

Digital influence, digital platforms and disconnected presence

Long-form leisure reading in the era of ubiquitous digital connectivity

Kari Spjeldnæs

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
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Scientific environment

I have had the advantage of participating in three scientific environments while pursuing my PhD. First, I am a PhD Candidate at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bergen, in the Department of Information Science and Media Studies, Bergen Media Use Research Group. Second, my daily working arena as a PhD Candidate has been with my employer, Kristiania University College in Oslo and the Institute of Communication at the School of Communication, Leadership and Organization. Then, my research is part of Digitox, a research project on digital disconnection financed by The Research Council of Norway.

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There is a common thread from my initial studies at the University of Oslo to the completion of my thesis for the University of Bergen. My studies in literature resulted in my master's (*hovedoppgave*) degree, under the supervision of Professor Hans H. Schei. Thanks to an announcement for a PhD position within the Digitox research project at Kristiania University College in Oslo, I got to know Professor Faltin Karlsen. I am forever grateful for his guidance and support as a co-supervisor and collaborative partner on the two empirical studies and two of my four articles.

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Participation in the PhD environment at Kristiania since September 2020, when I commenced as a PhD candidate, has been essential to this research project. First, I am indebted and grateful for the attention and follow up I have received from the head of the PhD program at Kristiania, Professor Anne Haugen Gausdal. Her research advice and her patient support in mentoring our group of PhD candidates, alongside Professor Hans Erik Næss, have played a vital role in shaping my work. This has been particularly significant as my first year as a PhD candidate coincided with the COVID-19 lockdown(s). Despite the challenges, I have been fortunate to be able to engage with close colleagues at Kristiania on a daily basis, learning together, exchanging ideas, and socializing. I consider this experience a true blessing. Thanks to Lasha Kavtaradze, Håvard Kiberg, Ester Conings Vanvik, Junai Mtchedlize, Marte Jordheim, Ola Martin Jensen Larsen, Trygve Bergland, and Martin Skogheim.

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Immersion in challenging research over time enhances the need for alternative activities to fuel the mind and the body. I am forever grateful for the inspiration—and rest for my mind—I have received from the woods around Oslo and the mountains not too far away, regardless of the season. More importantly, however, is the meaning of friendship and support from Nina F. Grünfeld and all of you for whom I am so happy to have in my life as friends.

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Abstract in English

This thesis explores the influence of digitalization on long-form leisure and literary reading. It brings new knowledge about the unfolding of literature and literary consumption in the age of constant connectivity. On the one hand, ‘digitalization’ refers to the transformation of both fiction and non-fiction books into digital goods, available as e-books and audiobooks. On the other hand, it refers to the general transformation of society, with digital connectivity as the ‘new normal.’ To scrutinize the ongoing transformation regarding literary reading and publishing the digital disconnection perspective on leisure reading is a pervasive theme throughout this thesis.

My theoretical approach builds on Marcel Merleau-Ponty’s argument that bodily perceptions are essential to understanding meaning-making processes. I focus on the perceived consequences of how a cognitive process, such as reading, is affected by a change in the physical reading medium. Furthermore, I scrutinize the perceived influence on attention and reading concentration amid continuous digital connectivity.

The thesis includes four articles, two of which are based on a qualitative, interview-based study of adult leisure readers and two on a qualitative interview-based study of literary publishers. The first article explores how affordances offered by digital technologies influence reading habits. The second article focuses on how readers handle their literary leisure reading amid ubiquitous digital connection. The third article scrutinizes audiobooks’ influence on literary publishers’ work. Finally, the fourth article concerns how literary publishers perceive the influence of digitalization on reading conditions and their professional responsibilities.

This thesis highlights the transformational power and radical changes in long-form leisure reading and literary publication in the wake of digitalization. The analyses developed in the four articles resulted in my conceptualization of four characteristic traits in these processes: ‘The flexibility advantage’ pinpoints the increased flexibility in leisure reading brought on by the affordances inherent to digital devices and formats. ‘The platformization efficiency’ highlights the power of

change in business models due to digitalization and underscores the thesis' industrial perspective. Furthermore, 'the habit of concentration' highlights how digitalization influences the ability to sustain reading amid ubiquitous connectivity. Finally, 'the disconnected presence' is reflected in the media users' motivation and ability to switch between a connected and a disconnected mode, which benefit from habits and personal values. The notion of disconnected presence offers advantages for cultivating activities requiring sustained concentration, such as long-form reading.

Abstract in Norwegian

Avhandlingen utforsker hva digitalisering gjør med lesing og utgivelse av litteratur som leses for sin egen del. Det handler om langlesing av litteratur for allmennmarkedet og hvordan kontinuerlig digital påkobling preger lesing og litteratur. På den ene siden peker digitalisering mot at fiksjon og sakprosa-bøker blir digitale i form av e-bøker og lydbøker. På den andre siden peker digitalisering mot den gjennomgående digitaliseringen av samfunnet der digital påkobling er den nye normalen. Lesing og digital frakobling er avhandlingens røde tråd.

Avhandlingen bygger på Marcel Merleau-Pontys teori om kroppslig sansing som premiss for menneskelig meningsproduksjon. Jeg utforsker konsekvenser av endring i litteraturformat og lesemedium med vekt på personlige erfaringer. Videre undersøker jeg opplevd innflytelse av kontinuerlig digital påkobling på oppmerksomhet og evnen til konsentrert lesing.

Avhandlingen inneholder fire artikler. To av dem bygger på en kvalitativ intervjustudie av voksne litteraturlesere og to artikler bygger på en kvalitativ intervjustudie av litterære forleggere. Den første artikkelen undersøker hvordan digital teknologi og de mulighetene denne teknologien legger til rette for påvirker lesevaner. Artikkelen nummer to utforsker lesernes strategier for å lese i kombinasjon med allestedsnærværende digital påkobling. Den tredje artikkelen gransker lydbøkernes innflytelse på forlagsarbeidet og utgivelsesstrategier, mens den siste artikkelen undersøker innflytelsen av gjennomgripende digitalisering ved å se på forleggenes opplevelse av digitalisering og betydningen den har for lesing av litteratur og deres arbeid med litteratur.

Funnene i avhandlingen understreker at endringene i kjølvannet av digitalisering er store og kraftfulle. På bakgrunn av analysene i de fire artiklene har jeg kommet fram til fire trekk som kjennetegner den pågående digitale transformasjonen av litteratur og lesing: «Fordelene ved fleksibilitet» tydeliggjør hvordan teknologien i digitale lesemedium skaper flere muligheter for litteraturlesing. Begrepet «plattformeffektivitet» får fram betydningen av nye digitale forretningsmodeller og understreker avhandlingens industrielle perspektiv.

«Konsentrasjon som vane» understreker betydningen av å ha erfaring som leser når oppmerksomheten utfordres av kontinuerlig digital påkobling. «Frakoblet tilstedeværelse» er et kjennetegn for lesing som finner sted uten mulighet for digitale konsentrasjonsforstyrrelser. Frakoblet tilstedeværelse er avhengig av vaner og personlige verdier som påvirker leserens motivasjon og evne til (midlertidig) å koble seg fra for å lese over en viss tid.

List of publications

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Article III: Spjeldnæs, K. (2022): ‘Platformization and publishing. Changes in literary publishing’. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-022-09912-2>.

Article IV: Spjeldnæs, K. and Karlsen, F. (forthcoming): ‘Attention, ambivalence and algorithms. Publishers in the era of ubiquitous connectivity and expanding platforms’. Accepted for publication in *Media, Culture & Society* (per April 2023).

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Preface

The world of literature holds a strong fascination for a devoted group of people, as demonstrated by influential scholars. These devoted readers vary, from the leisure readers of fanfiction (Jenkins, 2013) and romances (Radway, 1984) to the large and diverse groups of readers of contemporary fiction and non-fiction. The love of literature is widespread and rests on a solid tradition (Furedi, 2015; Manguel, 2014; Thompson, 2010). However, there are signs of changes in literary reading.

A glance around an early morning commuter train or the waiting lounge at an airport shows the focus of an overwhelming number of people: on their smartphones. Until recently, newspapers and paper books accompanied many people in transit. Attentive reading used to be physically present in public spaces. Nowadays, digital devices like the smartphone and ubiquitous digitalization have radically changed media consumption and our surroundings (Couldry and Hepp, 2017)—including the reading of leisure literature. This thesis explores the influence of digitalization on the art of long-form reading and the conditions for literature through studies on readers and publishers of leisure literature (e.g., such as fiction and non-fiction).

The act of reading is essential to education. Mastering letters for reading is a primary task in children's education. Reading capacity is critical in modern societies, for work, for public participation, and for the handling of everyday life. Penetrating digitalization has influenced reading, parallel to the influence on many other activities. However, so far, digitalization seems to entail that, in general, people are reading more than ever in even smaller bits and pieces (Mangen and Weel, 2016).

My concern is the development of long-form reading, and I am not alone in showing interest in this matter. Extensive studies within the field of reading research have explored the influence of screen reading at all levels of education (Baron, 2015, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021; Mangen, 2020; Mangen et al., 2019; Singer and Alexander, 2017; Wolf, 2018). Further, worries about shortened attention spans and lack of reading capacity have been around for a while, and they do not seem to diminish (Carr, 2010; Hari, 2022; Wajcman, 2015).

My contribution builds on the insistent focus on adult readers and the genres of leisure literature, especially the literature of long narratives like fiction and non-fiction, characterized by the term ‘trade’ in the professional world of publishers and publishing. Furthermore, I scrutinized long-form reading and leisure literature in the context of the everyday life of readers and publishers, to which digitalization implies new products and broadened possibilities. The e-book was the first digital format to reach a broader audience, mainly through the proliferation of Amazon’s Kindle and its comprehensive offer of English-language titles, from 2010 onwards (Thompson, 2021). Furthermore, since the second half of the 2010s, audiobooks have proliferated through subscription-based streaming services, like Audible and Storytel (Berglund, 2021; Have and Pedersen, 2020).

Returning to the commuters’ train or the airport lounge, though we may not see paper books, people may yet be consuming literature: Digital literature is available for text reading or listening through the smartphone (Kuzmičová et al., 2020). But we know that digitalization has led to increased competition around time for media consumption (Ytre-Arne and Das, 2019). Thus, people in transit may just as well be checking the latest news, looking for social media updates, watching a YouTube video, or reading their emails (Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021). The research questions in this thesis consider that leisure literature is widely available in e-book and audiobook formats, in addition to the traditional paper book. Further, the research questions consider the complex nature of media and the challenges posed to reading concentration due to ubiquitous digital connectivity.

A main qualification for writing this thesis is my many years of experience working in the Norwegian publishing industry. Literature has been my occupation for over three decades, as an editor and publishing director in leadership positions in a major book club and a large publishing house. Following the development from an industry perspective triggered my curiosity about the future of reading and literature. I sensed a need to understand the broader picture of what was happening and decided to trace the history of reading and explore the field of reading research, resulting in a book on reading (Spjeldnæs, 2020). Moreover, essential research on the influence of

digitalization on text reading (Baron, 2015; Mangen, 2020; Mangen et al., 2019; Wolf, 2018) inspired further exploration.

When I became part of the Digitox research project, understanding the connection between continuous digital connectivity and the conditions for long-form reading became my task. The process of conducting my PhD research has been demanding and encouraging, challenging and exciting, and troublesome and highly work intensive. But most of all, it has been the continuous privilege of immersion into something that matters. The future of reading competencies and capabilities is deeply connected to the premise of creating knowledge and understanding at the societal level. Furthermore, literary reading can represent a source of personal recess and reflection, experience and learning, emotional preparedness and cognitive training—it is thus a source of personal well-being available to most people at a low financial cost. However, reading demands individual effort. Literary reading requires motivation and stamina to sustain attention: It is leisure and work. In this thesis, I concentrate on the structures and mechanisms that facilitate reading, not the content or aesthetic dimension inherent to the wide world of literary works.

The thesis explores the dilemmas intrinsic to the meaning of affordances, the influence on attention and the power of algorithms as they appear to agents and audiences in literary reading. In the following, I present an overview of the research project, including the process, deliberations, and the conclusions.

Part I: Final Contribution

1 Introduction

This PhD project explores the transformation of literary reading in the era of digitalization. On the one hand, ‘digitalization’ refers to the transformation of both fiction and non-fiction books into digital goods, available as e-books and audiobooks. On the other hand, it refers to the general transformation of society, where digital connectivity is the new normal—and digital media and being online 24/7 by default are experienced as intrusive to daily life (Brennen, 2019; Karppi, 2018; Syvertsen, 2020).

The topic of this thesis is the influence of (a) ubiquitous digital connection on long-form reading and (b) digital formats on literary reading. Hence, my aim is threefold: First, I seek to bring forward new knowledge on how long-form literary reading is influenced by digital technology, which offer new affordances to a reading audience through e-books and audiobooks. Exploring experienced adult readers of leisure literature ensures a perspective on long-form reading that deserves more attention within media studies.

Second, I aim to contribute new knowledge on how the digitalization of literature influences publishing strategies and editorial work. In this perspective, the introduction of streaming services, followed by a steep rise in audiobook listening, leads to an exploration of the algorithm-based platformization of literature.

Third, I seek to understand better how ubiquitous digital connectivity influences long-form reading. I address the influence of digital connectivity on the premise that long-form reading is an act of prolonged attention. My exploration of the influence of digital connectivity on reading relates to sustaining attention despite continuous digital connection through digital devices—in contrast to being disconnected or, in more vernacular language, ‘logged off.’ Thus, a reader may combine being digitally disconnected with reading a digital format, such as an e-book on a Kindle.

In exploring the influence of digitalization on long-form leisure and literary reading, this thesis contributes new knowledge about the unfolding of literature and literary consumption in the age of deep mediatization (Couldry and Hepp, 2017).

Thus, in scrutinizing individual acts of literary consumption in a continuous flow of digital distractions, this work provides a foundation for an enhanced focus on literature and long-form reading. Moreover, by understanding how digitalization influences the core of the literary industry, new knowledge on the future conditions for literary production is brought to the table.

The consequences of constant digital connection have become a major societal concern (Carr, 2010; Hari, 2022; Twenge et al., 2019; Wajcman, 2015). To begin with, the influence of comprehensive digitalization has many side effects, of which people actively searching for digital disconnection is one (Syvertsen, 2020). Long-form reading requires the reader's prolonged attention for a certain amount of time, making reading vulnerable to digital distractions: including an abundance of offers of information, entertainment, and education, available online 24/7. Reading a book thus exposes one to more competition from other media than ever before. As a result, distracted minds have become a threat to the capacity to read longer texts (Baron, 2015, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021).

A short glance in the rearview mirror will prove helpful before proceeding. In her (1984) study on romance readers, Janice A. Radway unfolded the passions, reading modes, and roles of customers and consumers of female leisure readers dedicated to paperback serials focusing on love. Radway brought forward the readers' awareness of their choice of genre and books, their ability to fully immerse themselves in the activity of reading, and the defining power of reading for identity. In her (1999) work on the Book-of-the-Month-Club, Radway uncovered the interdependency between publishers and readers. She explored the organization of this relationship, which emerged through the structure of a book club. Radway detected a continuing act of balance between commercial interests and readers' satisfaction, demands, and consumer influence.

Radway was exploring literary readers and the literary industry pre-digitalization. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to systematically compare contemporary experiences within the world of literature to Radway's findings from 30 years earlier, this research project does have a predecessor in her dual perspective on leisure reading, capturing the industry as well as the readers.

Moreover, I adhere to her underscoring of the meaning of literary reading to the building of a personal identity and societal culture.

In the following, I will introduce the overarching research questions, the throughout perspective of digital disconnection, the four articles, and the industrial premises; I then present the methods and processes of data analysis applied in the two empirical studies. The final part of the introduction includes the summing up of my findings, discussion, and conclusion. Part II constitutes the four articles that comprise this thesis's substantial empirical and theoretical contribution.

1.1 Aim and research questions

In this research project, I studied the development in leisure reading and literature given the ongoing digital transformation. The overall aim of this thesis can be summarized in one, overarching research question: *Why and how is digitalization influencing long-form reading and literary publishing?*

In this project, the influence of digitalization comprises the influence of new formats, such as e-books and audiobooks, and the influence of pervasive processes, such as platformization and ubiquitous connectivity. Before proceeding to my understanding and use of terms related to digitalization and reading, and the presentation of my throughout perspective of digital connection, I share a few reflections on the overarching research question.

The research question reflects the penetrating impact of continuous digital connectivity and intrusive media in a North European society like that in Norway (Syvertsen, 2020). I seek to understand the interrelation between the influence of digitalization and the cognitive act of reading through exploring the experiences of users and producers of literature. The asking of *why* and *how* underscores my interest in exploring the development in long-form reading to reveal the transformative forces at play in the wake of digitalization. By focusing on adult readers and long-form leisure literature, I aim to bring new knowledge to the understanding of the development of reading due to penetrating digitalization. Furthermore, exploring

literary reading and publishing in a media scientific perspective underline how leisure literature is part of general media consumption. In my view, it is essential to understand the development of literary reading within a broad frame of media offers and the widespread influence of digitalization on the everyday lives of leisure readers (Ytre-Arne, 2023).

However, the scientific contribution depends on the research questions raised, the method and the empirical material, and the capabilities of the researcher(s). These are the scientific premises: Only small slices of what exists in the world of leisure literature can be explored at a time. Therefore, although this thesis does not answer all the questions following in the wake of digitalization and reading development, I hope some essential ones will be answered. Moreover, I expect the findings to provide the foundation for further research.

1.2. On reading and digitalization

The development of reading due to digitalization is my longstanding focus of interest, my common thread, and my base for this research project. However, ‘reading’ and ‘digitalization’ are terms referring to a manifold of meanings and activities. Before proceeding, I want to clarify my use of terms on this constitutional point of interest to the thesis.

In my context, *long-form reading* refers to the reading of narrative texts of book-length, such as novels and non-fiction literature. I use the term ‘long-form reading’ even though I am aware of the nuanced definition differentiating between the ‘long long-form’ (labelling texts over 10,000 words), the ‘medium long-form’ (labelling journal articles up to 10,000 words), and the ‘short long-form’ (labelling articles up to 2,000 words; Baron and Mangen, 2021). Following the definition, the reading of books belongs to the category of long long-form reading. However, focusing on the influence of digitalization, I am interested in exploring the influence on prolonged reading, and for this purpose I use the term ‘long-form reading’ when pinpointing the act of reading as a continuous activity.

Leisure reading, also known as ‘recreational reading,’ refers to the acts of independent and voluntary reading, depending on the reader’s choice to read a continuous text, whether it is for personal or social purposes. I use the term ‘leisure reading’ to underscore my focus on personally motivated reading undertaken as a voluntary activity, mainly for pleasure (International Reading Association, 2014).

Literary reading refers to the reading of narrative texts challenging the reader to engage and involve in events and actions, characters and consequences, and emotions and ideas, through the language constituting the narrative and for the joy of the language itself (Mullis and Martin, 2021). I use the term ‘literary reading’ to underscore the reading of published works of narrative fiction and non-fiction. Further, I use the term when referring to the reading of books belonging to the category of trade publishing, different from other categories within the publishing industry, such as educational, professional, or scientific publishing.

In the following, my exploration of reading includes all the three dimensions of reading, sometimes clearly specified and differentiated from each other, sometimes intertwined and referring to reading at a more general level and in contrast to other kind of activities.¹

Proceeding to digitalization, I will clarify my use of terminology for a few essential concepts running through the thesis. ‘Digitalization’ (Brennen and Kreiss, 2016) has become the buzzword of our era, often with a loose reference pointing at a general notion of something technologically based. With the use of ‘digitalization’ in the thesis, I refer to the overarching and throughout process of developing and putting into practice models, mechanisms, and devices based on the binary system of ‘0’ and ‘1,’ programmed into varied algorithms. In this understanding, I regard the term as including the basic principles of ‘datafication’ (Dijck, 2014) and denoting the ubiquitous spreading of digitally based algorithms (Bucher, 2020).

I use ‘mediatization’ to refer to the process of transforming media into digital services and developing new media built on purely digital premises (such as social

¹ The articles were written and (partly) published as part of my PhD process, and my use of terms has correspondingly matured. Thus, the application of terms in the articles does not strictly follow the above definitions. The precise meaning should be clear in the combination of term and context, however.

media), resulting in an intensified or ubiquitous experience of media in everyday life. I relate the term to Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp and their work *The Mediated Construction of Reality* (Couldry and Hepp, 2017).

‘Platformization’ refers to the process of restructuring existing value chains and developing new services based on the algorithmic systematizing of customer information, customer practice and a digitally tailored offer. In the thesis, I primarily lean on the understanding of platformization as conceptualized by José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal (2018), though the essential structures are recognized in the works of Rick Srnicek (2016) and Amanda Lotz (2017).

‘Streaming service’ refers to digital subscription services built on a digital platform, incorporating the platformization principles, and in a business model where customers get temporary access—but no ownership—to curated content. (Lotz, 2017; Srnicek, 2016).

1.3 The disconnection perspective

My starting premise was that the impact of continuously digitally connected devices on the transformation of long-form reading requires exploration. With this in mind, I identified the primary perspective that guided my scrutiny of studies on digital disconnection, also commonly referred to as ‘digital detox.’ Consequently, the prevailing theme in the thesis centers on the disconnection perspective as it relates to leisure reading.

I turned to the young field of disconnection research (Syvertsen, 2020) to understand the transformative forces at play in long-form reading. According to reading-response theory and the concept of deep reading, fiction and non-fiction narratives require prolonged concentration to constitute meaning (Birkerts, 1994; Iser, 1972). I wanted to explore individuals’ experience of shortened attention spans due to proliferating digitalization (Firth et al., 2019; Terranova, 2012). The concepts developed within the field of disconnection studies pinpoint essential traits emerging in the wake of digitalization, helping to disentangle digitalization’s penetrating

influence. Thus, the perspectives intrinsic to the disconnection studies equipped me with a frame and analyzing tools. Furthermore, focusing on the interrelation between digital disconnection and attention, as in my studies on long-form leisure reading, this thesis represents a contribution to the field of disconnection studies. In the following, I will introduce the field of digital disconnection, emphasizing the perspectives put into practice in this thesis.

Digital disconnection studies represent a critical response to a continuous, digitalized daily life across personal and professional spheres (Lomborg and Ytre-Arne, 2021; Syvertsen, 2020). Resistance to media development is not new to media and communication studies (Syvertsen, 2017), but the concept of digital disconnection examines the influences of increasing digital connectivity. The broad range of research topics and the many cross-disciplinary perspectives underscore that the disconnection umbrella encompasses a family of diverse concepts. I draw on several of these throughout the thesis and the four articles.

A temporary action to achieve digital disconnection—or undertake a digital detox—appears to be a reaction to experiences of intrusive digital media. (Syvertsen, 2020; Syvertsen and Enli, 2020). The act of disconnecting is often pursued as a means to achieve more than simply being disconnected (Moe and Madsen, 2021; Sutton, 2017), whether it is real-life sociality (Kuntsman and Miyake, 2019), rest (Beattie and Daubs, 2020; Karppi et al., 2021), improved professional performance (Fast, 2021; Karlsen and Ytre-Arne, 2021), or better balance in one’s private life (Karppi et al., 2021).

In a steadily growing culture of self-optimization, the idea that digital disconnection enhance personal well-being is increasingly prevalent (Jorge, 2019; Jorge et al., 2022; Vanden Abeele, 2020; Vanden Abeele and Mohr, 2021). Studies on digital-free tourism (Syvertsen, 2022a, 2022b) and the exploring of social relations in the interplay between physical presence and social media (Abeele et al., 2018; Abel et al., 2021), are well-being perspectives intrinsic to a concept of digital disconnection. To explore leisure reading, I position myself within the tradition of scholars who underscore how disconnection practices might be more a disconnection *to* than disconnection *from* something (Jorge et al., 2022; Kaun, 2021; Sutton, 2017).

Disconnection studies highlight how strategies for coping with digital media are flexible: Disconnection and connection do not constitute a dichotomy, but represent a continuum (Karppi, 2018; Karppi et al., 2021). Disconnection practices may be part of a lifestyle (Portwood-Stacer, 2013), indicate societal dilemmas (Kuntsman and Miyake, 2022; Syvertsen, 2020), represent a well-being perspective toward life and social interaction (Baym et al., 2020; Karppi et al., 2021), highlight real-life experiences (Syvertsen, 2022b), or reflect frustration and loss of attention because of intrusive smartphones (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020).

I will highlight four essential perspectives inherent to disconnection studies that are essential to my overarching analyses. First, as already mentioned, disconnection studies engage in and motivate the questioning of well-being and the invasive character of digital media. In the context of my research, well-being is related to long-form reading as a freely chosen and preferred leisure activity. Second, digital disconnection studies question the interrelation between inner values, personal identity, the experience of authenticity, and the meaning of cognitive presence in and through digital context (Syvertsen, 2020; Syvertsen and Enli, 2020). Third, the way in which disconnection studies question experiences of time amid ubiquitous digital connection underscores the meaning-making processes intrinsic to digital media use and how they are changing due to digitalization (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020; Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021). Fourth, disconnection studies highlight how handling of ubiquitous digital connectivity is an individual responsibility. The regulation of digital connectivity is, so far, a private matter (Enli and Fast, 2023; Syvertsen, 2020).

Trine Syvertsen summarizes the state of the art in disconnection studies (2020), highlighting how digital disconnection is characterized by media users' ambivalence (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020). Further, digital disconnection is recognized by the practical handling—or the work—undertaken by the media users (Bolin, 2011; Fast, 2021), and there is an identity perspective to digital disconnection (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). The act of taking a digital detox for a shorter or longer period may be triggered by a search for authenticity (Syvertsen and Enli, 2020).

Syvertsen (2020) proposes the 'three Ps'—presence, productivity, and privacy—to characterize the influence of intrusive online media. In my work,

focusing closely on the influence of ubiquitous digitalization on the cognitive concentration required for long-form reading, I propose adding three new ‘P’ terms: power, pride, and patience (Spjeldnæs, forthcoming; see article II).

Through this research, I have become convinced of the importance of directing our attention towards digital (dis)connectivity, to comprehend what is driving the prevailing lack of attention seemingly permeating our society—and influencing our reading abilities (Baron, 2015, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021; Carr, 2010; Wolf, 2018).

2 The phenomenological approach

With an aim to understand the influence of digitalization on long-form leisure reading, I found the epistemological premise for this thesis in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. In the proceeding, I will explain the understanding of phenomenology informing this thesis.

In the process of designing the research project, and deciding on methods and informants, I decided that my empirical base would be built on the informants' sensations: I wanted to explore their experiences intrinsic to digitalization and long-form reading. Further, focusing on the influence of digital reading formats, I sought to explore the perceived consequences of how a cognitive process, such as reading, was affected by a change in the physical reading medium and context of literature consumption. I also wanted to scrutinize the perceived influence on attention and reading concentration amid continuous digital connectivity. I found that the phenomenological insistence on the study of perceived experiences as essential to understanding coincided with my project's overarching research aims.

While Marcel Merleau-Ponty's approach to phenomenology largely informed my work, a brief note about the ideas of his predecessor, Edmund Husserl is required. Edmund Husserl (1838–1917), is required. Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology, argued that human consciousness is a prerequisite to all recognition, and he insisted on the scientific value of this philosophical stance (Orbe, 2009). Conscious experiences may be treated as empirical data, even though they belong to subjective individuals. According to Husserl, the consciousness transcends its subjective outset, as it is always directed towards something objective, always *intended*. Hence, the conscious experience can be isolated or 'bracketed.' This process of isolating the experiences from the outside world makes them objectives for scientific study equal to how they originally appeared in human consciousness.

Crucial to my project is the phenomenological position that ordinary human behavior and reasoning are a means of acquiring knowledge for deeper understanding of phenomena. Epistemologically, this premise asserts that individuals' senses becomes a source of knowledge about a larger whole (Orbe, 2009), and depends on a

systematic reflection on conscious, first-person experiences (Smith, 2007). The starting point for this reflection is the direct experience of the *phenomena* as they manifest in one's mind; these can then be examined to discern the key aspects of the experience (Smith, 2007). Building on the theory of Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty developed the phenomenology of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2012), demonstrating the applicability and viability of focusing on perceptions to understand human activities.

