

# Judging Popular Novels as Creative Products: Which Creative Attributes Contribute to Their Success?

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was threefold. First, to explore whether a German version of the Creative Product Semantic Scale can be applied to novels, a hitherto poorly investigated creative product. Second, to determine which of the emerging attributes might affect the potential for success of a novel. Third, to check whether the novels judged are distinguishable in terms of their creative attributes. In an online study, participants judged four popular novels from recollection: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *The Hobbit*, *Twilight*, and *Inkheart*. A factor analysis of items based on the *Harry Potter* subsample indicated four major dimensions: Resolution, Novelty, Style and Complexity. Among the dimensions, Resolution was the only dimension predicting potential for commercial success in a multiple regression. Novels were not distinguishable on the basis of the dimensions judged, indicating that the present CPSS did not have enough discriminatory power to detect differences among novels from the same genre. Additional measures indicated judgments had been relatively stable since the reading experience. Furthermore, a large proportion of participants was presumably biased in their memory, due to having watched the respective movie adaptation. This was suggested by a false memory check. Surprisingly however, there were no detectable differences in judgment between those who passed and those who failed the false memory check.

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## INTRODUCTION

Can a popular novel be considered as a creative product whose evaluation and ultimately its success depends on its attributes? While the authors of these works would take this matter for granted and many creativity researchers may agree, other fields have failed to recognise this assumption. The attributes of the novels themselves have often been ig-

nored or even deemed irrelevant in terms of their success by consumer psychologists, literary scholars, economists and sociologists alike (Albrecht, 1977; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Clement, Proppe, & Sambeth, 2006; Hohendahl, 1973; Keuschnigg, 2012; Lauterbach, 1979; Rollka, 1975; Sorensen, 2007; Sutherland, 1981; Van Rees, 1987, 1983; Verdaasdonk, 1983). The success of novels was instead said to be determined by literary critics, publishers, media, conformity and other social influences. This line of research suggested that basically any book would be successful, if it was sufficiently “pushed” by external influences. (We do not consider intrinsic attributes of products as sufficient to explain their real-world success. Rather, we use the term “potential for success” or “creative potential of a product” comparable to the creative potential in persons [Runco & Acar, 2012], as in both cases potential does not guarantee success). Ignoring intrinsic attributes of novels in research is surprising given that naïve readers reach consensus in their judgments about texts without external influences (Nell, 1988; Simonton, 1988).

On the other hand, creativity researchers have not made much effort to change this picture. Not only concerning novels but generally in the domain of writing, researchers have extensively dealt with the creative process and the creative person (see Forgeard, Kaufman, & Kaufman, 2013 for a review; Fürst, Ghisletta, & Lubart, 2017; Paton, 2012) and rarely with the creative product. Notable exceptions are the works by Colin Martindale. However, while his work was pioneering in applying quantitative methods to literary works, his most important work concerned aesthetic history (Martindale, 1990) and not the relationship between the creativity of a single literary work and how much it is liked, let alone its success outside the laboratory. At least, a laboratory study by him found the frequency of a category of words connected to irrational, unconscious processes and emotional meanings was associated with the rated creativity of short-stories (Martindale, 2007). Outside the laboratory, this approach was partially successful in explaining the success of texts. Words of this category were more frequent in Shakespeare’s more successful sonnets (Simonton, 1990), but only a *smaller* disparity between these words and words of abstract and rational meaning was predictive for successful novels (Scherer, 1994). Thus, Martindale’s approach seems at least partially insufficient to explain real world success.

Generally, the element of surprise (Simonton, 2012) could be considered as another influential factor in the potential for the success of a creative product. However in the case of narratives, the evidence is inconsistent: while the rated degree of surprise in the structure of short-stories was associated with story liking in one participant group, it was not associated with liking in another (Martindale et al., 1988).

