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Limits and being unlimited by the reading format: a phenomenological study on emotional experiences of readers of audiobooks and physical books

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Abstract

Introduction. This is a qualitative study of the reading habits and experiences of readers of audiobooks and physical fiction books, with a focus on their emotional reactions to the reading process and the format of reading.

Method. Qualitative interviews were carried on for Finnish participants (N=6) and transcribed.

Analysis. The analysis was interpretative phenomenological analysis, which focuses on the personal interpretations of the participants' reading experiences. The transcribed interviews were analysed in multiple rounds and the process of coding was used to map out themes.

Results. The results suggest that both formats of reading create strong affective and emotional connections in the readers, but in various and often polarizing and dichotomic ways. Feeling of being limited by the format and having control over the environment were two major themes regarding the reading and listening experience.

Conclusion. All participants formed strong emotional connections with the medium and felt that the one that they did not prefer had negative connotations and limitations to the reading experience, whereas their preferred medium enhanced their experience and liberated them from the limitations of the not preferred medium.

Introduction and historical background

As audiobooks have become a more common way to consume fictional literature (Have & Stougaard Pedersen, 2015), more and more studies have sought to understand the phenomena surrounding them (cf. Berglund & Steiner 2021; Kristensen & Lüders, 2021; Linkis & Pennlert, 2020; Rubery et al., 2011; Tattersen Wallin, 2022; Tattersall Wallin & Nolin, 2020). However, there are fewer studies regarding personal and phenomenological experiences of the listeners than quantitative user studies (though not completely non-existent, for example, Have & Stougaard Pedersen, 2015; Spjeldnæs & Karlsen, 2022; Tattersall Wallin, 2021). The present qualitative study paves the way to understand better what kinds of emotionally and affectively charged reactions audiobooks can evoke in their listeners and how the format of the book affects the reading and listening experience. As the present study is also comparative on experiences of both physical and auditive literature, it illustrates the differences of how the mediums evoke the affective experiences and therefore is a valuable addition to the existing literature of both physical and auditive literature studies.

In this research, I define audiobooks as books that are consumed by listening, and physical books as books that are consumed by reading text in physical form: this includes also e-books read on a tablet or an e-reader in the context of this research. The reason for including e-books with physical books was for practical purposes to make a clear distinction between audio-based and text-based reading in this research.

Tattersall Wallin and Nolin (2020, p. 484) characterize two major forms of reading: stationary and mobile reading. Stationary reading is defined by the concrete act of seeing the text and reading visually, whereas mobile reading is defined by the act of listening and can therefore be overlapped with other activities. As Tattersall Wallin and Nolin demonstrate in their study and what my study complements, is the fact that what they define as mobile reading is strongly linked to multitasking and sharing and allocating time usage with different activities. However, in this study I use the term listening instead of mobile reading for purposes of clarity and to make a clear distinction between physical reading and auditive reading.

I find it important for my research to gather data from experiences of both auditive and physical fiction. This is to highlight both the similarities and differences the two formats can provide, and to understand how the readers themselves experience these similarities and differences. The oral tradition of storytelling precedes written literature by centuries, but only during the last century has there been a technological possibility of producing auditive literature in such a form that it can be consumed at almost any place and time.

Audiobooks have had historical precursors starting from the advent of first sound recording devices in the 19th century. In the 1930s, the first recordings of complete novels started to emerge (Camlot, 2011, pp. 25–30), but it took several decades to fully transform into a business model that resembles the modern audiobook industry. The growing popularity of cassette tapes in the 1980s and CDs in the 1990s paved the way for the development of modern business models of audiobook publication. Nowadays, aside from public library e-audiobooks, audiobooks are mostly consumed via either pay-per-book or monthly subscription model through streaming services. (Dali & Brochu, 2020, pp. 107–108; Rubery, 2011, pp. 28–29; Tattersall Wallin & Nolin, 2020, p. 474.)