In order to comprehend the impact of digitalization on leisure reading and to adopt the perspective of the audience in studying these phenomena, I align myself with the phenomenological tradition within media studies. The phenomenological examination of the processes involved in meaning making inherent to media consumption (from the user's perspective) has been explored in various contexts, such as broadcasting (Scannell, 1995), digital news media (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2021), and social media (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2022). These studies demonstrate how nuanced perceptions rooted in personal experiences contribute to the development of new knowledge. Furthermore, my emphasis on Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the significance of bodily perceptions for understanding meaning-making processes—even in the realm of digital media use (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2021, 2022)—underscores the relevance of this theoretical approach to my research project.

In the following, I will highlight the principles of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology that are relevant to my research questions and method. While the articles utilize different theoretical perspectives for their specific analyses (as indicated in Table 2), the studies informing the articles applied a phenomenological approach to the construction of consciousness and knowledge as the foundation for collecting empirical data.

2.1 Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach

Marcel Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach constitutes the epistemological premise for this research project. I base my scientific justification on his emphasis that, to comprehend human agency, human sensations perceived by the body are the primary source of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty's relevance to reading (in general) and to my thesis is key for two reasons: First, the phenomenological approach positions bodily perceptions as foundational to all sensemaking, as reflections build on perceived experiences. Second, Merleau-Ponty's theory clarifies the meaning-making processes intrinsic to reading, which I will describe more closely after a brief overview of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach.

Merleau-Ponty's posits that human perception precedes all understanding, emphasizing the primacy of the human body in all perceptions. According to Merleau-Ponty's epistemology, a nuanced collection of real-life sensations provides the foundation for scientific knowledge about the observable world – as it appears to the senses. He states that bodily perceptions are fundamental to understanding the surrounding world, as they are 'the background against which all acts stand out and [are] thus presupposed by them' (Landes, 2012: XXIV). Merleau-Ponty's approach to understanding human reasoning is based on the immediate experiences we all have as children (Østerberg, 1994). Children's natural openness to the world is a model of bodily perception, as it is led neither by instinct nor intelligence.

Merleau-Ponty's insistence on bodily perceptions is relevant in the shift in literature consumption from reading with one's eyes to listening with one's ears, transitioning from paper books and e-books to audiobooks. Further, the focus on attention and digital (dis)connection involves bodily perceptions more generally; handling potential digital distractions while reading requires both acts of concentration and physical, bodily adaption.

Merleau-Ponty combines 'an extreme subjectivism with an extreme objectivism' (Landes, 2012: XXXVII). There exists no clear demarcation between experiences originating from a specific subject or the interplay between multiple subjects, just as there is no division between what is considered prior and what is

presently experienced. Objectivism pertains to rationality and one's manner in conceptualizing the outside world. However, the body's perception of the world is a prerequisite for all experience, all consciousness: 'Philosophy is not the reflection of a prior truth, but rather, like art, the actualization of a truth' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: XXXIV). What is available to one's perception is always limited to what one's body can absorb and validate through personal, firsthand, sensory impressions—and those impressions are filtered through the body. Moreover, the construction of meaning is based on a consciousness based entirely on subjective perceptions.

Within the context of reading and the publishing industry, the physical interaction between readers and the reading medium plays a crucial role in understanding developments in reading. Further, the emphasis on bodily sensing as rendering experiences as purely subjective underscores the personal foundation of all scientific knowledge, regardless of the scientific method employed. And recognizing the relevance of experiences across chronology and linear timelines underscore the importance of appropriate contextualization, when translating human perceptions into scientific knowledge.

An example illustrating the importance of critical considering context is found in Merleau-Ponty's introduction to the *Phenomenological Field*. He distinguishes between the fundamental act of sensing and the experience of sense in order to acquire knowledge of the broader environment: A phenomenon is that which becomes visible, and careful observation is necessary to discern what has come into view. From the perspective of a trained phenomenologist, the human body perceives the surroundings as a phenomenological field with many layers of meaning. This process is comparable to a reader's uncovering of layers of meaning when reading a literary text—to which I will turn momentarily.

Following Husserl, *intentionality* is embedded in Merleau-Ponty's epistemology. The subject perceives and makes meaning of the surrounding world through an already intrinsic understanding of oneself as a complete whole. This pre-reflective consciousness is the basis for intentionality and prepares humans to understand the world. Intentionality is manifested through one's concrete and spatial relationship to the world. Form and matter are inseparable. This intrinsic, pre-

reflective way of relating to the world constitutes meaning for all humans. As such, intentionality is essential to understanding the cognitive processes of reading.

Further, Merleau-Ponty states the basic meaning of perspective as all perception rises from the body: ‘To see is always to see from somewhere, is it not?’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 69). The position of the subject decides what is to be seen and perceived; thus, no observations are neutral. Our bodily position and sensory capabilities shake our experiences and introduce boundaries to what we can perceive. Merleau-Ponty explains his argument by describing how we see things: specifically, the interplay between the perceiver and the perceived. What appears blurry far away becomes dazzlingly clear when up close. A shift in focus makes it possible to explore the object in greater detail. Perceptions are inherently limited by the body’s position, as the subject cannot simultaneously see both the front and the back, or the text and the context of the same item. This implies that a comprehensive view of the object, encompassing all its aspects, is unattainable. Nevertheless, the subject seeks to overcome the constraints of perspective, to uncover what may be hidden.

Merleau-Ponty introduces the notion of the ‘absolute object’ as a theoretical concept to explore the idealized possibility of perceiving an entire object all at once. This concept envisions a comprehensive view of the object as if it were observed from a 360-degree perspective, condensed into a single moment that transcends the limitations of time and space. This absolute object represents an amalgamation of infinite viewpoints concentrated into a singular act of vision, going beyond the physical dimensions of time and space. Merleau-Ponty uses this concept to examine the inherent complexities and limitations of perception.

Thus, the experience of time is essential. The subject maintains a grasp on both the immediate past and the immediate present in each moment, without the present ‘effac[ing] its past’ nor its future ‘effac[ing] its present’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 73). This understanding emphasizes the subject’s ability to integrate what has just passed with realistic expectations of the near future into their experience of the moment. These processes are automatically operationalized in reading—often without readers consciously attending to the cognitive operations involved. In this thesis, the

experience of time is also related to the influence of continuous digital connection on reading, on which I will elaborate later.

Memories are equally crucial in constituting meaning for the subject, whose firsthand perceptions are supplemented with prior experiences of perceptions. Merleau-Ponty draws on the metaphor of a house, by way of illustration. One understands that a house has pipes and an interior ceiling, despite not being visible to the subject. A house is automatically compared to other houses. The subject keeps an ‘immense world-memory,’ storing prior observations from which they can draw when supplementary information is necessary for a complete picture.

Merleau-Ponty’s epistemological understanding advocates extreme openness and the position of real presence in the world; in his view, there are no limitations to this understanding. Thus, the phenomenological approach might seem indecisive and unclear in its openness. But to Merleau-Ponty, the subject is part of the surrounding world. In his perspective, to be present and to perceive is to engage in open communication with the world.

Following Merleau-Ponty’s epistemological premise, the physical manifestations of the act of reading and one’s physical surroundings appear essential to the reading experience—which I examine. Further, as digital influence depends on digital devices, the exploration of reading in the era of digitalization depends on the human sensations of these devices and their implications. Finally, my focus on digital connectivity and its influence on attention relies on bodily interactions with devices in an effort to sustain long-form reading amid penetrating digitalization.

2.2 Phenomenology and the act of reading

The intrinsic relationship between phenomenology and the act of reading is crucial to my interaction with the topic of long-form literary reading. The cognitive principles inherent in reading are prerequisites in my exploration of the influence of digitalization on literary reading. My choice of topics for this thesis is predicated on the notion that reading contributes to essential meaning-making processes and must

thus be examined when subject to significant change (such as the influence of digitalization). When focusing on the attention required for reading, which aligns with my overarching research question, I find the phenomenological perspective on reading useful in highlighting the meaning of prolonged attention in long-form reading. I will now describe, in greater detail, the meaning of phenomenology to reader-response criticism and the act of reading.

Reader-response criticism was developed in the 1960s by Wolfgang Iser (1926–2007). Iser’s emphasis on the continuous, dialogical process between the written text and the reader consuming that text is fundamental. Iser (1978: 111) argues that the reading activity follows a classical hermeneutic structure: ‘throughout the reading process there is a continual interplay between modified expectations and transformed memories’. As described by Iser, reading as a cognitive process is compatible with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception, due to the communication between the subject and its surroundings.

Iser develops his argument on reading by describing how the reader reorientates while reading. As the text progressively provides new information about an unfolding story, the reader continuously readjusts their understanding of the conveyed message. Information is provided sequentially, shedding light on what has been read and readjusting the reader’s expectations on what is to come. These readjustments are built into the reading process and are automatically executed by the reader. Iser conceptualizes the ‘wandering viewpoint’ to denote the reader’s ever-developing understanding as their reading unfolds, like Merleau-Ponty’s perspective on bodily perception, depending on the position of the body. Moreover, this continuous adjusting of expectations by the reader closely parallels how perceptions are understood in relation to the pre-reflections, directed by an intrinsic intentionality. In the reading of literary texts, much like perceiving one’s physical surroundings, there exist layers of meaning: Literary texts convey more than what is explicitly stated, akin to observing a house only from its front facade.

Thus, the body relates to the world as the reader relates to the text. Bodily perceptions and reading experiences are subjective. However, there is a significant difference between these two meaning-making processes, related to the conception of

time. Reading requires a linear dimension of sequences unfolding in time to make meaning, such as chronology in a story. In theory, according to Merleau-Ponty, bodily sensations are independent of an ordered, time-based succession of actions.

The phenomenological approach to reading, as developed by Iser (1972, 1978), highlights the reader's active participation in the meaning-making process of reading. This insight is essential to understanding the relationship between long-form reading and the ability to sustain attention over longer periods of time.

The overarching principles in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology underscore that (a) understanding the meaning of firsthand experiences is essential to understanding human interaction with the outside world, and (b) that human perception constitutes the basis of all knowledge. The empirical data for this thesis are thus the firsthand experiences elicited in interviews. Following Iser (1972, 1978), the broad reach and applicability of a phenomenological approach are further highlighted in the decoding of the reading process. Previous experiences are essential to make meaning of a new text. Briefly summarized, reading is a mix of perceived text (from the author) and prior experiences (to the reader).

As this research project is rooted partly in the sharp increase in audiobooks via streaming services, the phenomenological approach is essential. Emphasizing bodily perceptions, the differences between reading with one's eyes or one's ears become pointed, as demonstrated in the article on how digital devices transform literary reading (Article I). Not only are the cognitive processes involved in meaning production different between reading and listening (Clowes, 2019), but the entire situation of the human body changes when limitations in space and movements no longer define the reading process, as listening can take place while walking around or cleaning the house.

Moreover, to grasp the impact of ubiquitous digital connectivity and the vast array of media options vying for the attention of leisure readers, it is crucial to consider the physical environment and the presence of digital devices (e.g., smartphones). Therefore, my empirical data, aimed at exploring these phenomena, primarily rely on personal sensations elicited through a phenomenological approach.

3 Presentation of the articles

The thesis explores one overarching research question, builds on two empirical studies, and includes four articles. I will now turn to a short presentation of the articles (see Table 1). The two qualitative interview-based studies on which the analyses rely will be presented in a later chapter.

| | Author(s)/Title | Status |
|-----|--|--|
| I | Kari Spjeldnæs and Faltin Karlsen: 'How digital devices transform literary reading: The impact of e-books, audiobooks, and online life on reading habits' | <i>New Media & Society</i> , https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221126168 (Published 11 October 2022) |
| II | Kari Spjeldnæs: 'Power, pride and patience in literary reading: Dealing with disconnection and precarious attention' | Accepted for publication in Albris, K.; Karlsen, F.; Fast, K.; Kaun, A.; Lomborg, S and Syvertsen, T (Eds.): <i>Digital Backlash. An anthology</i> . (To be published by Nordicom, 2024) |
| III | Kari Spjeldnæs: 'Platformization and publishing. Changes in literary publishing' | <i>Publishing Research Quarterly</i> , https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-022-09912-2 (Published 09 September 2022) |
| IV | Kari Spjeldnæs and Faltin Karlsen: 'Attention, ambivalence and algorithms. Publishers in the era of ubiquitous connectivity and expanding platforms' | Accepted for publication in <i>Media, Culture & Society</i> (per 22 April 2023) |

Table 1

I am the sole author of two out of four articles. Further, I am the first author of the two articles which were co-written with Professor Faltin Karlsen; I was also responsible for the major planning, executing, analyzing, and writing of these two

articles. In the following, the articles will be referred to according to their number in Table 1.

Narrowing my focus to the specific research questions explored in each article, I discovered a need for more finely grained theoretical perspectives than the general approach to meaning-making processes intrinsic to phenomenology. Consequently, I selected distinct theoretical concepts for each article, to inform the analytical processes that addressed the research questions outlined in Table 2.

| | Articles and research questions | Theoretical concepts |
|-----|--|---|
| I | <p>‘How digital devices transform literary reading’</p> <p>How does digital reading technology influence reading habits?</p> <p>How do readers handle distractions following digital connections?</p> | <p>Affordances (Gibson, 1977, 1979; Norman, 2013)</p> |
| II | <p>‘Power, pride and patience in literary reading’</p> <p>How do readers of literature experience the balancing of long-form reading with digital connection in the age of deep mediatization?</p> | <p>Temporal ambivalence (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020)</p> <p>Authenticity (Syvertsen and Enli, 2020)</p> <p>Self-regulation (Madsen, 2015)</p> |
| III | <p>‘Platformization and publishing. Changes in literary publishing’</p> <p>How do streaming services and growth in audiobooks influence literary publishing?</p> | <p>Platformization (Dijck et al., 2018)</p> |
| IV | <p>‘Attention, ambivalence and algorithms’</p> <p>How do literary publishers perceive conditions for literary reading given ubiquitous digital connections?</p> <p>How do literary publishers perceive their field of professional responsibilities when a ubiquitous digital connection is the new normal?</p> | <p><i>Habitus</i>, field, and capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2014)</p> |

Table 2

I will now continue to present the articles and the respective application of theoretical perspectives according to the research questions in each article.

3.1 'How digital devices transform literary reading'

The first article explores how affordances offered by digital technologies influence reading habits. The article builds on a study in which semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with devoted leisure readers. (The empirical studies will be presented in Chapter 5.)

When analyzing the empirical data, the affordances concept helped to frame my analysis of human interaction with new technology. The term was coined by the ecological psychologist James Gibson to describe an animal in relation to its surrounding environment (Gibson, 1977, 1979), and the design theorist Donald Norman introduced the term into the field of human–computer interaction, to capture the possible actions available to a subject in a given situation (Norman, 2013). Thus, affordances include the reciprocal relationship between a subject's capabilities, which depend on physical prerequisites for the situation, and personal possibilities, which depend on experiences and desired outcomes. The relevance of the affordances is contingent upon the user, while the quality of the affordances lies in the relationship between the properties of an object and the user's goals with that object. Affordances are intrinsic to an object, and are activated only when used by someone (Mannell, 2019; McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015; Nagy and Neff, 2015; Syvertsen et al., 2019).

The concept of affordances informed my research on digital devices' influence on leisure reading; it enabled me to identify the meaning of digital devices and the practical implication of digitalization to the readers of literature. As demonstrated in the article, the concept helped to disentangle the different relationships between reading a paper book and reading on a tablet. While the content is equal, the physical reading substrate is not (Hillesund et al., 2022), and the affordances intrinsic to the digital reading device constitute a sharp difference between the two formats. Further, in scrutinizing the influence of audiobooks, other affordances are at play (literally), defined by the opportunities in the digital device for audio listening and the convenience of a streaming service (e.g., via a smartphone; Spjeldnæs and Karlsen, 2022).

The article contributes new knowledge on the experiences of the digital reading of e-books and audiobooks, the meaning of the inherent affordances to digital reading devices, and the influence of digital connectivity on leisure reading. The three significant findings conveyed in the article are that (a) experienced readers adapt the reading format and content to the situation; (b) digital reading, especially in audiobooks, favors lighter texts; and (c) identifying oneself as a reader with innate reading habits motivates one to resist digital distractions.

3.2 ‘Power, pride and patience in literary reading’

Article II focuses on how the readers handle their literary leisure reading amid ubiquitous digital connection. The empirical material was generated from the study in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with devoted leisure readers. The article draws on the general notion of the mediatized daily life (Couldry and Hepp, 2017) and the interrelation between penetrating digital media and the lack of available time, characterizing the attention economy (Davenport and Beck, 2001).

In my analysis, I applied three perspectives from the field of disconnection studies: ‘temporal ambivalences’ (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020), ‘authenticity’ (Syvertsen and Enli, 2020), and ‘self-regulation’ (Madsen, 2015: 124). Analyzing the interview transcripts through the temporal lens clarified how interviewees alluded to threats to attention by referencing time. The authenticity perspective brought the interviewees’ fundamental meaning of personal values inherent to literature and reading to the surface. Finally, self-regulation served to disentangle interviewees’ continuous internal deliberation and negotiation to balance a digital daily life.

The analysis elicited a typology of three attributes to describe the interrelation between disconnection and concentrated attention, as demonstrated by literary readers: the *pride in self-understanding* related to the personal value of reading, the *power to self-regulate* digital connectivity embedded in an identity as a reader; and the *enduring patience* to read based on experience. This typology highlights the

parameters necessary to achieve a balance between the desire for sustained attention and the prevalence of digital connection as the default option.

3.3 ‘Platformization and publishing’

Article III investigates the changes occurring in literary publishing and draws upon empirical material from the second study conducted as part of my PhD research. The study consisted of qualitative interviews conducted with editors-in-chief who oversee the publication of fiction and non-fiction for adult readers. The article focuses on the influence of audiobooks on literary work.

The emergence of platform-based services is a prominent characteristic of ubiquitous digitalization. Thus, to understand the digital influence on trade publishing following the sharp rise in audio listening, I applied the theory of platformization, as developed by José van Dick, Thomas Poell, and Martin de Waal (2018). The authors propose three key concepts essential to the processes of platformization:

Datafication denotes the transformative force when many actions are translated into numbers (Bucher, 2020). An example in trade publishing is the rearticulation of the power relationships in the ecosystem when analogue paper books sold per copy are transformed into digital audio distributed through streaming services (Sundet and Colbjørnsen, 2021).

Commodification captures the process whereby networked platforms reconstruct offers and services into commodities for sale, ‘valued through at least four different types of currency: attention, data, users, and money’ (Dijck et al., 2018: 37). Processes of commodification thus apply to any kind of offer or any ‘thing’ that is digitally promotable and for sale.

Selection serves as a means to optimize the matching of customers with offers tailored to them (Dijck et al., 2018): that is, the processes of datafication and commodification are realized through selection. The optimal curation of personalized and targeted offers, supported by the processing of collected data, forms the

foundation for successful transactions. Moreover, well-executed selection is often crucial for establishing differentiation from competitors (Lotz, 2017).

Through the application of van Dijck et al.'s key concepts, the transformative powers embedded within platformization processes in trade publishing were revealed. Platformization underscores the significance of specific genres, as some are more easily adapted to success as audio books in streaming services than others. Further, the analysis showed how concepts of quality are under transformation, and how the combination of diminishing economic margins and digitalization leads to stricter editorial decisions. Finally, the increasing dependence on digital platforms and streaming services enhances pressure to customize literature, in order to attract the readership.

3.4 ‘Attention, ambivalence and algorithms’

Article IV explores how literary publishers perceive the influence of digitalization on reading conditions and their professional responsibilities, focusing on the interrelation between structural premises and perceived experiences. To achieve this aim, I drew on perspectives of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically his concept of *habitus*, which is closely intertwined with his concepts of field and capital.

Briefly, the concept of *habitus* captures how people—the acting subjects—integrate their past experiences with their present actions (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2014). *Habitus* encompasses the dual nature of personal dispositions. On the one hand, they persist over time; on the other, they are transposable, so different features are activated, depending on the social context (Grenfell, 2014). In general, *habitus* underlines the link between the surrounding structure and the agency available to the subject in the present. Within the context of my study, *habitus* highlights the diverse array of characteristics intrinsic to one’s personal background, which also holds relevance for leisure readers—although this article does not apply a classical Bordieuan analysis relating taste to class, education, and cultural background (Bourdieu, 1984).

Bourdieu's concept of field denotes the social world surrounding individuals. Less comprehensive than a social system, a social field is delineated through shared practices, values, and norms (e.g., in finance, politics, or cultural institutions such as publishing houses and the publishing industry). Individuals are socialized into fields. By internalizing the meaning of roles and relationships within a specific field, they encounter the field as a social arena in which to realize the obligations and desires within their reach. Every field is characterized by specific rules and structures, as is the field of trade publishing analysed in this article.

The power at stake concerning *habitus*, field, and the internal struggles between them is deeply related to Bourdieu's concept of 'capital'. Capital transforms into power. In addition to the materialization of capital in manifest objects, it emerges, embodied, through individuals. Practice through *habitus* actualizes this embodied capital. Thus, an individual's (economic, social, and cultural) capital, decides their *habitus* and their position in the field. Further, their level of adapting to and acting within the field according to the rules and logic of the field depend on their *habitus* and capital.

The analysis demonstrated the unified understanding that emerges and rules within a field that considers itself to be autonomous. The symbolic capital within a field makes the individuals perceive their field as differentiated from the surrounding fields. Seen through Bourdieu's lens, with which one can uncover social agency, the power of the shared *habitus* among the publishers clearly emerged.

This article highlights the transitional power intrinsic to the platform-based media industries, and I conclude with two main findings. First, a lack of attention triggers a sense of urgency for the future of literary reading. Second, digital transition entails an overarching ambivalence. Stakeholders in literary publishing perceive a battle for time and question the future of reading. They experience that media on platform-based streaming services is competing with traditional reading. Moreover, ubiquitous digital connection is leading to a change in professional *habitus*.

Following this section's overview of the topics, key perspectives, and findings presented in the four articles, I turn now to an overview of the field of trade

publishing. This field serves as an important backdrop to the empirical studies, the analyses, and the final conclusion to the thesis.

4 The industrial premises

4.1 Trade publishing

My topic of research is the publishing industry of long-form leisure literature (i.e., fiction and non-fiction literature) and its audiences (i.e., the readers). In the following, I clarify the industrial context of my two studies and the relevance of their research questions to the field of trade publishing. Moreover, I scrutinize the driving forces influenced by ubiquitous digitalization. The transforming power intrinsic to platformization processes has been significant to my understanding of digitalization's influence. As such, this chapter includes a description of the mechanisms and meaning of platformization.

For those with an interest in this aspect of the publishing industry, it is essential to acknowledge the contributions of John B. Thompson. His work on the increased commercialization of publishing into bestsellerism (Thompson, 2010) and the radical digital change (Thompson, 2021) provide valuable insights into the history and development of trade publishing. Here, I must include a comment on the usage of terms. Thompson refers to the 'trade' when describing publishing literature for leisure and recreation, in line with general industry practice. The term refers to the market of fiction and non-fiction literature aimed at general readers, historically associated with retail sales through bookstores (Thompson, 2010). This market encompasses a wide range of genres, including non-fiction works that are not primarily intended for long-form reading (e.g., travel guides or cookbooks). In the context of this thesis, I refer to literary publishing (and publishers) to underline the focus on long-form reading rather than the business perspective—though the two are related (especially in the era of digitalization, to which I will turn later). I use 'trade' and 'literary' publishing in this thesis to differentiate between the commodities for sale and the works of literature to read.

Building on Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts, Thompson introduces four features in the field of trade publishing (Thompson, 2010: 4) to describe its pertinent characteristics. First, Thompson emphasizes the 'plurality of fields' in the publishing

industry. While he concentrates on trade publishing, the industry as a whole includes four clearly distinguished markets, including the fields of educational, academic, and professional books. Like Thompson, I deal with the trade market, to which the genres of fiction and non-fiction belong.

Second, Thompson highlights the ‘relational terms’ within trade publishing and the many neighboring fields. Interrelations and competition between agents and organizations are inherent to the daily practice of trade publishing—at all times and levels (Halvorsen et al., 2020).

Third, resources enable the capacity to act in the field, expressed in Bourdieu’s concept of capital. Thompson defines the publisher’s capital as economic, human, social, intellectual, and symbolic, highlighting economic and symbolic capital as essential to a publishing company’s competitiveness. Only two ‘currencies’ count in trade publishing: sales numbers (constituting financial capital) and reviews and awards for state recognition (symbolic capital). ‘These are the only two criteria—there simply are no other’ (Srnicek, 2016).

Fourth, there is the ‘logic of the field’ itself. The field of trade publishing depends on, and exists because of, individuals acting according to rules within the field. Thompson compares the logic of the field of trade publishing to the grammar of a language. Native speakers utilize their language without necessarily being aware of the underlying rules and principles governing its structure. As such, individuals working in trade publishing act according to a certain logic—a logic they help uphold and develop over time. As a result, they can describe their field in greater or lesser detail but may not be able to explain all of its particularities and interrelations.

Thompson’s four features of the field of trade publishing highlights the fact that fiction and non-fiction publishing houses belong to a structure of organizations and rules traditionally designed for the sale of paper books to end customers through retail. Further, the four features underscore trade publishing’s multiple relations to other fields, including fiction and non-fiction authors; book printing and distribution; bookstores; and book clubs. This brings us to another central concept necessary to delimit the field of trade publishing—the publishing chain (Thompson, 2010). The publisher is an intermediary on a line between the two extreme points: the author and

the reader. To fulfill their obligations once a book has been accepted for publication, the publisher must ensure the quality of the work through internal or external resources, such as acquiring editors, copy editors, and designers. The publisher must also facilitate the printing and distribution of the book, so that it is available for sale to the end customer. Thompson differentiates between the supply chain, which encompasses the entire workflow and process, and the value chain (Porter, 1985), which emphasizes the value added at each stage of the process.

A short comment on Bourdieu before focusing more closely on the influence of digitalization. Apart from the use of Bourdieu's concept in my fourth article, I have not set out to produce a classical Bordieuan analysis of cultural consumption. While I study the experiences of users, I do not analyze consumer choices and tastes according to *habitus* and fields (Bourdieu, 1984). However, Bourdieu's perspectives have been applied in a number of relevant studies on the publishing industry and reading culture (Bourdieu, 1994; Halvorsen et al., 2020; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Rønning and Slaatta, 2011; Thompson, 2010). Thus, this research project relates to a Bordieuan tradition and will—hopefully—contribute to this scholarly dialogue on the development of cultural consumption and publishing industries.

Digitalization changes the value chain, from the publishers to the end customers. Indeed, streaming an audiobook to smartphones on the go via earbuds is quite different from visiting the bookstore to buy a paper book and carrying it home to read by lamplight on the couch (see Articles III and IV).

4.2 Digitalization in trade publishing

Turning now to the influence of digitalization on trade publishing, I will focus on features that are essential to structural change, in general, and on the platform-based streaming services that have facilitated the sharp increase in audiobooks.

A set of digitalized value chains for trade literature has emerged alongside digital formats and the general digitalization of sales and consumption. Concentrating on the part of the chain between the publisher and the end customer, as I do in this

thesis, three main models influence the trade publishers: The first of these is the digital sale of paper books. The end customer buys the book directly from the publisher or through a digital bookstore (e.g., Amazon.com, Adlibris.no, or Ark.no), and the paper book is delivered to their doorstep or somewhere to be picked up (e.g., a bookstore). The second model is the digital sales of digital books: that is, the copy sale of audio or e-books to be directly downloaded to the end customer's digital account and device, provided by the same digital bookstores. The third model is digital streaming through services offering access to digital books—mostly audiobooks—through a subscription service, such as Audible.com or Storytel.no.