More recently, a study found that the popularity of paramount bestsellers is influenced by their linguistic originality (Form, 2018). Despite objectively measuring this property, the study had two limitations. First, the study focused only on linguistic originality. A novel can however be original in its plot, portraying of characters, the content etc. Second, a creative product is generally expected to have more than the quality of originality, as studies by Besemer and O'Quin indicated (Besemer, 1998; Besemer & O'Quin, 1986, 1999; O'Quin & Besemer, 1989). Besemer and O'Quin used three major dimensions to describe creative products: *Novelty*, *Resolution* and *Style*. Novelty addresses newness in processes, concepts and methods. Resolution subsumes aspects of how well a product does what it was made for. Style (initially called Elaboration and Synthesis) (O'Quin & Besemer, 2006) reflects the form, presentation and aesthetic make-up. All of the mentioned dimensions were measured with the Creative Product Semantic Scale (CPSS), a questionnaire developed for judgment by laypersons. Studies suggests that if novices have structured criteria for assessment, they can reliably judge creativity (Cropley & Kaufman, 2012, cf. Birney, Beckmann, & Yuan-Zhi Seah, 2016). We decided to use the CPSS to investigate novels as creative products in the present study. Although there are several other questionnaires available for a structured judgment of products (Horn & Salvendy, 2006a), we chose the CPSS for three reason. First, the CPSS has a long history of evaluation and refinement. Second, it has already been successfully used with intangible products, namely ideas for problem solving (Smith, 1993). This is insofar relevant, as we aimed to judge an intangible product here as well: not the book as the tangible medium, but a narrative emerging in the reader's head from words read, something that is not readily accessible to perception, like paintings or music (Burke, 2015).

Third, the CPSS sticks with its two major dimensions of Novelty and Resolution to the two standard criteria of creativity, originality and usefulness (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). This seems to make the third dimension of the CPSS, Style, unnecessary. Yet, another definition suggests a possible relevance of Style. Torrance's (2008) process-oriented definition of creativity also included (among additional aspects) the ability to communicate the results of creative processes. Besemer and Treffinger (1981) assigned successful communication as a products' attribute to the dimension of Style. More recently, the aspect of style or aesthetics was found to influence evaluations of overall creativity, but to a lesser degree than originality and usefulness (Acar, Burnett, & Cabra, 2017). Thus, we see Style as another dimension worthy of inclusion in the present study.

While the CPSS could be a useful descriptive tool in comparing the creative attributes of different novels, there is another immediate resulting question: if novels differ in their creative attributes, which of these will be crucial in influencing their potential for success?

From consumer research in other creative product domains, it is known that valueness (an aspect of Resolution) and elegance (an aspect of Style) are the most relevant predictors of people's willingness to buy originally designed chairs (Besemer, 2000). Other researchers, who developed their own scale, found that the relevance of a given attribute depends on the specific outcome variable considered. Although Novelty was most important for perceived overall creativity of a product, product aspects concerning the induction of affect were most important for purchase intentions and product satisfaction (Horn & Salvendy, 2006b, 2009). An inspection of items (e.g. "attractive - unattractive") suggests, that the affect-inducing product aspect may have conceptual overlap with Besemer and O'Quin's subscale Elegance. If one defines creative products in a broad sense and includes ideas under this term (Runco, Plucker, & Lim, 2001), studies from the evaluation of ideas will also be informative in helping to understand what people prefer in creative products. Similar to tangible products, people prefer usefulness or effectiveness over originality (Blair & Mumford, 2007; Rietzschel, Nijstad, & Stroebe, 2010; Staw, 1995). Overall, usefulness (effectiveness) and affect inducing aspects possibly relating to style seem to be most relevant for preference in creative products.

### THE PRESENT STUDY

Our study was driven by the following questions: can popular novels be meaningfully described as creative products using a translated and adapted version of the CPSS? What characterizes popular novels? Do novels differ in their attributes as creative products? If so, has their success anything to do with their product attributes? We tried to answer these questions not by giving participants unknown books with the advice to read them and asking for their judgments after a certain period of time. Instead, we searched for people who had already read at least one of four novels.

Admittedly, asking people for their judgments in this manner is an unusual approach and differs considerably from a controlled laboratory study. The long delay between the reading experience and study participation in particular should enable a plethora of distorting, external influences. However, we took efforts either to determine whether external factors indeed influenced the outcomes of interest and quantified them where possible; or we try to explain why they should be of less concern than one intuitively thinks.

