Understanding Film Fan Tourism: An Inventory of 15 Years of Research

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Abstract

The first studies of film and television as inducers of tourism appeared in the 1990s. From the outset, research in this area has identified a diverse range of tourist profiles, highlighting the fact that audiovisual media fans constitute an important segment of the tourism market because fan consumers dedicate considerable amounts of time, money, and energy to pursuing their specific interest. As a result, academic researchers have developed a substantial body of knowledge in this field over a relatively short period. The objective of this article is to offer a critical review of studies that have enhanced our understanding of film fan tourists to identify critical gaps in knowledge and, consequently, propose new ways to fully integrate the fan perspective into studies of audiovisual fiction-induced tourism. To this end, all the articles dealing with this specific tourist profile indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar (49) have been identified and analysed based on their year of publication, geographical location, type of audiovisual production studied, methodology adopted and composition of the sample, major research themes and main theoretical and/or practical contributions. This review of the literature on film fan tourists finds that our understanding of the specific characteristics of the profile and behaviour of this type of tourist is still limited. This is due to some extent on the lack of consensus on the definition of the concept of "fans", which has led to the erroneous classification of tourists whose travel motivation has nothing to do with a film and/or television production—and who may not even be fans of that production—as film fan tourists. The recommendations of this review thus focus mainly on reaching a consensus on the definition of the concept and establishing a single set of selection criteria for future research.

Keywords

Film Tourism, Film-induced Tourism, Film Fan Tourist, Audiovisual Fiction, Travel Motivations, Travel Experience, Fan Creative Practices, Fan Community, Tourist Profile, Tourism Segmentation, Literature Review.

1. Introduction

Tourism studies and fan studies, the latter forming part of the broader fields of media studies and cultural studies, have produced an extensive bibliography that in many cases conceptualises the fan as a film tourist. The scale and scope of the literature in these two fields (tourism studies and fan studies) makes a review of the main research topics and perspectives both viable and necessary, to summarise the advances made to date and offer an overview of the breadth

and depth of research on the concept of the media fan in relation to the phenomenon of film tourism. The objectives of this review are therefore: 1) to compile and categorise studies of film fan tourists, based chiefly on their main research areas; 2) to critically evaluate them and identify their theoretical and/or practical contributions; and 3) to identify the limitations of the studies and propose future lines of research.

To this end, the next section of this article offers a definition of the concept of the media fan and identifies its relationship with film tourism. This is followed by a description of the search and selection process used to identify the 49 publications included in the study sample, and the analytical criteria established for the review. The fourth and fifth sections outline the main results. This review is particularly timely given that the literature on media fans in relation to the phenomenon of film tourism has not been analysed before from a transversal perspective. Consequently, this paper concludes with some theoretical and methodological proposals for future research on the relationship between media fans and film tourism.

2. Background

Media fans constitute an important segment of the tourism market because, as **Mackellar** (2006) points out, fan consumers dedicate considerable amounts of time, money, and energy to pursuing their specific interest. Indeed, fans have been identified as one of the tourist segments that contribute the most to market niches such as film-induced tourism (**Zubernis; Larsen**, 2012).

But what does it mean to be a fan of something? What differences are there between a media product fan and a regular audience member? For more than thirty years, scholars working in the field of fan studies have been examining and debating the individual and collective nature of communities (real, virtual, or a combination of both) that grow around a shared interest, analysing their practices, patterns of behaviour, interactions, and emotional benefits. Throughout this period, researchers have been conscious of the inherent difficulties associated with this task (**Hills**, 2002; **Sandvoss**, 2005), i.e., to characterise fans without resorting to reductionist notions or the proposition of pathological motivations (**Cavicchi**, 2014; **Couldry et al.**, 2007). The term "fan" is an abbreviation of "fanatic", a word with negative connotations of destructive patterns of behaviour associated with mass movements (**Hoffer**, 1951), although in everyday language and in this article the term is used neutrally. **Gray et al.** (2007) offer a historical review of fan studies, which they categorise according to three generations of fan scholarship. In the first wave, fandoms, ridiculed by the media and by non-fans, were viewed as a source of empowerment and a space of autonomy and resistance against dominant ideologies. In the second, researchers highlighted how fan communities replicate economic, social, and cultural hierarchies, and thus effectively serve to maintain the economic, social, and cultural status quo. Finally, contemporary research on fans has sought to explore questions beyond the scope of popular culture: how people form emotional bonds with themselves and others in a modern, mediated world.

Despite the diverse range of definitions that have been given to the term "fan", there is a general consensus that it describes someone "who forms an intense affective bond with a particular property" (**Jenkins**, 2018), or "a person with a focused interest in a particular topic, subject, or person" (**Thorne**, 2011), while "fandom" is defined as a serious leisure activity that requires significant individual effort (**Abercrombie; Longhurst**, 1998), which includes making lifestyle changes as a consequence of the fan object. The fandom requires a certain level of commitment on the part of the fans, although the nature of their participation and their level of involvement may vary widely (**Thorne; Bruner**, 2006), ranging from casual audience member to obsessive devotee (**Stever**, 1995; 2009). Some fans limit their consumer practices to watching a series and then looking up information about it on websites or blogs. Others, in contrast, participate actively in the fandom by sharing their viewing experience with others, holding thematic parties, creating fanworks (e.g., writing fanfiction), attending conventions and meetings with the stars of the series, visiting the filming locations, writing letters to the series producers and/or stars, taking an active role in a fan club or collecting memorabilia (**Stever**, 1995).

In the field of tourist studies, the term "fan" has not been clearly defined. However, in studies of special interest tourists, **Brotherton and Himmetoğlu** (1997) and **Mackellar** (2009) have used the term to designate one of the extremes on the "tourism continuum", i.e., tourists who are totally committed to their interest, who are likely to take a number of holidays based on that interest, and who become more experienced and demanding customers over time.

Other studies have identified fans as one of the key segments of the film tourism market, and a plethora of terms have been coined to refer to film-induced tourists whose sole and/or main travel motivation is an audiovisual fiction production: specific film-induced tourists (**Macionis**, 2004), elite tourists (**Connell; Meyer**, 2009), dedicated film tourists (**Macionis; Sparks**, 2009), purposeful film tourists (**Croy; Heitmann**, 2011), *fan endurci* ("deep-rooted fan", **Grenier** (2011)), fanatic tourists (**Benjamin et al.**, 2012), and screen authentic tourist (**Rittichainuwat et al.**, 2018). However, none of these terms covers both elements that define this specific type of tourist: 1) their object of interest, i.e., "films" (including "cinema, television and other screened media", **Beeton** (2016). 9); and 2) their high level of commitment, an inherent trait of the fan. For this reason, the term "film fan tourist" is adopted (**Connell**, 2012) in this review to designate

those tourists who travel to filming locations (meaning "sites where movies and television programmes have been filmed as well as tours to production studios, including film-related theme parks," **Beeton** (2016) as a direct consequence of their status as fans of an audiovisual text.

Yet despite the identification of a relationship between fans and tourism, our understanding of the specific characteristics of a fandom and its members, and of the types of interaction and participation that occur, is still limited (**Reichenberger; Smith**, 2020). Numerous studies indicate that the proportion of tourists whose sole and/or main travel motivation is a fiction film or TV series is in fact marginal (**Busby; Klug**, 2001; **Croy**, 2018; **Di Cesare *et al.***, 2009; **Rittichainuwat; Rattanaphinanchai**, 2015; **Macionis; Sparks**, 2009). It is thus perhaps unsurprising that the phenomenon of film fan tourism has received less scholarly attention. While it is true that there are many researchers who have analysed the travel motivations and experiences of film tourists, very few have done so from the perspective of film fan tourists.

Another possible explanation for this is the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration (**Reichenberger; Smith**, 2020), which, according to **Zubernis and Larsen** (2012), may in turn be the result of an aversion to the fan phenomenon: although over the last thirty years numerous efforts have been made to rehabilitate the image of fans, a persistent feeling of embarrassment pervades fan spaces and academic approaches to the subject. Moreover, as **Fiske** (1992) suggests, the cultural capital of popular culture, which can be built up by fandom activity, is different from the official cultural capital associated in particular with the conventional cultural activities of the elite, as popular cultural capital can extinguish quickly.

Much of the academic research on fans has focused on sports fans (**Laverie; Arnett**, 2000), which is why media fan studies have borrowed its terminology. **Thorne**'s classification (2011), without doubt one of the most popular because it combines different types of fans (science fiction fans, *Star Trek* fans, gaming fans, and sports fans), takes inspiration from the work of **Hunt *et al.*** (1999). However, as **Fiske** (1992) also points out, sports fans are quite different from media culture fans, especially fans of audiovisual fiction. Unlike other types of fans, such as music or sports fans, film and television fans follow fictional worlds instead of real people and/or events (**Karpovich**, 2010), which means that the relationship established between fans and their object of interest is different. The approach is not direct, as the fan object does not really exist and therefore cannot be "touched". Thus, when fans of a film or television series try to approach their fan object, they do so in a mediated way: any direct contact they have is not with the actual characters or the places where the events take place, but with the actors and locations associated with the production. When visiting filming locations, for example, fans experience what are not only "real spaces" but *lieux d'imagination*, physical points of reference that offer them the opportunity to construct the "imagined" world and subsequently cross a symbolic boundary between it and the "real" one (**Reijnders**, 2010b).