As my research is based on Finnish-language interviews in Finland, I will highlight some characteristics of Finnish audiobook publishing landscape, which corresponds strongly with other Nordic countries. Tattersall Wallin and Nolin (2020, p. 475) analyse a large dataset provided by a Swedish audiobook service BookBeat, which is also a major content provider in Germany and Nordic countries, Finland included. In Nordic countries, the subscription-based model with a monthly fee (like multimedia companies such as Netflix or Spotify) is the most common way to

consume audiobooks (cf. Tattersall Wallin & Nolin, 2020, p. 474). In Finland the sales numbers of audiobooks grew by over 300 percent between 2019–2023 (Suomen Kustannusyhdistys, 2024).

Because of the nature of the business model, it is common for people to spend several hours per day listening to audiobooks, scrolling the catalogue, or starting a new book and letting it be if it does not appeal to them, since it does not incur any additional cost. This type of consumption was evident in the stories of my participants, and even though my case study is strongly limited in number, it still manages to characterize some specific elements of how audiobooks are consumed in Finland.

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Methodology

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

My primary research question is: how is the medium from which one reads meaningful for the reading experience? To answer this question, I carried out qualitative interviews, and the methodological basis for the interviews and their investigation was settled to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009). Interpretative phenomenological analysis has been found to be useful in psychology to investigate how people understand their own felt and lived experiences, and how are these meaningful (Smith, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). This phenomenological investigation is double hermeneutic in the sense that researchers interpret what the interviewees have interpreted of themselves. The method is suitable for understanding and interpreting the interviewees' experiences of the reading process; their cognitive and emotional processes; and the personal, emotionally and affectively charged experiences of the reading process itself.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish, transcribed word by word and coded in Finnish in several phases for the researcher to construct themes from the data. In the beginning of the coding process individual affectively charged words were coded and listed, and emerging themes were enlisted based on these codes. Then the process was repeated over and over again until the major themes as well as affects and emotions within them were interpreted by the researcher. In the quotations selected for this paper, which were translated into English by the researcher after the coding process, the notation [- -] denotes that a passage was cut out because of its irrelevance regarding the theme in analysis. As the results are interpreted and reflected through a subjective researcher position, I note that I am mostly a reader of physical books and do not have much experience in listening to audiobooks.

Data

The participants were found by advertising at the local libraries and university, with the purpose of targeting people who read actively. They were asked to tell which they prefer to consume, physical or audiobooks, and one of the questions was why they have selected this form of literature as their preferred form.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish. There were six interviewees and the interviews lasted 45–90 minutes. The interview consisted of eight questions, accompanied by follow-up questions that were derived from the interviewees' stories (see Appendix 1). Questions included inquiries

about the interviewees' reading habits, routines, emotional reactions they had during the reading and after it, how they attached themselves into the fictional characters and story worlds and how they felt the experiences of physical and auditive reading differed. As this paper focuses only on the emotional experiences regarding the form of reading, the experiences of participants about the fictional characters will be addressed in a future, separate paper.

Following are brief introductions of the interviewees, describing their reading habits and preferences. As all the participants were active and avid readers, I have defined *moderate reader* as someone who reads one or two books per week as opposed to more avid readers who read even more. Abbreviations IP (physical) and IA (audio) are used to indicate interviewees' preferences of reading format.

Interviewee 1 (20-25F, IP): Reads a lot (two to three books per week), only reads physical books. Forms strong emotional attachment to physical book as a medium and the temporality of reading at your own pace. Prefers to read physical books. Only listens to podcasts and essay literature.

Interviewee 2 (25-30F, IA): Reads a lot (two to three books per week), mostly listens auditive books. Says switching to audiobooks regained their love for reading after a long break. Forms strong emotional attachment to fictional characters, prefers to listen books that evoke positive emotions.

Interviewee 3 (35-40F, IA): Reads sporadically, mostly during summer, mostly listens auditive books. Listens only to *light* books that evoke positive emotions for relaxation. Forms strong emotional attachment to fictional characters, to the extent that they evoke physical reactions.

Interviewee 4 (25-30M, IP): Reads moderately (one to two books per week), reads mostly physical books. Prefers reading books that have morally ambiguous characters because of the psychological complexity.