Bourdieu (1994) differentiates between small-scale and large-scale publishers by referring to their (relative) autonomy, arguing for the smaller and independent publishers in contrast to the large producers of literature for mass consumption. In Thompson's commercial perspective on publishing (2010: 146), he underscores the business premises and underlines the 'benefits of scale.' He highlights the significant implications of digitalization: the rationalization of the back office, the discounts and advances due to negotiations in the value chain, and the need for investing 'in IT and the infrastructural systems that are so vital for publishing houses today' (Thompson, 2010: 151). Further, he underscores how 'the logic of the field' is affected by a polarization characterized by the consolidation of publishing houses and increased focus on bestsellers; this kind of 'extreme publishing' (Thompson, 2010: 154) is visible in large gambles on a few titles with vast market potential.

The acquisitions and consolidation of the publishing business in the last decade (Midttømme et al., 2021; Thompson, 2021) demonstrate the increased importance of economic power to maintain strong positions in the trade. This shift provides the backdrop for the empirical studies in this thesis. On the one hand, digital development has resulted in large-scale demands for economic resources. On the other hand, the development of platform-based streaming services has enhanced the value of scalability. Large-scale publishers with the economic muscles to invest in digital infrastructure thus benefit from acquiring more content for their system. However, small-scale publishers become dependent on large corporations, as they can

neither afford nor defend similar investments, given their scale of production and sales.

Economic capacity to invest in digital infrastructure and marketing and technical development are the main features of running streaming services, from handling content and customers to customer satisfaction and the marketing and sales of subscriptions. The technological infrastructure is therefore the prerequisite for operation and demands initial funding, development, and support. However, this scalable technology requires a growing market to fulfil its economic potential. Moreover, since the service necessitates ongoing support to keep pace with overall digital advancements and ensure customer satisfaction, it is highly advantageous to distribute the technical costs across a broader market.

Thus, the advent of streaming services resulted in a transition from copy sale to digital transcription, affecting the relationship between the publishing trade and the end customers. In addition, the enhanced position of streaming services within the book market amplifies the significance of technological and economic power, favoring large-scale operations (Thompson, 2021). Consequently, national borders and even language barriers are superseded by economies of scale.

4.3 Norwegian trade publishing

In this overview of literary reading and publishing in Norway in the era of digitalization, which serves as the backdrop for the two empirical studies in this thesis, I will start by sketching a general picture. Norway is a thoroughly digitalized country (Deloitte, 2018), where internet access and the smartphone comprise everyday necessities (Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2018), whether to purchase a bus ticket or communicate with the bank.

Surveys on media consumption show that people's internet use has surpassed television consumption in the last decade (Statistisk sentralbyrå, [SSB] 2023). However, the reading of paper books constitutes a tiny component of general media

consumption: In 2022, the figure was 17 minutes a day (audiobooks not included), in contrast to the 239 minutes spent on the internet. Norwegian statistics confirm the international trend in media use, with digital media use (such as the internet, sound, and video) outcompeting the analogue reading of newspapers and books (Mannell, 2019; McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015; Midttømme et al., 2021; Nagy and Neff, 2015).

Norwegian publishing houses handle the publishing process from the early stages of editing to finalizing the manuscript, in collaboration with the author, and subsequently taking care of the book's production, marketing, sales, and distribution, with sales operations as the final stage. The publishing houses and their editorial staff are essential for acquiring and developing original literature and new authorship. This differs from trade publishing in countries like England and America, where literary agents are intermediaries between the authors and the publishers, and are involved in the editorial processes with the author before the publishers' engagement.

The Norwegian literary system builds on a set of agreements between unions, of which the agreements between the Norwegian Publisher's Association and the different authors' organizations are essential in ensuring collective agreements to regulate legal issues, decide on the economic exchange between the publishers and the authors through set royalty levels, and outline the scheme of cooperation and shared tasks between the authors and the publishers. The high level of collectiveness and cooperation in Norwegian publishing may explain why the operations of literary agents in Norway are limited to the sale of rights to translations and remediations into (for example) films or television series.

Further, the Norwegian literary system is closely linked to national cultural politics, ensuring public support for Norwegian-language literature through three primary operations: the first two of these are a tax exemption on the copy sale of books (not on subscription to streaming services) and a set price on new titles.² Third,

² The Norwegian book system has been exempted from competition law: A fixed price has been obligatory on new titles (from a publisher who is a member of the Norwegian Publishers' Association) until 1 May the year following publication. This regulation makes it impossible to include new titles in a streaming service, since all streaming services are subscription based, with business models building on an 'all you can eat' principle, without any notion of set value per title. A new book law confirming the principle of set prices for all formats

the Norwegian state supports contemporary Norwegian literature by ensuring the availability of paper books and e-books in libraries, following genre-specific agreements (Halvorsen et al., 2020; Tallerås et al., 2019).

Norway's literary market is treated as a national market by the participating actors, with a focus on Norwegian-language literature. Hence, Norwegian trade publishing is characterized by a strong emphasis on titles in the Norwegian language (including translated titles), which entails that its marketing is specifically targeted towards a Norwegian audience. It should be added that no statistics are available concerning the sale of English-language books sold in Norway, such as e-books sold to Kindles through Amazon or English-language audiobooks sold through the Amazon-owned Audible. However, there is reason to believe that this is a significant number, not least because the general level of English is high in the country.

4.4 Structure and ownership in Norwegian trade publishing

The influence of platformization as demonstrated through the impact of streaming services for audiobooks, is linked to a backdrop characterized by ownership and financial power. To frame the influence of digitalization on Norwegian leisure reading, and especially to frame the everyday life of the publishers, I present an overview of the essential publishing houses and the recent changes in ownership among them.

Since the last decade of the 20th century, three large publishing companies have dominated the field of trade publishing: Cappelen Damm, Gyldendal (not to be confused with the Danish Gyldendal), and Aschehoug, with Vigmostad & Bjørke steadily growing into a predominant position among the large publishing house.

will be voted over by the Norwegian Parliament in summer 2023. The set price regulation distinguishes the Norwegian market from many other markets, such as the Swedish or Danish market, where there are no fixed prices on books and thus no regulatory constraints on including new titles in a streaming service. In this regard, a fixed price regulation on new titles serves to protect the copy sale of new titles and limit growth in streaming services.

These companies are publishing houses and media concerns that are smothering smaller publishing houses.

Medium-sized publishing houses historically important to Norwegian trade publishing are Samlaget, Kagge (owned by Danish Politiken since April 2022), Oktober (Aschehoug), Tiden (Gyldendal), Press, Pax, and Spartacus. There is no clear consensus on what constitutes a medium-sized versus a small publishing house. However, as expressed in reviews, prizes, and public attention, Kolon (Gyldendal), Pitch (Bonnier), Res Publica, and Pelican are examples of small but influential publishing houses in the field of Norwegian trade publishing. In 2018, Strawberry Publishing entered Norwegian publishing and has rapidly grown its business. In September 2022, the publishing houses Pax, Spartacus, Dreyer, and Press consolidated into Forente Forlag, to become partly owned by Gyldendal.

The large publishing houses are vertically integrated, with ownership in operations distributing paper books, such as Forlagssentralen ('Publishers' Central,' Gyldendal) and Sentraldistribusjon ('Central Distribution,' Cappelen Damm). Further, they own chains of bookstores, such as Ark (Gyldendal), Norli (Aschehoug, together with Norgesgruppen), and Akademika (Vigmostad & Bjørke).

Over the years, international entities such as the Swedish company Bonnier and the Danish company Egmont have held ownership positions in the Norwegian publishing industry. Bonnier's ownership in Cappelen publishing house dates back to the 1980s and was merged with Egmont's existing ownership of Damm in 2007 into Cappelen Damm. In 2021, Swedish Bonnier bought the majority of Strawberry publishing house and within short time all of Strawberry became a Norwegian Bonnier. Thus, Bonnier held significant ownership in two trade publishing operations until Danish Egmont enlarged their half of Cappelen Damm to become a sole owner by the summer of 2021. Further, in March 2022, the Danish Politiken announced their takeover of Kagge publishing house. International ownership in the Norwegian trade market is (thus far) limited to sister companies in the Scandinavian countries. Whether the international influence in the Norwegian book market continues to be Scandinavian or become more global remains to be seen.

Cappelen Damm launched the Norwegian operation of Storytel as a joint venture with the Swedish mother company in 2014. Storytel is currently the largest streaming service for literature in Norway. Next is Fabel, a Norwegian-based streaming service launched in 2017, developed by Lydbokforlaget, a publisher of audiobooks that is co-owned by Aschehoug and Gyldendal. Vigmostad & Bjørke sells e-books through the digital bookstore Ebok and the streaming service Ebok Premium.

When Bonnier withdrew from the ownership of Cappelen Damm in 2021, the Danish Egmont (as the sole owner of Cappelen Damm) and the mother company of Swedish Storytel became the co-owners of the Norwegian branch of Storytel. After Bonnier's takeover of Strawberry later in 2021, they launched their streaming service Bookbite in Norway in 2022. In 2021, the Swedish streaming service Nextory entered the Norwegian streaming market.

4.5 Sales and distribution of digital literature in Norway

From 2014 to 2022, digital literature, in streaming and copy sales, has increased its market share compared to physical sales through bookstores and other physical and digital sales channels. Thus far, the increase in digital sales—especially audiobooks via streaming services—has largely balanced out the decline in the copy sale of literature, even in an ever more complex media landscape saturated with diverse digital content (Midttømme et al., 2021).

In this Norwegian media landscape, the growth of e-books has been slow since an industry launch in 2011, representing 3.2% of total sales in 2018 and 3.8% in 2022. This development is comparable to the spread of e-books in other non-English-speaking markets, such as those in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and France (Bergström et al., 2017). The spread of Norwegian digital audiobooks is in striking contrast to Norwegian-language e-books. Streaming services have facilitated a

significant increase in audiobooks, rising from 10% to 23.5% of total sales from 2018 to 2022³ (Norwegian Publishers' Association [NPA], 2022).

The introduction of subscription-based streaming services is essential to explaining the rapid growth in audiobooks. Both e-books and digital audiobooks were available for sale and downloading before Storytel entered the Norwegian market with Norwegian titles in 2015. However, the significant rise in digital consumption aligns with the growth of streaming services.

Comparing the growth of e-books and audiobooks, one can argue that the increase of audiobooks coincides with the spread of smartphones, and that the convenience of listening to audiobooks while doing other things (e.g., driving or gardening) has enhanced the growth in audiobooks compared to e-books, regardless of the model of sale and distribution. However, while the differences in affordances between the e-book and the audiobook play into the level of spread and penetration (Gibson, 1977; Kuzmičová et al., 2020; Norman, 2013; Schwabe et al., 2022; Spjeldnæs and Karlsen, 2022), the transformative power inherent to platform-based streaming services appears overarching.

The rise of audiobooks in streaming services implies a significant change in the Norwegian trade market. Worth noting, however, is the fact that paper books hold a significant position in the trade: According to sales numbers and statistics, most literary consumption consists of text reading on paper. Moreover, from an industrial perspective, it is essential to note that audiobooks originate from the production of text-based books (Colbjørnsen, 2021a; Midttømme et al., 2021). The emphasis on streaming and platform-based services in this thesis, as in recent work on reading and the literary industry in general, depends on audiobooks' immediate and penetrating impact on streaming services (Schwabe et al., 2022; Tattersall Wallin and Nolin, 2020; Thompson, 2021).

The Norwegian example underscores the vulnerability of smaller publishing houses in the streaming economy. When the smaller publishing houses Pax, Spartacus, and Press announced their merger into a new publishing association and a

³ Before 2022, the numbers were based on a customer listening to more than 20% of a book. From 2022, the comparable basis is listening to more than 15% of a book.

joint venture with Gyldendal, the meaning of scale and digital development in literary publishing was clearly stated. The small publishers explained this new constellation with their need for technical infrastructure and economic muscles to handle the digital reality of trade publishing (Neraal, 2022).

The growth in digital consumption has led to a decrease in the price paid per title consumed. A title is, on average, cheaper in the digital format of an e-book than a paper book. Titles in streaming services usually represent an even lower return per title consumed. Hence, digitalization, in general, and explicitly streaming services mean that everybody earning their income from book sales is exposed to higher economic risk; this holds true across the value chain, from the author to the retailer (Midttømme et al., 2021). Thus, the introduction of streaming services demonstrates the power of scale and economic resources.

Further, this brief overview of Norwegian trade publishing underscores Bourdieu's argument concerning the interrelation between capital and power (Grenfell, 2014). The vertical integration process demonstrates the trade publishing industry's dependence on a capital-intensive digital infrastructure. Moreover, with power concentrated among a few leading publishing groups and even cross-ownership with digital operations, a limited number of people are involved in the overarching decisions. Given its general tendency to recruit employees from a small range of fields (Thompson, 2010), the Norwegian trade faces the challenge of critically testing favored strategies—an argument I explore in the article on publishers in an era of ubiquitous connectivity and expanding platforms (Article IV).

4.6 Norwegian leisure readers

Measuring people's reading habits is challenging. The number of books sold is one parameter to measure interest in books, and it does give an indication—though it may not provide facts about the amount of reading. The number of paper books sold in the Norwegian trade publishing industry fell by 4.2% per year from 2011 to 2020 (Midttømme et al., 2021). The decrease has continued, with 8.5% fewer paper books

sold in 2022 compared to 2020 (NPA, 2023). This parallels the introduction of e-books and streaming services for audiobooks into the Norwegian market. It is worth noting, however, that the fall in paper books is not compensated for by the relatively small rise in e-books, indicating a transition from reading text to listening, in the consumption of literature. Although the share of audio listening is less developed in the statistics, SSB (2023) does report that 6% to 8% of the population listened daily to audiobooks between 2017 and 2020.

According to the same statistics, about one fourth of the Norwegian population read books. However, there are essential differences relating to age between readers. For example, 3% reported that they had read an e-book in 2020. In general, there has been a decrease in daily reading day between 2015 and 2020, from 16 to 13 minutes. The most significant is the 10-minute fall in daily reading among 16- to 24-year-olds, from 16 to 6 minutes. The decrease among older adults is minor in comparison: Among 65- to 79-year-olds, 34% reported reading daily, in comparison to 24% among 16- to 24-year-olds. (These numbers solely relate to the text reading of books. Audiobooks are not included (SSB, 2023).)

With regards to libraries, there was a decrease of 15% in the lending of books for adults between 2010 and 2019, continuing a descent from the first decade of 2000. However, there was an increase of more than 20% in the lending of children's books during the same period.

4.7 The platformization of trade publishing

Having delved into the Norwegian trade market to present both a frame and a backdrop for the two empirical studies, I will now focus on the driving forces intrinsic to processes of platformization. I argue that, to disentangle the changes in literature and long-form reading due to digitalization—and to understand this field in 2020—the power and mechanisms inherent to platform-based streaming services must be considered.

The introduction of streaming services, such as Audible and Storytel, has led to an accelerating growth in audiobooks in recent years. These services possess the ability to revolutionize the publishing industry in two key ways: first, literature reading is transformed into listening through audiobooks; and second, the conventional model of copy sales is supplanted by subscription-based models and novel business approaches for literature producers, namely the publishers and authors. Hence, literary publishing has become increasingly dependent on technological development, data collection, algorithms, and—in general—overarching technological structures (Dijck, 2014; Dijck et al., 2018; Nieborg and Poell, 2018).

Algorithm-driven streaming services enhance the polarization between good and bad sellers (Lotz, 2017; Srnicek, 2016), a well-known mechanism in the book market (Thompson, 2010). Fewer titles reach large audiences in this situation, with increased blockbuster effects for the few, and fewer opportunities for the many. Therefore, the driving forces behind these mechanisms need closer consideration to understand the ongoing change in literary publishing.

Through datafication processes, networked platforms radically increase the number of aspects transformed into quantitative data (Srnicek, 2016). Hence, data left by users have become a new currency in cultural industries. Comparable to the television industry, criteria other than audience numbers are becoming essential and challenge the traditional schemes of value creation and value estimates (Sundet, 2021).

Access to user data has become a key with which to develop customer offers; moreover, whoever holds that key holds power over actors in cultural industries (Colbjørnsen, 2021b). Data are ‘raw resources’ available for analysis and the customizing of offers, as the latter are derived from evaluations based on the tracking of data left behind by users (Dijck et al., 2018). Further, the datafication of business enforces new regimes of production and value estimation, based on the collection and streaming of user data. Traditional qualitative assessments are challenged by the rise in datafied quantitative measurement, which might influence deliberations in

processes traditionally based on human consideration, such as the notion of quality in literary texts (Lotz, 2017).

New power structures emerge in the wake of penetrating digitalization (Srnicek, 2016). As such, a new agent can assume a powerful position in the publishing industry: the digital platform (and its owner). Furthermore, with the help of datafication, commodification, and selection concepts, new modes of agency emerge (Dijck et al., 2018). To enhance economic power, features such as scalability and curation become essential to optimizing in accordance with the premises of quantification. Thus, the introduction of streaming services has made the mechanisms of platformization into driving forces in the publishing industry.

The datafication of business entails new regimes of production and estimation of value: ‘the systematic collection, algorithmic processing, circulation, and monetization of user data’ (Dijck et al., 2018: 4). These operations are conducted between the content provider and the user and belong to the new platform mechanism. This ‘process of commensuration’ (Dijck et al., 2018: 45), in which different operations and perspectives are merged into numbers and systematized in a platform structure, lays the foundation for efficacy and precision at a previously unseen level, granting the platform owners a competitive advantage. Platform owners and platform-based services end up competing with publishers for power positions.

As in other cultural industries, power in publishing has moved from the creator and producers towards the customers (Lotz, 2017). The distributors closest to the customer have enhanced their position. Digitalization has developed and systematized the end customer relationship. In a platform-based industry, the distributor has grown out of old frames to occupy positions previously reserved for operators within marketing, storage, and sales.⁴ In this way, the distributors compete with the publishers for powerful positions in the value chain of books (Thompson, 2021).

Datafication includes a detailed analysis of customer preferences and behavior based on customers’ actual doings translated into numbers (Dijck, 2014).

Accordingly, user analyses that are made into reports belong to the service, and not to

⁴ If streaming services offering literature can be compared to an actor in the analogue value chain of books, it is the book clubs, which also combine curation, marketing, sales, storage, and distribution within one operation.

the publishers. User data are part of the services' capital base and become negotiating currency (Srniczek, 2016). Publishers' access to these data depends on their agreement with streaming services.

Furthermore, user data and analyses become helpful information for building publishing strategies. Precise metrics emerge, which can be integrated into developing original works for a broader audience—whether these are future backlist series, single titles, or investments in target groups. Those with access to large bases of user data acquire an advantage over competitors.

Moreover, the platformization processes influence the marketing of literature. For example, user data are essential to streaming services when customer offers are selected and presented. Offers are pre-programmed based on customers' earlier preferences. Knowledge about the combination of groups of users and their consumption at a given time or in a given situation lays the foundation for programming algorithms to do the essential curation and turn marketing operations into 'hybrid gatekeeping mechanisms' (Maasø and Spilker, 2022). A combination of technical and human processing becomes a means to optimize breakthrough and to enhance attractivity towards customers via mechanisms such as front boosting, novelty boosting, choice narrowing, and context confirming.

The number of copies sold used to be crucial to the publishers' financial results. The same held true for prices and discounts. In a platform structure, these numbers are partly supplied and partially exchanged with numbers accounting for users' behavior. Users of a platform service leave collectable and countable tracks. Some of these numbers are comparable with former copy-based numbers. A title's economic success can be measured in the number of copies sold and the number of digital accesses. What is new, however, is the possibility of detailed quantitative measurements of users' involvement and consumption. The importance of ownership to gather data measuring users' behavior is equally new.

The traditional value chain, which depends on the sales of single-copy books, requires customers to pay for one book after another, often in a bookstore. It therefore used to be a publisher's goal to ensure an economy enabling investments in future books with the turnover from copies sold, enabling more books to be published.

Literature sales channels were characterized by their physical and practical attributes as providers of separate single copies, whether being a bookstore, a warehouse, or a book club selling literature.

Subscription services depend on subscribers' satisfaction with the complete service, which includes the technical quality of apps, curated selection, customer service, monthly price, etc. At the same time, customers should be encouraged to consume offered content; otherwise, they are likely to opt out. A subscription service must thus carefully balance the turnover from customers' subscriptions with their cost for content (Lotz, 2017). As such, the subscription-based streaming service and the publisher providing content do not necessarily share interests. Moreover, the publishers become dependent on subscription services, whose turnover is only indirectly based on their presentation and processing of the literary works.

From a publisher's perspective, the difference from copy sales is striking. The selling of books was the main task of their traditional retailer. The book sellers' level of success is directly correlated to the number of books sold, while a subscription service's measure of success is the number of subscribers. Their financial results depend on the number of subscribers and their subscription length. Investment in new subscribers is a continuous matter (Källén, 2021): A subsequent stream of subscribers opting out must be replaced and, at best, outnumbered.

The development of technology as the base of subscription-based streaming services is initiated and paid for by organizations with solid commercial incentives (Srnicek, 2016). This leads to asymmetrical relationships (Colbjørnsen et al., 2021) and enforces the possible inequality of power (Mathieu and Jorge, 2020). Content providers and users become dependent on the services, while the services control the connection between publishers and users. They manage the data left by users, which can be used to further develop the service and better tailor offers to customers.

Further, the publishers' profit tends to decrease, as does the authors' revenue (Have and Pedersen, 2015; Midttømme et al., 2021). Subscription services destabilize the traditional connection between a single copy and economic value and make consumer price independent of consumption (Colbjørnsen et al., 2021). Hence, the power relationships in the ecosystem are rearticulated. Further, the industry must

accommodate a high risk of a decrease in revenue (Sundet and Colbjørnsen, 2021). As a result, there is a risk of deterioration in the overall offer of published books (Spilker and Colbjørnsen, 2020).

Customers' behavior while reading or listening to a digital book via a streaming service may constitute data for developing a publishing strategy. Algorithm-based reports that show when readers stop reading and which narrative structures ensure longer reading spans inform the systematic mapping out of literary stories, according to customers' behavior. Norwegian trade publishing does not yet seem to systematize such practices (Article III). Nevertheless, the options are being identified, and new modes of processing content are emerging.

Hence, with the advent of pervasive digitalization entering the publishing industry through streaming, new practices and modes of conceptualizing literature may emerge, similar to shifts that have been observed in the music industry (Kiberg, 2020). The processes of platformization thus influence the *habitus* of the agents in the field. A broad range of agents are possibly affected, from the authors to the publishers and—ultimately—the readers, whose offers may change in the wake of digitalization. Moreover, the ability (and power) to access data generated by streaming services becomes even more valuable, as it may enable the possessor to tailor future literature offers to customers.

To sum up, when examining the influence of platformization on literary publishing, the shift of power from the publisher to the platform owner demonstrates significant changes in the field of literary publishing. First, access to detailed information about users' consumption of literature has destabilized traditional power relationships in the book industry. It is the streaming services that keep track of their subscribers' actions. User data has become a new type of negotiable value, and ownership of these data signifies power. Second, streaming services challenge a traditional value chain customized for paper books. The base of these services is a platform structure in which operations such as marketing, sales, and distribution that used to belong to separate companies, or at least units, are now merged into one platform. The growth of streaming services entails the movement of power from the producers' end, closest to the author, to the users' end, closest to the customer.

Third, user feedback is essential when developing services and content, not least to secure advantages over competitors. The broader the sources of user feedback, the more targeted the strategies can be. Fourth, content curation is critical to a streaming service's customer offer. Through datafication and the systematization of user data, selecting suitable titles for the right customers at the right time can be nuanced down to the level of a single person. Algorithmic analyses of data left by users are necessary to personally customize content. Through hybrid gatekeeping mechanisms (Maasø and Spilker, 2022), streaming services enforce their marketing capacity and tighten their relationship with subscribers.

It is worth noting that users become central actors when a streaming model based on subscription make use of its potential. Often without noticing, readers of literature become an integrated part of subscription services—a very different experience from being a customer in a bookstore, buying paper books.

The change in power relationships influences the producers and the users of literature, the publishers and the readers—as clearly demonstrated in the four articles in this thesis. Furthermore, in examining the relationships between the agents in the field, new power relationships emerge. The power lies in the distributors' systematic, digitalized connection to the reader, and this outcompetes the publishers' focus on the authors and their traditional emphasis on the value chain from the author to the publisher. The value of the authors' contribution risks decreasing because customers' data become critical to production in a platform-based trade publishing industry.

4.8 Platformization and the reading audiences

I study the audiences of literature, namely the readers, based on their general position as agents in trade publishing under the influence of digitalization and platformization processes. In conceptualizing research on audiences in the era of intrusive media, Rajana Das and Brita Ytre-Arne (2018) call for further attention on the impact of digital media and the divides in power relationships. Considering the influence of

platformization and the transforming power of datafication, commodification, and selection—as described in the previous chapter—I will now turn to the premises for readers.

An audience perspective brings forth practical, physical dimensions belonging to the embodiment of reading (Mangen, 2020; Merleau-Ponty, 2012). This perspective is important because of the introduction of digital devices to literature consumption, enabling the production of e-books and audiobooks. To read involves physical and practical interaction with reading material. Digitalization has destabilized the traditional relationship between the reader and a physical paper book. Thus, alternatives like e-books and audiobooks need to be explored—particularly the impact of technical affordances (Gibson, 1977; Norman, 2013) on the reader and in the context of broad media offerings—like I do in Articles I and II. According to previous studies on digital media consumers, habits change due to differences in availability, materiality, content, and behavior (Livingstone, 2019; Peters and Schröder, 2018; Ytre-Arne, 2023; Ytre-Arne and Das, 2020).

In parallel with digitalization and the shift from traditional linear broadcasting to the ubiquity of digital news and social media, there has been a notable change in the audience's perspective. Rather than solely focusing on the outcomes of media consumption, there is now a greater emphasis on studying their interaction and participation with media on a broader scale (Schröder, 2019). This perspective is highly relevant to today's literary readers, although readers of traditional long-form literature usually practice their reading in an individual setting, independent of others (unlike in gamified fiction, where readers actively involve themselves in a collective act of creation; Jenkins, 2013). Therefore, I explore literary reading in the context of the readers' broader media repertoire (Hasebrink and Domeyer, 2012) and the influence of ubiquitous digital connection (Brennen, 2019; Karppi, 2018; Syvertsen, 2020). As such, to explore the digital influence on reading amid pervasive online connectivity, a comprehensive understanding of the audiences' perspective on being a media user is essential (Bruns, 2008).

Digitalization contributes new perspectives on the encoder–decoder relationship (Hall, 1973; Shaw, 2017). The influence on power relationships between

the sender and the receiver, the publisher and the reader—the encoder and the decoder—changes according to the mechanisms of platformization (Dijck et al., 2018). When customer data become an asset to the platform owner, the capital relating to the reading audiences' increases at the expense of the publishers' capital (Srnicsek, 2016).

I examine the reading audiences from two perspectives: First, along with digitalization of readers of literature, I focus on new possibilities and changes to the readers' conditions due to continuous digital connection. Second, when exploring literary readers from a digital (dis)connectivity perspective, I underscore their belonging to the broad community of modern media consumers. My research examines the influence of digitalization on literary readers, emphasizing their agentic power, which is evident in the empirical data collected.

5 On methods

In this chapter, I will describe the methods applied in this thesis and the reasoning behind my choices. To understand the influence of digitalization on literary reading and answer the overarching question in the thesis, I needed to study the experiences of digital influence. Obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the transformative power of digitalization required engaging with informants who had comparable experiences. The empirical data for this study needed to include a dual perspective, consisting of the insights of devoted readers who experienced literature both before and after the advent of digital formats and the ‘new normal’ of pervasive connectivity (Ytre-Arne, 2023). Further, to understand the perceived influence of digitalization on reading attention and the conditions of long-form reading, I wanted to concentrate on reading amid increased competition from digitalized media. I selected two groups of informants: adult leisure readers and editorial managers in literary publishing.