Of more concern is the relevance of proficiency or expertise. One could argue that the earlier mentioned preferences in creative products are merely a result of a lack in expertise in judges, as non-experts are generally not reliable judges for determining the creativity of a product (Kaufman & Baer, 2012; cf. Lu & Luh, 2012). We are, however, specifically interested in the judgment by ordinary people, because the liking by people

makes a novel “popular” in the genuine sense. Thus, we consider the expertise of a judge not as a target, but a possibly interfering variable that must be controlled for.

## METHOD

### Novels

The four novels selected for the present study are well-known in Germany: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 1997), *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1937), *Tintenherz [Inkheart]* (Funke, 2003) and *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). They were selected as they share several similarities. All were originally written for children or young adults. They had been popular enough in Germany to recruit participants who had actually read the book. Each of the novels was the first part of a series of books. All novels are from the genre of fantasy fiction giving authors much opportunity for originality. Potential differences in judgment should thus not be attributable to different scopes for originality in different genres or to general popularity of genres, but to the content of the novels themselves.

### Participants

Participants were recruited via German postings in social networks and internet groups specifically for people interested in reading. Postings contained a short description of the purpose of the study and an invitation with a link to LimeSurvey®. LimeSurvey® (<http://www.limesurvey.org/>) is a tool for creating and conducting online surveys in which the participants can give their answers anonymously by following a sent link. As all participants were invited equally by posting a link, we could not keep track of how individuals responded to the invitation. Accordingly, a response rate cannot be reported. All participants gave informed consent prior to the participation.

The whole sample included 107 participants (22.2% males, 8.5% gave no information). The mean age in the whole sample was 26.6 years ( $Mdn = 24$  years, range: 18-55 years,  $SD = 7.7$  years). Because participants could decide themselves which novel they wanted to evaluate (up to three), the number of participants judging a given novel differed: 81.2% judged *Harry Potter* ( $n = 95$ ), 36.8% *The Hobbit* ( $n = 43$ ), 33.3% *Twilight* ( $n = 39$ ), and 33.3% *Tintenherz* ( $n = 39$ ).

We also report demographic data specifically in the subsample of participants judging *Harry Potter*, as it served as our basis for factor analysis:  $n = 95$  (70.1 % females, 7.4 % gave no information). The mean age was 26.4 years (18-55 years,  $SD = 7.5$  years,  $Mdn = 24$  years). Empirical research has shown that correspondence between sample and population factors is predominantly determined by communalities (see below) and not by sample size due to the higher effect-size of the former (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). Thus, we see our sample size as sufficient for a factor analysis.

## Measures

**False memory check.** When answering the CPSS-items, participants may have unintentionally recollected the movie adaptation and not the novel. Thus, we included a question to implicitly check this issue. This open-ended question asked for a story detail for which the original novel and its movie adaptation differed. We assumed, that if participants tended to have the movie in mind when they recalled the story and characters, they would answer wrongly with the detail from the movie. Giving no answer to this question was interpreted as recollecting the movie.

**Time passed since reading.** To measure the time since the reading experience, participants answered a question regarding how long ago the reading of the respective book was on a 5-point ordinal scale ("less than a year - one to two years - two to three years - three to four years - more than four years").

**Adapted Creative Product Semantic Scale.** Besemer and O'Quin developed, validated and revised a measurement instrument, the Creative Product Semantic Scale, intended to judge creative products by non-expert judges (Besemer, 1998; Besemer & O'Quin, 1986, 1999; O'Quin & Besemer, 1989). The thirty-seven items of the CPSS were carefully translated by the second author. The translation was then checked by the first author. In cases of disagreement, the translation was discussed until a consensus was found. Since not all items may apply to all creative products (White, Shen, & Smith, 2002), we checked whether items were applicable to novels in a paper based pre-test. Items were presented to three individuals (two females, one male) with the instruction to think of their favourite book and rate it on the items on a 5-point Likert scale. If they had difficulties in applying an item to a book, they were instructed to indicate the item in question. Four items were excluded by this procedure. The remaining 33 items presented in randomized order were rated in the main study and entered into the factor analysis. (During factor analysis two additional items had to be dropped. See below). Twelve items were reverse coded for administration.

