paris, 2005). Studies on motivational reasons behind book usage are rare; the few available studies mainly interpreted book usage as a form of individual content consumption to gratify needs like pleasure (Nell, 1988). An implicit picture has been drawn of a stay-at-home book user who reads just for the hedonic moment. Of course, the direct gratification of needs is a major function of media usage in general (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), but we suggest that heavy book usage can also confer social benefits un-

Johannes Kaiser and Thorsten Quandt, Department of Communication, University of Münster.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Johannes Kaiser, Department of Communication, University of Münster, Bispinghof 9-14, 48143 Münster, Germany. E-mail: info@johannes-kaiser.net

related to the direct act of reading or content consumption. One example is the prominent positioning of bookshelves in the living room where they are on display for visitors. Here, books can serve to tell visitors a story about the host's personality and interests in a symbolic manner. Another example of the social value offered by books is reading in public. As Watzlawick pointed out, it is impossible not to communicate when other people are around (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 2011). Even if a person just sits in a café with an intellectual book about contemporary arts next to him, this can send a message to the other coffee drinkers, for example, "Look, I am interested in the arts."

We therefore suggest that heavy book usage is also motivated by social benefits including symbolic communication and self-expression. To test this hypothesis, we have developed a model of heavy book usage that brings together the media-related and socially related motives behind heavy book usage. We then test this model statistically with data obtained from online and offline surveys completed by 613 heavy book users.

Literature Review

The only explicit research on heavy book usage is research into the idea of bibliophilia. In this field, the criterion for being a bibliophile has been merely defined as collecting books (Basbane, 1995; Eco, 2009). In addition, this literature lacks objectivity. For example, Mühlbrecht (1898) and Willms (1978) described bibliophilia in relation to a fascination with outstanding personalities who collect books (Bielschowsky, 1980). The works of Bogeng (1968) and von Lucius (2000) are manuals with instructions on how to be a bibliophile or the best way to collect books. These publications offered no empirical proof for the motivations behind heavy book usage.

Whereas there is a lack of empirical research into heavy book usage, normal book usage is well researched in media psychology. One line of investigation has been the average time spent on reading in comparison with other media activities. In the Netherlands, for example, leisure reading has significantly declined over the past 40 years and is mainly substituted for by watching TV (Knulst & Kraaykamp, 1998). In Sweden, the number of book readers has also de-

clined since the 1970s, but, interestingly, people who do read nowadays spend more time in reading (Johnsson-Smaragdi & Jönsson, 2006). Another research branch focused on the relationship between emotions and reading books. For example, Mar, Oatley, Djikic, and Mullin (2011) discussed the influence of emotions on book selection according to mood management theory (Zillmann, 1988) as well as explored the emotions that are evoked during reading including empathy and identification, and possible emotional outcomes, for example, changes in cognitive processing after reading. Another study found that the emotional changes evoked by reading fiction under laboratory conditions mediate changes in personality (Djikic, Oatley, Zoeterman, & Peterson, 2009). However, it is unclear whether this effect remains for a long period of time.

The research literature also illustrates the fact that social perspectives on book usage are rarely discussed. However, a few steps in this direction have been taken. For example, Schutte and Malouff (2004) examined reading preferences and motivations using Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory. The authors applied the theory's distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to the field of book usage and operationalized the extrinsic factor as constraints or rewards by the social environment. However, their results showed only that pleasure-oriented intrinsic motivation predicts reading, but the theoretic idea that book usage could also be motivated through an orientation to the social environment has been brought into literature. In another study, Mar and Oatley (2008) looked into the social aspects of book usage. They argue that the function of fiction is composed of more than entertaining the reader because the presented simulations of the social world in books can facilitate empathy, the understanding of others, and general social ability. This argument was strengthened by a study showing that lifetime exposure to fictional texts is positively related to social ability, whereas exposure to nonfictional texts did not show this relation (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, de la Paz, & Peterson, 2006).

However, although the ideas presented here give some initial reference points that take the social benefits of heavy book usage into account, the research literature still lacks any theoretical or empirical investigations into how

books can be used for symbolic communication and self-expression in social interaction. To remedy this, we have developed an explanatory model of the motivations behind heavy book usage that includes benefits both from reading (the reception of the book) and from the symbolic value of books.

Theory

When talking about heavy book usage, the first question should be to define what constitutes a heavy book user. The only relevant reference point in the literature for Germany is a result given by a representative study by the German Publishers and Booksellers Association (2008). In this study, every participant who read 18 or more books a year in his or her free time (i.e., not for work purposes) was classified as a heavy reader. However, we believe reading is not the only possible form of book use. Owning a book without reading it can be seen as a second type of book usage. As Ahuvia (2005) and Belk (1988) pointed out, the possession of products can be used to express the self through symbolic communication and is also a relevant dimension of consumption. In addition, collecting books without reading them can be a passionately maintained hobby like stamp collecting. For this reason, we take book possession into account in our definition of heavy book usage. To define heavy possession of books, we developed a criterion in which all people who own at least 120 books are classified as heavy book possessors. This is the equivalent of buying one book a month over 10 years. The limit of 10 years is relevant for our criterion because a longer period would exclude young book owners, who would not have enough time to accumulate a sufficient number of books. Consequently, in our study, heavy book users are defined as people who read at least 18 books a year in their free time, or who own 120 books or more. We are well aware of the possible limitations to this newly developed criterion. However, our results show that the possession of books by heavy book users is on average considerably higher than our criterion. This indicates that threshold of 120 books may be too conservative. However, on balance, we believe this to be a minor problem, because it prevented that relevant parts of the special group we

wanted to reach were excluded through setting too high a threshold.