Drawing upon social science research and my aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of an ongoing transformation, I based my analyses on an inductive approach, as conceptualized by Norman Blaikie and Jan Priest (2019). My studies of the experiences of essential agents in literature and leisure reading laid the foundation for identifying patterns and developing characteristics to describe the influence of digitalization. In inductive reasoning, higher-level categorization of the data depends on the researcher’s interpretation of the material. Inductive reasoning underlines the interrelation between the empirical base and the researcher’s subjective contribution, acknowledging the process of sensemaking based on the researcher’s capabilities, limitations, and demands. Furthermore, the inductive approach allows the researcher to categorize the informants’ responses and identify patterns that emerged in the empirical material—necessary for my exploration of the digitalization of long-form reading from the informants’ perspectives.

I chose the method of semi-structured qualitative interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017) to collect empirical data. During the data analysis, I aimed to extract the informants’ narratives of their perceived experiences in a way that revealed patterns of knowledge and insights, so that their sensemaking could contribute to a larger

societal understanding of the ongoing transformation in long-form reading (Blaikie and Priest, 2019; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Before focusing on my processes of data gathering and analysis, I explain my rationale for applying a qualitative approach and for the scientific reasoning applied in this thesis.

5.1 The decision to use qualitative methods

‘A world comprised of meanings, interpretations, feelings, talk, and interaction must be scrutinized on its own terms. Qualitative inquiry has always maintained this commitment, now more than ever.’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997: 13)

The choice of method aligns with the overarching epistemological question about how to constitute new knowledge in the chosen field of research. Thus, the choice of method decides *how* to view the field of research and *what* kind of findings might be the outcome of the research. A method is ‘a way of knowing’ and ‘a distinct way of orienting to the world,’ comparable to Thomas Kuhn’s concept of the paradigm (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997: VII).

In collecting ‘empirical accounts of practices and experiences of agentic media interpretation and use’ (Das and Ytre-Arne, 2018: 5), this thesis seeks to make a modest contribution to the robust literature on audiences in complex media situations influenced by continuously evolving technologies. Further, the thesis takes an industrial perspective, providing an agentic interpretation of editorial stakeholders in the literary industry.

The central thread connecting the three overarching research questions is the examination of the capacity to engage in literary reading amid continuous digital connectivity. To create new knowledge on the influence of digitalization on literature and literary reading, I required a method that would enable an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of consumers and producers of literature.

I selected a qualitative approach centered on personal sensemaking to provide a nuanced empirical foundation for my analysis. In my perspective, this method offers the most effective way to develop research that captures the intricacy of modern media experiences. It is worth noting Marilyn Strathern's depiction of the diverse possibilities imagined for a device at a time when technology did not automatically entail digital components: 'In the same household, husbands and wives may be divided in their perceptions of it [the telephone] as a lifeline to the outside world or as an incursion into privacy' (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1994: VII).

Nearly three decades ago, Sonia Livingstone highlighted the advantages of qualitative studies to understand the user perspective within media studies (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1994). The need for nuanced exploration based on individuals' experiences has not diminished with the advent of ubiquitous digitalization; on the contrary, it has become even more crucial. As digitalization has progressed, introducing new media formats, it has concurrently led to the fragmentation of traditional ones. The disruption of conventional volume editing (in newspapers) and set schedules (in broadcasting) represent the shift in media consumption to an à-la-carte experience: Choose whatever you want, whenever you want it (Lotz, 2017). Furthermore, personalizing media experiences through algorithm-based targeting enforces individualism in media consumption (Dijck et al., 2018). Rajana Das and Brita Ytre-Arne (2018) underscore the need to focus on relationships between audiences and structures, to better understand the influence of digitalization. I believe that, in today's multifaceted media landscape, a qualitative study is the most suitable tool to investigate the human encounter with digital technology. The intricate interplay between media production and consumption within the literary industry necessitates a closer examination of the individuals involved. Industry reports and statistics alone fail to capture the full story.

Qualitative research enables—nuanced descriptions and captures complex—sometimes contradictory or unconscious—forces at play among informants (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017). In contrast to quantitative research, which aims to derive findings that are representative of larger groups of informants, qualitative research focuses on individuals' actions and reasoning. An advantage of applying

qualitative interviews as a method when researching recent development in fields almost entirely dependent on human skills, engagement, and motivation is that the interviews facilitate ‘a privileged access to the daily reasoning of your object of study’ (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017: 196). Further, the phenomenological approach I have adopted in my research underlines the significance of focusing on experiences and interpreting meaning, which is crucial for ascertaining the transforming influences of digitalization.

Understanding the changes perceived by the users (the readers) and the producers (the publishers), necessitated that I be aware of the complexity inherent in exploring the real world. Given that my research was focused on the human–digitalization relationship, complexity was to be expected. However, a qualitative approach proved to be well suited to untangling this complexity, as qualitative research centers on details and nuances, rather than generalizations—with the (implicit or explicit) understanding that detailed descriptions and observations are essential to understanding life’s complex unfolding (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). In my research, taking a qualitative approach enabled the exploration of diverse perspectives on the interrelation between digitalization and literary reading. The influence of digitalization on this domain was revealed to be multifaceted, exhibiting variations not only between individuals but also within the same person, across modes and situations. Moreover, the qualitative approach allowed for unexpected answers and unanticipated interrelations to emerge—particularly crucial when investigating an emerging field like the influence of digitalization on literary reading.

The questions pursued in the articles and the overarching question were focused on producing meaning through qualitative approach. The aim was to capture meaning-making practices by taking a phenomenological approach to the informants’ sensitizing about digitalization. Thus, my search for new knowledge on the influence of digitalization on literary reading aligned with the profound question of how we know things.

5.2 Semi-structured qualitative interviews

My initial methodological question concerned how best to access people's sensemaking, to which semi-structured qualitative interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017) seemed the best response. My thesis is built upon conducting in-depth studies that give voice to essential agents to understand modern reading practices and the transformative consequences of digitalization on literary publishing. The semi-structured interviews gave me access to 'the general contours of the landscape upon which action takes place' (Tavory, 2020: 457). In this methodological approach, talk is action. I consider the informants' talk to express their reasoning. Understanding their sensemaking process as rooted in their perceptions, the utilization of semi-structured interviews provided me with access to the empirical data. (Atkinson and Coffey, 2003).

Data gathering consisted of two interview-based studies in collaboration with my co-supervisor, Professor Faltin Karlsen. The first was a study on adult readers of literature who had experience with both analogue and digital reading, such as reading paper books and reading e-books or audiobooks (hereafter, 'the readers' study'). The second study was on editorial leaders within Norwegian trade publishing (hereafter, 'the publishers' study'). Both studies were approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), and written consent to participation were retrieved from all informants.

For both studies, the empirical process commenced with the development of an interview guide, which entailed defining the topics of interest and limiting the scope. Rounds of deliberation and revision and discussions with supervisors were essential to improve and tailor the interview guide according to the aim of the thesis.

5.3 Data analysis

The greatest challenge in this project was understanding the relationship between the empirical data and the theoretical approach, to go beyond the excitement and

engagement of the data and ascertain how it could contribute meaningfully to the broader theoretical framework. I knew early on that the interviews were rich in relevant data—even more so once I began working on the transcriptions. Furthermore, I understood how to generalize the data to findings at a higher level. Hence, the first level of categorization was not a problem. What troubled me was the operationalization of a specific theoretical perspective. I struggled to make the theory work as a lens through which I could ‘see the higher meaning’ of the data and thus combine theory and data into scientific arguments.

I have revised and rewritten the four articles to identify the theoretical approach that would enable the empirical material to yield both truthful and valuable insights, and to reveal where more research is needed. Once I realized the deeper relationship between the theory and empirical classification into higher-level categories, I had my ‘breakthrough’ moment. When I was rewriting Article II into a radically different version (for the third time), I slowly realized how my conceptualization grew out of a theoretical approach, which made me aware of certain aspects of the data. From then on, I have deliberated about—and differentiating between—the data by mentally weighing and testing them against the reasoning inherent to the theory (or concept) I have found most suitable to achieve a higher-level understanding relevant to the research question(s).

The informants’ shared information has been analyzed within my specified frame of method and theory. As a researcher, I have used my creativity, knowledge, and imagination ‘to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of various individuals’ (Blaikie and Priest, 2019: 142).

The circular process of classifying primary data, identifying categories at the first open level of coding, and then elevating the combination of material and my first-level analysis to a higher level of generalization through axial coding belongs to the hermeneutic tradition originating from Gadamer (1989). David Morley (2005) has demonstrated the complexity of data analysis (2005); he underlines the challenge of combining the interpretation of people’s telling based on personal experiences with structures that organize their sensitizing into patterns of meaning at an overarching

level. I could not agree more with the weight of this challenge and its importance: Without a sharp theoretical lens, my data would merely have been an exciting story, at best.

This interpretative work has been a creative process, through which my construction of meaning has unfolded without preconceptions (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). My aim in analyzing the data was to identify the common threads and shared elements relevant to the lives of my informants within the specific framework of this research project: that is, the empirical world as perceived by the reading audience and the publishing industry and framed by the different sets of the research questions.

As I was conducting research in a field where I have professional experience and knowledge, my collaboration with Professor Karlsen around the data collection and analysis was important. Although an experienced media scientist, he has no scholarly background in publishing or literary reading. Thus, we represented both the insider and outsider perspectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

I will now describe the two data collection and analysis processes separately, according to the procedures applied to each study. It should be noted that the analysis of the interviews must be seen in the context of the study to which they adhere (Tavory, 2020).

5.4 The readers' study

5.4.1 Data collection

In the readers' study, two pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview guide and the practical process of interviewing—particularly important as the study was conducted under lockdown, requiring that the interviews be conducted on Zoom. The pilot interviews were transcribed and treated as ordinary empirical data to test the whole process. One pilot interview was included in the study after consent was provided by the informant.

The main criterion for selecting informants into the readers' study was their experience with both analogue and digital reading. As the informants were adults and the study focused on long-form recreational reading, experience with paper books was expected. However, the interview guide also contained questions about digital reading, e-book reading on tablets, or reading via audio book. I recruited informants using the 'snowball method': i.e., 'network, chain referral or reputational sampling' (Blaikie and Priest, 2019: 173).

The recruitment process commenced with an invitation for devoted readers to participate in a research study, which I posted on my Facebook account. I explicitly stated that individuals in the book industry or related professional positions could not participate. To obtain a good sample, we selected informants covering a broad age span and including male and female readers, with differences in education and profession. The study sample ultimately comprised 12 informants, aged 28 to 67, of whom 5 were male and 7 were female. In addition, they reflected a variation in professional backgrounds. Among the informants were a carpenter, an actress, a bioengineer, a librarian, and a researcher, to mention a few (Table 1 in Article II presents information on the informants).

After the informants agreed to participate, I sent them a questionnaire to gather data on their age, place of residence, education, occupation, and experiences with different reading media, as well as examples of books they had recently read. The purpose of conducting this brief survey was twofold. First, it served to gather essential information for the study without using time during the interviews to do so. Second, it directed the informants' attention toward the specific topics of interest without delving too deeply into the interview guide questions.

The interview guide contained six sections: reading habits; experiences with digital reading formats; literary reading in the context of other kinds of media consumption; the meaning of literary reading to the informants in general; literary reading in the context of being digitally connected; future thoughts on hopes for the literary industry; and personal reading.

The reader's study took place in January and February 2021 (with the final interview being conducted in March 2021); as such, and as noted earlier, all

interviews were conducted digitally because of the COVID-19 situation. I would argue that we, as the researchers, were able to establish a good rapport to the informants, allowing us to gather in-depth, high-quality data, despite being in a somewhat unnatural setting. As literary reading is an individual act, often conducted in private, this study relied on the informants' wording, which was independent of how or where the physical interviews occurred. One could even argue that the secluded setting of a digital interview—screen to screen—makes for more intimate surroundings than an in-person encounter.

The interviews were transcribed (verbatim), consecutively. The two interviews conducted by Professor Karlsen were transcribed by an agency and immediately added to the empirical base. I transcribed the rest of the 45- to 60-minute interviews; as I did so, working my way through, sentence by sentence, the categorization process naturally emerged. Keywords for the initial coding were noted and discussed throughout. As such, the initial data analysis process occurred in parallel to the interview process.

The sample in the readers' study was limited to informants who self-identified as devoted readers with experience with both analogue and digital reading. Due to the focus on literary reading, ensuring variation in age, sex, occupation, reading habits, and reading media determined whether individuals were recruited into the sample, rather than their socioeconomic status.

After about 10 interviews, Professor Karlsen and I considered the material rich enough to begin discussing whether we had reached saturation (Blaikie and Priest, 2019). Then, after one more interview and our decision to include the second pilot interview (which covered each topic in the final interview guide), we stopped interviewing—having concluded that the material contained enough variety and depth to ensure that the research questions could be answered.

To ensure anonymity, the informants were given pseudonyms and sometimes a slightly different occupation. Quotes to be included in articles were translated into Norwegian by me.

5.4.2 Data analysis

In keeping with the exploratory character of this study, my co-researcher (Professor Karlsen) and I took an inductive approach to the analysis, and followed the principles of thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to increase reliability. Our discussion resulted in 23 categories, which guided my coding of the interviews in NVivo.

The first-level categories consisted of the following: how I became a reader; the meaning of literary reading; why I read; what I do not read; the reading concentration; my reading situation; what/when I do not read; volume of reading; the choice of books; frequency in reading; paper versus tablet; paper versus audio; preferences; the identity as a reader; what kind of reader; access to literature; the meaning of price; the future of reading; other media consumption (than literary reading); social relations and reading; the literary industry; the most important thing we talked about; and three words to sum up my relationship to literary reading. Through axial coding and thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006), these were developed into higher-level categories and applied to the analyses undertaken in accordance with the specific research questions in Articles I and II.

5.5 The publishers' study

5.5.1 Data collection

The second study explored how digitalization influences the daily work and editorial decisions in the professional life of publishers of and editors-in-chief responsible for original Norwegian-language fiction and non-fiction literature. The world of Norwegian trade publishing is limited, as is the population from which a sample can be recruited. In addition, I was an agent in this industry for many years.

The informants were selected because of their responsible positions in departments of narrative fiction and non-fiction aimed at adult readers. Further, the selection of informants was defined by the aim of having publishers central to the field of original, Norwegian-language titles and publishers representing publishing

houses of various sizes. All the publishing houses represented in this study have a thriving business. They vary from small companies employing between 3 and 10 full-time workers to publishing corporations having more than 100 employees and covering publishing for education and professional purposes in addition to the trade publishing asked for in this study.

Informants were recruited via personal e-mail. Everyone who received this e-mail agreed to participate, an overwhelming number of whom responded rapidly. This was likely due to the fact that, to a certain extent, I knew all of the informants beforehand and they knew me.

The publishers study included twelve informants from large, mid-sized, and small Norwegian Publishing Houses. The nine female and three male informants held positions in which they made decisions about titles to be published. They managed editors and other staff, and each of them had more than ten years of experience in publishing. I also selected them as informants because of their responsibility for the publishing list and the financial results of their departments. The amount of editorial responsibility and the responsibilities within connecting fields like marketing and sales depend on the size of their organization. Here, the general rule is that the smaller the publishing house, the more overall responsibility. The size relates directly to one of the topics in the study: To some of the informants, the responsibility for remediated versions like e-books and audiobooks belonged to another department; to others, these tasks were solely theirs.

The six themes in the interview guide were professional responsibilities and tasks; work related to digital formats; consequences from the digitalization of the books, readers, and industry; literature in the media landscape; digital connection in general and corresponding challenges to attention; and personal reading habits.

The publishers' study was conducted from November 2021 to February 2022. Nine interviews were undertaken at the informants' office, and three on Zoom due to COVID-19 regulations. After transcribing the interviews (three of which were conducted by Professor Karlsen and transcribed by an agency), I slightly edited them to produce a version focusing on the informants' telling relevant to the research topics (i.e., all questions and comments from the researchers were omitted.) This

edited version was sent to informants to read so that they could make adjustments to their statements, if they wished, and provide written consent to the use of this material for research purposes. All informants returned this edited version, and there were only a few corrections in a couple of interviews. Some returned the transcript unread, underlining their trust in me for the further treatment of the material. When I used quotes from this material (all of which I translated), I referred to the informants with a capital letter, varying from A to L.

Though the Norwegian publishing industry is a thriving business, there are a limited number of relevant publishing houses where one can find informants according to the criteria, and the saturation depends on the representativity of the group of informants.

5.5.2 Data analysis

The data analysis followed an inductive approach in line with thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this study, the analysis commenced with the editing of the interviews for consent, as the informants' narratives were sorted under thematic headings. Accordingly, the analysis was conducted in Word documents, through multiple rounds of reading and sorting. Initially, the first level of categorization resulted in 18 categories, including changes following datafication; audio accelerates change; differences in genres and author styles; digital marketing; and publishing strategies.

Following this first level of analysis, the empirical material was analyzed according to the specific research questions in Articles III and IV. The two analyses were conducted separately, starting with the complete material from the publishing study. Further, the processes of analyzing vary according to collaboration. While the analysis in Article III is conducted by me and then reviewed according to peer reviewers. The analysis in article IV is a result of discussions between Professor Karlsen and me about themes and higher-level categories.

5.6 Ethical guidelines and considerations

5.6.1 NSD registration

As a researcher in Norway, I am obligated to adhere to Norwegian legislation and procedures governing research standards. Consequently, in my research project, I complied with the relevant practices and considered any ethical challenges that the project could entail. I will describe the practical steps I took to follow the appropriate procedures, and then I will discuss the ethical considerations relevant to this thesis.

Research projects involving personal data collection require approval from the NSD. In my application to the NSD, I included the study's aim, research questions, and interview guide, and detailed the steps that would be taken to ensure that the data were protected and informants' anonymity ensured. After answering a few questions from the NSD case manager, the study was approved and allowed to proceed. This process was repeated for the second study.

5.6.2 My background in Norwegian trade publishing

Before discussing the ethical considerations relevant to this research, and presenting my self-reflection on my role as a researcher in a field about which I have insider knowledge (due to my career within the industry), I will outline my working experience in Norwegian publishing.

When I was a 20-year-old literature student, I secured a part-time position as an assistant to the Information Officer at Aschehoug—at that time, the third largest publishing house in Oslo. Though I planned to pursue an advanced degree, my part-time job occasionally transitioned into full-time employment whenever temporary substitutions were required for certain positions. In 1989, at the age of 22, I was hired as a press officer in Aschehoug's trade unit. Half a year later, I was given the position permanently. Thus, from 23 to 53, I spent my working life within Norwegian publishing, including the couple of years when I was working on my master's degree (*hovedfag*) during nights, weekends, and holidays (finished 1997) and two maternity leaves (in 1997 and 1999).

After two years as a press officer, I continued as a publishing editor of non-fiction at Aschehoug before entering a position as editor-in-chief in the Norwegian Book Clubs (1995). During my nine years in leadership positions within the Norwegian Book Clubs, I learned not only about the commercial premises in trade publishing but also how to lead. In 2004, I accepted an offer to return to Aschehoug to become the publishing director of their non-fiction department. A year later, I was offered the position of publishing director of the larger literature department in Aschehoug, a job I held until I decided to leave the company in 2019.

During my years working in the Norwegian Book Clubs and Aschehoug, I have learned about trade publishing, the editing and marketing processes, and the handling of literary and commercial consideration—from the inside and through experience, together with knowledgeable and inspiring colleagues. Moreover, throughout my extensive tenure in a leadership role at Aschehoug, I had the overarching responsibility for editorial, commercial, and financial matters within the field of fiction and non-fiction literature. As part of this role, my leadership experiences were further enriched through board positions and responsibilities representing the Norwegian Publishing Association.

From 2011 onwards, the digitalization of literature and the publishing industry became a central aspect of my position at Aschehoug, as well as in my leadership role in the group negotiating juridical and economic premises with the authors' organizations on behalf of the Norwegian Publishers' Association [NPA]. For many years, I was also the chair of the selection committee for the board of the NPA.

Particularly relevant to this thesis is my role as Chairman of the Board at Lydbokforlaget from 2013 to 2019. In this position, I was responsible for the strategy, the planning, the launching, and subsequent management of the subscription-based streaming service Fabel, offering audiobooks to Norwegian readers of literature.

5.6.3 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations provoke broader questions compared to the practical procedures mandated by NSD. Consequently, they prove challenging to delineate

and, in my opinion, necessitate deeper engagement from the researcher due to the absence of strict protocols. As a researcher, I am obligated to conduct my work in accordance with the ethical norms that researchers are expected to follow⁵.

Research ethics implies the consideration of individuals and groups of people, the essential principle of freedom of research, the practice of honesty and precision in referencing, the deliberation of results, the societal responsibility, and the responsibility towards colleagues (Somby, 2021). Here, I will highlight the consideration of individuals, as this is where I have had to engage in the most deliberation. While the other perspectives are equally important, they did not require special attention, apart from the obvious: to act considerately, behave decently, and work appropriately with all the references (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017). My ethical considerations regarding the informants revolved around the two groups: the readers and the publishers.

The readers

It was my responsibility to protect the readers' anonymity, as promised. I took care not to convey any background information about them, such as profession and geographical location. However, as the recruitment was done through 'snowballing,' I occasionally encountered individuals who acted as intermediaries between my call for informants and the actual informants. Consequently, there were instances in which these intermediaries referenced the fact that a friend/family member had been interviewed. This constituted an ethical challenge, as I did not have the authority to share informants' details, but I also strive for honesty.

In situations like this, I determined that it would be strange not to acknowledge that an interview had occurred, especially when the other person clearly knew about it. However, I refrained from explicitly referencing the interview itself. This posed a minor challenge on a few occasions, particularly when the topic generated interest and individuals wished to contribute their own experiences and perspectives,

⁵ As defined in 'Forskningsetikkloven', paragraph 4.

initiating a discussion that involved a third party who was not present and had the right to privacy—which I had the responsibility to protect.

The publishers

The publishers were being interviewed because of their professional role. Due to our longstanding professional coexistence within the same industry, I knew them, and they knew me. We had socialized in informal settings and shared familiarity with a large group of people who are part of the publishing industry. Aware of the ethical challenges this posed, I was careful to emphasize, at the beginning of each interview, that my role was that of a researcher. Further, throughout the interview, I restrained from commenting upon social or business matters that referenced my former position. I considered it my responsibility to maintain the necessary distance between the publishers as informants and me as a researcher throughout the research project, and to act in accordance with my role as a researcher. Moreover, Professor Karlsen conducted three interviews because I had been in a leadership position towards these informants. (However, I was responsible for organizing the interviews and the following up with the informants afterwards.)

The fact that I had extensive experience in the same profession as the informants was both a great advantage and a challenge. On one hand, having a deep familiarity with the field and personal experiences related to the topics covered in the interview guide served as more than just a source of motivation for engaging in this research: It also provided a foundation for asking specific questions and conducting insightful analyses. Further, having prior knowledge of the field made it easier to identify and access suitable informants—and to secure their trust. On the other hand, my responsibility as a researcher increased because of my prior knowledge. I had to carefully differentiate between my pre-existing knowledge and the information I obtained through the research, in order to prevent any blending of empirical data with assumptions or presuppositions. Moreover, during the analysis phase, I had an ethical obligation to ensure a balanced approach to the findings, considering the broader

interests of the informants, both as individuals and as a significant group within the industry.

Another relevant perspective concerning prior knowledge is that, due to my previous employment, I possess insider information that pertains to the industry. As a result, I have had to exercise caution to ensure that I omitted any industry-specific information that belonged solely to my former employers. While this did not pose significant challenges, it should be noted as it falls within the realm of ethical considerations and requires mindfulness.

Furthermore, my transition from an experienced professional in the field to an expert researcher places me in a potentially influential position, necessitating an even greater level of awareness and ethical consideration. As I work towards disseminating the findings from my studies, it is crucial for me to maintain my overarching objective: to generate new knowledge regarding changes in reading and literary publishing in the era of digitalization, without harming any informants—individually or as a group. Following Brinkmann and Kvale (2017), I acknowledge the responsibility I have to understand people and actions sufficiently to act by the moral standard I expect from myself and to which I am obligated in my role as a researcher. In this regard, I consider the ethical matters related to the publishers' study more complex than the ones related to the readers.

5.6.4 Self-reflection

My methodological choice of semi-structured qualitative interviews calls for a closer consideration of my role as a researcher (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003), in addition to the ethical considerations discussed above.

Conducting qualitative research always activates the researcher's sensibility. The researcher's background, communicative skills and emotional capacity, and knowledge of the field are likely to influence the answers given by the informants (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017; Tavory, 2020). As my field of research belongs to a social world of which I was a member and co-creator for many years, there was a risk of involving myself as a participant at the expense of critical observation (Atkinson

and Coffey, 2003). In both studies, I engaged with the informants as an expert. I must acknowledge the possibility that I may have inadvertently influenced the interviews and introduced a desirability bias (Tavory, 2020), despite my intention to maintain a neutral stance as a researcher. Additionally, it is important to consider that the informants may have held preconceived perceptions of me, especially those who were familiar with me through previous interactions (i.e., the publishers). Even the readers themselves may have had preconceived notions about me, as they might also have known that I had been a publisher and/or that I was the author of a recently published book on reading (Spjeldnæs, 2020). As such, during the interviews, certain information might have been constructed by the informants to portray themselves as more experienced readers than they were, as agency bias might have been at play (Tavory, 2020).

Having such extensive experience in the field I was researching prompted me to reflect on the benefits of having a deep understanding of my subject matter, balanced against the potential drawbacks of being too closely associated with it (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Prior to conducting the interviews, reading accounts that emphasized the value for semi-structured interviewing of being knowledgeable about the field helped alleviate my concerns. Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale (2017: 196) underscore the advantage of being ‘knowledgeable, structuring, clear, friendly, sensitive, open, chairing, critical, remembering, interpreting.’ Furthermore, this awareness served as a reminder to maintain my role as a researcher, preventing me from slipping into friendly conversations with my peers during the interviews.

My approach to the informants is best described as one of being a ‘reflective partner’ and ‘dialogic facilitator’ (Blaikie and Priest, 2019: 45). I aimed to stimulate the informants’ sensitizing. To achieve this, I sought to make them feel safe and to trust me. Further, I had to phrase the questions simply, without complex reasoning. While I cannot guarantee that I always achieved this, the empirical data collected undeniably reflects a deep richness and wide variation. I should note that the plethora of professional conversations in which I engaged in my leadership roles were an advantage in each interview, helping me to maintain focus and adhere to the themes under exploration.

The utilization of semi-structured qualitative interviews as a method facilitated access to rich material comprised of the informants' perspectives, as experienced and articulated by them. However, it can be argued that this method did not fully incorporate a critical approach towards the informants—particularly the publisher informants. Given their leadership positions in the trade and publishing houses, their narratives are, to some extent, influenced by corporate strategy, whether consciously or unconsciously. Consequently, there is a risk that the interviews did not uncover certain pertinent information beyond the realm of corporate discourse. As a result, personal reflections challenging top-level leadership strategies (which were not the primary focus of my research, except in smaller publishing houses without such hierarchical distinctions) may have remained undisclosed.

Moreover, as I have a personal background in Norwegian trade publishing and the informants in the publishers' study and I knew each other beforehand, there may have been resistance to certain questions, either undisclosed to me by the informants or not fully recognized and followed up by myself. It is possible that I lacked some critical distance due to my immersion in the industry lore, my knowledge and shared experiences with the informants. In this project, the collaboration with Professor Karlsen, who has no previous involvement in the field, serves as a vital complement to my method of conducting semi-structured interviews, helping to mitigate the inherent risks associated with my use of this interview approach.

The researcher's perspective plays a crucial role in qualitative data analysis (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Acknowledging the potential interference stemming from my previous career has sharpened my focus on reflecting on my role and work as a researcher and in the subsequent dissemination of my findings, as exemplified in this introduction. However, considering that I selected a topic for my PhD research that I care deeply about and in which I have invested much of my adult life, personal bias when analyzing the data cannot be ruled out. By openly addressing these considerations, as I am doing here, I hope that others can properly contextualize and evaluate my research.