**Potential for success.** The likelihood that participants would recommend the novel in question to a friend is used here as a proxy for the potential for success. Word of mouth recommendations are known to increase the awareness of a book and buying decisions for it (Beck, 2006; Kamphuis, 1991). An empirical study found that word of mouth recommendations for paperbacks actually had a stronger effect on sales numbers than author awards or being discussed by critics (Schmidt-Stölting, Blömeke, & Clement, 2011). Thus, we see word of mouth recommendations as a building block for real world success.

Participants answered the question as to whether they would recommend the novel to a friend on a 5-point Likert scale, if its price was 25€ (~28\$). As in Germany the aver-

age retail price is about 20€ for hardcover books and 9€ for paperbacks (Schmidt-Stölting et al., 2011), this is a relatively high price. It was chosen to reduce expected ceiling effects in recommendations especially in the case of the Harry Potter novel.

**Creative writing expertise.** Because we consider expertise to exist on a continuum (Hekkert & Van Wieringen, 1996; Plucker, Kaufman, & Temple, 2009), we measured participants' expertise in creative writing with the relevant part of the German version (Form, Schlichting, & Kaernbach, 2017) of the Creative Achievement Questionnaire (Carson, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005). The CAQ is a self-report measure asking for accomplishments in creative domains. As expertise is domain-specific, only the items concerning creative writing were presented. The construct, concurrent and discriminant validity of test score interpretation of the German translation of the overall CAQ is good. Scores for creative writing were log-transformed to account for the right-skewed distribution.

### Procedure

After giving informed consent, participants indicated which of the four novels they had read for up to three novels (presented in randomized order). If they had read all four novels, they were requested to choose the three novels, which they remembered best. Participants were then directed to the block concerning one novel. A block first included three questions about the novel. The first two questions were distractions, the third served as the false memory check. Then, participants read a short summary of the plot. As all novels were part of a book series, this should merely serve to remind participants which part of the overall story line took place in the first book. Next, participants answered how long ago the reading experience was, followed by the CPSS-items and the rating for recommendation. Then, the block for the next novel would begin, if they indicated having read more than one novel. Blocks were presented in randomized order. Finally, participants gave expertise and demographic information.

### Analysis

The original CPSS has three major dimensions: Novelty, Resolution and Style with each of them having different subscales. In the development of the CPSS, items had been a priori defined as belonging together and building a given subscale (Besemer & O'Quin, 1986). Then, a factor analysis was run on the average scores of subscales. However, we considered a more data-driven approach. In order to determine major dimensions, we applied a principal component analysis on *all* items used. While this came at the cost of losing the subscales, we hoped to increase the validity of the overall questionnaire by this approach. For such a "bottom up" approach without an a priori model, a principal component analysis is more appropriate, than an exploratory factor analysis, which relies on a "top down" approach with theoretical ideas about relationships between items.

We used the sample judging Harry Potter for the factor analysis and for investigating association between variables, for no other reason than that this subsample turned out to have the largest number of judges. Analysis was based on a correlation matrix as the extraction method. The chosen rotation method was varimax. Two items showed too low communality (below .55) and were thus excluded from the item pool. PCA was then repeated without those items. For this new PCA, the communalities ranged from .55 - .83 ( $M = .71$ ). The value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index was .89. The first factor had the greatest eigenvalue of 13.4 (43.1% accounted variance), followed by five other factors with eigenvalues above one [2.3 (7.3%); 1.8 (5.7%); 1.3 (4.3%); 1.2 (4.0%); 1.1 (3.5%)]. A scree-test suggested a four factor solution. The four extracted components/factors accounted for 64.4% of the variance. The factor loadings are shown in Table 1. There were several adequately to strongly loading items (.50 or better) on nearly all factors (see Table 1). All analyses were performed with SPSS Statistics 20.0 Software (IBM SPSS Inc. Chicago, IL).