Two Kinds of Motivation for Heavy Book Usage: Use and Fetish Values

We suggest that heavy book users have different motivations for using books, reflecting the different values that books offer. One kind of value is the opportunity to gratify needs directly by consuming book content. For example, the need for entertainment can be gratified by reading a novel. When a person is reading a story, his or her need for entertainment can be gratified immediately. As this kind of value is media related and obtained within the situation of reception (i.e., while reading a book), we call this the *use value* offered by books. In media research, a popular concept for dealing with use values is the uses and gratifications approach (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). This approach identified a number of central needs, which can be gratified directly through media consumption: learning (Perse, 1990); escapism (Rubin, 1983); entertainment (Rubin, 1983); passing time (Perse, 1990); and relaxation (Rubin, 1983). All these have in common that they can be gratified through individual usage of the book. In other words, to relax through reading, all that is required is the book and the book user.

However, we argue that heavy book users have additional motives to the direct benefits received during the reception. Books, as with any kind of commodity, also have social value, which can function as a symbol within social interaction (Koch & Elmore, 2006). When a person leaves a book shop carrying a bag with the shop's imprint and walks through the city, everyone can see that this person is a reader. Here, books offer a social value for self-presentation. This value is not obtained through the reception of the book but through visible possession. The distinction between the use values of products, which are obtained through direct consumption, and their social values was first discussed by Karl Marx (1867/1952) in *Das Kapital*. He called these social values the *fetish values* of commodities, because this value is independent of the use value of products and gains its importance through social exchange (Marx, 1867/1952). Although we agree with the Marxian definition that the "use value of objects is realized . . . by means of a direct relation

between the objects and man,” that is, by the consumption of a commodity (Marx, 1867/1952, p. 37), we modify the definition of fetish value. Marx believed that fetish values can only be realized through the social process of commodity exchange, whereas we define the fetish values of books in a broader way, as general values not related to the situation of reception but, for example, related to the social environment. In concrete terms, one fetish value of books could be the opportunity to express identity within social situations through symbolic possession (Belk, 1988). In the sense of “we are what we have” (Belk, 1988, p. 160), products can tell others about one’s identity. However, using a product in public does not necessarily mean that someone is motivated to communicate symbolically through that product. For example, eating fast food in the city center can be a social act transmitting unintended symbolic communication. Nevertheless, evidence for using products explicitly for their symbolic value can be found. From a psychological perspective, book possession, as with the possession of any other product, can symbolically support a coherent self-narrative, which encourages stable psychological well-being (Ahuvia, 2005). The theory of symbolic self-completion put forward by Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) also showed the importance of symbols to express identity. Following this theory, self-directed goals that have not been achieved can be compensated for through the acquisition of symbols that represent the achievement of that

goal. This compensatory behavior is explicitly more effective for the self when other people recognize these acquired symbols (Gollwitzer, Bayer, & Wicklund, 2002). With regard to self-integrity, Sivanathan and Pettit (2010) also showed that visible possession of high status goods can help people overcome aversive psychological states, such as exclusion or powerlessness.

All these arguments indicate that books may offer additional benefits, which are not directly achieved within the situation of reception. They have effects beyond this situation, for example, in social interaction. We call these effects the indirect benefits of heavy book usage or the fetish values of books. Accordingly, we propose a model that brings together both use values and fetish values to explain the motivations behind heavy book usage (see Figure 1).

Social Fetish Values: Integration and Differentiation

We distinguish four types of fetish value, three of which are social values and one of value only to the individual. Books can be useful for integration within a social group, for example, to have a say in the group. At the same time, books enable their users to differentiate themselves within their own social group, for example, by being an expert on novels. Books also allow their users to differentiate themselves from out-groups, that is,

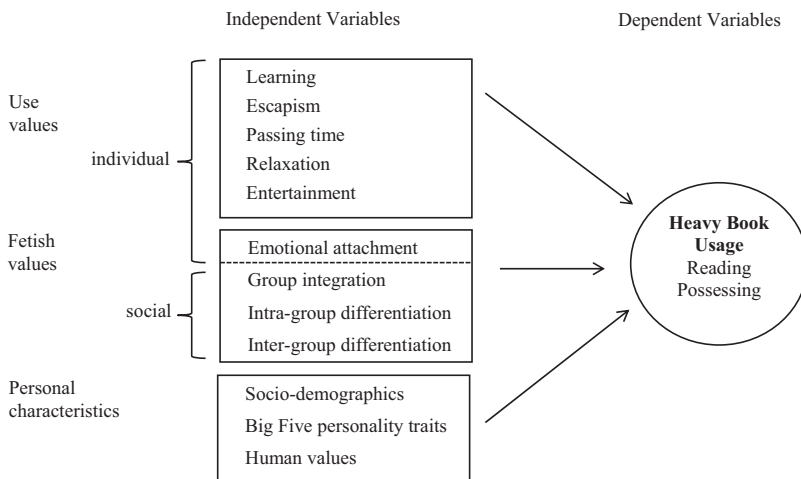


Figure 1. Model of heavy book usage.