Furthermore, an understanding of the field is essential when analyzing qualitative data. Analyzing interviews as images of 'people's landscapes of meaning'

(Tavory, 2020: 451) is a prerequisite to understanding them in their individual context. First, it is necessary to grasp the meaning of details and catch nuances in the informants' sensitizing about the topics under exploration (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Moreover, qualitative research can be compared to other learning processes recognized by a phenomenological approach, where 'the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied' (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 236). Thus, the researcher's ability to understand the informants from their perspective increases in line with the researcher's level of knowledge about the field. In principle, the researcher should share knowledge with the informants, to participate in their doing (Giddens, 1982).

In my experience, the value of prior knowledge of the field is essential. My ongoing reflection on my role as a researcher led to a heightened responsibility to be aware of potential interference throughout the entire research process: from designing the interview guide to analyzing the data. This thesis would have been fundamentally different without my deliberate focus on research questions, narrowing the scope, selecting informants, and gathering the essential background information needed for conclusive analysis. Furthermore, my motivation to engage in firsthand research and persevere through the subsequent work stemmed from my genuine curiosity about the impact of digitalization on literary reading, nurtured by my extensive involvement in the field. Thus, my dedication to the broader field of literary reading is the basis of this thesis: I confess that there is a normative aspect to this dedication (and my declaration of it), and I defend my thesis upon these premises (Nyre, 2009).

This brings me to the end of this chapter. I have benefited from my prior familiarity with my field of research, but such intimate knowledge is a mixed blessing. My work leans on the hermeneutic tradition, in line with Hans-Georg Gadamer. I know that it is impossible to avoid bringing (conscious and unconscious) prejudices to one's research. This thesis is not neutral in an objectivist sense (Skjervheim, 1976), neither in perspective nor in the analyses or findings. I hope the complete compilation of the introduction and articles contributes to expanding our understanding of the changes in literary reading and publishing in the era of

digitalization. In this regard, the thesis invites critical consideration, both in terms of its negative and positive contributions to the scientific fields with which it aligns.

6 Conclusion, contribution and discussion

I will now present a summary of the findings reported in the articles, before proceeding to the overarching research question and the main contribution of this thesis.

6.1 Conclusion

I have collected the findings from the four articles in Table 3 to provide a concluding overview.

| Article | Findings |
|---|---|
| I: 'How digital devices transform literary reading: The impact of e-books, audiobooks, and online life on reading habits' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers adapt their reading mode to the situation. • Digital literature favors lighter texts, especially true with audiobooks, that are often listened to in combination with other activities. • Experienced readers develop strategies to control and ensure further reading that make them practically and temporally disconnect. |
| II: 'Power, pride and patience in literary reading: Dealing with disconnection and precarious attention' | <p>Typology of traits to describe the interrelation between disconnection and concentrated attention as demonstrated by literary readers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literary readers adhere to personal values that provide a foundation for pride in their self-understanding as a reader. • Having an identity as a reader triggers the power to self-regulate digital connectivity. • Being an experienced reader enforces enduring patience to read, though not without struggles and firm decision making. |
| III: 'Platformization and publishing. Changes in literary publishing' | <p>The transformative forces inherent in digital platforms influence present days' literary publishing, captured by five essential traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rise in audiobooks leads to the increased importance of some genres. • Streaming services entail sliding concepts of quality. • Marketing is increasingly dependent on social media. • Literature in streaming services results in diminishing economic margins. • Stricter editorial decisions follow in the wake of platformization. |
| IV: 'Attention, ambivalence, and algorithms. Publishers in the era of ubiquitous connectivity and expanding platforms' | <p>Digitalization triggers an overarching ambivalence among literary stakeholders in trade publishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a sense of urgency regarding the future of literary reading. • Platform-based streaming services compete with traditional leisure reading. • Lack of attention to reading is taken for granted and confirmed by personal experiences. • The rise in audiobooks demonstrates new opportunities. • Concerns about the future of reading are countered with a general, unspecified notion of hope. |

Table 3

The thesis demonstrate how literary reading is influenced by ubiquitous digital connection along three lines: First, the enhanced flexibility of streaming services favors the spreading of audiobooks. Second, the spreading of other media through streaming services, such as television series, competes with leisure reading. Third, ubiquitous digital connectivity challenges the continuous attention necessary to long-form reading.

6.2 My contribution

Moving on to the overarching research question, I will highlight the overall takeaways in the thesis and my contribution to the understanding of the influence of digitalization on leisure reading and trade publishing, and to field of disconnection studies. My answers to the research question *Why and how are digitalization influencing long-form reading and literary publishing?* are best summoned under four conceptual headings, each of them pinpointing a characteristic trait emerging through the totality of analyses in the thesis. When I end up highlighting these four concepts, it is because their capacity for influencing change appear striking. Through my exploration of the changes to long-form leisure reading and literary publishing in the era of digitalization and continuous connectivity, I emphasize the significant influence of transformational power and the radical nature of these changes. I introduce four key concepts—'the flexibility advantage,' 'the platformization efficiency,' 'the habit of concentration,' and 'the disconnected presence'— which help us to understand the profound shifts taking place in this field.

6.2.1 The flexibility advantage

The first concept addresses the influence of digital devices brought on by digitalization. An overall takeaway from this research project is the increased flexibility in leisure reading because of the affordances inherent to digital devices and formats (Gibson, 1977; Norman, 2013). Devoted leisure readers take great advantage

of the flexibility offered by the affordances in digital devices, and they customize their choice of literature and their reading format to the situation they have at hand. The flexibility intrinsic to digital literature is most remarkable in audiobooks. Experienced readers navigate seamlessly between reading formats to optimize the combination of their preferred content and physical setting. Thus, audiobooks have made literature consumption a combined activity: Readers listen to audiobooks while doing something else. Literature consumed via one's ears generally implies less attentive reading. As a result, readers typically choose more straightforward narratives and lighter literature for audiobooks. The flexibility of literature consumption afforded by digitalization holds an advantage for readers, thanks to the combination of increased situations in which one can read, the ability to engage in tasks like gardening or driving while consuming literature, and the easy access to a wide selection through streaming services. Furthermore, the devoted readers are fully aware of these advantages and know how to benefit from them.

6.2.2 The platformization efficiency

The second concept pinpoints the industrial perspective and the power of change in business model due to digitalization. I explored the interrelation between the penetrating digital development and the industrial premises for a content industry like trade publishing. The publishers' study highlights how the changes to long-form leisure reading are highly influenced by the transformative power of platformization in the wake of digitalization. The sharp increase in audiobooks is a result of the introduction of platform-based streaming services. Thus, in only a few years, the efficiency and convenience of the platform-based streaming services have led to a radical change in the consumption of literature.

The rapid spread of reading while multitasking because of audiobooks highlights the efficiency intrinsic to the platformization processes. Literature has become part of a combined activity, very different from reading a book alone in silence. The means of systematically collecting, analyzing, and making use of customer data is inherent to platform-based services (Dijck et al., 2018; Srnicek,

2016), efficiently changing the readers' behavior and making the reading audiences establish new habits. Furthermore, media spreads through platform-based services at the expense of traditional analogue distribution. Hence, the consumption of audiobooks and television series in streaming services tends to outcompete the reading of paper books because of convenience and availability.

The power and pace of the change, the radical shift in the reading modes, and the strong competition from the wide offer of platform-based media of all kinds may yet transform the publishing industry more than so far anticipated by the trade.

6.2.3 The habit of concentration

The third concept highlights how digitalization influences readers' ability to sustain reading amid ubiquitous connectivity. My research confirms the intrusive power of digital devices that are continuously connected. They have the power to disturbing the concentration needed for long-form reading (Baron, 2015, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021; Iser, 1972; Wolf, 2018). Thus, devoted readers develop strategies to disconnect, in order to ensure that they can read without interruption. They explicitly discuss their personal strategies for dealing with the constant potential for smartphone interruptions, whether or not they have been successful in implementing them. In the era of ubiquitous digital connection, long-form reading requires readers who actively choose to read.

This thesis demonstrates how reading habits established in the pre-digital era persist and are adapted to the new flexibility offered by digital affordances. Furthermore, the concept of authenticity—which is deeply intertwined with self-identifying as a reader—is notable. The studies emphasize the strong personal connection individuals feel towards literature when they perceive themselves as readers; and their habit of concentration relates to their personal values and self-identification as readers. The ability to prioritize reading relates to the notion of authenticity (Syvertsen and Enli, 2020), which, to the informants, is intrinsic to literature and reading. Thus, the thesis reveals a strong interrelation between notions of value and the prioritizing of reading amid the vast array of media on offer. The

meaning of habit and the notion of value appear as prerequisites to counter the constraints of ubiquitous digital connectivity.

6.2.4 The disconnected presence

The concept of ‘disconnected presence’ emerges as a key thread to the topics explored in this thesis. As digitalization continues to expand its influence and digital platforms increasingly invade both the social sphere and individuals’ attention, leisure readers must personally manage their digital devices in order to maintain uninterrupted reading focus. The disconnected presence is reflected in the media users’ motivation and ability to switch between a connected and a disconnected mode, which benefit from habits and personal values. The notion of disconnected presence offers advantages for cultivating activities requiring sustained concentration, such as long-form reading.

The power inherent in the platformization processes enhances the pressure on readers who want to sustain reading. The platforms’ mechanisms to seize attention (such as the ticking clock of notification and the popping up of targeted offers) as well as the general penetration of platform-based apps in personal and professional lives (from Meta’s Facebook and Instagram to Microsoft’s Teams) constitute a continuous cascade of potential interruptions; this requires strong personal motivation to resist the temptations of digital disturbances. The disconnected presence as a concept captures the mental room for concentration, regardless of whether one is focused on an analogue object or a digital device. The reader may achieve a disconnected presence while reading an e-book on a Kindle. This concept also describes situations when one voluntarily liberates oneself from digital disturbances, with the goal of sustaining prolonged attention. The disconnected presence may appear through physical or digital facilitation, for a longer or shorter time.

Considering threats to attention from ubiquitous digital connectivity, experienced as endless (doom)scrolling (Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021) and concerns about continuous connectivity (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020), the platform efficiency enhances the intrusive character of digital media. In addition, knowing that the

individual digital media users are easily caught by the gamification mechanisms built into online media and services (Karlsen, 2020; Syvertsen, 2020), one's capacity to sustain attention and cognitive presence becomes even more threatened by digitalization. Furthermore, when attention is a scarce resource, the competition tightens. According to statistics on media use (SSB, 2023), media offering more entertainment—more leisure, so to speak—for less cognitive work seem to be preferred. Audiobooks and television series grow at the expense of long-form reading.

My study of the changes in leisure reading from the perspective of digital disconnection underscores how studies on concentration in the era of attention economy benefit from the context of media studies. Amid the broad array of digital media on offer, the concept of disconnected presence emerges, underscoring the significance of digital disconnection as a way to sustain activities demanding cognitive presence, whether it is mountain tourism (Syvertsen, 2022b) or—as I have explored in this thesis—long-form leisure reading and immersing oneself in literature (Baron, 2015, 2021; Mangen, 2020; Spjeldnæs and Karlsen, 2022; Wolf, 2018).

There is a final deliberation to highlight, considering the *why* and *how* in the overarching research question. This double question comprises the influence on reading in a thoroughly digitalized media context (*how*), and it comprises the major forces leading to change because of digitalization (*why*). However, the four conceptual subheadings above do not equally address answers to these two questions in the overarching research question. In my exploration of the influence of digitalization on long-form reading, I find that, on the one hand, the flexibility advantage and the disconnected presence are answers to the *how* perspective. These two concepts capture traits emerging through profound digitalization because of the spread of digital devices and ubiquitous digital connectivity. On the other hand, I find that platformization efficiency and the habit of concentration are answers to the *why*. While platformization efficiency highlights the pace and power inherent to the spread of platform-based services, the habit of concentration characterizes the power to sustain an activity, resisting the allure of constant and easy change. Despite their different effects, these two concepts capture the essence of two competing power

regimes that have emerged in the wake of digitalization, each promoting distinct patterns of change.

6.3 Discussion and future research

I will turn now to the meaning of the phenomenological approach to my research project. The findings, as presented in the articles and in this introduction, demonstrate the significance of personal experiences in the exploration of the influence of digitalization on literary reading. The sensory registration implied in handling the digital devices and the connectivity constitutes the foundation for the experiences voiced by the informants. Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the broad perspective on human sensory perceptions as the basis of knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) has thus been essential to developing this research project.

I set out to understand the ongoing transformation of the field of readers and to generate new insights into the factors influencing long-form leisure reading. In my analyses, I drew on Merleau-Ponty's theory as a lens through which to understand the subtleties and intricacies discovered. Consequently, the significance of habit emerged from the informants' perceived experiences, at the intersection of adaption to a digitalized daily life and personal values.

However, it is important to note that this thesis represents just one contribution to the research exploring the influence of digitalization on reading. Given the rapid development and widespread proliferation of digitalization, further scientific attention is warranted to deepen our understanding of its effects. I propose six arenas for future research in this arena.

First, I focus on the interrelation between digital (dis)connection and attention, between a disconnected presence and reading concentration. The combining of the perspectives from studies on digital disconnection (Lomborg and Ytre-Arne, 2021; Syvertsen, 2020) with findings from research on long-form reading underscores the challenge of ubiquitous digital connection on long-form reading. Through this thesis's dual perspective—on the influence of digital formats in long-form reading

and on the influence of ubiquitous digital connection—the meaning of habit emerged as crucial for sustaining long-form reading. The importance of habit to sustain leisure reading emphasizes the self-affirming trait inherent to the art of reading. As such, the gap between those who are habituated to long-form reading and those who are not may be essential. This gap has the potential to become a more substantial societal challenge. Thus, the long-term influence of audiobooks on the consumption of literature and long-form reading and the habits developed from digital reading remain to be explored.

Second, as contemporary adult readers acquired their foundational learning and introduction to literature in a pre-digital era, they possess habits that formed in that era. In my studies, leisure readers and publishers alike highlighted the fact that literary reading cannot be taken for granted in the age of mediatization (Couldry and Hepp, 2017). The fierce competition for people’s time and attention in the digital era renders reading susceptible to various digital distractions. Furthermore, literature and long-form reading risk being outcompeted by other media. The position of literature and books in a future media landscape potentially dominated by platform services thus requires research.

Third, according to the informants in this research project, the intrusive and distracting nature of smartphones is not dependent on the reading medium. Consequently, readers of paper books should also be cautious about the influence of smartphones. I recommend that future research delve into the formation of reading habits shaped by digital experiences, exploring the possibilities offered by digital devices while also acknowledging the potential of to disrupt reading focus.

Fourth, general concerns about future generations and their reading tend to focus on the future of paper books, and in this research project, the publishers conveyed the impression that the traditional paper book is the gold standard. The differences between reading on paper and reading on screen have been thoroughly explored within the field of reading research (Mangen, 2020; Mangen et al., 2019; Singer and Alexander, 2017). However, considering long-form reading at large, specifically leisure reading, there is a need for more nuanced knowledge of and discussion on the meaning of screens in the art of long-form leisure reading among

adults. Although reading via screen entails fewer mental anchors (Kuzmičová, 2016) and less focused orientation on the text (Mangen et al., 2019), the advantages of flexibility and availability to leisure readers deserve more scholarly attention to picture the future of literary reading and the publishing industry.

Fifth, the informants in the two studies are adults who learned to read on paper, rather than on screens. As such, their introduction to reading and literature—and the corresponding habits they developed—occurred through the experiences of paper books. With the spread of digitalization and the prevalence of reading on screens, however, new readers are being introduced to reading and literature by the screen and the audio format, and new modes of reading are emerging. Furthermore, reading on screens requires the development of new techniques to offset the advantages of reading on physical paper that are lost in the digital medium. There is thus a need for more research on young readers and how their reading skills develop within the context of digital—rather than paper—formats.

Sixth, the influence of platformization is thoroughly explored in the television (Ask et al., 2019; Lotz, 2017; Sundet, 2021; Sundet and Colbjørnsen, 2021) and music industries (Maasø and Spilker, 2022; Spilker and Colbjørnsen, 2020). The continuing proliferation of and growth in audiobooks (Berglund, 2021; Have and Pedersen, 2020; Tattersall Wallin and Nolin, 2020) will influence future literary publishing, the writing and publishing of books, and the preferences of the reading audiences. Though there is robust research on this topic, including on trade publishing (Colbjørnsen, 2021b; Colbjørnsen et al., 2021; Pettersen and Colbjørnsen, 2019), this thesis lays the foundation for further research on the influence of platform-based services on the readers and producers of literature.

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Part II: The articles

Article I



Article

How digital devices transform literary reading: The impact of e-books, audiobooks and online life on reading habits

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Abstract

Literary reading is under transformation. Digital devices supplement traditional paper books with e-books and audiobooks, and at the same time, ubiquitous digital connection challenges focused reading. Based on a qualitative interview study with adult leisure readers, this article explores how affordances offered by digital technologies influence reading habits. Informants demonstrate how e-books and audiobooks enhance reading experiences, as digital affordances influence the how and the when of literary consumption. Three prominent findings are stated. (1) Readers adapt reading mode to the situation, and experienced readers have developed strategies to maximise the ultimate combination of title, format and reading conditions. (2) Digital reading favours lighter texts. This dimension is more substantial for audiobooks, relating to the wide choice of combining audiobooks with other activities. (3) Being devoted readers motivates people to develop strategies to ensure further reading. These strategies effectively make readers practically and temporally disconnect to immerse in literature.

Keywords

Affordances, audiobook, digital devices, digital disconnection, digital transformation, e-book, literary reading, paper book, readers, reading

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Introduction

The traditional paper book is a versatile mobile device and a close companion in many people's lives. New digital devices such as the iPad and Kindle offer an even more significant versatility. They can simulate most affordances of the book and contain a library. At the same time, the smartphone has become the medium for audiobooks, not least because of streaming services. However, the online nature of digital devices sometimes includes the ability to interrupt any other activity – such as reading. As a result, people generally read shorter texts in a digital media environment (Baron, 2015; Mangen and Van der Weel, 2016).

Historically, books and literature have a high standing in Western culture, and book reading is generally associated with depth, focus and other intellectual virtues (Furedi, 2015; Manguel, 2014). Nevertheless, concerns that newer media will suppress the book are a recurring topic (Syvertsen, 2017). Moreover, during the last decade, we have seen a growing concern that people are losing their ability to concentrate for more extended periods due to the overflow of 'shallow' and easily digestible content from the Internet and smartphones (Carr, 2010; Jackson, 2018; Twenge et al., 2019). Therefore, the future of reading longer texts are regarded as especially vulnerable (Baron, 2021; Kovač and Van der Weel, 2018; Mangen et al., 2021; Wolf, 2018).

A central question in this study concerns the relation between literary reading and digital online life. The development in literary reading is explored through the experiences of the users, namely the readers. Development in technology, media formats, media content and modes of social interaction furnish radical changes in media consumption (Das and Ytre-Arne, 2018). Digitalisation and platformisation have, on the one hand, made way for an increase in reading formats and business models, like streaming services, affecting both industry and consumers (Colbjørnsen, 2020; Dijck et al., 2018; Spilker and Colbjørnsen, 2020). Digitalisation presents a stream of opportunities for information, education and entertainment. On the other hand, as being digitally connected has become the default of modern living, long-form reading is more exposed to competition on the readers' attention (Firth et al., 2019; Terranova, 2012). Over time, the cognitive presence required for reading longer narrative texts is vulnerable to digital temptations (Baron, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021). This challenge to mental attention entails a need to study the literature on reading with intrusive digital media (Syvertsen, 2020).

The article is based on a qualitative interview study with experienced readers of books in different formats. The exploration of reading for personal and private purposes underlines the scholarly aim of this article. The empirical basis is essential because it moves beyond reading for practical and educational purposes and explores digitalisation from the readers' perspective. This article thus adds new insights concerning how readers handle literature reading in a complex media situation.

This article adds new insights into the influence of digitalization on literary reading. We examine literary reading in the era of deep mediatisation (Couldry and Hepp, 2017) and explore the influence of ubiquitous digital connectivity on literary reading (Das and Ytre-Arne, 2018; Syvertsen, 2020). Moreover, we consider the duality of digitalization in contemporary literary reading. The literature *and* its readers go digital, and we raise two research questions to explore this transition: (1) How does digital reading

technology influence reading habits? (2) How do readers handle distractions following digital connections?

The understanding of reading used in this article is indebted to the reader-response theory assigned to Wolfgang Iser (1972, 1978). According to this view, reading is characterised by a continuous exchange of information (from the text) and associations intertwined with personal memories and earlier reading (from the reader). ‘Deep reading’ (Birkerts, 1994; Wolf and Barzillai, 2009) was coined to describe the concentrated reading that takes place over a reasonable amount of time to ensure involvement in the text by the reader.

This diversity of personal experiences through reading relates to Silverstone’s description of ‘personal economies of meaning’ (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1994). Highlighting how purely individual starting points are prerequisites for mediated experiences is an understanding directly in line with Iser’s. A reader’s outcome after an encounter with a literary universe will be dependent on experiences, knowledge and memories at a personal level. Reading takes place in an everyday context where cultural norms, taste and practicalities influence the what and the when of literary consumption.

Reading becomes even more nuanced when considering the range of reading modes, from deep reading to fast skimming and from a lonely and silent encounter with a book to an audiobook accompanying other activities (Baron, 2021; Birkerts, 1994; Furedi, 2015). Janice Radway (1998) argues for audiences as agents on the move, while Henry Jenkins (2013) states a position where recreational readers, as other audiences, are responsible only for themselves. Furthermore, recreational reading covers several genres divided into main categories such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The multiple genres underline how reading is an activity as diverse as there are readers.

Taking the readers’ perspective in the study of digital influence is in line with the emphasis on the active role of the digital media consumer in audience studies (Livingstone, 2004, 2019). In addition, leaning on Kim Schröder’s (2019) ‘audiencization’ perspective, the study attempts to understand how conscious readers state their choices in a complex media situation. The following analysis will reflect readers’ experiences when digital reading formats are established as alternatives to paper books’ traditional, analogue reading.

This article revolves around readers and reading media, with particular attention paid to the difference between analogue and digital reading formats. In addition, the article focuses on digital connectivity and the risk of digital disturbances – from reading devices to everyday media use more generally. Reading habits and the relationship between the reader and the reading media are at the core of the study, more so than the social context in which the reading happens.

As the subject of concern is leisure reading that demands focus over time, the medium discussed in this analysis is the book. The study is based on Norwegian readers and three reading formats: the paper book for text printed on paper; the e-book for text displayed on a digital screen, typically a tablet; and the audiobook listened to on a digital device, usually a smartphone. In most instances, the digital book is comparable to the paper book, whereas the audiobook represents more radical remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 1996). In this article, all three of them – the paper book, the e-book and the audiobook – are named ‘the book’.

The analysis draws on the concept of affordance from design and media studies to address media specificities (Gibson, 1979; Norman, 2013). This theoretical perspective is presented in the next section, followed by a description of the method. Finally, the influence of digitalization on literary reading is conceptualised according to reactions perceived by the readers. After a discussion, the main takeaways are summarised in the conclusion.

Analytical framework

Since this study compares reading practices on various reading media, awareness of how they differ is equally essential. With this aim, we employ the concept of affordance, initially developed by the ecological psychologist James Gibson (1977). According to the design theorist Don Norman (2013), affordance is ‘a relationship between the properties of an object and the agent’s capabilities that determine just how the object could possibly be used’ (p. 11). Norman takes a human-centred approach and sees affordances as culturally grounded: Affordances are only as interesting as the user recognises them to be. It is in the relation between an object with specific properties and the person putting this object into practice that the affordance of the object is noticeable. Affordances are inherent possibilities in an object becoming visible only in actual use (McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015; Mannell, 2019; Nagy and Neff, 2015). Hence, this article does not aim to systematically evaluate how various affordances are used. Instead, the focus is on those affordances the users recognise themselves and how and why they integrate them into their media use and media habits.

In insisting on the readers’ perspective in the tradition of audience studies, we emphasise how the influence of digital affordances in literary reading needs to be explored and analysed according to personal experiences.

Methods

The empirical material in this article is a qualitative study focusing on individual experiences, and 12 informants identifying as leisure readers were interviewed. This qualitative approach brings forward experiences of digital reading in the context of everyday life and the readers’ social, physical and digital surroundings of the present.

In line with the main focus on reading, the study concentrates on the relations between the readers and their reading medium. Hence, variation in persons’ age, sex, occupation, use of a reading medium and reading habits determined the sample and not the socio-economic status of the readers. The main selection criteria were that the informants enjoyed leisure reading and engaged in analogue reading and digital reading with eyes, ears or both. The sample consists of five males and seven females between 28 and 67, including persons with a higher university degree (5), a college degree (5) and vocational training (2). The primary recruitment strategy was snowball sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) and advertising on social media.

When participating in the study, the informants received a short survey about age, education, occupation, examples of titles most recently read and preferred reading medium. Because of this initial information, the interview sessions were effectively

driven towards the readers' making sense of their literary reading under digitalization. The main topics in the interview guide were reading habits, experiences with digital reading formats and literary reading in the context of being digitally connected. The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and were, due to Covid, conducted online. Recruitment of informants continued until the empirical corpus appeared to have reached a saturation point according to the premise of variation in reading habits.

Two researchers conducted the interviews which were later transcribed and subject to a thematic analysis. Due to the exploratory character of this project, categories and themes were constructed with an inductive approach, following the principles of thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The authors discussed the categories systematically to increase reliability, and the first author continued the thematic analysis in NVivo. The final coding in NVivo consists of 23 categories. The empirical base for this article are the categories availability, choice of books, frequency, concentration, media use, paper versus tablet, paper versus audio, preferences, pricing, reading volume, situations, time. Generally, takeaways are brought forward when three informants or more reported practices or tendencies most central to the research questions. When a finding is related to one informant only, this is noted. The informants are anonymised. The interviews were in Norwegian, and the first author translated the citations in this article.

Analysis

As an introduction to the analysis, we will start with a short note on the Norwegian media context. Norway is a highly connected country with widespread smartphone use. Statistics on media use show how analogue reading, such as newspapers and books, is replaced by digital media use (McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015; Mannell, 2019; Nagy and Neff, 2015). The smartphone has become an intimate partner in everyday life (Deloitte, 2018; Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2018), and audiobooks through streaming services are spreading literature as never before. The ongoing changes among readers in Norway are reflected in turnover from digital literature sales, with numbers closely comparable to changes in other Scandinavian countries. Audiobooks in streaming services rose from 10% to 23% of total sales (Norwegian Publisher's Association [NPA], 2022) from 2018 to 2021. At the same time, e-books represented 3.2% of total sales in 2018 and 3.7% in 2021. The numbers from Sweden and Denmark state an equally steep increase in the use of audiobooks (Danish Publishers [DP], 2022; Swedish Publisher's Association [SPA], 2022), and indications suggest that the rate of growth in audiobooks is now flattening out in Sweden.

The following analysis explores how digitalised literature has influenced reading habits, including the readers' treatment of digital connectivity alongside their reading. The informants were introduced to digital reading platforms several years before the interview, and most had a long-term relationship with various reading formats. Despite differences in age, sex and occupation, the interviews showed many commonalities among the informants. Being deeply immersed was mentioned by 9 of the 12 as the main reason to indulge in literary reading. In addition, reading provides a typical means to explore other cultures, 'travel in time', and see the world from other

people's perspectives. These were some of the reoccurring reasons for prioritising literature. 'As they say, you live a hundred lives through just one if you read enough books', one of the informants expressed.

Proceeding to the first research question about reading habits and the influences of digital reading technology, e-books and audiobooks are first handled separately.

Affordances in e-books trigger ambivalence

Informants habituated with a tablet are aware of the affordances brought on by digital technology. They praise how these make reading books more available and reading situations more practical (Kuzmičová et al., 2020). Seven informants found new reading opportunities through digital tablets. Most referred to their Kindle, but iPads were a preferred reading device to at least two of them. One of the informants explicitly reported having read extensively on a smartphone.