Interviewee 5 (20-25F, IP): Reads moderately (one book per week), reads mostly physical books, though also reads many auditive books. Forms attachments to books as physical objects and fictional characters that are psychologically complex and deal with darker themes.

Interviewee 6 (50-60M, IP): Reads moderately (one book per two weeks), reads mostly physical books in paper and electronic books on a tablet. Reads primarily science fiction and fantasy, immerses themselves to the story worlds. Forms strong emotional attachment to the story worlds. Physicality of the book helps to immerse with the story world and electronic literature gives opportunities to read more often.

Results

The analysis produced two superordinate themes:

1. Feeling of being emotionally limited by the medium
2. Having a control over the environment

The themes are explored more thoroughly below. The analysis of both the literary mediums in question as well as the affective and emotional experiences of the reading and/or listening experience together make up a detailed and thorough analysis on how readers and listeners of books experience affects and emotions. I arrived at these themes through several rounds of coding the data and isolating which factors in the different mediums contributed to the emotional experience.

The first theme of feeling of being emotionally limited by the medium refers to the experience that the medium of reading that they did not prefer actively limited their emotional experience. The second theme of control over the environment refers to the experience that auditive literature is submissive to the environment, whereas physical literature dominates the environment.

Feeling of being emotionally limited by the medium

The first major theme is the experience of a limited medium: participants all said that they consumed more reading in their preferred form rather than their non-preferred form which they found limiting. The participants used phrasing that have strong negative connotations. They used phrases such as 'can't engage' and 'lacks something'. Participant 1 described her experience as follows:

I feel that book is a kind of an art form, like reading is the most essential way for me to consume fiction, from a book I get the most out of it, I also understand it better, like, this kind of moving material where there is a temporal dimension [- -] audiobook is performative art where there is a temporal dimension [- -] and also like books have been made for reading, that for me it's just like that if I want to listen to something I have a lot of things that are made for listening, there are all kinds of podcasts and talk shows and others, if I want to listen to something I'll listen to something that is made to be listened [- -] so in a way an audiobook is like waste, also waste of time, because you can kind of consume the same material on paper and then use the time to consume something that isn't on paper. Participant 1 (IP)

Participant 1 describes a feeling that she cannot connect with audiobooks because of the temporal element which she feels is not inherent to the story(world) because the story was originally meant to be consumed in a different format, that is, physical book. The temporal limitations of audiobooks, referring mostly to the fact that an audiobook is to be read at a certain pace, make emotional immersion difficult for her. For Participant 1, the experience of the immersion was so important that for this reason she could not emotionally connect with audiobooks.

When asked why she prefers physical books, Participant 5 answered, in turn:

I like it that I can see the language, the visual element is important for me, and then I can consume it with the speed I want or jump backwards or stop contemplating a sentence for a longer time, and then also when speaking about fictional literature, I feel it's easier or it's better for the form or more respectful that you can properly focus on the language and then I also feel it's easier to follow read book than listened if there are multiple characters. And I also like books as objects. Participant 5 (IP)

Participant 5 echoes the same emotions expressed by Participant 1, namely, the possibility to pause reading whenever the reader wants and to focus on what the reader wants. The ability to maintain the wanted tempo in reading were essential in forming the emotional immersion to the story world. As this is not possible in the case of audiobooks (or at least is significantly more difficult), participants 1 and 5 did not like listening audiobooks.

However, the temporal elements were a crucial aspect in those who preferred the auditive format. All the participants who preferred audiobooks described how it liberated them so they could consume more. Participant 2 described her experiences:

But there is also this kind of dimension that I'm incapable of working now and my endurance is sometimes weak to do like anything, meaning like even focusing on reading a book, that it has been difficult for many years. My reading lessened a lot when my health deteriorated, and I had to get off from work. And then when I found these audiobooks I found out that I can consume literature and that I really enjoy without

having to focus as much as reading physical book would demand. So, it's a great pleasure. Participant 2 (IA)

When I then asked: 'So, do you feel that it's easier to consume audiobooks than physical books?', Participant 2 responded, 'Yeah, definitely. Precisely because I'm not tied to the physicality like in paper books'. Participant 2 felt that audiobooks gave her the joy of books again and brought a significant amount of pleasure for her amidst health problems. She felt that if she had not been offered this opportunity, she probably would not have consumed books as much as she does now.