groups to which they do not belong. In this way, a member of the group of heavy book users can distinguish him or herself from the group of TV viewers, athletes, or musicians, for example. The idea of social integration and differentiation through products is based on the work of Georg Simmel (1904), which addressed the logic of fashion. He distinguished between two central social principles in society: imitation and differentiation. On the one hand, people want to feel they belong to a group and therefore imitate others; on the other hand, they want to preserve their individuality. According to Simmel, fashion can fulfill this function; perhaps books can do the same. Djelic and Ainamo (2005) applied Simmel's concept to mobile phones and supported the usefulness of this approach for media products. The general relevance of symbols for group processes, which may include media products, was also well described in social psychology (Cottrell, 1942; Ledgerwood, Liviatan, & Carnevale, 2007) and consumer research (Ahuvia, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Another relevant concept, which should be taken into account for group processes, is Tajfel's (1970) distinction between in-groups (groups to which a person belongs) and out-groups (groups with which a person does not identify him or herself). This distinction is relevant because differentiation can occur regarding both. In line with these ideas, we define three fetish values within the social dimension, which are relevant for the prediction of heavy book usage.

Group integration. A person orientates himself toward receiving a social fetish value in his personal environment through heavy book usage. This fetish value is used to maintain intergroup similarities and integration in one's own social group (in-group).

Intragroup differentiation. This describes the orientation of a person to obtain a social fetish value in his personal environment through heavy book usage. This fetish value is used to differentiate one's individuality from other members of one's own group (in-group).

Intergroup differentiation. This describes motivation to receive a social fetish value outside of one's personal environment through heavy book usage. This fetish value is used to differentiate one's individuality from those

groups of which one is not a member (out-groups).

Individual Fetish Value: Emotional Attachment

In addition to these social fetish values, we outline the importance of an individual fetish value that explains heavy book usage: emotional attachment to books, which offers the opportunity for the personal regulation of emotions and psychological well-being (Bowlby, 1980). This value is not related to the social environment, but is rather a relationship between the individual person and his book(s). Although some of the use values mentioned earlier can also help to regulate emotion, for example, entertainment in terms of mood management (Zillmann, 1988), the difference here is that mood management is a direct consequence of the consumption of media content, whereas emotional attachment can also be effective without the physical presence of the attached object (Bowlby, 1980), for example, a book collector who thinks about the books he owns as a means to cope with a stressful situation, by psychological recollection of the attached object. The concept of emotional attachment developed by Bowlby (1980) assumes that in stressful situations people seek psychological and physical help from their attachment objects. Emotional attachment is usually established in relation to other people, for example, one's mother. However, Thomson, MacInnis, and Whan Park (2005) argued that emotional attachment can also be formed with products and brands. Turner and Turner (2013) showed that the intensity of emotional attachment is similar to the user's attraction to digital and nondigital artifacts. Read, Robertson, and McQuilken (2011) empirically analyzed the concept of emotional attachment for books and e-readers as media products. The authors demonstrated that emotional attachment toward printed books is a significant negative predictor for the use of e-readers. We anticipate that emotional attachment, as an individual and self-related fetish value, is a particularly relevant factor for predicting heavy book usage because it implies a strong relationship between the object and the user. In addition to the use value of media products, emotional attachment toward a media product can help a person stabilize himself and

therefore it functions as a tool to avoid distress, even if the object is not used directly (Bowlby, 1980).

Personal Characteristics

In addition to the use and fetish values of books, there is another relevant group of variables, which is important for the prediction of heavy book usage: namely, personal characteristics. Above all, sociodemographics such as gender, age, education, and income can explain the use of media (Van Rees & Van Eijck, 2003). Hence, these characteristics are also included in our model of heavy book usage. Furthermore, personality traits influence media usage. Finn (1997), for example, demonstrated that the Big Five personality factors (for a detailed overview see Costa & McCrae, 1992) are relevant predictors for the usage of TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, books, and movies. In Finn's study, reading for pleasure had a significant association with lower extraversion and greater openness. Rentfrow, Goldberg, and Zilca (2011) also found significant correlations between different personality traits and preference for various overall media genres. As a result, our model also includes the Big Five personality traits. Human values, such as hedonism or self-direction, form another crucial aspect to the explanation of heavy book usage. Such values are desirable goals for people and serve them as superordinate criteria to develop attitudes and behavior toward objects (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). As to Schwartz (1996), human values explain different kinds of behavior, for example, cooperative behavior or election behavior. In terms of media usage, human values have been observed with regard to political values or ideologies around the concept of selective exposure (Stroud, 2008) or based on Inglehart's (1979) differentiation between materialism and postmaterialism (Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). However, no empirical research has been carried out on the concept of human values for the explanation of heavy media usage. This study aims to find out whether human values can also explain heavy book usage.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Before testing our exploratory model of heavy book usage (see Figure 1), we take an

exploratory look at the identity of 21st century heavy book users in terms of sociodemographics, personality traits, human values, and the motivation to benefit from the use and fetish values of books.