The power of instant gratification for eager readers inbound to digital reading technology is striking. As stated by Gustav (67), 'It's magic. It is a great advantage with Kindle; just click and read. Everything is available'. Access to the whole world of literature instantly, from anywhere, is an advantage underlined by all but one of the e-book reading informants. Another advantage highly praised was the weight, or – more precisely – the lack of weight. 'It weighs nothing. I can carry it everywhere all the time. It's so easy. It weighs about 50 grams to carry along your library' (Hans, 60).

The practicality of lightweight appeared as a gift to great consumers of literature, whether because of much travelling for work, more lightweight holiday luggage or less weight to carry around in your everyday handbag. In addition, more individual advantages were mentioned, such as having free and immediate access to library books or reading on an even smaller device than a tablet, namely the smartphone. For those who were habituated to reading on a tablet, the smoothness in accessing and reading literature in diverse situations was greatly appreciated.

Technological affordances that were especially appreciated include the possibility of adjusting light and the individualisation of text on the screen. Reading in the dark without disturbing others is a recurring point. 'I have been reading a lot at my Kindle while lying in the dark with children who do not fall asleep while breastfeeding and this stuff' (Susan, 34).

Due to adjustable letters, a tablet allows for reading even without glasses, when forgotten at home. The expanded reading options and the physical practicalities inbound to e-books were pointed arguments in favour of tablets.

Informants who were less enthusiastic about digital reading stressed the downside of tablets. Malfunctioning screens in the summer sun and the opportunity to avoid screens after a full day of work in front of a screen were arguments against digital reading. Electronic devices also bring a fear of damage and the risk of losing them, as underlined by Rita (63).

A clear majority of the informants express that navigating inside a digital text is cumbersome and negatively impacts the reading experience, as underlined by the enthusiastic e-book reader Alice (53): 'Obviously, it is easier to scroll back and forth in a paper book'.

There was a wide spectre of reactions to how e-book reading influenced the outcome of the reading experience. The affordances in tablets bring along new and enhanced possibilities for their users (Norman, 2013). Several of the informants told us how they continuously switched between paper and tablet related to the occasion and the text's complexity level. For example, Susan states (34), 'Serious reading needs paper. Literature with a strong narrative and pace is fine digitally. You do not need to memorise where the text is on the page'. The most experienced tablet readers utilise the digital affordances provided by the tablet, such as highlighting quotes, searching for exact paragraphs or pages or, as earlier stated, adjusting letters on the screen. Three of the most habituated tablet readers had literally converted from paper to tablet. They chose the traditional codex only when they already had the paper book or the titles were digitally unavailable. To them, tablets brought on more reading.

When deliberating between physical and digital books, the value of materiality was accentuated, even among readers habituated to digital reading. Expressions like 'a more substantial relation' [to paper], 'aesthetics' and 'romantic' underlined the emotional aspects brought forward by memories related to personal reading history. As Richard (29) expressed, 'the best reading experiences come from paper. It is to be present'. The physical book triggers emotions. One informant described how she passes the shelves in her living room, smiling when recognising a loved title. This notion of nostalgia in favour of paper books compared to e-books resembles the reaction described by Ballatore and Natale (2016), where the 'aura' (Benjamin, 1968) generated by media technology implies that one technology, like the paper book, is more authentic than others.

Being in favour of digital books for daily reading does not exclude the love of paper and analogue reading, but readers express double binds towards their paper books. On the one hand, the love of bookshelves and the physical touch of paper express a need for something tangible to connect to their literary experiences, different from a tablet. On the other hand, storing physical books is described as cumbersome and space-demanding. The interview guide contains no question about this, but unsolicited expressions are clearly stated, as when one informant explained how she throws away physical books every year. After renovating, she has had a 'die-hard Marie Kondo exercise', having freed some shelf space. Nevertheless, she keeps her carefully selected library of paper books.

The readers express conflicting relations to their favoured reading medium, as when crammed bookshelves infuse troubling feelings, while the touch and smell of paper books are cherished. The tablets for e-books and paper books bring about a complex set of positive and negative reactions, depending on the kind of affordances emphasised by the reader.

Affordances in audiobooks make reading a combined activity

All informants who listed audiobooks as a preferred reading option highlighted the advantage of combining literature with other activities. This was expressed as a matter of fact. For example, one informant listened to audiobooks during most of his workday. A more typical finding, however, was the combination of listening to audiobooks while

performing private, practical tasks. The advantage of audiobooks while driving, working outside in the garden or inside the house or performing other physical tasks was popular among those who were into audiobooks. Audiobooks were also used more instrumentally to fall asleep or engage in social activities with children: 'It is such an incredibly nice activity, an excellent way of reading together' (Susan, 34).

Listening to audiobooks also depends on the quality of the narrator's voice. Although not introduced in the interview guide, it was mentioned by half of the informants listening to audiobooks, such as Caroline (63): 'I get irritated by a bad voice'. The voice may lead the informants to stop reading or make it more enjoyable. One female informant reported falling in love with certain voices and, as a result, had listened to several 'shitty' books only because of the narrators. Voice affects the literary experience at a deeper level, and the voice becomes an integral part of the experience of audiobooks. One of the younger male informants highlighted this by telling how he remembered his voice from books he had read, but the narrator's voice from audiobooks he had listened to.

Audiobooks provide the affordance of changing speed, but only a couple of informants used this feature. However, the slow pace of audiobooks was a shared complaint, most commonly by those who did not like listening to literature. 'I am a fast reader. Audiobooks are too slow' was a recurring notion. Only one of the informants, who had dyslexia, described audio as faster than text reading.

The significance of the narrator's voice and the affordances inherent in audiobooks allow for a different kind of literary experience than reading the text. The affordances in audiobooks trigger new emotions and aesthetical aspects, as voice and speed become part of the equation. Consumption mode changes from reading to listening (Philips, 2007). Furthermore, the remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 1996) of the paper book to audiobook adds affordances that allow simultaneous engagement in activities other than reading while consuming literature. When reading becomes listening, the book becomes a more ambient medium akin to the radio in creating new user practices (Have and Pedersen, 2015). As a result, opportunities to consume literature are radically expanded.

Digital affordances make readers optimise

Even though there was a variety in how tablets had increased reading opportunities, a common denominator was that text reading became more flexible. The advantages of low weight, small size and the possibility of bringing a whole library along were praised by experienced e-book readers. 'I read a lot on my Kindle. It is so practical to carry and easy to handle. If I walk the dog through the park when it is dark, I can put on more light, you know' (Hannah, 55). Digital affordances in audiobooks on a smartphone make reading even more accessible.

I always read. When I brush my teeth, when I eat breakfast, I always have a book [a tablet] in hand. Bus, train, everything I do, I read. And now, with the audiobook, it has become even more; when cleaning and painting the house. Whatever I do, there is an audiobook on. (Theresa, 40)

Half of the informants who used audiobooks expressed how this format is most suitable for literature where missing parts of text or details such as names and dates are not

a big issue. The experience results in different choices of literature for other reading mediums. Kate (63) stated, ‘It might be why I choose to read the important books [at her tablet], and I choose Lucinda Riley and those as audiobooks. Simon (32) said, ‘audio is for more peripheral reading’.

More than half of the informants using audiobooks regularly expressed how their concentration slips away more quickly when listening than reading. The refrain was that it is easier to drop out of an audiobook and start thinking of something else. The audiobook was experienced as less demanding and more suitable for literature that does not require much concentration, as listening is done ‘less attentively’ (Costera Meijer and Groot Kormelink, 2015; Have and Pedersen, 2015, 2020), which implies that audiobooks challenge reading concentration (Bergström and Höglund, 2020; Tattersall Wallin and Nolin, 2020).

One of the great hindrances to digital reading is navigating the text, going back and forth. In practice, this is harder when listening to an audiobook than reading an e-book, and it is highlighted as a justification for the preference for lighter literature in audiobooks. Several informants report ‘falling out’ of the text while listening to audiobooks, and this is a reason to choose titles with a pointed theme (non-fiction) or simple storylines (fiction). Hence, the informants sort genre and complexity of literature according to format.

This study demonstrates how digital affordances give literature the power to expand the reading situations. Experienced readers customise their reading according to the situation, and the choice of the book also depends on the reading medium.

Digital reading technology influences reading habits by changing how the readers relate to and perceive their literary reading. Research question one can be summed up in three main takeaways: affordances in e-books trigger ambivalence, affordances in audiobooks make reading a combined activity, digital affordances make readers optimise and adapt their reading according to the situation.

Advancing to research question 2, about readers’ handling of distractions following digital connection, the act of literary reading is explored in the context of media use more generally and the ubiquitous digital connection present in everyday life of the 2020s.

Readers activate affordances to handle digital distractions

Social media on the smartphone were immediately and unanimously described as the main source of digital disturbances. Half of the informants had made precautions to protect themselves from being disturbed by social media. They had developed strategies to make the smartphone less tempting. They expressed an attitude of self-awareness and control but did not always succeed: ‘I can feel the pull, something exciting, and if I first get to these small films [of cats] and then it is one more and one more and . . . Then I turn off’ (Hannah, 55).

The informants expressed a strong motivation to uphold digital discipline, whether by activating the black and white mode on the smartphone to make it less tempting, eradicating all notifications, or depositing the smartphone in another room to read. There was a significant variation in individual rules set up

to protect the reader from digital distractions. The overall impression was that they regarded themselves as masters of their devices and time, like Alice (53) who stated that ‘I am very conscious about being on and off. I want to decide myself when to be available’.

One informant needed more severe restrictions on herself. She related her extended use of social media to periods of feeling down, and at the moment, she described herself as enthralled by Twitter: ‘I am awful, I can’t stop it. I will have to uninstall the app to get a pause. Facebook and Insta are uninstalled already’ (Theresa, 40). These reactions are similar to reactions described by Pentzold et al. (2020) in their study on leisure life and quality time. Self-determined disconnection is a personal goal that is not always attainable.

There were many exposures to real-life intervention in the matter of reading, and this was brought into the interviews in response to questions about digital connectivity. Regardless of digitalisation, the manifestations of everyday life occurred as relevant as digital disturbances when exploring possibilities to read to half of the informants. Family members that need following up are reoccurring examples. To balance everyday life, family obligations and literature reading become an issue. Susan (34), who manages to maintain a large amount of leisure reading combined with small children and demanding work, is very conscious of her choice of reading mode. She distinguishes between reading for work and recreational reading and varies between tablets or audio according to the available situation. To her, digital online media does not steal reading time but challenges her working time. She must often refrain from scrolling through news and social media when she is about to follow-up on work-related tasks, and when working late, she hurries to ensure time for reading books.

To summarise the second research question about handling digital distractions, readers consciously navigate to make room for their priorities and continue reading. In interaction with social media, users tend to focus on their responsibility to regulate their use and limit digital distractions. They establish private ‘rules’ and sense troubled feelings of overuse (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020). The smartphone may be moved to another room, or the digital affordances of the smartphone may be put into practice, like activating silent mode or erasing social media apps to protect time for concentrated reading.

While these strategies are far from uncommon (Karlsen and Syvertsen, 2016; Mannell, 2019; Vanden Abeele et al., 2022), what is remarkable in our study is how closely they were linked to the act of reading. The level of prioritising literary reading is a pointed takeaway. The statements were unequivocal, as in these examples: ‘To me, reading is the best I can do. That’s my leisure time. It’s better than Facebook’ (Susan, 34); ‘The best is to sit totally in peace, alone, [and read] in two-three hours. That is absolutely the best’ (John, 28).

Devoted readers recognise digital distractions but do not consider them the main hindrance to their reading. Even those who struggle to disconnect are not prevented from reading. Instead, they customise their reading practices, partly by means of the affordances enabled by the smartphone. The love of reading itself serves as a means to prioritise certain activities and – to a large extent – manoeuvre one’s digital management of leisure time.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates how the readers recognise the affordances in digital literature and digital reading devices. Informants generally express an intimate and nuanced relation to their reading medium.

Literary readers adjust to digital affordances, as in e-books and tablets, with the notion of ambivalence at two levels. First, there is a clear distinction between those who love their tablets and those who do not. The e-book readers praise the freedom enabled by digital technology, from the small weight and abundance of works readily available to the practical adjustment of light, letters and searching tools. Others actively prefer paper books. Second, there is an inbound ambivalence towards the deliberation of e-books related to paper books, even among experienced e-book readers.

A sense of value is at stake (Ballatore and Natale, 2016). The deliberation on e-book reading brings an automatic evaluation of paper books (Kosch et al., 2022). On the one hand, the central tendency is that the essential titles should be on paper. On the other hand, the affordances inbound to e-books and devices come with a great practical advantage to many readers, most notably those who read the most. Notably, no one seems neutral on the digital reading of literary texts.

The ambivalence towards digital text reading may relate to the differences in analogue and digital reading found in reading research, which tends to be more focused on educational contexts (Alexander, 2004; Clinton, 2019; Delgado et al., 2018; Singer and Alexander, 2017; Støle et al., 2020). Studies report on deprived sensory perception when reading from a screen. Furthermore, enhanced tactility from paper reading entails better comprehension and learning (Kong et al., 2018; Mangen, 2016, 2020). Screens bring along fewer ‘mental anchors’; another effect that might affect reading outcome negatively (Schilhab et al., 2018), while physical texts on paper might be easier to navigate (Mangen and Kuiken, 2014). One of the few studies comparing long-form literary reading on paper and Kindle states that readers’ overall comprehension of the content is comparable on both reading platforms, but navigating across linear progress, remembering the order and understanding temporalities in narratives is easier on paper than on screen (Mangen et al., 2019).

The informants who are most into e-book reading convey a long history of tablet reading. This may indicate that it takes some time to understand the meaning of the affordances in tablets, in line with the operation of *body schemas* identified in research on embodied reading. Accordingly, exploring the affordances of tablets instigates learning processes to develop sensorimotor skills customised to the new reading media (Hillesund et al., 2022).

A quantitative survey of everyday reading practices among Danish library professionals and students underlines how digitalization has set the ground for ‘a flexible and highly personalized approach to reading as an activity’ (Balling et al., 2019: 215), highlighting customisation to situations, specifically related to reading text on the smartphone. A Swedish study analysing a Swedish subscription service data set demonstrates how audiobooks have enlarged the ‘timespaces’ of literary reading (Tattersall Wallin and Nolin, 2020). Finally, our Norwegian study underlines how an expansion of reading situations relates to the e-book *and* the audiobook. These three Scandinavian studies mutually strengthen the argument of digital affordances expanding literary reading.

As such, digital reading devices and audiobooks are comparable to other digital technology, which invades parts of everyday life earlier occupied by other activities (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1994). In contrast to concerns about overuse, however, increased reading time was not unwelcome, and the informants did not describe any apparent conflict between reading and other activities. Quite the contrary, accessing digital literature in text or audio expanded their reading, and new habits were established. This gives reason to summarise that they have developed and personalised their reading habits to optimise their outcome of reading at different reading mediums and in different situations.

The study demonstrates that digital affordances integrate literary reading into everyday practices, in line with Don Norman. He highlights that affordances enhance and strengthen the relationship between a human agent and an object (Norman, 2013). Therefore, enlarged reading opportunities facilitated by digital affordances facilitating the expansion of literary reading are valuable to the readers.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates how dedication to leisure reading facilitates disconnection. When reading is highly praised, you are not so prone to become invaded by digital distractions. Disconnection studies highlight how strategies for coping with digital media are flexible; disconnection and connection do not constitute a dichotomy but represents a continuum (Dremljuga, 2018; Karppi, 2018). This study underlines how an explicit devotion to books, regardless of format, justifies reading as a reason to disconnect and enhance resilience, without going offline. Literary readers manage to contain online temptations because of an inbound longing to go on reading, which, as a result, serves as a form of digital detox (Syvertsen, 2020).

Conclusion

This article has explored the following research questions: ‘How does digital reading technology influence reading habits’ and ‘how do readers handle distractions following digital connections’. This combination of questions reveals findings that capture essential aspects of today’s reading practices, relevant for disconnection research and audience and reading research. Research on disconnection usually focuses on the media that cause distractions, not on media that may insulate the user from them (Lomborg and Ytre-Arne, 2021). This study, in contrast, shows an example of digital media use that may foster a less disturbing everyday life simply because the alternative to social media and the smartphone is regarded as more worthwhile. The tablet expands reading opportunities but affords the contemplation the traditional book offers.

The study establishes new knowledge about leisure readers of literature reflecting a diversity of readers, affordances and contexts. The affordances of tablets and audiobooks have opened new venues for consuming literature and, to various degrees, influenced reading habits. The spread of audiobooks through streaming services has accelerated such change. Space and time allocated to media use are recurring topics in media studies and public debates, and they turned out to be topics central to the informants. The analysis states that digital leisure reading and listening increased regarding how, where and when literature is consumed. The main conclusion of the research questions consists of three findings.

The first finding is that readers adapt their reading mode to the situation. To a large extent, increased reading is linked to affordances inherent in digital reading technology.

Digitalisation makes text reading easily accessible. Experienced readers have developed strategies to maximise the combination of work of literature, reading format and situation. They swap seamlessly between paper, e-books and audio due to altered habits and their circumstances. To great consumers of literature, advantages like availability, weight and the possibility of personal customisation make digital literature a better option for daily reading than paper.

A second finding is that digital reading favours lighter texts. Complex narrative structure and deep layers of meaning are harder to grasp when the reading format does not easily support going back and forth in the text. This dimension is more substantial for audiobooks, where books that demand less concentration are favoured. The selection of literature is closely linked to the reading format. The complexity of the text is one criterion for selecting a format, especially audiobooks, which allows for light and ambient literature consumption. Reading on tablets or paper books demands more attention and is also the medium where immersion in the text, which many informants strive for, is more commonly reached. Several informants report finding it easier to navigate complex texts in physical books than in a tablet; in some cases, they choose a paper book for this reason. Audiobooks increase reading opportunities and alter reading practices, opening for more casual and less focused literature consumption. The literature becomes more available but also more ephemeral.

A third finding is that being a devoted reader gives motivation for developing strategies ensuring continued reading. Readers do not question whether they should go on reading. Obstacles are to be bypassed. While readers are as frustrated with digital distractions and prone to online browsing as anybody else, they express a strong awareness of their need to protect reading. These strategies effectively make readers practically and temporally disconnect to immerse themselves in literature.

This study and the research referred to are based on people already reading literature. Further research will have to broaden the scope to include less devoted readers and non-readers (of books). In other words, there is a need for more research in order to explore the influence of affordances and the structural changes due to technical and commercial frames on literary reading following the spread of streaming services, the accelerated high rise in audio listening and the general development in digitalization.

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Article II

Article III



Platformization and Publishing: Changes in Literary Publishing

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Abstract

This article explores the influence of platformization on literary publishing, focusing on the impact of audiobooks and streaming services on editorial processes and business objectives. Increased importance of some genres, sliding concepts of quality, increasing dependency on social media, diminishing economic margins, and stricter editorial decisions are transitioning traits highlighted in this study on Norwegian trade publishers. Further, the analysis brings forward three central challenges to today's publishers: dependence on digital platforms to obtain readership, favoring simple narrative structures countering broader catalogues, and increased press on prioritizing in a market characterized by customization.

Keywords Publishing industry · Platformization · Streaming services · Literature · Audiobooks

Introduction

Literary publishing is under transition. Five hundred and fifty years after Gutenberg's invention of printing, the history of the book faces a new trajectory. Subscription services on digital platforms offer literature in streaming, and literary reading may be digitally monitored. Literary readers leave digital traces that may be used in further development of platforms and content, similar to processes in global platforms such as Facebook, Google and Spotify.¹

Content industries, such as publishing, used to be summarized by the flamboyant phrase 'content is king', expressed by Bill Gates in 1996.² Content providers' powerful positions were clearly stated. Digitalization of the business enforces new

¹ Murray [24], Price [29], Thompson [36].

² Bailey [3].

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regimes of production and power. Actions and deliberations are translated into numbers. Platforms have datafied input as their foundation.³

Operations are merged into numbers and systematized in a platform structure such as Netflix (film and TV-series), Spotify (music) and Storytel (literature). Subscription services reorganize the relationship between publishers and readers. The power of distribution directly to customers is a necessary condition for the platform industry to thrive and grow. Efficacy and precision in targeting customers are competitive advantages to the platform businesses.⁴

In the literary industry, the ongoing change is manifested in the accelerated rise in the distribution of audiobooks, as demonstrated in statements like ‘The fastest-growing segment in publishing’,⁵ ‘Steep rise in Audiobook Sales’,⁶ and ‘Downloaded audio: biggest format jump’.⁷

Based on a qualitative interview study of editorial leaders in Norwegian publishing houses, this article explores the influence of platformization on literary publishing, as expressed in the research question: *How do streaming services and growth in audiobooks influence literary publishing?* This article aims to bring forward new knowledge on the development of publishing in fiction and non-fiction literature for adult leisure readers, focusing on the impact on editorial processes and business objectives. These are insights relevant to the book industry, the larger field of media industries, and the readers. To the author’s knowledge, there is no similar study on the influence of digitalization on literary publishing exploring the recent development in the book industry as perceived by the publishers.

In the following, I will present the Norwegian context and some significant traits of subscription-based streaming services before proceeding to the analytical framework, the method, and the following analysis.

The Norwegian Example in a Scandinavian Context

The growth in subscription-based streaming services offering audiobooks in Scandinavia is the backdrop to this article, such as Storytel, Fabel, BookBeat and Nextory. These are services where customers have access to as much consumption as they want to a set price per month, effectively the ‘all you can eat’ principle. Audiobooks are their primary offer, partly supplied with e-books and podcasts.

Norwegian trade publishing is characterized by a strong emphasis on titles in the Norwegian language (including translated titles), which entails that its business is specifically targeted toward a Norwegian audience. Traditionally, large volumes of hardbacks and paperbacks have been sold, mainly through bookstores.⁸

³ Van Dijck [13], Lotz [21].

⁴ Van Dijck et al. [14].

⁵ Kozłowski [18].

⁶ Lotinga [20].

⁷ Anderson [1].

⁸ Pettersen and Colbjørnsen [27].

In only a few years, streaming services have achieved a strong position in the market, and there has been a strong growth in the distribution of audiobooks. While audiobooks in streaming services represented 10% of total sales in Norway in 2018, it rose to 23% of total sales three years later.⁹ Comparable numbers from Sweden indicate that digital streaming services (where the audiobook is by far the largest format) represented 15.5% in 2018 and 26% in 2021.¹⁰ The Danish numbers tell that the audiobook represented 26% of the total market in 2019 and 34% in 2020.¹¹

The steep growth in audiobooks implies some significant changes: digitalized literature has become mainstream through streaming services; copy sale has been partly replaced by subscription sale; and technological development has made literature more available. Hence, the traditional paper book was enriched with digital affordances after remediation¹² into an audiobook.¹³

From Copy Sale to Subscription

Subscription-based streaming services reorganize the traditional value chain.¹⁴ Subscription services do not harvest income directly from the processing of literary works.¹⁵ Further, operations along the line from author to the customer are merged. Marketing, distribution and sales grow into one function, facilitated by the subscription service.¹⁶ Hence, the number of subscribers and their length of subscription become criteria for success.

Subscribers' satisfaction is essential to keep up the turnover, and investments are made to achieve a satisfactory combination of curated content, user experience and technical solutions. Subscription services destabilize the traditional connection between a single copy and economic value and make consumer-price independent of consumption.¹⁷

Content providers and users become dependent on the streaming services, and 'the profit of the providers is decreasing' in new digital business models.¹⁸ Hence, the industry must accommodate a risk of a decrease in revenue,¹⁹ and there is a risk of a reduction of the overall range of published books.²⁰ Such 'network models' are

⁹ NPA [26].

¹⁰ SPA [34].

¹¹ DP [12].

¹² Bolter and Grusin [6].

¹³ Have and Pedersen [17].

¹⁴ Porter [28], Thompson [35].

¹⁵ Lotz [21].

¹⁶ Ask et al. [2].

¹⁷ Colbjørnsen et al. [9].

¹⁸ Have and Pedersen [17].

¹⁹ Sundet and Colbjørnsen [33].

²⁰ Spilker and Colbjørnsen [30].

never neutral. They are always based on a platform, bringing along asymmetrical relations.²¹

Analytical framework

In *The Platform Society*, José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal describe three driving forces in platform-based structures such as digital subscription services: datafication, commodification and selection. *Datafication* denotes how all kinds of things, actions and deliberations are transformed into numbers.²² Data left by users have become the new currency in a datafied structure like a service offering subscription on streamed content in the cultural industries.

The concept of *commodification* states how datafied information left by users serves as a lens to sharpen production and punch out goods to sell. These goods can be physical or digital, services or experiences. Moreover, they may be of any kind if they are scalable and digitally promotable for sale. According to van Dijck and colleagues, the value of the commodity is counted in currencies of attention, data, users, and money.

Offers need to be highlighted to attract attention, hence the *selection* concept. This third perspective on processes of platformization serves to underline the importance of focused curation based on knowledge of customers and target groups. Knowledge of the subscribers depends on the systematical treatment of digital user tracks, and are put into action by ‘hybrid gatekeeping mechanisms’²³ in a combination of algorithmic analyses and human curation. This combination of technical and human processing becomes a means to optimize breakthroughs and enhance attractiveness toward customers. Curated catalogues are made available through a mix of ‘personalization, reputation, and trends’.²⁴

Method

The article builds on a qualitative interview study²⁵ with Publishers and Editors in Chief in Norwegian publishing houses winter 2021–2022 to explore the influence of digitalization in editorial work and strategic deliberations as perceived by central actors in the industry.²⁶

²¹ Colbjørnsen [8].

²² Van Dijck [13], van Dijck et al. [14].

²³ Maasø and Spilker [22].

²⁴ Colbjørnsen et al. [10]; van Dijck et al. [14].

²⁵ Kvale and Brinkmann [19].

²⁶ The author has held a leading role in Norwegian trade publishing before becoming a researcher. The research project has no funding from the industry and there is no conflict of interest. Further, interviews are conducted in collaboration with Professor Faltin Karlsen, who has no former connection to the publishing industry.

The 12 informants in the study were chosen because of their role as head of literary publishing in Norwegian language originals of fiction and non-fiction for adult readers [in this article, referred to as ‘publisher(s)’]. As Norwegian publishing is a limited industry, twelve informants from small-sized, medium-sized, and large publishing houses within trade publishing are a representative sample. The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 min and took place at the informants’ offices, except for two on Zoom due to renewed COVID regulations.

The interviews were transcribed and then reviewed by the author to single out the answers relevant to further research before they were sent to the informants for approval. There are nine female and three male informants in the study, all with more than 10 years’ history of working in Norwegian publishing. Their present position includes responsibility for a list of publications and the financial results, and they are the head of co-working editors. The size of their departments and their departments’ placing on the broader organization vary from publisher to publisher, and with this also their level of responsibility for marketing, sales, and remediated versions of the text, such as e-books and audiobooks.

The analysis is built upon an inductive approach in line with a thematic analysis.²⁷ In the following, the informants are anonymized and referred to by a capital letter from A to L. Citations from the interviews are translated from Norwegian into English by the author.

Analysis

The publishers’ sensitizing about the development of literary publishing revealed five main themes related to the research question. In the following, findings are ordered after these five: genre, quality, social media, economic premises, and decision making.

The interviews started with an open approach to the influence of digitalization. It turned out that a general sense of threat to their traditional business of paper books was an overarching theme to all informants. Further, there was a shared notion about the audiobooks and streaming services causing radical changes: ‘What we expected to be the e-book revolution has become the audiobook revolution instead, because of streaming services’ (Publisher G), a statement relating to the experience of the informants.

The Notions of Genres

That streaming services favour specific genres is mentioned by several. ‘A lot of [audio] literature in streaming is lighter literature and crime’ (Publisher L). The emergence of a new sales channel, namely audiobooks in streaming services, has opened the field for a broader list of crime titles. Streaming services give new life to presumably ‘dead’

²⁷ Braun and Clarke [7].

backlist. True crime, commercial fiction, and professional ‘How to’ books are examples mentioned to underline how some types of titles seem to fit the context of audio streaming exceptionally well. Many publishers are actively looking for and cultivating authors, ideas, and narratives suitable for audio remediation.