Along the same lines, Participant 3 described the following:

I haven't read a lot because I haven't like found those kinds of moments when it's nice to pause with the book, I guess the days are so hectic [- -] in an audiobook it's easier for me to focus when I'm doing something, that I can do all kinds of things, that I have this kind of shared ability to focus that I can do things and I need to do something, have chores at the same time as I'm listening. Participant 3 (IA)

Participant 3 explains that it is difficult for her to find moments to read a physical book and that reading audiobooks has liberated her to read more. For her there is an experience of joy and liberation in being able to do other things while simultaneously listening to audiobooks. She describes how her focus shifts rapidly between activities, even saying that often she finds normal play speed too slow and prefers listening her audiobooks at a faster speed. In an interview study of audiobook listeners by Spjeldnæs and Karlsen (2022), they found out that most of the readers adapt their reading mode to the situation, which in case of audiobook playback speed means adapting to it instead of manually altering it. Therefore, the listening habits of Participant 3 in this regard do not necessarily reflect the most common way to consume audiobooks.

Physical limitations were also mentioned by others. When discussing the differences between physical books and electronic books, Participant 6 noted:

There might be this experience of age sight that physical book is easier to read because they usually have such layout that you can read it but these electronic might have that it's not so easy to read it. It also looks like they have fewer physical pages meaning that they are denser. Participant 6 (IP)

For Participant 6, it was most pleasant and easy to read physical books not only as he preferred the physical object, but because he felt that physical books were easier to read than electronic books because of his deteriorated eyesight. While some other participants highlighted that audiobooks gave them the opportunity to read more and in a more pleasant way, for Participant 6 physical limitations were a major reason for choosing a specific format of reading.

Control over the environment

The second major theme that emerged was the experience that auditive literature is submissive to environment, whereas the physical literature dominates the environment. This means that the participants who preferred physical literature had strong emotional reactions to the book as a physical object, and actively sought and found pleasure in that.

With both physical and auditive literature, the temporal element of reading was important for the participants, but the temporality manifested itself in different ways. For those who preferred physical books, the ability to immerse oneself solely in the experience of reading, as well as having concurrent reading habits and routines, were important. With those who preferred audiobooks, the ability to put more time into enjoying books per day and the ability to listen books almost whenever and wherever possible was an important reason for them to choose auditive literature.

Most of the participants had clear routines and habits of reading that were in certain locations. When asked if they could consume the other format in that place, most of them said no. For example, Participant 1 described her reading routines of physical books as follows:

Well I have this kind of a routine that every night I read while I'm eating and then after eating I read about an hour [- -] after I've been out I get back and read book, and then at evening after I've finished my studying, like almost the first thing to do is to open a book and sit somewhere and it's the same at evening when I get home and eat and then I read books. [- -] And always, always if I'm sitting on a train or car or waiting somewhere, if I'm going somewhere where I must wait, I have a book and I'm reading a book, I don't play with my phone but I'm always reading a book. Participant 1 (IP)

Participant 1 describes having very specific routines for reading physical books, as well as spending a lot of her leisure time whenever she's traveling by reading a book. In the same way, Participant 2 describes her reading routines, though this time with audiobooks:

And I've liked audiobooks precisely because then I don't have to be with the physical book in the same space or I don't have to stop anywhere or my eyes aren't locked to something, my hands aren't locked to something but I can, I mean I have my phone almost always with me everywhere, so I can listen to practically anywhere and anytime and just do everything at the same time so I've especially liked that and I think that's why I've probably moved almost completely into the audiobooks now when I've found it and bought the app. Participant 2 (IA)

As is demonstrated by the participants' descriptions, for those participants who preferred audiobooks, the freedom to listen whenever and wherever was an important deciding factor between two formats, whereas for the participants who preferred physical books, the time that they reserve and spend with the object of physical book was considered valuable and important. On the other hand, listening to audiobooks was often associated with multitasking, defined as simultaneously doing tasks that require cognitive functioning of information (Aagaard 2019, pp. 88–89). Participant 3 describes her experience with multitasking with auditive literature:

Interviewer: You said you must do something while listening. Can you say why? Or what will happen to you if you don't do anything, if you just try to listen"

Participant 3 (IA): Well, my mind starts wandering and then I'll fall asleep. Usually I'm somewhat restless that usually, like, when I'm reading a book, a physical book, then of course I'm still, but with audiobook you kind of have that motoric restlessness.