RQ1: Who are heavy book users and how do they differ from the average population?

According to our model of heavy book usage, two hypotheses will be tested. As we added the dimension of fetish value to literature, our purpose is to examine whether these fetish values are predictors in terms of the strength of heavy book usage:

H1: Fetish values explain the strength of reading books for heavy book users.

H2: Fetish values explain the strength of possessing books for heavy book users.

We then use cluster analysis to identify different types of heavy book user and to explore the relationship between personality and the motivation for using books to achieve benefits outside the situation of consumption (fetish values). This is necessary for a better understanding of the way in which fetish values function for heavy book users.

RQ2: Which types of heavy book user exist with regard to personality and fetish values?

Method

Sampling

We conducted both online and offline surveys to test our hypotheses. The purpose of our study was to reach only that special group, which we defined as heavy book users. Thus, a randomly drawn representative sample of the German population was not absolutely necessary. To reach that special group, we made the questionnaire available between August and October in 2013 via different channels that we thought would reach heavy book users. Advertising flyers for the survey were distributed in 32 book shops in Western and Eastern Germany. The link to the online questionnaire was posted on several book-related forums and Facebook groups. We also conducted two surveys by means of a printed version of the online questionnaire. One of these surveys was carried out at a meeting of German book bloggers at the beginning of September 2013; the second took place in the public library of Münster during four days in September 2013. To check whether

or not the participants were heavy book users, the first two questions of the survey were about the reading and possessing behavior of the respondents. If a participant did not fit the criteria, he or she was redirected to a short survey asking why they did not read many books. Although this was not a random sample, the characteristics of our sample paralleled the sample of heavy book users in the study by the German Publishers and Booksellers Association (2008), as shown in the results.

Measures

Reading and possessing. Participants were asked to give the number of books they had read in the past 12 months and the number of books they owned in the following literary genres: nonfiction books, biographies, guidebooks, classics, detective fiction, historical novels, romance novels, fantasy and science fiction novels, modern literature (i.e., literature excluding detective fiction, historical, romance, fantasy, and science fiction novels), and others.

Sociodemographics. Gender and age were measured as is customary in social sciences. Education and income were measured using quasi-metrical categories in a seven-step scale ranging from 1 (*without school graduation*) to 7 (*PhD*), and in a five-step scale from 1 (*below €10,000*) to 5 (*more than €70,000*).

Personality. For the Big Five personality traits, we used a measurement adapted from Rammstedt et al. (2012), who translated and validated a German version of the Big Five traits ("Big-Five-Inventory-10") consisting of 10 short phrase items rated on a five-step scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Human values. To examine the role of human values, we used 10 items from Schmidt, Bamberg, Davidov, Herrmann, and Schwartz (2007), who translated the internationally used and validated human value scale (Schwartz et al., 2001) into German. Although the human value scale consists of 21 items with two items for each value (except for universalism, which is measured by three items), we selected one item for each of the 10 human values to shorten the questionnaire and to avoid the likelihood of uncompleted questionnaires. We changed the scale from 1 (*very much like me*) to 6 (*not like me at all*) to the opposite to make the scale consistent with other scales in our question-

naire, which range from negative to positive. The scale was recoded for our examination.

Use values. To measure use values, we adapted five items from three different sources: learning and passing time, from Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985); relaxation, from Conway and Rubin (1991); and escapism and entertainment, from Rubin and Perse (1987). These items were measured using a five-step scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). To avoid linguistic bias, both the translation and the retranslation of the items were carried out by two independent German and English experts who had no connection with the research project.

Emotional attachment. Emotional attachment to books was measured by the scale created by Thomson et al. (2005). It includes items such as "I feel passionate about my books" or "I feel delighted about my books." For each scale, respondents indicated their agreement with statements across five response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). We also applied the translation and retranslation method described above for this scale ($\alpha = .90$).

Group integration. We developed a three-item scale measuring the respondents' group integration ($\alpha = .62$). It included the following items: "I read, because my acquaintances read," "While buying new books I follow my acquaintances' recommendations," and "I read in order to participate in my acquaintances' conversations."

Intragroup differentiation. To measure the intragroup differentiation, we developed a six-item scale ($\alpha = .77$). It included the following statements: "I read more than the majority of my acquaintances," "I'm used to recommending books to my acquaintances," "I inform my acquaintances which books I read and which books I own," "I like being considered a bookworm by my acquaintances," "I keep my favorite books and novels I have recently read where they can be easily spotted by visitors," and "I have a trusted bookseller who knows my literary preferences."