**Table 1**  
**Factor Loadings on Different Dimensions**

Item	Sty	Nov	Res	Com
<b>interesting - boring</b>	<b>.77</b>		<b>.31</b>	
<b>harmonious – jarring</b>	<b>.77</b>			
<b>graceful - awkward</b>	<b>.77</b>			
<b>charming - repelling</b>	<b>.71</b>			
<b>well-made - botched</b>	<b>.69</b>		<b>.36</b>	
<b>well-crafted - crude</b>	<b>.62</b>			
<b>careful - careless</b>	<b>.58</b>			
trend-setting – warmed over	.45	.38		
<b>unusual - usual</b>		<b>.72</b>		
<b>shocking - ordinary</b>		<b>.71</b>	<b>.35</b>	
<b>radical – old hat</b>		<b>.66</b>		
<b>startling - state</b>	<b>.36</b>	<b>.50</b>		<b>.39</b>
<b>original - commonplace</b>		<b>.50</b>		
unique - ordinary	.43	.49		
ornate - plain		.33		
<b>relevant - irrelevant</b>			<b>.80</b>	
<b>important - unimportant</b>			<b>.79</b>	
<b>substantial - insubstantial</b>			<b>.73</b>	
makes sense - senseless	.37		.68	
useful - useless		.32	.63	
<b>significant - insignificant</b>			<b>.62</b>	
logical - illogical	.42		.59	
revolutionary - average	.34	.39	.56	
essential - inessential		.43	.55	
<b>exciting - dull</b>			<b>.51</b>	
valuable - worthless	.41		.49	
effective - ineffective			.39	.38
<b>intricate - simple</b>				<b>.76</b>
<b>complicated - straightforward</b>				<b>.74</b>
durable - flimsy				
elegant - coarse				

*Note:* Only loadings above .30 are shown. Items in bold were used for the respective dimensions.

## RESULTS

### Harry Potter subsample

**Factor analysis.** To determine how items built different dimensions measuring different product attributes, items were first analysed for an underlying factor structure. Items loaded on four different factors. Details can be seen in Table 1. Twenty-one items built four different scales. The first dimension encompassed seven items concerning Style. The second factor described Novelty (five items). Six items concerning Resolution characterized factor 3. The final factor was about Complexity (two items). Cronbach's alpha for the major dimensions derived from items loading on the factor Novelty was  $\alpha = .79$ , for Resolution  $\alpha = .87$ , for Style  $\alpha = .91$ , for Complexity  $\alpha = .60$ .

**False memory check.** The majority of participants in this subsample failed the memory check. This suggested that their memory (and ultimately their judgment) was biased from having watched the movie adaptation. That is, although they were supposed to judge the novel, they presumably had the movie in mind during judgment. To examine whether it was nevertheless appropriate to include the participants concerned in the factor analysis, the recommendations and judgments for all dimensions were compared between both groups. A MANOVA revealed that participants who answered correctly did not judge any differently from those who answered incorrectly:  $F(5, 86) = 1.87$ ;  $p = .11$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .902$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . This indicated that pooling both kinds of participants for the factor analysis was appropriate.

**Table 2**

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables for the Harry Potter Subsample

	Min	Max	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recommendation (1), $n = 92$	1	5	4.4 (6.4)							
Resolution (2), $n = 94$	1	4.8	1.8 (3.2)	-.50**						
Novelty (3), $n = 95$	1	3.2	2.0 (2.8)	-.19	.58**					
Style (4), $n = 94$	1	4.3	1.3 (1.9)	-.35**	.66**	.54**				
Complexity (5), $n = 92$	1	5	2.9 (.9)	-.15	.26*	.37**	.13			
Times passed (6), $n = 94$	0	4	2.7 (18.1)	-.16	.22*	.02	.10	-.09		
Age (7), $n = 88$	16	55	26.3 (.8)	-.16	.17	.11	.06	.06	.08	
Expertise (8), $n = 87$	0	2.85	.28 (.45)	-.12	.25*	.13	.07	.19	.18	.36**

Note: Low ratings indicate higher Novelty, Resolution, Style and Complexity. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .001$

**Association analysis.** To investigate the distinctive impact of product dimensions on the potential for success of a novel, correlation analyses were performed. Correlations

of product dimensions and likelihood of recommendation are shown in Table 2. Resolution and Style were associated with likelihood for recommendation, with Resolution having the strongest association ( $r = -.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ). (As for all attributes in the original CPSS, low scores indicate a high level in the attribute under concern.). Because Style and Resolution were correlated with each other, a regression analysis with both dimensions as independent variables was performed. For this model (adjusted  $R^2 = .23$ ), only Resolution ( $p < .001$ ,  $\beta = -.47$ ) was a significant predictor (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Regressions for Likelihood of Recommendation on Major Dimensions**  
**for the Harry Potter Subsample**