Participant 4, in turn, says the following:

When you're listening to audiobooks it feels like it's not enough just this one thing that you're listening, but you are kind of supposed to be doing something else, but then I don't like that kind of multitasking. Participant 4 (IP)

This sensation of *having an urge* to do something simultaneously while listening audiobooks was echoed by other participants as well. When asked if they had ever tried just being still and listening, they provided the same sorts of answers as Participant 3 regarding an inability to focus. Listening to audiobooks was felt as inherently containing some sorts of physical activity, combining listening to audiobooks with mundane chores.

For the participants, consuming books in whatever format was clearly a multi-sensory experience that is enhanced by a lot of other factors than just the linguistic and emotional content of the story world. The importance of the voice was highlighted by several participants. Voice is not limited only with audiobooks, as many participants described reading physical books as having an inner

voice, with the ability to pause, rewind and taste specific words and sentences. Participant 3 had an experience of listening to and reading the same book, forming a strong emotional attachment to the reader of the audiobook, and they described it as follows:

Well, it was an interesting experiment because then I heard the voice of Erja Manto in my head all the time, and then, little by little it started maybe fading away. Maybe in a certain way when in audiobook what is being spoken is like slower, so maybe you kind of when you're reading you can stop to taste some metaphor or like that so maybe it feels that in a certain way the language of the book opened to me better or opens to me better when I'm listening to it, because in a way the voice and phrasing of Erja Manto somehow really fits it so well because it's kind of old-fashioned language, really old words and like that and then, I kind of like just pushed forward and didn't pay so much attention to it when I was reading it physically. Participant 3 (IA)

Participant 3 describes how the audiobook reader's voice becomes a defining element in evoking emotions and that it was one of the most important emotional experiences she got out of the book(s). She described even choosing audiobooks to listen to, based on the reader. The technical elements of the auditive literature enabled the participant to experience something she could not get from a physical book.

Discussion

This interview study of readers and listeners revealed two major themes regarding the emotional experience of literature: feeling of being emotionally limited by the medium, and the experience of controlling the environment.

Participants who preferred a physical format of reading, experienced lack of emotional connectivity with the auditive format, whereas participants who preferred an auditive format of reading felt that it liberated their consumption of time as well as allowing them to immerse more fully into the story world, sometimes forming strong emotional connections with the voice of the reader.

The format of reading actively enhances and creates the emotional experiences and affects in the minds and bodies of the readers. The format of the book is not just a passive tool for consuming the book, but an active component in shaping the emotional experiences of readers. As all the participants had rather strong preferences for a format, perhaps they actively seek out to consume only one specific format of reading, thus creating a strong dichotomic division between formats. This, in turn, might strengthen the negative emotional experiences they have for the other format. As many participants stated, their experiences of other formats have been rather limited during the last couple of years, especially with those who preferred physical books.

Tattersall Wallin and Nolin (2020, p. 486) found that consumers of BookBeat, a Swedish subscription-based audiobook service, spend 90–100 minutes per day on average in listening audiobooks. The participants of my study also gave similar estimates on their average consumption. Tattersall Wallin and Nolin (2020), as well as Rothbauer (2009, p. 481) and Cedeira Serantes (2016, p. 223), conclude that a general theme amongst many readers and listeners is that they wanted to read more but felt that they lacked the time to do so. All my participants who preferred audiobooks expressed the same sentiment and said that listening to audiobooks had given them more time to read, which they felt had a strongly positive impact on their lives overall.