3. Methodology

3.1. Literature Search Methods

The first stage of this review involved an exhaustive search for relevant studies in Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, historically the three most important multidisciplinary bibliographic data sources (**Visser *et al.***, 2021; **Martín-Martín *et al.***, 2021). In view of the international nature of research on film fan tourism, the articles selected are exclusively from academic journals published in English. In order to identify all published studies, searches were conducted using a wide range of terms employed in tourism studies and fan studies to refer to the phenomenon of fans visiting locations associated with film or television productions: "film-induced tourism", "film tourism", "movie-induced tourism", "movie tourism", "television-induced tourism", "TV tourism", "cinematic tourism", "popular media-induced tourism", "popular media tourism", "pop culture tourism", "media-related tourism", "media tourism", "screen-induced tourism", "screen tourism", "content tourism", "anime tourism", "anime-induced tourism", "anime pilgrimage", "*otaku* tourism", "media pilgrimage", "fan pilgrimage", and "fan tourism". All the articles identified in this initial search were examined to determine whether to include them in the study based on the selection criteria outlined in the following subsection.

3.2. Selection and Exclusion Criteria

The second stage involved the selection of specific studies based on three formal, content-related criteria. First, given that this paper focuses on the phenomenon of film fan tourism, only those publications that present research on film fan tourists were included. To meet this basic criterion, the articles selected had to include the term "fan" somewhere in the text, or any other term used to refer to tourists motivated to travel solely or mainly by an audiovisual fiction production: specific film-induced tourist (**Macionis**, 2004); elite tourist (**Connell; Meyer**, 2009); dedicated film tourist (**Macionis; Sparks**, 2009); purposeful film tourist (**Croy; Heitmann**, 2011), fanatic tourist (**Benjamin *et al.***, 2012), tourist-fan (**Norris**, 2013); *otaku* tourist (**Okamoto**, 2015); screen authentic tourist (**Rittichainuwat *et al.***, 2018); and/or purposeful anime tourists or anime-fan tourists (**Mori**, 2022). Secondly, as this review focuses exclusively on fans of

audiovisual fiction, publications presenting research on literary fans, sports fans, or music fans were excluded. However, research dealing with tourists who are fans of media products that did not originate in the audiovisual world but have expanded their audiences through film or television versions (Harry Potter tourism, Dracula tourism, etc.) were deemed eligible for inclusion. The third selection criterion was that the publications must present an original empirical study. Purely theoretical contributions were thus excluded from the analysis. However, this review also includes references to other studies which, although they do not form part of the sample because of their format (books or book chapters) or because they do not meet all the selection criteria, are nevertheless essential for understanding the evolution of research in this field.

The application of these three criteria reduced the sample to 159 articles for further analysis. The third stage involved reading the 159 articles selected in the second stage to identify those that dealt specifically with film fan tourists. This preliminary review identified a widespread assumption among researchers that the findings of a study relate to film fan tourists merely because its sample has been taken at a festival or theme park or because it examines a text that has turned into a fan phenomenon. As this literature review is concerned with research that specifically explores the film fan tourism phenomenon, it only considers studies that include a means of confirming the fan status of their participants, for example, by locating them through fan communities or specialist forums (**Bolan; Kearney**, 2017), by establishing committed, loyal viewing as a selection criterion (**Bagnoli**, 2015; **Mitev et al.**, 2017), or by analysing their tourist behaviour (**Waysdorf; Reijnders**, 2018)[1]. Any studies that refer to tourists as fans without a mechanism for confirming their fan status or with selection criteria that cannot guarantee that status were excluded, reducing the sample to 49 articles.

3.3. Categorisation and Analysis of the Studies

In view of the size of the sample, the use of text mining techniques, which are becoming increasingly popular in bibliometric analysis (**Barrera-Barrera**, 2022), was not adopted for this review. Instead, it was decided to conduct a critical literature review of the content of the articles based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques: a content analysis (**Berelson**, 1952) and a thematic analysis (**Braun; Clarke**, 2022).

The content analysis was applied to general information on the articles (publication year, type of production, type of location, country of destination, country of production and tourist's nationality), and to their methodological approach (data collection method and sample).

On the other hand, thematic analysis, a flexible approach to the analysis of qualitative data (**Braun; Clarke**, 2022), was the method chosen to analyse and categorise the object of study and the main findings of the studies included in the sample. Following the preliminary review of the articles (first reading) carried out in the final stage of the selection process, it was found that 23 of the 49 articles in the sample fall into the field of fan studies or straddle the line between fan studies and tourism studies, as although their object of study is an area of tourism, their analysis draws on the conceptual and theoretical principles of fan studies. The rest of the articles (26) belong for the most part to tourism studies, with no or very limited reference to fan studies.

The development of the initial coding system (**Saldaña**, 2016) took into account the predominance of tourism studies and the recurring nature of the most common themes. A detailed reading of each of the studies selected was then carried out with the aim of identifying all their themes and sub-themes. The final coding system was based on categories used in previous literature reviews in the field of film tourism, particularly the studies by **Connell** (2012) and **Nieto-Ferrando et al.** (2023), although they were reformulated and expanded in light of the data collected and the theoretical principles of fan studies. In other words, the coding system was the product of a process that was both deductive and inductive. The final coding system includes the following research categories, which served to structure the findings of this review:

a. Travel intentions
b. Search for information and travel planning
c. Travel motivations
d. The tourist experience
    d1. Imagination
    d2. On-site thematic activities and creative production
    d3. Company and community
    d4. Satisfaction
    d5. Authenticity
e. Destination loyalty
f. Impact of film fan tourism: sustainability, identity and heritage

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[1] According to **Waysdorf** and **Rejinders**, interviewees were selected "based on visible fan behaviour in the park such as attire, reactions to certain attractions, or reciting book or film dialogue" (pp. 177).

4. Results of Content Analysis

The proportion of articles that were finally selected out of the initial sample of articles including any of the terms referring to tourists motivated solely or mainly by audiovisual fiction (49 out of 159, 30.8%) indicates that the use of such terms is uncertain or erroneous because in most cases the tourists in question should have been classified as general or serendipitous tourists (**Macionis**, 2004). This confusion reflects the lack of consensus on the definition of this tourist profile and the need to reach one. The studies included in the final sample reveal a gradually increasing importance over time of the concepts of fan and film fan tourist: while in the first sub-period of study (2007-2010) a total of 10 articles on this tourist profile were identified, by the last sub-period (2019-2022) that figure had increased to 16. Although it is not yet a consolidated field of research, this positive trend suggests that it is on its way to becoming one.

4.1. Film Fan Tourist Research by Media Product Type and Location

Of the types of productions analysed in the studies, television fiction series are the most common (22). Films are the object of study in 16 articles (nine of which focus on film series), while the other 11 discuss film, television productions and other formats without distinguishing between them (eight of which refer to multiformat anime and/or mixed-media works). A long-running TV series, film series or media franchise is more likely to sustain interest and establish a long-term relationship with its audience. Viewing over an extended period of time fosters identification, empathy, emotional engagement and parasocial interactions, which in turn motivate spectators to became fans. It is thus hardly surprising that most of the productions analysed in the literature on film fan tourists are products with a long duration over time.

Most of the articles are case studies focusing on one or two audiovisual productions (35). When they go further (14), they explore genres or formats, such as TV detective series (**Reijnders**, 2010b), *nang rak* films (**Promkhuntong**, 2021) or anime (**Okamoto**, 2009; 2015; **Sabre**, 2017; **Ono** *et al.*, 2020; **Liu** *et al.*, 2022; **Mori**, 2022; **Lin** *et al.*, 2021). Others study a group of productions associated with a specific destination, such as Vancouver (**Brooker**, 2007) or Scotland (**Garrison; Wallace**, 2021). Most of the studies also analyse authentic screen locations, meaning locations that are depicted in the film or television series or where the production was filmed (30). Another 15 studies examine real-life locations that are associated with the production but not actually shown on screen; in most cases, these are settings evoked in animation productions (13). Three studies explore afilmic spaces with no direct relation to the story but where the fandom comes together and one paper examines a post-filmic space with no prior existence, created specifically for the production (a theme park).

4.2. The Geography of Film Fan Tourist Research

An analysis of the geographical distribution of the research reveals the destinations, productions and audiences that have received the most attention in studies of film fan tourists. Japan is the most frequently studied tourist destination (10), thanks to the growing scholarly interest in anime tourism. The United Kingdom (9) is in second place, while third place goes to New Zealand, whose five studies all focus on *The Lord of The Rings* franchise (referred to hereinafter as *TLOTR*). Tied in fourth place are South Korea and the United States (4 each), and Thailand (2) is fifth. Seven other countries (Australia, Cambodia, Canada, China, Germany, Italy, and Romania) provide the destination for a single study, while the eight remaining studies examine fan phenomena with locations in more than one country.

In relation to the country of origin of the audiovisual productions, it is important to note that many are co-productions. Overall, Japanese productions and UK-US co-productions dominate the study sample (14 studies each). US productions are in third place (6), followed by New Zealand-US co-productions (5), and South Korean and UK productions (3 each). Over the years there has been a progressive increase in the number of studies on productions made in Asia, with just two publications in the first sub-period (2007-2010), three in the second (2011-2014), six in the third (2015-2018) and 10 in the last sub-period (2019-2022). The Japanese government's constant advertising campaigns to attract tourists interested in manga and anime clearly have much to do with this increasing scholarly interest in Asia.