Variable	Likelihood of recommendation			
	B	SE	$\beta$	p
Resolution	-.71	.18	-.47	<.001
Style	-.06	.22	-.04	.77
corrected $R^2$		.23		

Note: n = 94

Other factors which potentially influence judgment, but are not intrinsic to the product itself were also considered. Time passed since reading a book was positively associated with Resolution. Not surprisingly, the longer ago a reading experience, the less important and relevant a book becomes for a reader, which intuitively makes sense. It is however surprising that time passed since the reading experience had no influence on the judgment of other dimensions and the likelihood of recommendation.

Concerning other control variables, there was also a significant association between creative writing expertise and Resolution. This association indicates that the more expertise one has, the less likely one is to judge a genre novel to be useful. Note, that neither the other dimensions of judgment nor the likeliness of recommendation were affected by expertise.

### Complete sample

**False memory check.** It had to be determined for each of the three remaining novels separately, whether those participants who passed the false memory check differed in their judgment and recommendations from those who failed the check. For this purpose three one-way MANOVAs were performed, comparing judgments among readers of a given novel. Within the *Tintenherz* subsample, the effect of remembering the novel vs. the movie was not significant:  $F(4, 33) = 1.22$ ;  $p = .32$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .871$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ . For the *Hobbit*, results were also not significant  $F(5, 36) = 2.30$ ;  $p = .07$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .758$ ,  $\eta^2 = .24$ . Finally, the results were not significant for *Twilight*:  $F(5, 32) = 2.35$ ;  $p = .06$ ;

Wilks'  $\Lambda = .731$ ,  $\eta^2 = .27$ .

Comparison among products. To compare whether there was a difference in the four dimensions (DVs) between four novels (IVs), every participant who gave more than one judgment was randomly assigned to a group judging a given book. That is, no participant was in more than one of the four groups (*Harry Potter*:  $n = 29$ , *Hobbit*:  $n = 26$ , *Twilight*:  $n = 26$ , *Tintenherz*:  $n = 26$ ). A one-way MANOVA with four levels indicated no significant differences between the judgments of novels:  $F(12, 265) = 1.60$ ;  $p = .09$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .831$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$  (for attributes of novels, see Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Comparison Among Novels**

	Harry Potter	Hobbit	Tintenherz	Twilight
<i>n</i>	29	26	26	26
Dimension	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Resolution	2.0 (.6)	2.1 (.7)	2.2 (.6)	2.5 (.8)
Novelty	2.2 (.6)	2.3 (.6)	2.2 (.4)	2.6 (.6)
Style	1.5 (.6)	1.8 (.7)	1.7 (.6)	2.2 (.9)
Complexity	2.8 (.8)	3.0 (.7)	2.9 (.7)	3.3 (.8)

Note:  $n = 107$

## DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate which attributes describe novels as creative products and how they can be the basis for the potential of the success of a novel. A factor analysis on bipolar semantic items identified four major dimensions: Style, Novelty, Resolution and Complexity.

### Measuring well-known creative products

Before discussing main results, a certain limitation deserves more attention. Study participants had not only read the book of concern under any condition they liked, but had not known that they would participate one day in the present study. That is, the novels had been around a long time until participants judged them in the present study. The obvious objections to this unusual procedure are (a) the varying time gaps between individuals until study participation, and (b) ample opportunities for external influences to distort readers' original opinion about a novel.

First, the longer ago a reading experience, the more story details are forgotten. This should make comparison of judgments meaningless among participants for whom time

since reading experience varied. However, time passed since reading a novel only had an influence on the judgment of Resolution (Table 2). More precisely, the longer ago a reading experience, the less valuable and useful a novel was judged. Surprisingly, other measures remained unaffected. That is, although details may be forgotten, a reader's judgment seems to be largely stable in the long run.