Choosing a specific format for reading gives the participants control over the environment, meaning that with physical books their experience is tied more closely to the environment itself. With audiobooks, the understanding and experiencing environment is more *flowing* in the sense that listening to these gives their listeners an experience they describe as freedom to choose and act more freely regarding their reading routines and habits compared to physical books. However,

the participants preferring physical books do not experience this as limiting, but more as a feature that enhances their reading experience.

In an interview study of audiobook listeners by Spjeldnæs and Karlsen (2022), they found out that most of the readers adapt their reading mode to the situation, which in the case of audiobook playback speed means adapting to it instead of manually altering it. Participant 2 said that she often liked to listen to audiobooks at a faster speed than the preset settings. She felt that she could concentrate better at a faster speed, whereas in slower speed she easily becomes impatient. In this regard, the listening habits of Participant 2 do not necessarily reflect the most common way to consume audiobooks, and therefore it creates an experience that is not inherent to how audiobooks are constructed or consumed. On the contrary, regarding reading physical books, all of the participants mentioned the rhythm of the text and story itself in a physical form of text as aesthetically pleasant and having inherent value for them, and that they felt this was lacking in audiobooks. Therefore, rhythm of the text in both forms becomes an important and definitive element in creating the emotional connection to the form of reading.

Participants 2 and 3 who preferred audiobooks stated that they multitasked while listening, and that it increased their ability to concentrate. Studies about listening to audiobooks (Noorda & Berens, 2021; Tattersall Wallin & Nolin, 2020) support the participants' experience, noting that it is common to multitask while listening audiobooks, and that it might even improve concentration on tasks that otherwise feel boring (cf. Nowosielski et al., 2018).

Rothbauer and Cedeira Serantes (2021, pp. 116–122) categorize three registers of time in the reading experience: 1) stable places of differentiated return, 2) temporalized reading bodies, and 3) reading as temporalized practice. The register of reading as a temporalized practice takes into account how the auditive medium gives the participant the ability to control temporality; as Rothbauer and Cedeira Serantes (2021, p. 121) write, “[r]eading in this register is about escaping time, or resisting the pressures of clock time – it is about making time”. For example, in the case of Participant 3, audiobooks as a medium have liberated her to listen to more books as she would be able to read physical books, and this has allowed her to listen to a long novel series in course of a summer vacation, which in turn has resulted in significant and emotionally invested commitment to the storyworld and the characters. However, her expectations of what should happen in the story did not come true. Therefore, her way of listening to the audiobooks as a temporalized practice where she could dictate or create her experience by controlling the reading experience, directly contributed to her emotional investment and commitment as well as the emotional and affective feelings and reactions.

For those who preferred to read physical books, the emotional connection to the limitations and control over the format and the environment is in line with registers 1 and 3 of stable places and temporalized reading. For example, in the case of participants 1 and 4, they actively sought to read in libraries as a routine as well as to enhance their emotional connection with the reading process. The physical spaces evoked similar experiences in them as how they described their relationship with physical books. For them, the physical object of the book itself, as well as the physical spaces directly linked and connotated into the books as objects, were sources of emotional and affective connection. This was also visible in their answers regarding their connection to the fictional characters and storyworlds, which will be addressed in a separate paper.

The meaning of an audiobook reader's voice has been observed in other studies to be one of the most contributing factors for a personal and emotionally loaded experience (e.g. Björkén-Nyberg 2020; Rodero 2018; Székely et al., 2012). The technical elements of auditive literature enabled the participant to experience something she or he could not get out of a physical book. The possibility of choosing an audiobook based on who the reader is, and whether the participant has an emotional connection towards that person, made it possible for them to customize the reading

experience based on her preferences. In a study by Székely et al. (2012, p. 3336) all of the participants would have preferred the possibility of customizing synthetic voices for an audiobook, and the experiences of the Participant 3, who had a preferred reader, concur with these findings.