The publishers justify a renewed emphasis on specific genres by referring to preferences singled out by streaming services. In doing this, they highlight considerations of datafication in streaming services. Further, their editorial reasoning demonstrates processes of commodification when genre traits are copied in new works and formerly outdated titles are renewed.

The Concept(s) of Quality

Increased awareness of genres favoured in streaming services triggers reflections on how concepts of quality are sliding. Several informants foresee a forthcoming development in promoting a more efficient narrative style. Almost all informants identify a general tendency toward customization to better match subscribers’ preferences to streaming services.

In general, there are frequent references to the influence of TV series and narratives being ‘speeded up’, like: ‘At least we know that it cannot be too complicated when it comes to audio. If there are too many narrative lines, the reader falls out’ (Publisher H). The editorial leaders convey awareness about new kinds of criteria to consider. Extended reflections or descriptions in narratives are more likely to be exchanged with passages accelerating action in stories. The development encourages more focus on getting readers ‘hooked’. ‘There is a movement from the titles for the few to those with a broader reach, even though many will not admit this change’ (Publisher A).

Most of these informants handle a variation of genres, and to those having responsibility of quality fiction it is essential to underline that quality fiction is not affected from any outside influence. However, there seems to be no doubt about a general influence on quality regimes enforced by streaming services, related to the spreading of TV series and audiobooks.

The publishers justify deliberations on manuscripts and the kind of titles they will look for in the future by referring to the traits favoured by streaming services or explicitly mentioning former bestsellers, regardless of format or sales channel. Whether pointing at oneself or publishers in general, there is a shared notion of quality concepts under transition. Further, there is an expectation of increased influence from demonstrated success formulas, whether shown in the top lists of streaming services for books or other media.

The Meaning of Social Media

The relations to the authors are recurring in the interviews. Generally, the publishers have been more focused on the authors than on the readers of literature. An explanation for this orientation may be the traditional order of the value chain.²⁸ The end customers have been in the hands of the booksellers; bookstores, libraries, and book clubs, and not the publishers.

Relations to authors were not least frequent in a theme not explicitly introduced by the interview guide but turned out as one of the main takeaways even though. When publishers are asked about digitalization, the meaning of social media in the marketing of books was top of mind to everybody: ‘We talk about it [social media] with the authors. We talk a lot about it. We would never publish an author who is not on social media’ (Publisher J). Judging from the informants’ responses, social media have become the main channel for directly marketing fiction and non-fiction to readers. Publishing houses depend on the social media accounts of their authors.²⁹ The number of followers and agency in social media has become a reason to publish, mainly to some non-fiction publishers. Publishers depend on authors with a following in social media.

Further, most non-fiction publishers explained how social media had become a significant channel for ideas to new titles and a source for new authors. Examples of amateur bloggers having become bestsellers are prevalent in the interviews. The advantage of finding new authors on social media includes enforced marketing power. The number of followers and the way of communicating with followers are explicit examples of new criteria counting when deliberating publication. To this, one informant underlines how this development is, in fact, democratization in access to publishing houses. Potential authors are more likely to emerge from anywhere, regardless of their social and geographical background.

This amplified relationship between the authors and their digital domain is, on the one hand, referred to as a prerequisite; authors are strongly encouraged to promote their books on their personal social media channels. Several publishers explain encouragement and practical help to those not already experienced social media users. On the other hand, the informants demonstrate enforced emphasis on investment in social media channels: ‘Our marketing is much more directed into social media. We spent a lot of time and resources producing digital content for PR purposes’ (Publisher E). The importance of social media comes across in comments on the organizing of the publishing houses. Several informants refer to their recruiting of social media persons. Communicating personally in words and pictures have become an essential skill in the book industry and among its actors, including the authors.

The embracement of social media for marketing purposes tells an essential story about the influence of platformization on literary publishers. Dependence on social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram to get books promoted reveal

²⁸ Porter [28].

²⁹ Murray [24].

marketing strategies built on datafication, commodification and selection and integrated into the business models of the global GAFAM companies.³⁰

Economy in Question

Audiobooks and streaming services enhance press on economic margins. Informants clearly express awareness of the expenses in producing audiobooks and how they are generally low in economic profit. There is increased investment per title. An audiobook needs studio recording and a reader, most often a professional actor if not the author. Further, consumed audiobooks in streaming services make less money to the publisher compared to the same numbers sold in copy sales. To a large amount of the titles presented by literary publishers, audiobooks and streaming services represent investments which are hard to recuperate but also hard to avoid, as authors expect audio editions following the penetration of streaming services.

In addition, there is a press on economic margins when an audiobook in streaming services replaces a sold copy of paper books. All informants question the economics of audiobooks in streaming services one way or the other. The general notion is that there must be a kind of significant change in the business model, as expressed: ‘A business model must be developed that makes it possible [for the publishers] to earn money on audio as well’ (Publisher H). At the same time, the economic deliberations are partly balanced by statements commenting on how some titles do surprisingly well in streaming services, to the benefit of the authors behind those titles.

There is an explicit tendency among informants to be more critical than formerly regarding which titles to produce in audio. A few publishing houses have had a period of ‘all in audio’, and they are now reducing the number of titles reproduced in audio. They realize that quite a few titles are not fit for this format. To the larger publishing houses the economic risk is less acute, the threat of reduced income when paper books in copy sale are exchanged with audiobooks in streaming services. Rather, they express a need to explore and test new business opportunities.

To the tiny publishing houses, the matter of audiobooks leads to questioning their future in general. When the investment needed to make a catalogue into audio is not within reach, the remaining options are either selling audio rights separately (and losing the possibility of later return) or a change in ownership to strengthen financial muscles. A publisher of a small company highlights the most critical topic in the interview session by saying: ‘The structural impact of new digital options is the most important’ (Publisher G). Ownership of rights has become more critical in the era of platformization. In this perspective, the transforming power of streaming services and audiobooks may lead to the restructuring of the publishing business.

Even though the principles of datafication, commodification and selection lead to a more effective distribution to the readers, and the readers get easy access to a broad selection of titles, the publishers are left with less revenue per consumed work of literature. Tasks and responsibilities transferred from the publishers to

³⁰ Döring et al. [15], Thompson [36].

mechanisms inbound to the streaming services, such as marketing, sales, and distribution, make publishers more vulnerable. Enforced economic pressure on publishers is more threatening to the smaller ones. A marginalized economy may be balanced to large publishing groups with other activities within the group.

Editorial Decisions

An overarching takeaway in this study is the publishers' awareness of the transformations resulting from the rise of audiobooks. A challenge frequently referred to by informants is reaching out and making money from a broad range of titles. The increase in the distribution of audiobooks owing to streaming services is a poignant justification. However, all informants generally worry about a decline in text reading and the future market for literature. 'And it [the digitalization] does something to our publishing strategy. Quite a few books that we could publish earlier are heavier to publish today. So, we are more critical about the titles that can make it out there' (Publisher F).

Many informants report how they adjust to the ongoing development by increased consideration. Several informants comment on tightening the opportunity of acceptance, such as: 'One gets a bit stricter and a bit more impatient. So, there is less time to make something a success' (Publisher K). The development leads to press on the economy because of increased investment in audio editions and reduced return on audiobooks in subscription services compared to copy sales. Further, there are frequent references to the decrease in paper book sales, mainly paperbacks. Informants report on being stricter in editorial decisions. Or, as some of them express: it has been harder to be accepted on their lists.

The tightening of the regime for decisions and the acceptance of new titles relates to the process of selection. Publishers curate their lists of publications, comparable to how platform services curate their customer offers. And the process is guided by sets of selection criteria, whether strictly defined by numbers or based on human sensations of quality and commercial potential. The publishers explain new strategies enforcing stricter decisions competition from other media, like TV series. That many seem to replace literary reading with TV series is a recurring topic in the interviews.

Hence, the publishing strategies are under the influence of platformization in a double sense: first, the underlying driving forces lead to stricter processes for acceptance. Second, the general competition for audiences' attention is intensified by the diversity of services offered from platform-based services, of which the publishers expressly point at streaming services like Netflix and HBO.

A few comments sum up the analysis before proceeding to the discussion: publishers' deliberations are increasingly dependent on numbers, and more details are put into numbers before any consideration takes place. Success in streaming services triggers searches for, and development of, comparable titles to imitate previous success, as in processes of commodification. In addition, more detailed knowledge of achieved commercial success makes selection principles more influential in the publishers' curation of their lists. The publishers express a sense of more narrow

frames, explicitly in economic matters. The analysis demonstrates a strong interrelation between the findings. Publishers have become partly dependent on their authors to access the market with their books. When subscription services become a significant channel toward the end-customers of literature, there is a move of power in the value chain from the producers to the distributors with a following press on the publishing economy.

Discussion

The concept of commodification is not new to the history of literary publishing. The book industry was commodified long before digital platforms entered the scene.³¹ Users' activities turned into feedback and used to design (re-)packaging of content to match customer preferences in processes of platformization are like what publishers have been doing for years in publications of new editions, like cheaper paperback versions of originals in hardcover. Further, paperbacks are often identified in serialized packaging, such as the orange spine of Penguin Books.

Commodification implies a denotation of value deprivation³² that is recognizable in the digitalization of the book. In comparison, paper books can be beautiful in physical expression, with large-format, high-quality paper and colour illustrations. These tactile aspects are lost in the e-book. The remediation from text to audio is even more radical. A printed text changed into a fully modulated voice can be experienced as a compromise of lesser value. At the same time, the literary work is renewed.³³ In a platform-based industry, user feedback is systematized and given agency guiding the development and customization of cultural commodities.³⁴ This kind of commodification is enforced through digitalization.

The profound meaning of social media to present days publishing is highlighted. At the same time, dependence on social media was not critically referred to by any informants. Rather the opposite. Furthermore, structural threats, such as the interlocking to platforms and risk of surveillance³⁵ or direct access to end-customer, were not mentioned. Though such issues are likely to be considered within the publishing houses, they were not visibly important to the publishers of literary fiction and non-fiction. How frames decided by the social media platform owners impact future literary publishing is a topic for further research.

That mechanism of selection lead to polarization between good and bad sellers are well-known in the book market. However, this study underlines how algorithm-driven streaming services enhance mechanisms enforcing the bestsellers on expense of other titles.³⁶ When a smaller selection of titles reaches large audiences, there are

³¹ Lotz [21].

³² Van Dijck et al. [14].

³³ Have and Pedersen [17].

³⁴ Döring et al. [15], Nieborg and Poell [25].

³⁵ Van Dijck [13].

³⁶ Berglund [4], Srnicek [31], Steiner [32].

accelerated sales for the few and fewer opportunities for the many titles, resulting in higher risk to the publishers.

Even though transition experiences are not new to the publishers, the power of the present change cannot be bypassed. These interviews convey reasoning about a mix of ubiquitous digitalization and an overwhelming offer of cultural content that makes literature more vulnerable to competition. Literature, regardless of format, compete with media more easily ‘digested’. In this new world of digitalized culture, the audiobook brings hope for the future to the publishers. Several express how audiobooks in streaming services literature may appeal to new readers. Future research must study the long-term influence of streaming services and audiobooks.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how streaming services influence today’s literary publishers. The power of transformation from the digital platforms offering audiobooks and social media relations to end customers appears substantial. The analysis brings forward five essential traits in transition influencing literary publishing: increased importance of some genres, sliding concepts of quality, increasing dependency on social media, diminishing economic margins, and stricter editorial decisions. Even in the era of deep mediatization,³⁷ the medium is not the message,³⁸ but the digitalized medium, such as the audiobook, has an impact on the message.

Interestingly, the totality of details in the interviews, underlines how fundamental the mechanisms of platformization have become. Social media and streaming services control the publishers’ contact with the readers. Digital distribution led by datafication, and algorithmic selection has become a prerequisite to reaching readership. In addition, commodification principles are essential in developing new titles. Notions on literary quality and genres underline the influence of commercial traits in authorships, genre, and narrative styles as they are conveyed by successes of audiobooks in streaming services.

Further, tracks of enforced diversification are notable. Increased selection calls for mixed strategies³⁹ between publishing houses, formats, genres and reading modes. On the one hand, this diversification implies more substantial economic power to be a full-scale publisher. A stronger polarization among titles emerges, only a few titles turn out to be bestsellers, and the rest remain in the long thin tail. But, on the other hand, by diversification of formats and sales channels, literature reaches new audiences, is available in more situations, and some old backlists get renewed success.

This article has identified three central challenges to today’s publishers. First, streaming services’ availability and efficiency has made distribution crucial to obtain a broader readership and a following turnover. Second, the format of audiobooks

³⁷ Couldry and Hepp [11].

³⁸ McLuhan [23].

³⁹ Döring et al. [15].

and targeted digital marketing favours simple narrative structures,⁴⁰ countering the maintaining of broad catalogues that include literature with complex narratives and demanding language.⁴¹ Third, a market characterized by customization, enabled by datafication, customization and selection, promotes new priorities and calls for new strategies.

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Article IV

Attention, ambivalence and algorithms

Publishers in the era of ubiquitous connectivity and expanding platforms

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Abstract

This article scrutinizes how digitalization influences fiction and non-fiction literature publishers in the era of ubiquitous digital connection. The analysis states how a lack of attention is triggering a sense of urgency for the future of literary reading. Further, the digital transition entails an overarching ambivalence. Key stakeholders in literary publishing are experiencing how media on platform-based streaming services is competing with traditional reading. They perceive a battle for time and question the future of reading. From the perspectives of Bourdieu's theory, the article reveals how penetrating connectivity is leading to a change in the professional habitus. Continuous busyness and increased professional presence are triggering ambivalence between work-related duties and personal well-being. Moreover, the publishing stakeholders reveal an ambivalence in voicing future expectations. While worried about the future of reading, the professional habitus leans on a promising future for the industry.

Introduction

Literary reading and publishing are undergoing a digital transformation. E-books and audiobooks are replacing traditional text reading in paper books (Balling et al., 2019; Mangen

et al., 2019; Tattersall Wallin and Nolin, 2020). Literature is more available, and reading is adapted to a wider range of situations by the affordances in tablets for reading and smartphones for listening (Gibson, 1977; Norman, 2013; Spjeldnæs and Karlsen, 2022). The growth in subscription-based streaming services has reorganized the distribution and vending of audiobooks (Colbjørnsen, 2021; Have and Pedersen, 2020; Lotz, 2017), challenging publishers, their business model and the dissemination of literature as a paper book medium.

Moreover, literature has merged into a technology sphere, namely the digital platforms distributing digital content. Algorithms handle detailed information about customer consumption to fuel the marketing and distribution of literature. The publishers' longstanding business model based on turnover from the sale of physical books is being (partly) substituted with a share of digital consumption (Dijck et al., 2018; Lotz, 2017; Maasø and Spilker, 2022; Sundet and Colbjørnsen, 2021).

While digitalization brings along new opportunities to the literary industry and its customers, the industry depends on readers managing to concentrate. The reading of longer texts demands the readers' focused attention, to make room for the interchange between the authors' texts and the personal experiences activated to establish meaning when reading (Baron, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021; Thompson, 2010, 2021). Attentive presence is a prerequisite whether reading a traditional paper book, an e-book or an audiobook, regardless of how the digital formats and their affordances influence the cognitive processes in reading (Clowes, 2019; Hillesund et al., 2022; Mangen, 2020; Mangen et al., 2019). Deep reading depends on immersion. It is vulnerable to distractions (Birkerts, 1994; Wolf, 2018; Wolf and Barzillai, 2009). Distractions and disruptions are phenomena as old as the practice of reading (Furedi, 2015). However, the possible distractions offered by online media and, not least, by the invading character of social media, are omnipresent (Karppi, 2018a; Karppi and Nieborg, 2020; Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021b).

Along with the digitalization of the literary industry, the ubiquitous digital connection influences the everyday life of its users (Couldry and Hepp, 2017). The smartphone has become a close ally to most people and brings along continuous offers of digital media, digital relationships and possible distractions (Abeelee et al., 2018; Karppi, 2018b; Karppi and Nieborg, 2020). Studies on digital disconnection demonstrate how the smartphone is experienced as the most invading digital device in everyday life (Ytre-Arne and Das, 2019, 2020). People experience digital media as time-consuming, and express ambivalence concerning their use of it (Ytre-Arne and Moe 2018; Deloitte 2018). Statistics on media use show how analogue reading, such as newspapers and books, is being replaced by digital media use (SSB 2023).

Digital media invites less attentive media consumption and more multitasking, such as audiobooks and other activities (Tattersall Wallin and Nolin, 2020), or time-consuming scrolling (Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021a). The capacity to immerse oneself and keep on focusing diminishes when multitasking (Firth et al., 2019; Lupinacci, 2021; Terranova, 2012). Hence, shorter attention spans challenge the act of long-form reading (Baron, 2021; Baron and Mangen, 2021).

The growth in subscription-based streaming services has accelerated the influence of audiobooks (Döring et al., 2022). The radical and rapid change following digitalization calls for a deeper understanding of its impact on the literary industry. However, there is little research on the influence of digitalization on decision-makers in the trade publishing of fiction and non-fiction literature. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how editorial leaders perceive the conditions surrounding them and the books they publish, to understand more of the long-term influence of digitalization on literary reading and publishing.

The empirical focus of this article consists in publishers of fiction and non-fiction literature in the era of ubiquitous digital connection (Fast, 2021; Karlsen and Ytre-Arne,

2021; Syvertsen, 2020) and their encounter with a platform-based economy that is reorganizing the value chain between the content provider and the end customers (Dijck et al., 2018; Lotz, 2017; Nieborg and Poell, 2018; Porter, 1985). Based on a qualitative interview study of editors in chief in Norwegian publishing houses, this article scrutinizes the influence of digitalization in a profession which produces content that demands continuous attention from its customers. The article aims to create new knowledge on the interrelations and dependencies between digitalization and literary publishing.

The analysis focuses on two research questions: (1) *How do literary publishers perceive conditions for literary reading under ubiquitous digital connections?* (2) *How do literary publishers perceive their field of professional responsibilities when a ubiquitous digital connection is the new normal?*

Before proceeding to the analysis and the discussion, we will introduce the theoretical approach, the empirical base and the applied method.

Analytical framework

This article explores publishers' perceptions of digitalization and how these influence their cultural field and line of work. We apply the perspectives from Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus, field and capital as an analytical framework. The habitus perspective centres on the informants' agentic role and their perceived room for action. The field and capital perspectives are partly brought into the analysis as they are essential to understanding practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2014).

Bourdieu introduces habitus to highlight how agentic subjects' driving forces are brought forward through an amalgamation of personal history, personal deliberation of the moment and the structural frames. Habitus is defined as 'subjectivity conditioned by structural circumstances' (Bourdieu, 2002), and explains how the individual agent has a broad

motivation, including interrelations which may not be visible nor seem relevant from the outside (perhaps not even to the agentic subject themselves). Moreover, habitus captures longstanding personal traits brought forward depending on the situation (Grenfell, 2014).

The meaning of personal background when acting in the present is underscored in the habitus perspective. Education and cultural background shaped by social circumstances -- notably class -- play into everyday considerations and practices, even without awareness. Habitus works across chronology, and may combine experiences in the past to present situations and future expectations. Further, objective and subjective reasoning are seamlessly intertwined in habitus, and come to expression through the situational agency (Bourdieu, 1977).

The field perspective centres on the social world where individual acting takes place. Habitus is always placed in a specific field, and the habitus of its agents reciprocally defines a field. Historical tradition and the intrinsic meaning of roles and interrelations between agents are essential to a field. Hence, individuals act according to the structures and rules characterizing the field.

Habitus brings forward the interrelation between structural frames and human action. The relational aspect of human agency and the intrinsic connections between personal history and situational frames become significant (Lizardo, 2004). Deliberations may be combinations of unnoticed influence from the private sphere with objectives from the outside world (Grenfell, 2014). The field perspective tightens the relational aspect, as agents do not belong only to one field. Fields are bordering and overlapping. There are fields within fields, and fields are evolving. Further, competition within and among fields always leads to change (Grenfell, 2014).

The struggles within and between fields relate to the capital perspective. Social, economic and cultural capital are essential to the meaning of class within societies and to the

understanding of society. While financial capital concerns material wealth, social capital underscores the importance of social background (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2014).

On the one hand, Bourdieu's relational focus between structure and agency demonstrates how individuals internalize rules in a field to constitute an acting habitus. On the other hand, the relational emphasis brings forward an externalization of the intrinsic regulations and relationships within a field when acting in it. Current practices depend on how past practices and systems are perceived without paying attention to them (Bourdieu, 1984).

The focus on the interrelation between the individual and a collective entity of prevailing social and cultural conditions is relevant to this study of informants in a professional setting. Equally relevant is the focus on how structures become internalized and shape what are perceived as individual worldviews, but are shared within the group (Bourdieu, 1977; Hesmondhalgh, 2006).

Empirical base and method

The empirical base of this article consists of leaders in Norwegian trade publishing responsible for Norwegian language fiction and non-fiction literature (originals and translations) for Norwegian readers. In the following, we will use the term 'readers' when focusing on the action of end-customers to publishing, and the term 'customers' when focusing on the business transaction taking place. Norway is a highly digitalized and digitally connected country with a high penetration of smartphones (SSB 2022). The ongoing transformation in the Norwegian literary industry is reflected in turnover from sales in digital literature. The impact of audiobooks on streaming services is the most remarkable, having risen from 10% to 23.5% of the total turnover from 2018 to 2022 (NPA 2023). As the statistics available are limited to Norwegian language titles, the penetration of foreign

language e-books, such as Kindle books from Amazon, and audiobooks in other languages is unknown.

The article is based on a qualitative study of semi-structured interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015) with twelve publishers working on adult literature, covering small, medium-sized and sizeable Norwegian publishing houses. The informants are in charge of editorial processes and the titles being published. They are responsible for their publishing list's financial results and cultural impact. Even though the Norwegian publishing business is thriving, the industry is relatively small compared to industries covering languages with a more extensive reach. Hence, the twelve informants constitute a representative group of Norwegian publishers responsible for a broader list of narrative fiction for adult readers, whether fiction or non-fiction or both genres. They are in positions to make decisions about manuscripts and publishing strategies, with titles such as Publisher, Editor in Chief or something similar. In the following, they will be referred to as publishers.

The informants count nine women and three men with more than ten years of experience in Norwegian trade publishing. The publishing houses vary in size and structure, and so do the informants' range of responsibilities. The smaller the publishing house, the less specialized the tasks and the broader the responsibilities of the informant. For example, in larger publishing houses, the responsibility for reformatting the text to e-books and audiobooks is placed in separate departments. It is worth noting, though, that most of the roughly 100 members in the Norwegian Publishers Association are smaller than the ones categorized as 'small' in this study.

The informants were recruited by personal emails. Ten out of twelve informants confirmed their interest in participating shortly after receiving the first email, and two after a reminder. After the first inquiry, the informants were sent a new email describing the project more broadly and asking for written consent for participation. The twelve informants

consented to further participation. Each interview was undertaken by one of the authors. Ten took place at the informants' offices and two online because of the Covid situation. The interview sessions followed the same guide and lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. The interviews were transcribed and sent back to the informants for acceptance. Some minor corrections by the informants were worked into the corpus of approved interviews that constitute the empirical base for this article. Informants have been anonymized and assigned a capital letter for reference. Citations have been translated into English by the first author.

Interviews were analysed using the inductive method, following the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The material was first systematized into 18 categories, such as 'Changes following datafication' and 'Audio accelerates change'. The axial coding produced four categories relevant to the aim of this article: (1) attention, (2) notions of change, (3) balancing of (dis)connectivity, and (4) influence of digital connectivity.

The habitus lens leads us to analyse the publishers' perceived room for action when their field is under transformation, focusing on the interrelation between personal experiences and the frames of their professional daily life.

The industry in focus is characterized by highly skilled knowledge workers (Rønning and Slaatta, 2011; Thompson, 2010, 2021). In this respect, the theme of this article is relevant not only to the industry of the informants, but also to the broader context of content industries undergoing digital transformation, that depend on highly skilled and experienced employees.

We will now proceed to the analysis, where results from the axial coding are further scrutinized in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the following, we will first focus on the literary publishers' perception of conditions for literary reading under ubiquitous digital connections, according to the first research question.

Battling for time and questioning the future

Concentrating on the publishers' perceptions of change in literary reading, the first point to notice is how all informants immediately and unsolicited introduced concepts of time.

Reading was translated into slots of time, and the informants described feelings of time pressure. They reported less time to read and stress about always being online. When asked to name the most critical topics mentioned during the interviews, half of the informants listed time-related perspectives, such as: 'It is a competition for people's time. And I am afraid that the ability to sit still and concentrate on only one thing is getting weaker. I am worried about even less undisturbed time to read' (Publisher A). Informants perceived the increased time pressure as an overarching influence from digitalization. According to this study, the influence of digitalization and continuous connection is a matter of time.

Further, the sense of time pressure is closely related to deliberations on attention and concentration. All informants stated, in various ways, that the art of literary reading is decreasing. The matter was stated without any references, as if referring to common knowledge. They considered their profession as being in a battle for attention: 'People's ability to concentrate is deteriorating. Their attention span has become shorter' (Publisher H). They did not question the interrelation between time pressure and lack of attention. All informants were worried about the advance of invasive digital media: 'this 24/7 to see what you want whenever you want represents a constant and negative pressure on literature consumption' (Publisher G).

The informants feared for the future of the industry they were deeply engaged in and, more generally, the consequences of less reading for society. Concerns came across primarily as afterthoughts, usually directed at non-professional readers: 'It worries me that people are not interested in books, perhaps not even able to read a longer text' (Publisher F).

Significantly, when they were asked to choose the most important topic at the end of the interview, the future of reading was seen as even more essential than the battle for time. Looking ahead, all informants were anxious about the trend in reading. They expressed a shared sentiment of serious loss to society if the decline was to continue, especially as young people seemed to be skipping recreational reading.

Competing media challenge attention to read

A significant observation from this study is how publishers stated and took for granted that the base of their industry is severely challenged. Literary reading is under pressure, and the trend is going in the wrong direction. The publishers did not have one common explanation for the vulnerable state of literary reading. However, ubiquitous digitalization was a common denominator in all deliberations on the reasons for the decrease. Further, according to the informants, adult literary reading faces two main competitors: audiobooks and TV series. This notion of change due to competing digital media was stated as a matter of fact, and presented as a probable reason for the decline in reading books.

The growth in audiobooks following the steep rise in streaming services triggered a double set of reflections regarding reading. First, informants stated that the audiobooks' contribution to upholding and even growing the literature audience is essential to the industry. Second, they questioned the influence of audiobooks on general reading competences: 'The growth in audiobooks is important. Hopefully it makes people read more because there is no doubt about people reading less' (Publisher D).

On the one hand, the publishers highlighted the positive contribution to their industry brought by the rise in audiobooks, such as reaching out to a broader audience and to people who would not have consumed literature otherwise. They were positive about audiobooks

bringing literature back on the public agenda: ‘The most important thing is how we are talking about books again, in public and private’ (Publisher J).

On the other hand, the informants considered audiobooks a challenge to their publishing tradition. They expressed uncertainty about the long-term effect of the audio turn in literary publishing. In this, they addressed an internal competition, as the audiobook format is – directly or indirectly – their responsibility, or at least the responsibility of the publishing industry. However, there were few comments on this conflict of interest.

The study leaves a general impression of the ‘wait and see’ attitude regarding the growth in audiobooks and the influence of digitalization on the informants’ business premises. They reported that paper books are selling less, both in the original hardback format and in paperbacks. They revealed an awareness of the expectations leaning on them about delivering content to future audio successes, especially the publishers in the larger publishing houses. But they also conveyed a solid position in the paper book tradition they pointedly adhere to, meaning that the paper book was still the main occupation and by far the primary format for the publishers. They related their professional responsibility to the tradition, as expressed in statements such as: ‘publishing work is surprisingly similar to what it was in 1999’ (Publisher E). A mixed sentiment of nostalgic pride and slight resistance was conveyed: ‘Some may say that publishing should change due to audiobooks. In my perspective, we must stick to the book and the text one way or another. It still works.’ (Publisher I). The meaning of the written text and the dependence on it was unquestionable to these informants.