In terms of audiences, however, a significant number of the studies do not specify the home countries of the fans (18), while many others (11) analyse fans of various nationalities. The samples of 13 studies are made up exclusively of international tourists, six of which analyse fans from multiple countries or of unspecified origins. Finally, the remaining seven publications study samples comprised entirely of domestic tourists. The lack of specification of home countries in many studies renders it impossible to establish a ranking of the nationalities that have been studied the most. Indeed, the nationality of the fans is considered a decisive factor in only a handful of studies. Two of the studies dealing exclusively with domestic fans identify national identity as a key factor in travel motivations (see section 5.4), while only one of the studies analysing international fans considers their place of origin and the intercultural dimension of the reception of content outside the country of its production (**Sabre**, 2017).

4.3. Typical Sample Composition and Research Methods Used to Study Film Fan Tourists

Both quantitative studies (mostly surveys) and qualitative studies (interviews or ethnographic techniques) have been identified in the sample. Obviously, these methodologies are not mutually exclusive, and some studies may adopt two

or more to analyse their object of study. Since each individual method has its own methodological strengths and weaknesses, it is considered important to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Seven studies are based exclusively on interviews (Table 1). However, another 16 studies use this same method in combination with observation (13), surveys (2) and the analysis of guest books (1). Surveys constitute the sole method of five studies. Others adopt a mixed approach, using a triangulation of data obtained using three (8) or four (2) different methods. The most common triangulations use a combination of interviews, surveys, and observation, although in some cases one of these methods is replaced with a different one, or another method is added to the combination. Possible additional methods include the analysis of tour journals, photography analysis and/or netnography. The use of netnography is central to five studies, which use it exclusively, while another four, following a tradition in fan studies, make use of autoethnographic reflection, deriving all their findings from the travel experiences of their authors. Finally, two studies employ the textual analysis of the creative production of fans as their sole research method. Thus, while research in tourism studies often has a strong quantitative basis, focusing on how a location's presence in film or television productions affects its tourist numbers and host communities, research in fan studies, forming part of the broader fields of media studies or cultural studies, tends to obtain opinions and feelings of a qualitative nature from fans of the audiovisual production to understand the meaning of the tourist experience.

Table 1: Research Methods Used to Study Film Fan Tourism.

a. Interviews (7)	**Mori** (2022); **Liu** *et al.* (2022); **Thelen and Kim** (2023); **Lin** *et al.* (2021); **Jang** (2020); **Reijnders** (2010a); **Bagnoli** (2015).
b. Survey (5)	**Jørgensen and Reichenberger** (2023); **Connell and Meyer** (2009); **Roberson and Grady** (2015); **Mitev** *et al.* (2017); **Ono** *et al.* (2020).
c. Interviews and survey (2)	**Carl** *et al.* (2007); **Okamoto** (2009).
d. Interviews and observation (13)	**Light** (2009); **Reijnders** (2010b); **Peaslee** (2011); **Reijnders** (2011); **Lee** (2012); **Okamoto** (2015); **Yamamura** (2015); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017; 2018; 2019); **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020); **Garrison and Wallace** (2021); **Milazzo and Santos** (2022).
e. Interviews and textual analysis (1)	**Norris** (2013).
f. Interviews, survey, and participant observation (4)	**Benjamin** *et al.* (2012); **Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai** (2015); **Sabre** (2017); **Rittichainuwat** *et al.* (2018).
g. Interview, netnography and ethnography (1)	**Garrison** (2020).
h. Interview, observation, and photography analysis (1)	**Kim** (2010).
i. Interviews, survey, observation, and tour journal analysis (2)	**Buchmann** (2010); **Buchmann** *et al.* (2010).
j. Survey, participant observation and exploratory focus group discussion (1)	**Alderman** *et al.* (2012).
k. Netnography (5)	**Shao** *et al.* (2011); **Bolan and Kearney** (2017); **Nishijima** (2020); **Promkhuntong** (2019; 2021).
l. Autoethnography (4)	**Goh** (2014); **Garner** (2016); **Toy** (2017); **Williams** (2019).
m. Textual analysis (2)	**Sugawa-Shimada** (2015); **Andrews** (2014).
n. Netnography, autoethnography and textual analysis of the city (1)	**Brooker** (2007).

For their samples, 34 of the 49 studies rely exclusively on fans. The other 15 studies work with samples that include all types of film tourists, while identifying a cluster of film fan tourists within that group, for which specific findings and/or conclusions are offered. It is significant that over the course of the study period the number of general samples has dropped while studies focusing specifically on fans have increased, thereby reinforcing the growing scholarly interest in this sector of the population.

Due to the high concentration of tourist destinations and audiovisual productions in specific regions and the lack of information on the origins of the study participants in most cases, it is not possible to identify trends in methodologies used or sample composition in terms of country of origin. However, it is worth noting that only one of the 14 studies focusing on Japanese productions uses a sample that includes all types of tourists, while the other 13 study film fan tourists exclusively.

5. Results of Thematic Analysis

The most popular individual theme in the studies of film fan tourists is the tourist experience (24), which may be related to tourist performance acts or playful practices at film locations, questions of authenticity, the immersion process or creative production by fans. On their own, travel motivations (4) and travel intentions (2) have received less attention. However, motivations combined with the tourist experience are central to five other studies. Another seven studies deal with two (3), three (3) or even four (1) themes simultaneously, combining travel intention, search for information, motivations, experience and/or loyalty. The remaining studies (7) focus on questions related to the impact of tourism, the transformation of filming locations and sustainability.

In relation to the evolution of the themes over time (Figure 1), no significant differences were identified over the course of the period analysed, although it was found that the tourist experience predominated in every three-year sub-period. No clear thematic patterns were identified in specific geographical regions either, except that, once again, the tourist

experience predominated in all cases. On the other hand, with respect to themes and methods, a relationship was identified between studies exploring the tourist experience and qualitative methods: 27 of the 35 studies that analyse the tourist experience either exclusively or in relation to other aspects apply strictly qualitative methods, such as interviews (6), a combination of interviews and observation (11), autoethnography (3), and qualitative netnography (4). Moreover, 23 of those 35 articles work with samples made up strictly of film fan tourists. No significant relationships were identified in any other cases.
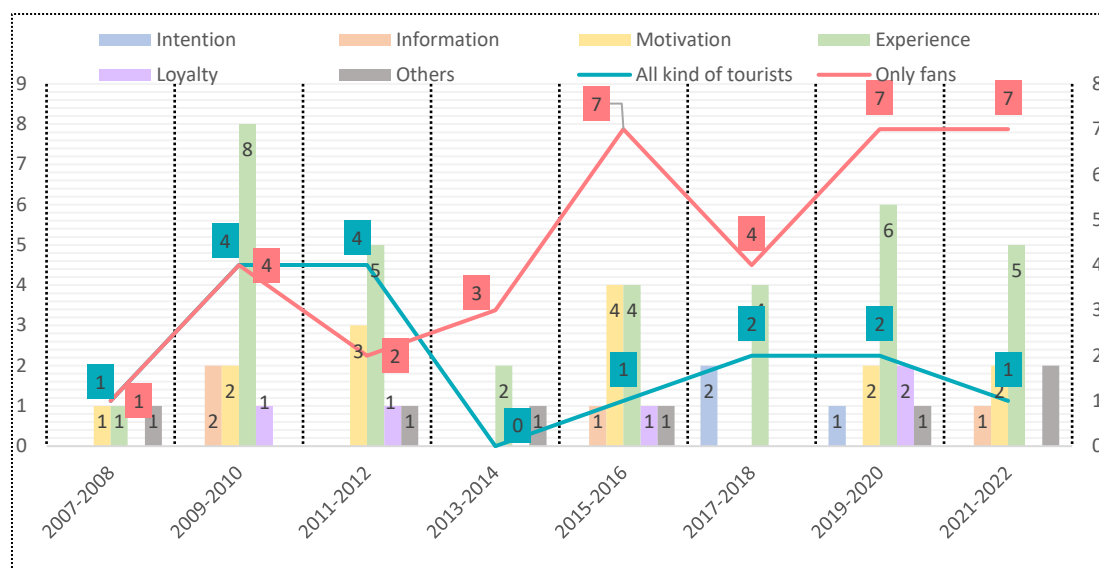

Figure 1: Evolution Over Time of Research Categories and Samples.

The next section offers an overview of the different disciplinary perspectives from which film fan tourists have been studied, followed by a critical review of the studies in relation to their main themes (Table 2).

5.1. A brief Evolution of Film Fan Tourist Research in Terms of Disciplinary Perspectives

A comprehensive understanding of film fan tourism requires an interdisciplinary approach, which, as the name of this type of tourism itself suggests, integrates media studies (especially film studies and television studies), fan studies, and tourism studies. Each of these disciplines is characterised by a wide range of theoretical and conceptual principles drawn from many other disciplines, including (as evidenced by the review sample) human geography (**Alderman *et al.***, 2012), semiotics (**Goh**, 2014), anthropology (**Sabre**, 2017; **Nishijima**, 2020) and art (**Garner**, 2016), as well as many other fields mentioned below.