Intergroup differentiation. A five-item scale measured the intergroup differentiation of respondents as readers ($\alpha = .64$). It included the following statements: "The vast majority of people read too little quality literature," "In bookstores I tend to talk about the books I read and about my reading plans," "My books make me different from other people," "I show up in public (e.g., in parks, libraries, cafés) reading

books,” and “Even strangers should know how much of a reader I am.”

To measure group integration, intragroup differentiation, and intergroup differentiation, the applied five-step scales ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Even where Cronbach’s alpha for group integration and intergroup differentiation is low, we believe these scales are suitable for our purpose, that is, to examine heavy book users in a quantitative manner for the first time in the research literature. This is first because Cronbach’s alpha systematically underestimates reliabilities of scales with fewer items (Cortina, 1993) and second because the requirements of Cronbach’s α are less rigorous in the context of an exploratory study (Nunnally, 1978). All measures were examined in a pretest, which was conducted as an online survey with students from communication courses a month before the actual study ($n = 33$). Based on the evaluation of the participants, we modified the scales for reading and possessing and optimized the items for our developed scales for intragroup and intergroup differentiation.

Results

Sample and RQ1

To answer the question about the characteristics of heavy book users (RQ1), we now pres-

ent descriptive data regarding their sociodemographic characteristics, personality traits, book usage, and motivations for using books, comparing these with the general German population. Our sample includes >600 heavy book users ($n = 613$). In comparison with the representative 2011 census of the Federal Statistical Office (2011), the sample differs in gender, age, and education from the general German population. However, in comparison with the representative study of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association (2008), which also identified heavy book users as people who read more than 18 books a year, our data are approximately equal (see Table 1).

Heavy book users not only differ from the general German population in sociodemographic characteristics but also in their human values. As Table 2 shows, heavy book users have significantly different scores in all human values except power. The scale ranges from 1 = *is very much like me* to 6 = *not like me at all*, implying that lower mean scores indicate higher human values. The biggest differences are significantly lower human values in tradition, security, and conformity.

The scores for the Big Five personality traits (see Table 3) also indicate differences regarding personality between heavy book users and the general German population. All five factors differ significantly. The heavy book user is less

Table 1
Sample Distribution in Comparison to the 2011 German Census and the Representative Study of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association (2008)

Sociodemographic characteristic	2011 Census	Sample	Publisher’s study (2008)
Gender			
Female	49	79	67
Male	51	21	33
Age			
Under 18	16	6	
18–24	8	27	Imprecise specification “69% between 30 and 59 years”
25–29	6	24	
30–39	12	18	
40–49	17	12	
50–64	20	10	
65 and older	20	2	
Education			
University degree	15	40	60

Note. All values are in rounded percentages.

Table 2
Human Values—Comparison of Sample and General German Population

Human value	Heavy book users	General German population	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Universalism**	2.07 (1.08)	1.94 (.97)	.14
Security***	3.04 (1.21)	2.38 (1.20)	.55
Self-direction*	1.97 (.98)	1.88 (.94)	.09
Benevolence***	2.44 (1.10)	1.96 (.84)	.55
Achievement**	3.04 (1.32)	2.87 (1.23)	.13
Stimulation***	3.97 (1.24)	4.18 (1.39)	-.16
Conformity***	3.42 (1.31)	2.86 (1.28)	.43
Power	3.38 (1.13)	3.31 (1.30)	.05
Tradition***	4.01 (1.41)	2.86 (1.40)	.89
Hedonism***	3.34 (1.22)	3.05 (1.33)	.22

Note. For comparison, we used the data from the European Social Survey (2012) Round 6 for Germany, $n = 2958$. Scale from 1 (*very much like me*) to 6 (*not like me at all*). All values without parenthesis in the first columns are means. Values in parenthesis indicate standard deviations. Values in the last column indicate Cohen's *d*.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

extraverted but more open to new experiences, for example.

We now look deeper into the book usage of our sample. In the sample, the average heavy book user reads 48 ($SD = 45$) books a year and possesses 643 ($SD = 1236$) books, $r = .19, p < .001$. However, gender differences are visible. Women read significantly more books than men ($M_{\text{women}} = 50, SD_{\text{women}} = 47, M_{\text{men}} = 37, SD_{\text{men}} = 31, t(540) = 3.67, p < .001$, Cohen's

Table 3
Big Five Personality Traits—Comparison of Sample and General German Population

Big Five	Heavy book users	General German population	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Extraversion***	3.11 (.97)	3.47 (.95)	-.38
Agreeableness***	3.23 (.76)	3.45 (.80)	-.28
Conscientiousness***	3.53 (.79)	4.15 (.79)	-.79
Neuroticism***	2.85 (.89)	2.42 (.88)	.49
Openness to experience***	3.99 (.79)	3.41 (.93)	.65

Note. For comparison, we used the representative data from Rammstedt et al. (2012) with $n = 1,134$. Scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). All values without parenthesis in the first columns are means. Values in parenthesis indicate standard deviations. Values in the last column indicate Cohen's *d*.