Second, the long-term gap should make it likely that external factors distort a reader's original judgment. However, other studies found such judgments to be quite robust. Leisure reading preferences by students were highly correlated with their preference rankings after two years of education with English Studies as their major (Nell, 1988). If an expensive liberal arts education hardly changes judgments, the question is, what external factors can do so. Nonetheless, given the success, especially of the Harry Potter book series as a whole, and many tie-ins, the present judgment of the first Harry Potter book could have been influenced by a kind of a Halo effect or, as this phenomenon is called for literary works, by prestige suggestion. Although we cannot exclude this possibility, we consider this not very likely. In other studies, the prestige of the author had no detectable effect on preferences for texts (Michael, Rosenthal, & De Camp, 1949; Simon-ton, 1988). As the prestige factor will only be strong, if understanding of texts is weak (Das, Rath, & Das, 1955), prestige is of less relevance in the present novels of readily understandable young adult fiction.

Third, maybe participants' recollection of a novel was biased from watching its movie adaptation. As our false memory check suggested, this seemed to apply for the majority of participants. Surprisingly however, the judgments of those participants who answered the question correctly showed no significant difference from those who did not. In other words, those participants who presumably had the novel in mind hardly differed in their judgment from those who erroneously recollected the movie during judgment. This astounding result makes sense, if one considers that the movies were relatively close to their original novels. After all, they were movie *adaptations*. Of course, the implied congruence between the two mediums can only apply to overall aspects of characters or story content, not to details. But while salient aspects of stimuli are usually remembered, details are not recalled whether they are seen, read or heard (Bransford & Franks, 1971; Mandler & Ritchey, 1977; Sachs, 1974). Thus, the details of presentation as book or movie might not matter, simply because they are forgotten in both cases. The assumption that specifically linguistic details of a book are not significant during the evaluation is supported by other research. Neither the aesthetic success of Shakespeare's plays outside the laboratory (Simonton, 1986), nor the liking of or interest in short-stories by established

writers in laboratory studies (Martindale et al., 1988) was influenced by linguistic features. In both studies, content or themes were decisive for aesthetic appreciation. Thus, although a movie adaptation lacks the considerable text found in the novel (at least anything not in direct speech), the resulting lack of linguistic features from the respective novel seems irrelevant: they might not matter for the judgment of the book itself. In conclusion, we consider the present judgments to be about content, narrative structure or characters - the basic "idea" behind the novel and obviously the movie.

### **Judging novels with the CPSS**

Coming to our major research questions, a comparison showed that the results concerning major product dimensions are basically in line with the original studies establishing the CPSS. In addition to the three established major dimensions Novelty, Resolution and Style, we found a fourth dimension, Complexity. This result came at the cost of sacrificing the subscales of the original CPSS, but the reliability of interpretations can be considered as being good for Resolution, acceptable for Novelty, questionable for Complexity and excellent for Style based on the internal consistency of the dimensions.

An interesting detail was that the item "unique–ordinary" loaded not only on the target factor Novelty, but also showed a cross-loading on the Style factor, which could not be ignored. This suggests a creative product can be perceived as unique not only because it is original, but also due to an unmatched level of style or aesthetic features.

The main focus of the present study was on variables intrinsic to a creative product, not person related factors relevant in the process of judgment. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the degree of expertise had only a detectable effect on the judgment of Resolution. This result should however not be generalized. Kaufman, Baer and Cole (2009) argued that how much experts and non-experts agree depends on the popularity of the domain considered. In popular domains, non-experts may have internalized the standards of a field, due to higher exposure and familiarity. Thus, the rather weak influence of expertise in the present study should be attributed to the fact that the products judged were popular fiction. The influence of expertise might be different for highbrow novels, despite also being from the general domain of writing.

### **Differences among products**

A comparison among novels showed no significant differences in the product dimensions judged. However, a visual inspection of the achieved scores of novels supported validity (see Table 4). For example, given that scores can range from 1 to 5, all novels are in the lower half of scores for Resolution and Style, while scores are in the upper half for complexity. Both can be expected for popular novels compared to highbrow novels.

But does the lack of detectable differences mean that different levels of success in the real world have to be explained exclusively by external factors? No. Given that lay people using the CPSS could indeed distinguish among products of different Novelty (Besemer & O'Quin, 1999), our results merely mean that the present version of the CPSS had not enough discriminatory power to distinguish among a sample of relatively homogeneous novels, e.g. those which are popular *and* from the same genre. In other words, popular fantasy novels for children can be generally characterized by the scores found.