From the outset, film fan tourist research has adopted a multifaceted agenda of objectives and approaches. The earliest study in the sample (**Brooker**, 2007) belongs to the field of fan studies, an interdisciplinary field that emerged in the early 1990s and has been growing in academic importance ever since. Studies of film fan tourists over time reflect this growth: while each of the first two study sub-periods (2007-2010 and 2011-2014) contain four articles that adopt a fan studies approach or consider the field in the development of their theoretical frameworks, in the third sub-period (2015-2018) this number increases to five and in the last sub-period (2019-2022) it rises to 10. Most of these studies (19) explore the tourist experience, either exclusively (16) or in combination with film fan tourist motivations (3).

The study by **Brooker** (2007) incorporates theories taken from urban geography, particularly the concepts of postmodern suburbs (**Relph**, 1976; **Soja**, 1989; 1996; 2000), simulacra (**Baudrillard**, 1994) and hyper-reality (**Eco**, 1998), into an analysis of the fan pilgrimage to argue that although television producers may consider Vancouver a generic, anonymous, flat environment, for fans of *Smallville* (The WB, 2001-2006; The CW, 2006-2011), *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) and *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009), this setting is not merely a city but an intersection of parallel universes. **Brooker** concludes that the presence of fans enriches locations and transforms them into stages for creation, play and carnival. In this sense, **Brooker**'s article constitutes a kind of inaugural document that introduces a whole range of key concepts for the study of film fan tourists.

The studies by **Carl *et al.*** (2007) and **Buchmann *et al.*** (2010), two of the most significant publications of the first sub-period (2007-2010) and of the sample as a whole, also delve into the theoretical concepts of authenticity, simulacra and hyper-reality in the tourist experience, in both cases in relation to the *TLOTR* fan phenomenon. **Carl *et al.*** (2007) conduct an empirical test of the model developed by **Mitchell** (1998, cited in **Carl *et al.*** (2007)) and the findings of their study confirm that tourist satisfaction is directly proportionate to the degree to which the tourists' actual experience at the location matches their hyper-real expectations. In other words, hyper-reality emerges as a requirement for a positive tourist

experience. On the other hand, **Buchmann *et al.*** (2010) connect hyper-reality and simulacra to a broader theoretical context, expanding the conceptual framework with the introduction of the notion of *theoplacity* (**Belhassen *et al.***, 2008) to demonstrate that the physical locations and social environments (in this case, the collegial spirit among members of the tourist group) are key to understanding tourists' evaluation of what is and what is not an authentic experience. Thus, it is not only the place that shapes the experience, but also the personal interactions with other tourists (the tour community) and with the tour guides (**Buchmann**, 2010). The question of authenticity in the tourist experience would subsequently be explored in the studies by **Rittichainuwat *et al.*** (2018) and **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2018).

In the first years of film fan tourist studies there also emerged what would become a theoretical cornerstone of this field of study: *lieux d'imagination* (**Reijnders**, 2010b), a concept already defined above (see section 2). Inspired by the notion of *lieux de mémoire* posited by the French historian **Nora** (1984) and the distinction made by the cultural anthropologist **Caughey** (1984) between the "world of imagination" and the "real world", *lieux d'imagination* would be further developed in later work by the same author (**Reijnders**, 2011), but also by other authors, such as **Milazzo and Santos** (2022), who stress the collective, socially constructed nature of such places.

Another key area of film fan studies that began to be consolidated in the first few years of the study period was related to the impact on the tourist experience of the audience's emotional involvement in the audiovisual production. In the early 2010s, **Kim** (2010), **Connell and Meyer** (2009) and **Connell** (2012) pointed out the lack of research on the tourist experience and set out to analyse photographic re-enactments as a metaphor for authentic tourist experiences. **Kim** bases his research on a combination of key contributions from television studies on the one hand, and from human geography and environmental psychology on the other. According to television studies, the specific characteristics of form and content of television drama series (familiarity, continuity, serialisation, etc.) contribute to the development of a deeper degree of emotional and behavioural audience involvement. At the same time, this profound attachment fosters the development of a special affective bond with the locations where the action takes place, referred to in the literature on the subject as "place attachment" (**Low; Altman**, 1992) or "sense of place" (**Relph**, 1976; **Tuan**, 1980). Re-enactments of scenes at filming locations are thus interpreted as expressions of the audience's emotional involvement with the text and the place, and of their need for active and (re)creative participation.

Since the publication of **Kim**'s study (2010), research on the tourist experience has increased dramatically, turning it into the most popular topic in studies of film fan tourists. As noted above, the tourist experience is the most common theme in the studies of the sample belonging to the field of fan studies. This explains the large number of studies that explore this question from the perspective of audience studies and cultural studies, considered the "founding fathers" of fan studies. For example, **Peaslee** (2011) connects media audience theories and tourism practice in order to analyse the manifestation of media power. Based on **Couldry**'s concept of the "mediated centre" (2003), **Peaslee** reflects on filming locations that acquire "special" status through a process of mediation, suggesting that tourist visits to such locations constitute the materialisation of the centrality of the media in our society. On the other hand, **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2019), also from the perspective of fan studies, take up the concept of "sense of place" proposed by **Tuan** (1977) and combine it with **Seamon**'s notion of "place ballet" (1979) to describe familiar places. Based on repeated tourist experiences, these authors argue that fans can come to conceive of filming locations as familiar places. They thus propose the concept of "fan homecoming" as a kind of "return" to a second home that allows the fan to disconnect from everyday life and engage with a more emotionally authentic experience, but in a familiar setting.

Building on the work of **Kim** (2010), many other studies have explored (re)creative practices during the tourist experience from the perspective of fan studies in combination with other fields. **Norris** (2013), for example, analyses the tourist experience from the perspective of media literacy. Based on a theoretical framework proposed by **Thomas** (2007), who draws on studies by **Jenkins** (2004) and **Lewis** (2004) to argue that fans use popular culture as a scaffold or launching point for their own creative process, **Norris** concludes that fans use fiction worlds as scaffolds for their own literary production, which in turn helps them make sense of their own travel experience and reflect on their own identity. On the other hand, **Promkhuntong** (2019) combines fan studies and film studies to analyse the textual production of fans who write about filming locations and/or their own experience at such locations. A later study by the same author (**Promkhuntong**, 2021) brings together fan studies and architectural studies, specifically the notion of "places-to-play" proposed by **Walz** (2010), to examine tourists' photographic, videographic and narrative practices.

Film fan tourist research has also considered the economic benefits of film tourism for local communities, with various studies exploring this profile of tourists from the perspective of destination marketing. **Yamamura** (2015), for example, analyses a partnership initiative in the Japanese town of Washimiya between the Commerce and Industry Association, local residents, film fan tourists, and copyright holders to strategically develop a regional promotion policy. According to the study author, this success story reminds us that "business is essentially a 'lasting relationship' between people" (p. 79), and therefore, local government strategies should focus on the development of partnerships with all stakeholders (sellers and buyers) in content tourism. Other studies, such as those by **Bolan and Kearney** (2017) and **Mitev *et al.*** (2017), have sought to measure the potential of audiovisual fiction as a tourism-inducing factor in order to help DMOs create successful marketing initiatives and persuade spectators to visit a filming location as film tourists.

In recent years, the development of film fan tourist research has been characterised by new concerns that in turn have introduced new disciplinary perspectives. From the perspectives of feminist studies, history and non-religious spiritualism, **Sugawa-Shimada** (2015) analyses how the phenomenon of *rekijo* ("history fan girls", or young women devoted to Japanese history) is redefining the national identity of these women and challenging gender norms in Japan. **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020) explore the renewed interest in Thailand's national heritage and its impact on the construction of national identity, while **Liu *et al.*** (2022) examine tourist identity. Drawing on social psychology (specifically, identity theory and social identity theory) and adopting an interpretative paradigm, this last study aims to establish a theoretical framework for the process of identity construction of anime pilgrims based on their relationship with the environment and their personal travel experiences. Finally, **Jørgensen and Reichenberger** (2023) also draw on social psychology, in their case to analyse negative film tourism behaviours and how tourists justify those behaviours from the perspective of moral disengagement theory.