The auditive format allows the listener to shift between activities and tasks, and connect the experience more strongly with physical sensations. This also shows the possible benefits of multitasking in creating tension in emotional gratification (e.g. Firth et al., 2024, p. 182) and can offer a reason why people multitask while listening to audiobooks. However, participants 1 and 5, who preferred physical literature, did not like the restrictions of audiobooks regarding the possibility to pause listening and choose specific words and passages for specific concentration. In their case the physical books offered them the possibility to pause which enhanced their emotional investment to the book. Therefore, for participants 1 and 5, the register 1 of stable places as differentiated return and register 3 of reading as a temporalized practice overlap significantly and together create a multisensory experience. This was not the case with the participants who preferred audiobook format, and for them reading as a temporalized practice was the most important factor in choosing the format.

The results of the study offer various possibilities for follow-up research. An accompanying perspective for analysing affective and emotional reactions and experiences of the readers and listeners could be a framework rooted in other sciences, such as affective neuroscience (Bacha, 2019; Davis & Montag, 2019; Panksepp & Biven, 2012; van der Westhuizen & Solms, 2017; Watt, 2017). As studies in question are mostly conducted by strictly qualitative methods and theoretical frameworks, a framework rooted in psychology and biology that has been empirically observed within humans would offer additional valuable insights to the data. These kinds of studies have been conducted sparsely, but some exist (e.g. Carocci, 2014; David, 2016; Grodal, 2009; Montag et al., 2021; Nan & Ho, 2014; Narvaez et al., 2013; Panksepp & Wilson, 2016). As the research questionnaire enables analysis through quantitative research and data collection, an additional framework would be beneficial for more thorough understanding of how affects and emotions are formed in physical and auditive literature.

Conclusion

The study answered the research question on how is medium of a book meaningful to the participants' emotional experience. The data was coded through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method and analysed by the researcher to find the underlying themes. The two subordinate themes were, 1) feeling of being emotionally limited by the medium, and 2) having a control over the environment.

The study found that all of the participants formed strong emotional connections with the medium and felt that the one they did not prefer had negative connotations and limitations for the reading experience. They felt that choosing a preferred method for book consumption enhanced their experience of having a control over the environment, meaning that they could more freely adapt to their preferred way of consuming books. They formed strong emotional connections to either the physicality of the book as an object or the ability to listen to audiobooks in various different situations and environments. These emotional connections were both positive and negative by nature, depending on the participant's preferred way of consuming books.

As the scope of this study is phenomenologically focused, it is important to continue the research programme with cross- and multi-disciplinary studies. The knowledge of people's consumption patterns, emotional and affective experiences of art and media artefacts can be applied to many fields of science, including art, culture and media studies, sociology, psychology and marketing studies. In this regard, the present study lays a foundation for follow-up questions to be addressed in further research.

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Appendix 1

1. How often do you read/listen to books?

- Tell in detail about an ordinary week: what do you read, where do you read, how much do you read
- Are you reading habits regular or is there variety?
- How long does it take you to read/listen to a book? Do reading a physical book and listening to an audiobook differ?

2. Why do you consume physical books / audiobooks more than the other?

3. Why have you chosen this specific medium if the same story exists in other formats (e.g. book, film, TV series, videogame)? Are there reasons for you to choose a certain story to be consumed as a physical book or audiobook?

4. Give a detailed description of one memorable reading experience that has happened to you lately.

- What kinds of feelings you had for the main and supporting characters of the book?

5. Pick one favourite character of a book and tell why this character is your favourite.

- Have you read or listened to this book?

6. Tell about how you generally feel about sympathizing with characters.

- Is sympathizing with characters important for you? Do you feel that the main character has to be sympathizing for you to like the book?
- Do you feel that these things are different with physical and audiobooks?

7. Tell about how you generally feel positive feelings towards fictional characters. Are there any specific traits or characteristics you like?

- Do you feel that these things are different with physical and audiobooks?

8. Tell about how you generally feel negative feelings towards fictional characters. Are there any specific traits or characteristics you like?

- Do you feel that these things are different with physical and audiobooks?

Preliminary observation suggests that occasional projects are more likely than their one-off cousins to originate in or be motivated by agreeable obligation. Examples of occasional projects include the sum of the culinary, decorative, or other creative activities undertaken, for example, at home or at work for a religious occasion or someone's birthday. (Stebbins, 2009, p. 767)