The interviews leave the impression that we have only seen the beginning of the changes instigated by audiobooks. There seems to be a shared opinion about ‘a high risk for what is to come because of audio’ (Publisher G). The result of fast growth appeared to be a kind of neutral passivity, neither embracing nor rejecting the development. The informants balanced out a double-sided reaction: There are advantages to digital media, and we better

leave the task to those coming after us. However, while change was definitively on the agenda, the general tendency may best be summed up in the following statement: ‘I know it is there and that I must relate to it even more. But it is as if I do not have the energy to go into it until it is decisive to me -- or, rather -- to my publishing house’ (Publisher D).

The informants highlighted the competition to the traditional text format from Netflix and TV series. The publishers revealed a shared notion of TV series as the main competitor to their own business: ‘Netflix and others like them are the biggest competitors. In many ways, the TV series has become the new novel’ (Publisher H). All informants referred to TV series, even though the interview guide had no questions directly about them. Moreover, the term Netflix had a double meaning to most of these informants, indicating both the specific streaming service named Netflix and TV series in general.

They referred to the phenomenon of modern TV series being spread through platform-based subscription services (Colbjørnsen, 2021; Dijck et al., 2018; Nieborg and Poell, 2018), like Netflix and HBO. However, except for one of the informants pointing directly to the power of algorithms, the structural foundation of platform-based TV series was not the informants’ focus of attention. Instead, they emphasized the content and the opportunity to choose between a broad selection of quality series. Furthermore, the convenience of ‘all you can eat’ and ‘whenever you want’ was an underlying factor when the publishers considered TV series the main competitor to literary books. These practical matters were implicit in their reasoning in favour of TV series, even if not directly addressed during interviews.

None of the publishers referred to any surveys, statistics or other kinds of facts when stating the influence of TV series on literary reading. Instead, their justification of the impact of streaming services was based on anecdotal conversations, as expressed by one of the informants: ‘We experience being in a very tough competition, especially towards TV series. This is also reflected in how people talk, you know. They do not talk about books any longer,

they talk about TV series' (Publisher D). Several informants noted how contemporary TV series bring the appeal of convincing narratives to broader audiences, which is a reason for their competitive power. As one informant summarized: 'Netflix is the new novel, right?' (Publisher L).

The informants pondered the future opportunities for their trade. There was a shared notion about the future getting more demanding. Publishers will have to perform even better when competing for attention with other media: 'Obviously, there is tough competition for peoples' time. This means that [as a publisher] you have to be super relevant, trying to crack some of the codes about the kind of content people want' (Publisher L).

Summing up research question one and the publishers' perceived influence of digitalization on literary reading, the relational perspective in habitus highlights a dilemma for literary publishers. There is tension between what they experience now and what they expect for the future. On the one hand, they expressed a consistent experience about how a sense of lost opportunities for reading is linked to a lack of time. They considered literary reading as decreasing because of competing TV series and audiobooks, and they were genuinely worried about the future of reading. On the other hand, it was as if they could not fathom the prospect of literary publishing and literature losing its position and power. Hence, they expressed a vague optimism towards the future. While they referred to the surrounding signs pointing towards a decline in literary reading, they were unwilling to accept this as unavoidable. They kept an optimistic eye on the possibilities brought on by audiobooks, even though most of them were hesitant about actively engaging in the growth of audiobooks. Although digitalization has led to significant transformations already, the informants conveyed an impression of a thriving and vibrant industry. The fact that physical bookstores are still there, and that the paper codex is the trade industry's primary format, were common notions.

The publishers were genuinely ambivalent in their encounter with digital development. Moreover, they conveyed an underlying trust in the literature itself. The times are changing, and, while there surely are more changes to come, the literature will still be there. Even though the long-term future might seem insecure to the industry, literature and reading will survive, one way or another. The publishers expressed a conviction in this, and a trust that someone -- probably not themselves -- will find the way to the future.

Professionally connected and continuously busy

Proceeding to research question two and the publishers' perception of their field of professional responsibilities when a ubiquitous digital connection is the new normal, we first focus on the professional handling of continuous connectivity.

The informants described highly digitalized working days, not least during the Covid pandemic. Several shared examples of how they accomplish their work entirely online. Being happy about being back in the office and meeting colleagues and authors face to face did not overshadow the advantages of digitalization. Some read most of the manuscripts they work on digitally, and some prefer physical paper for editorial work and personal reading. However, everybody depends on a digital connection, especially smartphones, in their everyday life, regardless of whether they prefer paper or screen for their professional tasks, and audio or text for recreation or the benchmarking of competitors' recent titles.

Their smartphone was always at hand and influenced their working life both positively and negatively. Not least, the combination of literary reading and smartphones was frequently mentioned as a challenge. Generally, references to smartphones and social media evoked the same concern: 'we squander our time on social media, a time we could have spent on reading literature' (Publisher C). Moreover, they were troubled by the distractions from social media brought on by the ever-present smartphone. This influence did not need any justification or

further explanation. Moreover, ‘this goes for everybody’, as one informant commented when talking about the power of smartphone distractions. Then he continued, ‘the hours pass by when you might have read a book instead’ (Publisher H).

Ubiquitous digital connection through the smartphone was intimately integrated into the everyday life of the publishers. Continuous digital connection turned out to be a prerequisite, and several informants deliberated on the duality of being online. The internal debate was between the practical solutions to matters having to be taken care of, and the stress coming from the never-ending stream of notifications, news and emails. On the one hand, the informants said they made no excuses when popping into a dialogue with a nervous author on a Saturday afternoon when the smartphone was available. Similarly, the possibility of having a glance at a literary event they were not personally attending, and giving a ‘thumbs up’ to support an author, were considered as quick-fixes for following up.

On the other hand, about half of the informants addressed the negative impact of constant connectivity in general, and the smartphone in particular. The never-ending rush of emails and social media updates comes with a price. As one informant described: ‘It leads to a kind of stress, always being connected’ (Publisher F). The reaction is immediately balanced out by mentioning the practicality of being able to throw off some emails while commuting to work.

One third of the informants shared sentiments of discomfort, such as: ‘The smartphone takes enormous amounts of time, also from me. I find it shameful and evil and that is how it is’ (Publisher D). Various strategies, such as putting the smartphone away to decrease its presence, were described, but the process could be cumbersome: ‘It is so easy to grab this [the smartphone] in many situations. I am working on it. Away with it! I am not allowing it into the bedroom, for instance’ (Publisher E).

Being in leadership positions influenced how the informants considered their space for action and the expectations they put on themselves. Stress brought on by continuous digital connection was considered unavoidable, but as leaders, they expected themselves to find the balance and to cope. The underlying assumption was: If I cannot handle digital stress, then who can? As one informant expressed: 'I am in a way always 'on', but that is how it used to be before also. And I feel that it is OK. I can handle this, and I get things done, you know' (Publisher F).

The experience of being caught in an everlasting whirlwind of digital distractions came across as typical for their work situation. The sense of responsibility and the level of commitment to work seemed profound. One informant explained that if her concentration was broken because she was scrolling on the smartphone, her response would be to work for longer hours and compensate for the distractions. Typically, the informants worried more about the influence on others, as expressed by one of the informants: 'Do we face a trend where readers become less patient and do not manage to concentrate on one thing only? The big and important question is what I am doing and what do I care about' (Publisher E).

Analysing the publishers' perception of continuous digital connection shows a two-sided reaction. The practicality of being online led to never-ending demands on their cognitive presence. Explored through the lens of habitus, the informants experienced a continuous balancing act between handling the responsibility tied to professional habitus and staying up to date on whatever came along on the smartphone. The workload was increased and breaks were gone because of constant digital connection. But the informants expected themselves to follow up on their responsibilities and the smartphone updates, whatever the personal cost.

Connectivity makes professionalism personal

The publishers voiced dissatisfaction over the trends in literary reading and media consumption in society. Their narrations were combinations of personal reflections and deliberations on behalf of an unspecified group of readers they considered their peers. Generally, this study reveals how the influence of ubiquitous digitalization activates considerations based on personal experiences and preferences. The interviews touched upon issues experienced as personal matters, and references to close family, especially children, were frequent.

Recurrent themes were longing for an uninterrupted time and an ever-present feeling of never catching up with the load of media consumption awaiting: ‘I might be bothered with a bad conscious. I feel I am not up to date. It is a relatively constant feeling. Even though I see and consume media all the time’ (Publisher G).

The publishers expressed a continuous dissatisfaction caused by the fact that they always wanted to consume more media than they could manage. As a result, they experienced an inevitable gap between tempting offers and available time: ‘I am reading, and I see very few TV series. You cannot have it all -- all the series on Netflix and read all the books at the same time. It is not possible’ (Publisher F). These informants were great achievers in their profession, in leading positions, and expected a lot from themselves -- and they experienced the pressure of never achieving enough.

There was also a constant notion about wanting to read more, as expressed in: ‘I want more time to read, more time to read things that are not work-related’ (Publisher K). This is likely not new to the publishing profession. However, this study reveals a situation where the amount of media narratives to consume (books, audiobooks, TV series, podcasts, news, social media) has increased enormously, without any old expectations of media consumption being taken away, not practically, nor according to their expectations of themselves. One informant

reported that after tracking her digital news consumption, she realized how much time she spent on something that left her with so little information, concluding that: ‘and in this, I am very much in sync with my contemporaries’ (Publisher C). The publishers expressed a craving for more reading and a longing for undisturbed time. But only a few were specific on the solutions: ‘I would have liked going to bed earlier, reading more in bed’ (Publisher D).

The awareness of personal media consumption triggered mixed feelings. ‘I am reading a lot, but always wanting to read more. I spend too much time checking the news on the smartphone, in a way. I miss reading more’ (Publisher E). There was an ambivalence about the varied consequences of digitalization, also relating to the publishers personally. On the one hand, the growth of the market for literature due to digitalization in general and audiobooks in particular, expressly implied new opportunities. In addition, TV series offer content to dive into and appreciate for the publishers and the readers of the books they publish. On the other hand, the smartphone and social media were continuously close companions, infusing some distractions but also necessary for staying up-to-date and easy handling of tasks to be done. Furthermore, the multiplication of media to consume and the convenience of digital online media constituted a continuous pressure to consume more media. It is never enough. There is always more to check out.

To sum up, on research question two and the publishers’ perception of their field of professional responsibilities under ubiquitous digital connection, two findings are notable: Few physical and temporal restrictions to the professional obligations imply a constant pressure in relation to cognitive presence. Further, because of digitalization, professional and personal agency fields are impossible to separate. Thus, the publisher’s habitus and the individual habitus are intertwined. The professional and the private are operated without questioning where one takes over from the other.

Attention, ambivalence and algorithms

Lack of attention to reading and an overarching ambivalence concerning digitalization are essential findings in this article. The ambivalence highlights three dilemmas. The first dilemma concerns the dual character of digitalization, primarily to publishers. On the one hand, there is an experienced battle for attention and pressure on reading time, and digital platforms make audiences exchange book reading with streamed media. On the other hand, digital platforms make literature reach new audiences through audiobooks.

Second, there is the dilemma of handling professional demands versus personal well-being (Beattie and Daubs, 2020; Karppi et al., 2021), also when the latter includes reading. Increased professional presence heightens time pressure and ubiquitous digitalization wipes out distinctions between the professional field and the personal field, creating a professional habitus of ‘always on’.

The third dilemma is about voicing future expectations. On the one hand, the personal experience with the ongoing digitalization makes the informants worry about the future of reading on a societal level. But, on the other hand, their professional position makes them emphasize the possibility of a positive outcome for literature and reading. Hence, even though personal experiences point towards decline, the professional habitus brings expectations about a promising future for the industry (Bourdieu, 1977).

The publishers’ immediate mentioning of time loss when deliberating on changes in literary reading underlines how handling of ubiquitous digital connection is perceived in concepts of time. Experiences of time lost when scrolling on the smartphone (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020) are ‘translated’ into measurable units of time passed, and the influence of digitalization turns out to be even more profound.

The informants express a duty to balance the continuous stream of digital obligations and opportunities in their unfolding combination of professional and private lives. The

analysis demonstrates how even professional stakeholders perceive no alternative to personal handling of digital media, underpinning the increased level of individual responsabilization brought on by continuous digital connection (Moe and Madsen, 2021; Pyysiäinen et al., 2017; Syvertsen et al., 2019; Syvertsen and Enli, 2020). The personal responsibility to ensure a sustainable balance in digital connectivity is equal, whether in personal or professional circumstances (Fast, 2021; Guyard and Kaun, 2018; Karlsen and Ytre-Arne, 2021; Karppi et al., 2021).

Considering the informants' involvement with their profession and their worries about the future of literary reading, it is worth noting that they do not seem to engage with the development and counteract unwanted consequences. The transition in their professional surroundings is defined by powerful agents beyond -- or above -- their professional field. The fast rollout of overarching and structural change following profound digitalization and platformization (Dijck et al., 2018; Srnicek, 2016) turns even prominent stakeholders into audiences.

Further, it is worth noting that the common denominator to the perceived threatening media technology, namely audiobooks and TV series, is distributed through subscription-based streaming services. The main competitors to literary reading depend on digital platforms where user data and algorithms are systematically utilized to enhance the platforms' performance in the interests of the platform owners (Klatt, 2022; Srnicek, 2016; Sundet and Colbjørnsen, 2021). The power of the transition intrinsic to platform-based media industries is brought to the surface by the informants in this study, highlighting the interplay between structural frames and room for action (Bourdieu, 1984; Lizardo, 2004).

To conclude this part, a reflection on the transferability of the findings is warranted. As described earlier, Norway is a small country with a high level of digitalization. As a 'media welfare state' (Syvertsen et al. 2014), and with economic and political conditions

typical for the Nordic model, the publishing industry is relatively stable and thriving. The large majority of books are published in Norwegian and the competition from other countries is also limited within the publishing industry. However, and as demonstrated in this study, powers outside of the publishing industry are of greater concern, be it social media platforms, TV streaming services or other types of media technology. In this respect, this study relates to various smaller media sectors also in other countries that compete in a global arena, despite being rooted in a national context. For the future, more research is needed to explore the further influence of platform-based structures and algorithmic power on the publishing industry – and, not least, on the readers.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how experienced literary publishers rely on and refer to a pre-digital publishing industry. Their agency as literary publishers depends on tradition (Bourdieu, 1984). The publisher habitus revealed in this analysis is reasonable, considering that all informants were adults when digital devices and online media became seamlessly integrated into everyday practice. They received their education and training in an industry that produced physical books. Furthermore, their habitus as readers grows out of reading paper books and becomes truly inherent to their identity.

In Bourdieu's perspective on the interrelation between the habitus, the field and capital, he emphasizes how people of the same field, and of the same social class, are likely to develop a similar habitus and value cultural capital equally (Grenfell, 2014). The level of shared notions about the meaning of literary reading and the call for urgency toward future development is an essential takeaway from this article. Further, the dilemmas raised make visible the interdependence between the personal habitus of the informants and the structural

frames of their professional roles and the industry they belong to (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Lizardo, 2004).

The analysis gives reason to ponder whether the transitional power in platform-based technology is being taken sufficiently into account in trade publishing. The dilemmas emerging from the ambivalent reactions to the challenge of attention and the power of algorithms underscore the complexity confronting publishers today. Furthermore, the pace of change is hard to keep up with in an industry accustomed to tradition. The long-term consequences following platformization, such as the change from physical sales to subscription and the transfer of power from the producers to the distributors, may be more challenging to the future of literary publishing than yet accounted for in the trade (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Klatt, 2022; Prey, 2018).

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Appendices

Appendix I: The readers' study

Mini-survey

Spørreskjema leserundersøkelse

Takk for at du har sagt ja til å delta i en undersøkelse om lesing der vi henvender oss til voksne lesere med erfaring fra å lese litteatur i ulike formater, enten det er å lese papirbok eller e-bok eller å lytte til en lydbok. I denne undersøkelsen er vi først og fremst opptatt av den lesingen du gjør for din egen del, på fritiden og ikke lesing i tilknytning til jobb eller studier. Ofte er det flytende overganger mellom hva som er jobb og hva som er fritid, og da svarer du bare det som først faller deg inn.

Som en del av leserundersøkelsen og i forkant av samtalen vi har avtalt om lesing ønsker vi å stille deg noen få spørsmål. Vi håper du kan sette av noen minutter til å svare på disse. Om du har noen spørsmål ber vi deg kontakte prosjektleder Kari J. Spjeldnæs (kari.spjeldnaes@kristiania.no / +47 975 95 668).

Kjønn: _____

Alder: _____

Utdannelse / yrke: _____

Bostedskommune: _____

Nevn to-tre av de siste bøkene du har lest

Hvordan leser (lytter) du helst (sett ett eller flere kryss)

Papirbøker E-bøker Lydbøker

For e-bøker: Leser du på (sett eller flere kryss)

Mobil Lesebrett Pad Datamaskin (stasjonær, bærbar)

(Med lesebrett menes skjerm uten bakgrunnsbelysning og internettilgang.)

For lydbøker: Lytter du på (sett ett eller flere kryss)

Mobiltelefon og strømmetjeneste Annet/beskrive: _____

Interview guide

Litteratur i bok, på skjerm og på øret. Hvordan påvirkes lesevaner av digital lesing?

TEMALISTE INDIVIDUELLE INTERVJUER MED LESERE

R: Researcher/interviewer

I: Informant

Generell innledning, R:

- Hvordan har vi funnet intervjuobjektet, via bekjente, sosiale medier eller annet.
- **Samtykkeskjema**
- At vi tar opp lyd, men anonymiserer alt.
- Forklare hovedstrukturen i intervjuet (temaer).

Tema 1: Lesevaner

Innledende – vi vet at du er en som leser bøker og ønsker å vite mer om lesevanene dine. Vi er mest opptatt av den lesingen du gjør på fritiden, som ikke er direkte knyttet til jobb eller studier.

- Kan du beskrive deg som leser?
 - o Hva leser du helst? (favorittsjanger, favorittforfattere ...)
 - o Hva leser du sjelden eller aldri? (Krim, dikt, biografier ...)
 - o Hvordan ble du en leser? (Vokst opp med bøker, skole, venner, særskilt interesse ...)
 - o Hvor leser du helst? (Lesestol, leseplass?)
 - o Hvor ofte leser du? (Hver dag, hver uke, hver måned ...?)
 - o Hvor mye leser du, sånn cirka? (Antall bøker per måned eller år?)
 - o Leser du mer/mindre nå enn før?

Tema 2: Om å lese papirbok, e-bok eller lydbok?

Innledende: Du har erfaring med å lese bøker på forskjellige måter.

- Hvordan vil beskrive din lesing i ulike formater – i papirbøker, e-bøker, lydbøker?
- Noen flere spørsmål om din lesing i de ulike formatene:
 - o Hva gjør at du velger det ene formatet fremfor det andre?

- Hvor stor andel vil du anslå at du leser i de ulike formatene?
- Hvordan påvirker formatet leseopplevelsen?
- Hva gir best leseopplevelse – og hvorfor?
- Hva gir dårligst leseopplevelse – og hvorfor?
- Hva er de tydeligste forskjellene mellom formatene?
 - Hva du husker?
 - Hvordan du styrer og kontrollerer egen lesing? (Tempo, bla fram og tilbake, lese om igjen ...?)
- Er det noen funksjoner du liker spesielt godt når du leser digitalt
- Får du tilgang på de bøkene du er interessert i på de plattformene du bruker digitalt?
- Har pris noe å si for valg av lesestoff?

Tema 3: Om lesing og andre medier

Innledende: Du leser, ser og lytter også til andre medier.

- Hvordan vil du beskrive dine medievaner
 - En vanlig dag?
 - I helger og ferier?
- Hva betyr bøker sammenlignet med andre medier, som film eller TV?
- Hvordan påvirkes din lesing av mobil- og skjermbruk?
 - Hvordan påvirker internett og sosiale medier dine lesevaner?
 - Hvilken betydning får bøker i forhold til nyhetsstoff og oppdateringer i sosiale medier?
 - Hvordan påvirker digitale medier og apper din konsentrasjon og lesetid?

Tema 4: Om hva lesing betyr for deg, mer generelt?

Innledende: Det vi leser setter spor og litteratur tar plass i livene våre på ulike måter.

- Hva gjør at noen bøker fremstår som viktigere enn andre for deg?
- Hva betyr formatet du leser i (papir, e-bok, lydbok) for din identitet som leser?
- Hva betyr bøker og litteratur for ditt felleskap med andre?
 - Har du noen faste møter/samtaler der bøker og litteratur er tema? (Lesesirkel, bokklubb, venner, familiemedlemmer ...)
 - Hva legger du vekt på i samtaler om bøker?
 - Deler du anbefalinger med andre? (Gir eller får?)
 - Hva tenker du at din lesing forteller om deg?

Tema 5: Om lesing og digitale forstyrrelser

- Har du opplevd at digitale medier er forstyrrende for lesingen din?
- Hva slags grep gjør du for å beskytte deg selv?

Tema 6: Avslutning

- Synes du bokbransjen (forlag, bokhandlere, andre) tar ansvar for litteraturens og lesingens fremtid?
 - o Hva tenker du at bransjen kan gjøre?
 - o Hva kan/bør politikerne gjøre?
- Er det noe du ønsker annerledes når det gjelder egen lesing og eget mediekonsum?
- Har du noen tanker om fremtidig lesing?
- Hvis du kunne ha endret én ting ved dine lesevaner, hva ville det vært?
- Dersom du måtte oppsummere ditt forhold til lesing i tre ord, hvilke ord ville du brukt?
- Sluttspørsmål: Hva er det viktigste vi har snakket om? Noe annet som er viktig?

List of informants

| Name | Age | Gender | Occupation |
|-------------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| John | 28 | M | Carpenter |
| Richard | 29 | M | Digital designer |
| Simon | 32 | M | Postdoctoral researcher |
| Susan | 34 | F | PhD Candidate |
| Theresa | 40 | F | Librarian |
| Alice | 53 | F | Uemployed (at the moment) |
| Hannah | 55 | F | Actor |
| Kate | 59 | F | Teacher, newly retired |
| Henry | 60 | M | Researcher |
| Caroline | 62 | F | Medical secretary/homestayng |
| Rita | 63 | F | Bioengineer |
| Gustav | 67 | M | Caseworker/bureaucrat |

Appendix II: The publishers' study

Interview guide

Forskningsprosjektet «Forlagsarbeid og digitalisering»

«Forlagsarbeid og digitalisering» er en studie der vi undersøker hvordan arbeid i forlagsredaksjoner påvirkes av overgang til digitale formater og hvordan generelt press på oppmerksomhet i en oppkoblet hverdag påvirker lesing, i og utenfor forlaget.

Introduksjon

Denne studien inngår i et forskningsprosjekt der vi ser på hva som skjer med lesing og litteratur når det digitale drivet utfordrer tradisjonelle lese-mønstre. Prosjektet inngår i et større forskningsprosjekt om digital frakobling (Digitox, finansiert av Norges forskningsråd) der vi ser på strategier for å balansere digitalt online-liv med aktiviteter som forutsetter frakoblet tilstedeværelse for kortere eller lengre tid.

Vi har gjennomført en første studie der vi ser på endring av lesevaner: Hvordan den digitale utviklingen med e-bøker, lydbøker og kontinuerlig tilgang på andre digitale medier leserne? Denne samtalen inngår i en ekspertundersøkelse der vi snakker med redaksjonelle beslutningstagere i forlag om hvordan utgivelsesstrategier og forlagsarbeid påvirkes av den digitale utviklingen.

TEMALISTE FOR SAMTALER MED REDAKSJONELLE BESLUTNINGSTAGERE I FORLAG

R: Researcher/intervjuer

I: Informant

Generell innledning, R:

Om forskningsarbeidet denne undersøkelsen inngår i, hvem vi snakker med (hvorfor deg)

Samtykkeskjema. Hvordan vi følger opp intervju og håndterer informasjonen som kommer fram

At vi tar opp lyd, forkortet intervju blir sendt til godkjenning, kun innhold herfra som blir brukt videre.

En forkortet og anonymisert versjon av intervjuet vil bli skrevet ut og sendt deg for godkjenning, og det vil være denne som tas videre inn i det vitenskapelige arbeidet.

Forklare hovedstrukturen i intervjuet (temaer).

Tema 1: Arbeid og oppgaver

- Hvis du kort skal beskrive dine oppgaver og ditt ansvar i forlaget?
- Hvordan vil du beskrive bøkene dere gir ut?
- Hva arbeider du med akkurat nå?
- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet her og hva er din bakgrunn?

Tema 2: Arbeid med digitale utgivelser

- Hvordan påvirker de digitale formatene (e-bøker og lydbøker) ditt arbeid?
- Hvordan virker de digitale formatene (e-bok og lyd) inn på strategier for utgivelse og boklisten/forlagsprogrammet mer generelt?
- Hvordan arbeides det med e-bok/lydbøker og papirbøker?
- Gjøres det samtidig – er det egne løp for e-bøker og for lydbøker?
- Hvis du skal nevne de viktigste forskjellene mellom papirbøker, e-bøker og lydbøker?
- Hvordan påvirker strømmetjenestene (primært lyd) det litterære arbeidet?
- Hva er de største endringene som er skjedd i forlaget/redaksjonen med digitale formatene (e-bøker og lydbøker) som etablerte formater?

Tema 3: Bøkene, bransjen, leserne – og konsekvenser av digitalisering

- Hva innebærer digitalisering for forfatterne?
- Hvordan kommer den digitale utviklingen til uttrykk i samarbeid med forfatterne?
- Hva er forlaget opptatt av på forfatternes vegne?
- Hva er forfatterne opptatt av (overfor dere i forlaget)?
- Hva innebærer digitalisering av litteratur for leserne?
- Hvordan påvirker tilbakemeldinger fra leserne deres arbeid?
- Hva er forlaget opptatt av på lesernes vegne?
- Hva er de viktigste endringene som følger av at bøkene er blitt digitale? Nevn én til tre ting.

- Hvordan vil du beskrive bokbransjens møte med digitale utgivelser og digitale markeds plasser?
- Med lydbøker og strømmetjenester?
- Hva tenker du om den internasjonale konkurransen for digital litteratur? (Amazon, Audible ...)

Tema 4: Litteraturens plass i mediehverdagen.

- Oppmerksomhetsøkonomi og mediedøgnet:
- Hvordan preger konkurransen om lesernes oppmerksomhet arbeidet med litteratur/det redaksjonelle arbeidet
- Hvordan preger «kampen om oppmerksomhet» forlagsarbeidet mer generelt?
- Hva påvirker lesernes litteraturkonsum? (Kan også formuleres som: Hva påvirker hva leserne velger å bruke tiden sin på?) 1-3 viktigste faktorene, slik du ser det.

Tema 5: Oppkoblet dagligliv og kamp om oppmerksomhet

- Hvordan preges arbeidet i redaksjonen/forlaget av det kontinuerlige digitale drivet? (Nett, SoMe, apper mm.)?
- Hvordan preger det digitale drivet deg?
- Hvordan tenker du/forlaget at sosiale medier og andre apper påvirker lesernes (eller bokkjøpernes) lesevaner?

Tema 6: Litt om dine lesevaner

- Er det noe du ønsker annerledes når det gjelder egen lesing og eget mediekonsum?
- Hvis du kunne ha endret én ting ved dine lesevaner, hva ville det vært?

Til slutt

Hva er det viktigste vi har snakket om? Noe annet som er viktig? / Noe du vil tilføye?

List of informants

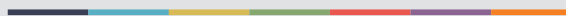
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|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
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| Publisher B | Fiction | Large (L) |
| Publisher C | Fiction | Large (L) |
| Publisher D | Non-fiction | Medium (M) |
| Publisher E | Fiction | Medium (M) |
| Publisher F | Fiction and non-fiction | Large (L) |
| Publisher G | Non-fiction | Small (S) |
| Publisher H | Non-fiction | Large (L) |
| Publisher I | Non-fiction | Small (S) |
| Publisher J | Fiction and non-fiction | Small (S) |
| Publisher K | Fiction | Medium (M) |
| Publisher L | Non-fiction | Medium (M) |

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