Table 2: Research Themes and Sub-themes.

a. Travel intentions (3)	**Bolan and Kearney** (2017); **Mitev *et al.*** (2017); **Ono *et al.*** (2020).
b. Search for information and travel planning (4)	**Connell and Meyer** (2009); **Reijnders** (2010a); **Okamoto** (2015); **Liu *et al.*** (2022).
c. Travel motivations (14)	**Mori** (2022); **Lin *et al.*** (2021); **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020); **Kirillova *et al.*** (2019); **Sugawa-Shimada** (2015); **Benjamin *et al.*** (2012); **Carl *et al.*** (2007); **Connell and Meyer** (2009); **Reijnders** (2010a; 2011); **Shao *et al.*** (2011); **Okamoto** (2015); **Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai** (2015); **Roberson and Grady** (2015).
d. Tourist experience (35)	**Carl *et al.*** (2007); **Connell and Meyer** (2009); **Light** (2009); **Okamoto** (2009); **Buchmann** (2010); **Buchmann *et al.*** (2010); **Kim** (2010); **Reijnders** (2010b; 2010a); **Peaslee** (2011); **Reijnders** (2011); **Benjamin *et al.*** (2012); **Lee** (2012); **Shao *et al.*** (2011); **Norris** (2013); **Andrews** (2014); **Bagnoli** (2015); **Okamoto** (2015); **Garner** (2016); **Sabre** (2017); **Toy** (2017); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017); **Rittichainuwat *et al.*** (2018); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2018); **Promkhuntong** (2019); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2019); **Williams** (2019); **Jang** (2020); **Nishijima** (2020); **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020); **Promkhuntong** (2021); **Thelen and Kim** (2023); **Liu *et al.*** (2022); **Milazzo and Santos** (2022); **Mori** (2022).
d1. Imagination (4)	**Reijnders** (2011); **Lee** (2012); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017; 2018).
d2. On-site thematic activities and creative production (26)	**Light** (2009); **Okamoto** (2009); **Kim** (2010); **Reijnders** (2010a; 2011); **Benjamin *et al.*** (2012); **Shao *et al.*** (2011); **Norris** (2013); **Andrews** (2014); **Bagnoli** (2015); **Okamoto** (2015); **Garner** (2016); **Sabre** (2017); **Toy** (2017); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017); **Promkhuntong** (2019); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2019); **Williams** (2019); **Jang** (2020); **Nishijima** (2020); **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020); **Promkhuntong** (2021); **Thelen and Kim** (2023); **Mori** (2022); **Milazzo and Santos** (2022); **Liu *et al.*** (2022).
d3. Company and community (8)	**Carl *et al.*** (2007); **Light** (2009); **Buchmann** (2010); **Buchmann *et al.*** (2010); **Kim** (2010); **Milazzo and Santos** (2022); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017; 2019).
d4. Satisfaction (4)	**Bagnoli** (2015); **Carl *et al.*** (2007); **Connell and Meyer** (2009); **Benjamin *et al.*** (2012).
d5. Authenticity (6)	**Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2018); **Rittichainuwat *et al.*** (2018); **Lee** (2012); **Peaslee** (2011); **Buchmann *et al.*** (2010); **Carl *et al.*** (2007).
e. Destination loyalty (5)	**Connell and Meyer** (2009); **Benjamin *et al.*** (2012); **Bagnoli** (2015); **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2019); **Ono *et al.*** (2020).
f. Impact of film fan tourism (7)	**Brooker** (2007); **Alderman *et al.*** (2012); **Goh** (2014); **Yamamura** (2015); **Garrison** (2020); **Jørgensen and Reichenberger** (2023); **Garrison and Wallace** (2021).

5.2. Travel Intentions

The more intense the emotional involvement developed by an audience when viewing an audiovisual production, the greater the desire to visit the locations shown and the greater the likelihood of visiting them will be (**Kim**, 2012; **Kasai; Hsu**, 2012). Considering that intense involvement is a defining quality of fans, it is hardly surprising that travel intentions among this audience sector are taken for granted and as a result are not widely studied in research on film fan tourism. In fact, the findings of research that does examine travel intentions effectively confirm this. **Bolan and Kearney** (2017), for example, point to a high awareness among fans of favourite production locations and a strong interest in visiting them.

Along the same lines, **Mitev *et al.*** (2017) offer empirical evidence that place attachment and the collection of information on locations have a positive effect on travel intentions: a strong place attachment motivates viewers to search for more information about it, which in turn leads to a stronger commitment, encouraging viewers to want to experience the place for themselves. On the other hand, **Ono *et al.*** (2020) find that character involvement affects anime tourists' visiting intentions, but storyline involvement does not, nor do most destination image attributes. Only landscape, social interaction, availability of information, and accessibility had a positive impact, suggesting anime tourists are not attracted to destination attributes that have no relation to the anime production.

5.3. Search for Information and Travel Planning

Film fan tourists are known for gathering a lot of information before they travel (**Reijnders**, 2010b; **Liu *et al.***, 2022; **Hills**, 2002). **Okamoto** (2015) identifies two main sources of travel information for these types of tourists: organisations, such as travel agencies and/or local authorities, and individuals, such as local residents or other tourists. The production of content by film fan tourists and the online distribution of that content, as will be discussed below (see section 5.5.2), is essential to the identification, recognition and/or authentication of locations associated with the film, especially in the case of anime.

According to **Liu *et al.*** (2022), preparation for the trip also includes taking screenshots of the production. **Reijnders** (2010a) corroborates **Liu**, **Lai** and **Li**'s findings, noting that many James Bond fans work with an extensive collection of

photographs, which requires considerable preparation. Before the trip, they view the film again a few times, paying special attention to outdoor scenes. When they identify a location, they capture a still image and save it to use it at the filming location, where it will serve as a guide for recreating the scene.

Conversely, **Connell and Meyer** (2009) found that one third of the participants in their study, a significant number of whom are classified as "elite tourists", did not know what to expect from their visit because they made no prior search for information on the destination, leading the authors of this study to contradict the findings of **Hills** (2002). The "elite tourist" is defined by **Connell** and **Meyer** as a sub-category of the "specific film tourist" (**Macionis**, 2004), someone "who is visiting purely to view the filming location with no other motive" (p. 199). However, in this particular case, the series being studied was not the travel motivation for all elite tourists because, as **Connell** and **Meyer** themselves acknowledge, the fans of this particular series are young children, who act as the travel decision-makers, not their parents, whose real motivation is merely to take their children to the destination. This would explain why these so-called "elite tourists" conduct no prior searches for information and why the findings of **Connell** and **Meyer** contradict those of other studies that suggest that one of the characteristic activities of film fan tourists is thorough prior research on film locations (see section 5.3).

5.4. Travel Motivations

Studies with samples that include all types of film tourists demonstrate that the factor that differentiates film fan tourists from all other tourists is precisely that their visit to places associated with an audiovisual fiction production is motivated exclusively or mainly by the production (**Rittichainuwat; Rattanaphinanchai**, 2015; **Connell; Meyer**, 2009; **Carl et al.**, 2007). Film fan tourists are thus also defined by their travel motivation: the audiovisual fiction production and the intense emotional attachment they establish with it. **Reijnders** (2010b; 2011) highlights this emotional attachment, pointing out that many respondents recognise the essential goal of their trip as deepening their affective connection with the characters and the story.

Macionis (2004), who was the first to analyse the specific motivations or more committed tourists, suggests that the tourist's interest in the audiovisual fiction production is directly proportionate to the importance of push factors and self-actualisation motivations. As a result, specific film tourists exhibit higher levels of ego enhancement, pilgrimage, self-identity, vicarious experience, status/prestige, and nostalgia. Various subsequent studies have corroborated these findings related to film fan tourist motivations. **Benjamin et al.** (2012), for example, identify the desire to relive nostalgic memories from childhood as a key motivation, while **Sabre** (2017) points to the possibility of "going back in time" as a factor. **Reijnders** (2010a) identifies ego enhancement as an incentive, highlighting the social status conferred: by turning their trip into a technological, rational process of searching for knowledge, James Bond fans seek to legitimise their hobby as something important, as serious leisure (**Stebbins**, 2007) rather than mere entertainment. **Reijnders** argues that Bond fans, like fans of Dracula (**Reijnders**, 2011), are also motivated to travel by the desire to compare reality and fiction or myth.

Studies by **Kirillova et al.** (2019) and **Lin et al.** (2021) identify a mix of fiction features and intrinsic personal needs as travel motivations of anime fan tourists: blending reality and fantasy, social belonging, and self-development on the one hand, and heroism, *princessism*, childhood nostalgia, plot framing, resonance between the virtual and real worlds, and deep cultural learning on the other. In another study of anime fan tourists, **Okamoto** (2015) reveals an extremely unique motivation: looking for and discovering sites featured in anime productions on their own and publishing information about them online. In contrast to most films and television series, anime productions do not generally provide information on the locations that served as sources of inspiration for their stories. It is thus understandable that some fans would be motivated to travel in order to become "pioneer pilgrims" (**Okamoto**, 2015) or "location seekers" (**Ono et al.**, 2020). These fans can come to have such a big influence on the fandom that they end up motivating other fans to travel, as reflected in a study by **Thelen and Kim** (2023): despite the complete absence of clear, official confirmation, fans of the manga franchise *Attack on Titan* travel to Nördlingen in Germany on the basis of references to this location by other fans.

The fact that the productions themselves do not reveal the locations depicted suggests that anime-induced tourism is not a commercialised form of tourism promoted by economic synergies between the audiovisual and tourism industries; instead, it is a phenomenon created by the fans themselves, demonstrating the powerful influence they can have on other fans and audience members and confirming their role as a population segment of vital importance to film-induced tourism. As **Thelen and Kim** (2023) point out, the circulation of travel information within fan communities can give a place the status of an "evocative location" (or reinforce that status); at the same time, it establishes a fan hierarchy that distinguishes between those who discover the locations and make them known, those who follow the tips of the first group and visit them, and those who have not yet visited them. The dissemination of information, mainly on social media, satisfies the desire for interaction in a community, but also the desire to receive recognition from others (**Jang**, 2020).

In parallel with fans' individual affective motivations, the literature on film fan tourism also explores sociocultural motives and the notion of social belongingness. In addition to giving fans the chance to inhabit the space of the action,

visiting locations associated with a film or television production offers them another benefit: face-to-face social interaction with other fans. According to **Ono et al.** (2020), *otaku* are motivated to travel by the desire to meet and interact primarily with other *otaku*, even while they also enjoy interactions with the locals. The feeling of belonging to a group can also be cultivated by participating in activities to support local residents, as reflected in studies by **Shao et al.** (2011) and **Mori** (2022) on media-induced voluntourism. **Shao et al.** (2011) argue that although their chief motivation to travel to the Chinese province of Yunnan is their love of the Chinese TV dramas set in the province and their desire to embody the values promoted by those dramas, fans also travel there in order to engage in altruistic behaviour, inspect the voluntary work of other fans, receive recognition from the community for their commitment as fans and achieve a greater sense of belonging to the fandom. On the other hand, **Mori** (2022) suggests that a motivation that all volunteers share is a desire to express their gratitude to the host communities.