*** $p < .001$.

$d = .29$), whereas men possess significantly more books than women ($M_{\text{women}} = 475, SD_{\text{women}} = 682, M_{\text{men}} = 1206, SD_{\text{men}} = 2141, t(541) = -3.57, p = .001$, Cohen's $d = -.64$). Regarding the motivations of heavy book users, the use values of books are highly rated, especially relaxation and entertainment (see Table 4). Table 5 shows that the fetish values are also high, with the exception of group integration. This gives us an initial descriptive picture of the personality and motivation of heavy book users. In the next step, we test which of these factors is best able to explain the strength of heavy book usage.

H1: Book Fetish and Reading Books

To show whether our model for heavy book usage explains the strength of heavy reading, especially with regard to the fetish values (H1), the regression model included the following predictor variables: age, gender, education, income, human values (universalism, security, self-direction, benevolence, achievement, stimulation, conformity, power, tradition, hedonism), Big Five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience), use values (learning, passing time, escapism, entertainment, relaxation), and fetish values (emotional attachment, group integration, intragroup differentiation, intergroup differentiation). All predictors were simultaneously included in the regression. A test for multicollinearity revealed acceptable values for tolerance: $.41 < \textit{tolerance} < .82$; and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF): $1.21 < \textit{VIF} < 2.46$. The model itself is significant ($p = .008$) and accounts for 15% of variance in reading many books (see Table 6). There are only two significant predictors for reading many books. The first is age; older heavy book users read

Table 4
Use Values

Use value	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Learning	3.61 (1.18)
Escapism	3.68 (1.28)
Passing time	3.47 (1.27)
Relaxation	4.50 (.83)
Entertainment	4.65 (.66)

Note. Scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Table 5
Fetish Values

Fetish value	<i>M (SD)</i>
Emotional attachment	3.95 (.80)
Group integration	1.90 (.66)
Intragroup differentiation	3.10 (.79)
Intergroup differentiation	3.40 (.84)

Note. Scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

more books than younger ones. The second significant predictor is intragroup differentiation, which has a similar positive association with reading many books. Therefore, the fetish value of books, that is, the opportunity to differentiate one's identity within one's specific social group, can explain why people read very large numbers of books.

H2: Book Fetish and Book Possession

To test the hypothesis that the number of books owned can be explained by our model of heavy book usage, in particular by the established fetish values (H2), the regression model included the same predictor variables as the model for reading many books. A test for multicollinearity showed acceptable values for *tolerance*: $.41 < tolerance < .82$; and *VIF*: $1.21 < VIF < 2.46$ as well. This model is also significant ($p < .001$) and accounts for 36% of variance in possessing many books (see Table 7). Age is a very strong positive predictor, and there is a negative relation between owning many books and the gratification of learning from books. The more books a person owns, the less he or she is interested in learning from them. The negative association between possessing many books and the personality trait of extraversion shows that the less extraverted one

Table 6
Multiple Regression: Predictors for Strength of Reading Books

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Constant	-12.62	48.39	
Age	1.15	0.37	.27**
Intragroup differentiation	18.5	4.98	.31****

Note. $R^2 = .15$; adjusted $R^2 = .7$.
** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

Table 7
Multiple Regression: Predictors for Strength of Possessing Books

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Constant	-2249.08	1050.73	
Age	40.74	8.0	.38****
Extraversion	-191.33	74.41	-.15*
Gratification: Learning	-153.04	56.84	-.15**
Emotional attachment	325.01	90.72	.21****
Intergroup differentiation	287.77	106.79	.19****

Note. $R^2 = .36$, adjusted $R^2 = .30$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

is, the more books one owns. The possession of a large number of books can also be explained by two fetish values: emotional attachment to books and intergroup differentiation. The stronger the emotional attachment to books, the more books people possess. The fetish value of book usage for differentiating oneself from other social groups explains the heavy possession of books. Having shown that fetish values are relevant predictors for heavy book usage, we now explore how these fetish values are related to personality. This is necessary for a better understanding of the way in which fetish values function for the user.

RQ2: Relation Between Personality and Fetish Values: Different Types of Book Fetishist

With a hierarchical cluster analysis including the Big Five personality traits and the fetish motivations, we identified three clusters that support the findings from the regression. In addition to the finding that the fetish values of books explained why some people read and own books extensively (H1 and H2), the clusters show that there are different types of book fetishist with regard to the Big Five personality traits (see Table 8). The three clusters differ significantly for all included variables with the exception of agreeableness. We will look at these in more detail in the following discussion.

Discussion

RQ1: The Heavy Book User in the Twenty-First Century

Books are one of the oldest mass media of modern society and, as with other media such as

Table 8
Types of Book Fetishist

Variable	Compensating book fetishist ($n = 169$)	Sociable book fetishist ($n = 146$)	Nonfetishist ($n = 182$)
Fetish values			
Emotional attachment***	+	+	--
Group integration***			
Intragroup differentiation***	+	++	--
Intergroup differentiation***	+	+	--
Big Five personality traits			
Extraversion***	--	++	-
Agreeableness			
Conscientiousness***	-	+	
Neuroticism***	+	--	
Openness to experience***		+	

Note. Content of cells indicate the cluster's mean deviations from the overall mean: +/- = 0.2 *SD*, ++/- -- = 0.4 *SD*.