We did a post-hoc power analysis with G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2013) for a MANOVA with four levels and four dependent variables to ensure we did not miss differences, for example, of medium effect size. For a total sample size of 104, an alpha level of .01 and medium effect size of  $f^2 = .15$  resulted in a power of .994. In other words, we can be pretty sure, we did not miss any differences due to medium effect size, but there might still be differences between novels below a medium effect size. A considerable difference in real world success would be caused by such slight differences, if external influences “amplify these differences so that ‘the rich get richer and the poor get poorer’” (Martindale, 1995, p. 230). This directly leads us to the next question, namely, which creative product attribute is most likely credited with a novel's success.

### **The contribution of product attributes to potential for success**

We also wanted to know which of the creative product attributes is most likely to be credited for the real world success of novels. To our own surprise, Resolution remained the only significant predictor for word of mouth recommendations in a regression analysis. Of course, many recommendations are no guarantee for the success of a novel. They can be seen more as representing a high potential for success in analogy to creative potential in creative persons (Runco & Acar, 2012). Given the importance of Resolution, a novel does not need to be original, but has to serve the function it was made for in order to be successful. Given that enjoyment is one of the main reasons for reading fiction (Stokmans, 1999), a major function of popular novels is simply to bring enjoyment to the reader: a novel's usefulness depends on how enjoyable it is.

The importance of Resolution for preference does not contradict previous studies in which Novelty (originality) was more relevant than Resolution (value, usefulness) or Style (aesthetics) (Acar et al., 2017; Diedrich, Benedek, Jauk, & Neubauer, 2015). In these studies, not the preference for product, but overall creativity was the dependent variable. The present result is instead comparable with other studies in which usefulness was found to be more important than originality in determining preference for tangible and intangible creative products (Besemer, 2000; Blair & Mumford, 2007; Horn & Salvendy,

2006b, 2009). This is also in line with Cropley and Cropley's (2008) argument that effectiveness is the most important aspect of a product in the practical world.

Although Cohen recommended  $R^2 = .13$  for a medium and  $.26$  for large effect size, a critic might still argue that the found effect of  $.23$  for Resolution is low when compared to results from consumer research. In one study, up to 76% of variance in preference for products could be explained (Horn & Salvendy, 2009). However, the lion's share of variance (75 %) was explained by a product's ability to elicit affect in the evaluating individual. Such a dimension connected to affect is not part of the CPSS, which may explain the level of  $R^2$  found in our study. So, what does that mean for the validity of the CPSS in general or at least for product measurement in novels?

### Implications

On the one hand, one could argue that the CPSS was designed to measure product creativity, but not consumers' preference for such products. So, having 23% explained variance should be neither concerning, nor surprising, if the dependent variable is something other than product creativity. From this point of view, the validity of the present version of the CPSS is satisfying and the CPSS needs no modification. On the other hand, there are arguments in favour of the inclusion of a dimension concerning affect in future studies of creative products to increase predictive validity. "[I]f the purpose of art is to evoke emotion, then those works that are deemed as most creative may be those that invoke the greatest affective response" (Batey & Furnham, 2006, p. 412). Indeed, the frequency of words with emotional meanings is associated with the rated creativity of short-stories (Martindale, 2007). Beyond the product aspect, it has also been argued that emotions should be considered more in the creative process (Agnoli & Corazza, 2019). In practice, an additional product dimension concerning affect may also help to discriminate between novels that are otherwise indistinguishable, as in the present study. However, we do not know of any definition of creativity which includes aspects of affect. This would collide with how creativity is currently conceptualized.

Naturally, creativity researchers are concerned a lot with the originality of products, processes and persons. As originality is the major factor characterizing creativity (Acar et al., 2017; Diedrich et al., 2015), this focus seems justified. Outside ivory tower of research, however, the present results add to other research which suggests that ordinary people are more concerned with what has been called functional creativity (Cropley & Cropley, 2005). As these ordinary people ultimately make the success of the product or person, creativity practitioners and researchers should not ignore other pillars of creativity.



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