The specialised nature of some studies can also lead to the identification of unique motivations that are seldom found in other tourism contexts. For example, **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020) and **Sugawa-Shimada** (2015) identify a renewed interest in cultural, national and historical identity as a chief tourist motivation. These studies both examine period and/or historical dramas that have revitalised public interest in historic sites related to events and characters, both real and fictitious, that fascinate audiences. The findings of both these studies suggest that fans travel in search of connections with cultural or historical places or characters through their favourite fiction production. In his analysis of the aspects of fiction with the biggest tourism-inducing potential, **Yamamura** (2015) suggests that the locations depicted in a fiction product become an attraction for fans not only because they appear in the story but also because they play a key role in the representation of the characters. For example, two of the protagonists in *Lucky Star* (Chiba TV, 2007) are the daughters of the Shinto priest of Takamiya Shrine, which in the anime production is modelled on Washinomiya Shrine. The result has been an increase in visits to this location. As numerous studies have shown, the three pull factors identified by **Macionis** (*place*, *personality* and *performance*) do not act individually; instead, it is the combination of all three that gives them their tourism-inducing power (**Gómez-Morales et al.**, 2022; **Beeton**, 2016; **Frost**, 2010).

Finally, the study by **Roberson and Grady** (2015) identifies and evaluates the motivations for attending a highly specialised event: a 3-day twentieth anniversary celebration of the filming of *The Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994), which includes themed hotel packages, tours of filming locations, and appearances by actors in the movie. According to the authors, the main motivations in order of importance are interacting or recreating (with props), visiting the filming location, interacting with "participants" (directors, actors, writers, crew members, etc.), collecting merchandise, photographs, autographs, and other memorabilia, and interacting with other fans.

5.5. The Tourist Experience

The psychological and sociological dimensions of tourist behaviours and experiences associated with tourism have been a key concern in much research on film fan tourists. For fans, the filming locations of their favourite films or television series constitute essential points of reference (**Brooker**, 2006) and their physical presence at these locations is a crucial experience (**Buchmann et al.**, 2010; **Couldry**, 1998; **Carl et al.**, 2007). The locations offer fans the unique opportunity to "inhabit" the spaces where the story objectively "took place", and to acquire a multi-sensory understanding of the setting, and in this case, of the narrative (**Crouch**, 2000). In turn, this embodied experience of space impels fans to fantasise about and connect themselves with specific stories and characters: it is the perfect occasion to enter into and enact the story presented on the screen and to create new memories (**Reijnders**, 2010b; 2010a).

5.5.1. Imagination

A significant number of studies of the fan tourist experience make reference to the role of the imagination in the relationship between reality and fiction. Imagination is a key component in travel experiences in general (**Lean et al.**, 2014), but it plays a crucial role in the case of film tourism. Imagination is always present in the experience of audiovisual fiction-induced tourism because although some stories may be more realistic than others, the worlds they depict are always imaginary, and thus no real-life location will ever be exactly as it was represented on the screen, even when spatial and temporal discrepancies are minimal. The only exception to this would be a set created specifically for a film or television production. **Couldry** (1998; 2000), who laid the groundwork for studies of television-induced tourist experiences, analyses the Granada Studios Tour, home to the serial *Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960-). The author argues that part of the pleasure of visiting the studio lies in the tourist's simple physical presence at the location and the confirmation of its actual existence. Visitors are thus interested in "testing the boundaries of the set's illusion: looking through the houses' letter boxes or windows, pressing doorbells and knocking on doors, looking round the houses' backs" (**Couldry**, 2000) or meeting cast members, not only to get autographs but to verify the authenticity of the place as the set for the production (**Couldry**, 1998).

Like sets, filming locations that existed prior to the production of the film or series also have the potential to evoke an imaginary place (**Lee**, 2012). However, the fan's own imagination is ultimately responsible for transforming a physical space into an imaginary place, i.e., the setting for the story. In fact, in cases where the locations have been drastically modified using CGI (computer generated imagery), their connection to the story depends exclusively on the imagination

and memory of the fan, who is required to make an effort to "dress the locations up" and reconfigure them (**Brooker**, 2007). This effort is particularly important for fantasy and science fiction productions, where there is a greater distance between reality and representation because the story takes place in another "universe", effectively overshadowing or even erasing the real geographical location. Far from the objective authenticity (**Wang**, 1999) that *Coronation Street* fans look for at Granada Studios, *TLOTR* tourists, for example, take the New Zealand landscape as a foundation for actively imagining and recreating the world of Middle-earth (**Goh**, 2014).

Based on their analysis of the tourist experience of fans of the series *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-19) (referred to hereinafter as *GoT*), **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017) identify three types of imagination associated with visiting the filming locations: hyperdiegetic, which involves imagining the places where the story happens and envisioning themselves as part of it; technical, consisting of creating a mental reconstruction of the filming process; and historical, which refers to understanding the "real" history of the places they visit. On the other hand, in relation to the fan experience at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter (WWOHP) theme park, **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2018) suggest that fans employ their "ironic imagination" (**Saler**, 2012), a double consciousness that allows the fan to be emotionally invested in and contemplative of the fictional world without ever losing sight of the fact that it is fictional. Similarly, **Reijnders** (2011) argues that the experience of the Dracula tourist is characterised by a dynamic interplay between two partially contradictory or opposing modes: tourists use a rational approach to make specific comparisons between imagination and reality, but at the same time they are also driven by a more emotional, intuitive desire for both worlds, the real and the imagined, to converge. In short, tourists never completely abandon either the rational or the emotional dimension but negotiate with and between the two to achieve the satisfying travel experience that had brought them there.

5.5.2. On-site Thematic Activities and Creative Production

The connection to the story sought by fans when they visit filming locations is intensified by certain on-site practices. A traditional tourist activity that is also very popular among film fan tourists on their visits to filming locations is the purchase of souvenirs (**Light**, 2009), because these play an important role in demonstrating the fan's interest and involvement and in materialising the memories of a holiday. This is why nearly all the film fan tourists interviewed by **Bagnoli** (2015) report buying one or two souvenirs on their visit and why the profile of "fanatic tourist" described by **Benjamin** *et al.* (2012) is characterised by purchasing more souvenirs.

However, according to the literature on film fan tourists, the most popular on-site practice is re-enacting scenes and photographing or filming the re-enactments. As discussed in section 5.1, the study by **Kim** (2010) provides key research on this practice, as it determines that previous viewing experiences not only promote attachment with filming locations but also inspire the audience to enhance their tourist experiences by re-enacting scenes. **Williams** (2019) also analyses the production of photographs by tourists, but from a different perspective: acts of paratextual spatio-play, defined by this author as the ludic use of relevant fannish artefacts (like a doll or an action figure) in a specific location to allow the fan to play with the borders between text/narrative world, self, and object. According to **Williams**, touching an object associated with the narrative provides a connection to the story world of the fan object and consequently bridges the gap between fictional and material worlds. Her study highlights the importance of materiality as a component of fan tourism (a subject that has received very little scholarly attention), and how pre-existing pieces of fan merchandise function very differently from souvenirs of a travel experience.

Rather than merely engaging in mindless hedonism or passive sightseeing, film fan tourists also want to relive the emotional experience offered by the series and seek to "get into the skin" of the character. Thus, at the filming location film fan tourists also enact a wide range of creative and specific embodied performances and other activities related to the subject and the emotional dimension of the story. For example, Dracula fans enjoy following in the steps of Jonathan Harker and searching for wolves and bats, attending thematic costume parties, or emulating their idol by lying in a coffin (**Reijnders**, 2011; **Light**, 2009), while James Bond fans embody the character by imitating "spying activities", such as tracking down locations, getting into places with restricted access, or driving an Aston Martin (**Reijnders**, 2010a). *GoT* fans attend feasts in a large stone hall and group workshops on archery and sword-fighting (**Waysdorf; Reijnders**, 2017), Harry Potter fans enjoy performing spell-casting and mock magic duels (**Milazzo; Santos**, 2022), and fans of *Buppaesanniwas* (Channel 3, 2018) dress in *Chut Thai*, a traditional Thai garment, to visit Ayutthaya (**Pookaiyaudom; Tan**, 2020). In consonance with **Roesch** (2009), **Liu** *et al.* (2022) also identify activities of an introspective nature, such as fantasising about characters and trying to think from their perspectives.

In the context of on-site practices, it is worth considering a study by **Light** (2009), one of the earliest studies in the sample for this review. Analysing the tourist experience from the perspective of performance (**Crouch**, 2004), **Light** conceives of tourists as "embodied actors" or "performers" who act in different ways on different stages (**Edensor**, 2000; 2001), and he positions them at the heart of his analysis in order to explore their role in the production and reproduction of places. Drawing on the field of human geography, **Light** understands space as a dynamic entity that evolves and transforms over time through human interaction. Spaces are thus defined in relation to the embodied practices enacted both by tourists and by the local population (**Sheller; Urry**, 2004). In this sense, the tourist activities

of Dracula fans not only interpret Transylvania (using it as a stage) but also reinterpret it.