*** $p < .001$.

TV or video games, can be objects of extreme media usage. Nonetheless, little is known about heavy book users. The descriptive data presented in the results draw a more complex picture about today's heavy book users than the simple stereotype of a traditional, intellectual, shy, and self-directed book user sitting alone at home reading through the night with the lights on under the bedspread. Even if our data do not depend on a representative sample, our findings suggest some new information on 21st century heavy book users. First, heavy book users are more likely to be female and differ widely in age. Second, in terms of human values, heavy book users tend to be progressive. It is interesting that books, the oldest form of mass media, are not the preserve of traditionalists. Third, and in regard to personality, the heavy book user seems to be less conscientious than the general German population. In summary, it is hard to fit the heavy book user of the 21st century into a single stereotype.

H1 + H2: Fetish Values as Predictors for Heavy Book Usage

While the descriptive data show who heavy book users are, the two regression models explain differences in the strength of heavy book usage. In both models, use values are not able to explain heavy reading and possessing of a large number of books, whereas fetish values can explain this phenomenon. Thus, H1 and H2 can be supported. This implies that heavy book users

are a unique kind of usage, which is also motivated by indirect benefits outside of the situation of media reception, especially social advantages.

The strongest predictor within the model for explaining the reading of books is a fetish value, namely, the opportunity to achieve intragroup differentiation through books (see Table 6). It seems that people read books to define their identity (e.g., as bookworm) in contrast to their own social group. Heavy readers may try to obtain an expert role in terms of books within their close social environment. The expertise of group members is well-known in social psychology and functions as an important mechanism for the development of social status within groups (Thomas-Hunt, Ogden, & Neale, 2003). Heavy readers may like to be asked for advice and book references by other group members. In this way, they can also display their general knowledge, which they achieve by reading books.

In our first regression, reading is associated with intragroup differentiation, whereas possessing books is associated with intergroup differentiation, as the second regression shows (see Table 7). Intergroup differentiation aims at the expression of one's identity compared with other social groups, for example, athletes, musicians, and TV viewers. In line with the fact that possessing books is related to lower extraversion, this could be interpreted as differentiation through symbolic communication, for ex-

ample, sitting in a public park on a bench with an intellectual book next to you. Book possession, therefore, may serve as a compensatory device for less sociable people. They may use books to express their identity toward other social groups. Our cluster analysis seems to support this interpretation (see RQ2). After the fetish value of intergroup differentiation, emotional attachment also predicts the possession of many books. As mentioned above, this fetish value is not a social one. Emotional attachment toward books probably offers emotional support and may help people to cope with stressful situations (Bowlby, 1980). For example, failures at work or in social relationships could be overcome by a psychological recollection of the attachment object. Hence, possessing books may be used as a kind of coping strategy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), like religion, for example (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). Notably, Marx also saw the fetish values of commodities as a quasi-religious function (Marx, 1867/1952).

In summary, our model serves as an explanation for heavy book usage. Most facets of the model (sociodemographics, Big Five personality traits, and fetish values) are significant predictors of heavy book usage. Interestingly, different fetish values seem to be relevant for different kinds of heavy book usage. To achieve benefits in one's own social group (intragroup differentiation), it is probably necessary to read books, because a person must demonstrate knowledge to be perceived as a book expert. Therefore, direct communication with other group members is essential. In contrast, for intergroup differentiation, it is not necessary to talk with members of other groups. Here the mere possession of books seems to serve as a symbol to differentiate oneself from other groups.

RQ2: Relations Between Personality Traits and the Fetish Values of Heavy Book Users

The use of books for symbolic communication also seems to be visible in the data of our cluster analysis. Regarding the Big Five personality traits and fetish motivations, we find three types of heavy book user (see Table 8) and every cluster may imply another form of heavy book usage. Please note that this cluster analysis is exploratory. Therefore, the following inter-

pretation of the clusters is merely suggested by the findings and not proven directly.

The compensating book fetishist. In comparison with the entire sample, people in the first cluster are more shy, less confident ($M_{\text{neuroticism}} = 3.27$), and less extroverted ($M_{\text{extraversion}} = 2.71$). However, they have a desire to express their individuality and try to differentiate themselves ($M_{\text{intragroup differentiation}} = 3.75$; $M_{\text{intergroup differentiation}} = 3.44$). In addition, they use books as attachment objects ($M_{\text{emotional attachment}} = 4.3$). We assume it is hard for the compensating book fetishist to express his or her identity directly in social situations, for example, when talking face-to-face. Nevertheless, he or she also has the need to express his or her individuality. This type, therefore, uses the fetish values of books, which can compensate lack of sociability by allowing self-expression through symbolic communication, for example, sitting in a public park on a bench with an intellectual book. This interpretation is congruent with the theory of symbolic self-completion, which claimed that failure to achieve self-directed goals can be compensated for through alternative symbols (Gollwitzer, Bayer, & Wicklund, 2002). The fact that media in particular can serve to compensate for low extraversion was also emphasized by Desjarlais and Willoughby (2010) in a study on the use of computers by adolescents.