According to **Gyimóthy** *et al.* (2015), filming locations are increasingly expanding what they offer tourists with packaged experiences related to the film or television narrative. However, this does not seem to be enough for fan tourists, who also want to redefine, re-signify and rework the locations, as previously suggested by **Light** (2009). As a result, fan tourism may also include acts of creation or transformative creative processes. As noted in section 5.1, **Norris** (2013) examines how fans appropriate and draw upon the characters, settings, and stories of their favourite cultural worlds to develop something new. This author analyses visitor comments in guest books as a scaffold or launching point for their own writing (their own fan fiction-type work) and for understanding their experiences and identity.

Andrews (2014), on the other hand, analyses fan production of *ema*: a small wooden tablet on which visitors to a Japanese shrine write their wishes or prayers with the hope that these will be fulfilled by the resident deity. Rebelling against this custom, anime fan tourists draw pictures of their own design, replicating the work of the original illustrators of the text and, at the same time, personalising it and creating new ones. By creating and offering their *ema*, **Andrews** argues, fans literally make the anime characters part of their own living world and thus "complete the picture". In this way, fans are no longer merely experiencing the places where characters have been but sharing the physical setting with them. The texts accompanying the *ema* are also often inscribed with prayers and petitions, suggesting that fans think of anime characters as deities. The author thus concludes that "the votive art is central to connecting the three dimensional (human/real) with the two dimensional (divine/fictional)" (p. 228).

Okamoto (2009; 2015) also points out that particular forms of *otaku* behaviour among pilgrims include creating useful content for other fans to use on their travels (guidebooks) or leaving mementos or evidence of their trips, such as objects, comments or illustrations, at the pilgrimage sites. Similarly, **Toy** (2017) observes that tourist sites are often enriched by processes of creation enacted by the visitors themselves, who thus construct them as "fannish places". These places may be identified by non-fans, but they only acquire meaning for fans, who recognise them as creations dedicated to their fan object, and as testimonies to the previous presence of other fans. Transforming or altering the original setting allows fans to leave a little of themselves in the story world—making themselves metaphorically part of the story—and to contribute to the real fandom space through their own actions (**Zubernis; Larsen**, 2018).

The creative production of fans may even turn them into creators of their own tourist destinations. This is precisely what happened in the case analysed by **Jang** (2020), where a group of fans of the Japanese mixed-media project *Love Live! School Idol Project* created a signboard in Seoul Station and visit it to commemorate the fictional birthday of Yazawa Nico, one of the characters. These fans also visit Umi, a mountain in South Korea, simply because it has the same name as another of the characters in the story. Although they have no direct relationship with the narrative, these two locations have been established as destinations exclusively as a result of the influence and participation of the fan community, who add meaning and authenticity to each place.

The use of social media is key to the process of introducing a new meaning and spreading it among the fan community. Fans not only visit the train station and the mountain but also share photos on social media to promote these sites as *Love Live!* places (**Jang**, 2020). **Okamoto** (2015) also highlights the importance of online communications, identifying the posting of live updates or pilgrimage diaries in real time on internet sites or social media as one of the most common fan activities at locations associated with the fan object. The post-visit behaviour of *otaku* also includes the dissemination of information online (**Okamoto**, 2015). In fact, studies by **Nishijima** (2020) and **Promkhuntong** (2019; 2021) use fans' online testimonies to analyse their experience at film locations. For example, **Nishijima** (2020) analyses a lengthy 24-page travelogue of a fan of the film *Your Name* (Makoto Shinkai, 2016). The fan's audiovisual record of his trip to Japan blurs the line between fiction and non-fiction by superimposing the fictional world of the film onto the physical space. In addition to pilgrimage stories, **Promkhuntong** (2021) also analyses other creative strategies employed by fans, such as affective mapping, involving the construction of a network of sites featured in the story, connected by fans' itineraries and the affective memories of both fans and local residents.

As noted above (sections 5.3 and 5.4), such digital resources are key to the consolidation of the filming locations as travel destinations for fans, and to the configuration of the hierarchical structure of the fan community and the acquisition of the fan symbolic capital (**Hills**, 2002) of each of its members. **Fiske** (1992), inspired by the model developed by **Bourdieu** (1984), coins the term fan cultural capital to refer to the accumulation of knowledge and information that fans have about their fan object. The accumulation of objects is also a form of fan cultural capital, which is why, as mentioned above, buying souvenirs is such a popular activity. Like official cultural knowledge, fan cultural knowledge offers a form of social recognition that distinguishes fans from the rest of the audience, and even distinguishes fans from one another by establishing a fan hierarchy or a series of film tourist tribes (**Croy** *et al.*, 2021). In this way, fans with a high level of fan cultural capital who can demonstrate it to the rest of the community also increase their fan symbolic capital (**Hills**, 2002), i.e., their prestige, kudos, reputation, fame, etc., within the community.

Online communication and the appearance of virtual fan communities has increased the amount of information available to fans while also expanding their opportunities to gain recognition through the creation of their own content.

Fans are no longer merely accumulating a lot of knowledge and information about the fan object but generating new content through a personal discovery or a specific experience with the story, such as seeking out and visiting locations associated with the production. This content—especially given the lack of official confirmations—and the commemorative activities organised by the fans themselves (**Jang**, 2020; **Waysdorf; Reijnders**, 2019) become particularly valuable for tourism, and can even become pull factors for future film fan tourists.

At one end of the spectrum of film fan tourists are "media-induced voluntourists" (**Shao** *et al.*, 2011) or "film-induced voluntourists" (**Mori**, 2022), a tourist profile that combines qualities of media/film-induced tourists and volunteer tourists. The activities of media/film-induced voluntourists are not random acts of kindness but are related to the media product. For example, the film-induced voluntourists who took part in the study by **Mori** (2022) participated in a clean-up project for a beach that appears in the anime production. According to this study, anime fan tourists are not natural volunteer tourists: initially, they seek to re-enact scenes from the anime production and the attractiveness of the fan object is the main motivation. However, the actual visit to the location can transform film-induced tourists into film-induced voluntourists who contribute to the conservation of the destinations they visit.

In other cases, tourists participate in activities directly related not only to the fictional settings but also to specific themes explored in the story. The media-induced voluntourists studied by **Shao** *et al.* (2011) promote education by helping children in rural areas—donating to the construction of a school and a library and meeting and exchanging gifts with the children—and giving recognition to forgotten veterans. Both studies highlight how film-induced tourism can involve more than just visiting filming locations and that film-induced volunteer activities are the product of a unique and spontaneous contribution by the fan community, unrelated to the tourism industry.

5.5.3. Company and Community

Although a sense of *communitas* is not essential to the experience of travelling to filming locations, as it is in the case of conventions (**Zubernis; Larsen**, 2018), the company of other fans can have a big impact on the experience. Indeed, as noted above (see section 5.4), a key travel motivation for some film fan tourists is precisely the desire to meet and interact with other people who share their interest (**Ono** *et al.*, 2020; **Roberson; Grady**, 2015).

Buchmann *et al.* (2010), **Kim** (2010), **Light** (2009), and **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017) all suggest that the experience can be enriched by sharing it with other people with the same interests, as the presence of others can reinforce the importance of the location and foster a more active participation in activities at the filming site, such as re-reading characters and re-enacting actions from the production. According to **Carl** *et al.* (2007), activities shared by the group contribute to making the experience authentic and enhancing satisfaction with the visit.

Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019), with reference to the experience of fans of *The Prisoner* (ITV, 1967-68) in Portmeirion, Wales, where the series was filmed, argue that fans are immersed not only in the location but also in the fan community, as they seek relationships with other fans. Indeed, the friendships made at the PortmeiriCon convention were considered extremely important by nearly all the study participants. **Milazzo and Santos** (2022) even go as far to argue that "fans can only enter into the imagined world through the presence of other fans" (p. 7). Their study shows that the presence of fans and fan communities is primordial to the successful transformation of everyday spaces into *lieux d'imagination* (**Reijnders**, 2010b). A *lieu d'imagination* is not just a physical space but a social concept; it is the people themselves who inhabit this space, in which they evoke the story (with costumes, thematic activities, conversations, etc.) and thus bring it to life.

The tour guide is also a key support for the tourist experience. Tour guides play an essential role because they help "unlock" access to narrative spaces and enable tourists to feel imaginatively immersed at either diegetic and/or extra-diegetic levels (**Garner**, 2016). The degree of satisfaction for film fan tourists thus depends to a great extent on the ability of the guides to interpret the landscapes for tourists (**Buchmann**, 2010; **Carl** *et al.*, 2007) and to convince them that they are fellow fans rather than merely "routine guides" (**Buchmann** *et al.*, 2010).

5.5.4. Satisfaction

Visiting a location associated with a film or TV series is an experience that is "highly personalised, subjective and unique to each individual based on their own pleasure, emotion, imagination, interpretation, and memory" (**Kim**, 2012). The success of the visit depends on a number of factors, including the fan tourist's prior knowledge of the location, level of emotional involvement in the story, expectations, travelling companions and story-related activities performed at the location. Thus, although a fan's motivation may be solely to inhabit the physical space and confirm its actual existence (**Couldry**, 1998), the experience could prove to be either hugely satisfying or hugely disappointing.