The sociable book fetishist. People in the second cluster also use books in terms of fetish values, namely for emotional attachment ($M_{\text{emotional attachment}} = 4.27$), to differentiate their own identity within their own social group ($M_{\text{intragroup differentiation}} = 3.96$), and to differentiate themselves from other social groups ($M_{\text{intergroup differentiation}} = 3.49$). In contrast to the first cluster, this type is more open to new experiences ($M_{\text{openness}} = 4.26$), very extroverted ($M_{\text{extraversion}} = 3.89$), conscientious ($M_{\text{conscientiousness}} = 3.95$), and less neurotic ($M_{\text{neuroticism}} = 2.26$). These people do not use the fetish values of books for compensation but rather for the reinforcement of their pronounced sociability. Interestingly, the sociable book fetishist shows the highest motivation for intragroup differentiation. We speculate that these users may be able to express identity directly through face-to-face-communication, which normally occurs in their specific social group. We suppose that identity is here defined as being a heavy book

user and that the fetish value of books reinforces the expression of this individuality, for example, by using books as topics for communication in face-to-face-situations. Thus, this type probably presents him or herself as a heavy book user to generate social benefits.

The nonfetishist. Compared with compensating and sociable book fetishists, people in the third cluster are characterized by a lower motivation to derive benefit from the fetish values of books ($M_{\text{emotional attachment}} = 3.43$, $M_{\text{group integration}} = 1.61$, $M_{\text{intragroup differentiation}} = 2.69$, $M_{\text{intergroup differentiation}} = 2.41$). In comparison with the mean scores of the entire sample, this group does not show any special values with regard to the Big Five personality traits, except for a lower extraversion ($M_{\text{extraversion}} = 2.9$). Because of that, we are unable to explain this cluster in greater detail. However, it shows that some heavy book users are less interested in making use of the fetish values of books. In general, however, the analysis of the relation between personality and fetish values indicates that the fetish values of books can be used in different ways: to compensate or to reinforce one's personality.

Conclusion

The differentiation between use values and fetish values has enabled us to identify a relevant dimension for heavy book usage: the indirect benefits of usage. As the results show, the indirect benefits of fetish values are crucial for predicting the strength of heavy book usage, whereas the direct effects of book usage, the use values, are not. This means that the motivation for the use of a large number of books is related less to the content of media or to the situation of reception. Instead, motivation is evoked by the opportunity books offer to shape identity and self-expression. In this sense, Heavy book usage is a special form of media usage because its goal is not to gratify needs such as entertainment directly through consumption. This kind of usage achieves long-term social benefits. Therefore, books also seem to be a form of social media and not only a medium for individual consumption. As the cluster analysis shows, these social aspects of heavy book usage can be used in different ways: to compensate shyness through symbolic self-expression and to reinforce extroverts in the way they present themselves to others.

Limitations

We identified heavy book users as people reading 48 books a year and possessing 643 books on average. It is important to make clear that this and all other findings in this study are grounded on a special sample of heavy book users, who we defined as reading at least 18 books a year or possessing not less than 120 books. Thus, the findings are only valid for a special group of book users, which we have defined as heavy book users. However, with regard to the fact that the average number of books owned was 643, our theoretical criterion of possessing more than 120 books may have been too cautious. However, this conservative lower limit prevented the exclusion of younger heavy book users. With regard to our model, the question remains as to whether all predictors can be located at the same level or whether sociodemographics or Big Five personality traits, for example, can explain fetish values, which in turn explain heavy book usage. We conclude that there is a relationship between possessing and reading books and a number of other variables. What we cannot be certain about is the direction of this relationship, for example, whether emotional attachment is the reason for possessing many books or vice versa. In addition, the integration of human values into our model was not successful, although they were appropriate predictors for behavior in other contexts (Schwartz, 1996). The benefits which books offer are possibly too manifold for these specific human values to be used as predictors of heavy book usage. Books have many different topics and are therefore available for traditional (e.g., historical novels), hedonistic (e.g., cookery books), or self-determined (e.g., guide books) users. Furthermore, the scores of our self-constructed scales of group integration and intergroup differentiation were not as reliable as expected. Future studies should develop scales to measure these constructs more precisely. This could be done through a bottom-up approach using a wider range of items to examine the factor structure of fetish motivations, for example. Finally, our measures of use values may were incomplete because we merely used the classic gratifications adapted from TV research. It is possible that additional use values such as emotion exploration or mood management are relevant motivations to use books.

Despite these limitations, this study was a first step in examining the motivations behind heavy book usage empirically. In general, the results show that heavy book usage is motivated by benefits beyond the situation of reception. We describe these benefits as the fetish values of books, which are related to social benefits such as expressing individuality through symbolic communication.

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