The film fan tourist's emotional involvement in the production is an important prerequisite for a successful tourist experience. **Kim** (2012) and **Kim and Assaker** (2014) find that a viewer who is more emotionally involved in a TV drama is more likely to report positive and favourable on-site screen-tourism experiences. Similarly, findings by **Carl** *et al.* (2007) seem to suggest a strong correlation between the level of audience involvement and the degree of satisfaction with the experience.

Tourists' expectations may also condition the degree of satisfaction with the experience (**Engledow**, 1977). **Carl *et al.*** (2007) suggest that a tourist's satisfaction level is dependent upon whether the experience exceeds his/her expectations. According to the same authors, film fan tourists have higher expectations of their tour experience than other tourists, although they are also more prepared to suspend their disbelief and read beyond the "real" landscapes to "see" or "feel" the fictional space, an idea also corroborated by **Light** (2009). This combination of high expectations and greater inclination towards suspending disbelief partly explains why most studies identify a high percentage of participants who report that their expectations were met or exceeded and that they left satisfied with their tourist experience (**Carl *et al.***, 2007; **Benjamin *et al.***, 2012; **Bagnoli**, 2015).

Once again, the only study that points in the opposite direction is by **Connell and Meyer** (2009), who found that more than half of all visitors who were disappointed with their visit were "elite tourists". It is important to remember, however, that while the real "elite tourists" in this study are children, whose sole or main travel motivation is a children's TV series, **Connell** and **Meyer** classify the parents or guardians accompanying them as "elite tourists" as well. The different travel motivations of parents and children can explain the significant differences between their respective views of the tourist experience. For example, disappointment with the visit appears to be relatively low among the children, but somewhat higher among adult respondents. Moreover, a much higher proportion of aspects enjoyed by adults were destination-related, while a higher proportion of the aspects enjoyed by the children were screen-related, an indication of the importance of screen-related elements for each tourist profile.

5.5.5. Authenticity

Carl *et al.* (2007) also link the degree of satisfaction with the travel experience to the authenticity of the filming locations: "the more perfect the representation of hyper-reality in the tours, the higher the satisfaction and thus the more enhanced the tourist experience." However, a study by **Buchmann *et al.*** (2010) suggests that the opposite is true of *TLOTR* film tourism, as some substitute screen-shooting locations can offer an experience that is just as or even more hyper-real than the original locations. **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020) suggest that the historical and architectural authenticity of Ayutthaya compared to what was portrayed on screen did not appear to affect fans' desire and intention to visit the temples featured in *Buppaesanniwas*. Along the same lines, **Rittichainuwat *et al.*** (2018) find that "screen authentic tourists" prefer visiting substituted or studio screen locations over real historic sites where the production was not actually filmed because they are drawn to screen locations irrespective of their authenticity: objective and existential authenticity do not matter as long as the destinations are associated with their favourite films. All these findings corroborate **Macionis**' (2004) observation that the more specific the film tourist is, the less important the authenticity of the location becomes.

The results of these studies also suggest that the meaning of the site for the film fan tourist is determined by the story and that it is this that creates the core of the tourism experience. This is why **Peaslee** (2011) argues that the "authenticity of the site as object allows for a variety of experiences which, authentic or otherwise, are certainly meaningful" (pp. 44). At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that fans assess authenticity with different criteria depending on the location being visited. For example, while the authenticity of the tourist experience analysed by **Lee** (2012) is dependent on the legitimacy of the places that served either as inspiration or as filming locations for the universe created by J. K. Rowling (historical authenticity), the authenticity of the experience at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter (WWOHP) is based on the theme park's ability to replicate that universe down to the finest detail (visual authenticity), in addition to having the explicit endorsement of the author herself (**Waysdorf; Reijnders**, 2018). Locations that inspired animation productions or destinations created by fans themselves are vested with authenticity by the members of the fan community. Film fan tourists may thus experience a wide range of locations as "authentic", whether they are original sites or replicas.

5.6. Destination Loyalty

The findings of a study by **Ono *et al.*** (2020) suggest that location seekers are more likely to become loyal to destinations that they have discovered that resemble particular scenes in an anime production. Immersive experiences, interactions with locals, treasured experiences and nostalgic experiences also positively affect destination loyalty, whereas vicarious experiences do not. Most destination image attributes do not affect loyalty because anime tourists do not value attributes that have no relation to the anime production. Only the attributes of relaxation, resident receptiveness, and availability of information have a positive impact on destination loyalty.

Various other studies of film fan tourists indicate high levels of loyalty. 77.8% of respondents who had travelled to the Isle of Mull in Scotland specifically to see the filming location of *Balamory* (CBeebies, 2002-2005) said that a return visit was likely (**Connell; Meyer**, 2009) and the majority of respondents at the 2010 Mayberry Days Festival indicated that they planned to attend the 2011 edition (**Benjamin *et al.***, 2012). Among the fans of *The Prisoner* surveyed by **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2019), the level of loyalty is extremely high; they have been visiting Portmeirion regularly for over 50 years, and meeting other fans is the main reason for returning. On the other hand, **Bagnoli** (2015) found that although respondents declared themselves to be satisfied with their visit, the majority stated that they would not visit the location a second time. And although their study does not deal specifically with the question of loyalty, **Liu *et al.*** (2022)

argue that unsatisfactory experiences can actually motivate anime tourists to revisit destinations, suggesting that the experience does not necessarily have to be positive to motivate a second visit.

5.7. Impact of Film Fan Tourism: Sustainability, Identity and Heritage

A limited number of studies explore the impact of film fan tourism on host communities. For example, a study by **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020) indicates the financial profits of fan visits to the community of Ayutthaya, while **Yamamura** (2015) examines a more general case of successful collaboration between the local community, fans, and copyright holders to develop products and organise events to contribute to regional development and encourage respectful tourism. Other research that can be added to this sub-group are the studies by **Mori** (2022) and **Shao _et al._** (2011) on film-induced voluntourists. Both these studies, like the article by **Okamoto** (2009), find that anime-induced volunteer tourists are characterised by their positive interactions with the locals and by making positive contributions to the community, whether financial or through solving problems, and that their visits do not have any negative impact on the community.

Conversely, other studies do identify negative outcomes on host communities. **Goh** (2014), for example, calls attention to the discontent of some members of the New Zealand population, especially indigenous inhabitants, over the promotion of the country as the "Home of Middle-earth", which they argue effectively replaces the country's real identity with a fictional one, and in turn attracts international investors who end up expelling New Zealanders from their own land. A study by **Alderman _et al._** (2012) offers another paradigmatic example: the place transformation process of Mount Airy, North Carolina, into a simulacrum of Mayberry, the setting for _The Andy Griffith Show_ (CBS, 1960-68). Without denying the benefits of film tourism for local economies, these authors advocate a more critical review of those benefits, which can sometimes marginalise other tourists and, even more problematically, local residents themselves, with a profound impact on their sense of place and of belonging. Like the cases of New Zealand and Dubrovnik (**Doppelhofer**, 2023), Mount Airy, in its efforts to attract fans of _The Andy Griffith Show_, has imposed a new layer of meaning on the place through the storyline of the TV series (**Beeton**, 2016), thereby rendering invisible and marginalising a large portion of the town's real population, mainly African Americans.

Tzanelli and Yar (2016) explore a series of commercial initiatives in the city of Albuquerque aimed at attracting the attention of fans of the series _Breaking Bad_ (AMC, 2006-13), which has been criticised for cynically glamorising or trivialising crystal meth addiction and crime, while a study by **Jørgensen and Reichenberger** (2023) examines the common types of negative film tourism behaviours that respondents are willing to engage in, and how they justify those behaviours. The study found that fans of _Breaking Bad_ are significantly more likely to engage in and justify negative tourist behaviour than fans of _GoT_, suggesting that the moral alignment of the respective TV series and the situational context influence the fandom's moral values.

The case study by **Garrison** (2020) explores both perspectives in the fan community of _Outlander_ (Starz, 2014-). While the media describe the behaviour of fans of the series as loutish and destructive, **Garrison** identifies and analyses a group of fans whose collaborative efforts (such as the creation of a tourist map of the Inverness region and the organisation of fan events) have brought attention to regional heritage sites, turning the fans into promoters and guardians of Scottish heritage and facilitating regional tourism in Scotland.

6. Discussion and Future Prospects for Film Fan Tourism Research

This literature review confirms that film fan tourists constitute a very specific and distinct profile of film-induced tourists. In addition, the significant increase in the size and number of fan communities, along with their consolidation since the rise of the internet, is turning fans into a tourist sector of growing importance and one that offers big opportunities for the tourist industry. However, our understanding of the film fan tourist is still limited. This literature review has revealed a number of questions that have yet to be addressed, as well as areas of research that require further scholarly attention. The resulting research agenda, which is summarised in Table 3, is discussed below.

Table 3: Research Agenda for Film Fan Tourism.

1. Establish a consensus on the criteria used to distinguish film fan tourists from other types of tourists.
2. Incorporate more quantitative methods and larger samples for analysis.
3. Consolidate the interdisciplinary nature of studies in this area, prioritising the expansion of fan studies.
4. Analyse the whole process of film fan tourism from the perspective of the affective involvement that characterises fans.
5. Promote comparative studies that will facilitate the extrapolation of results.
6. Explore the religious and/or spiritual implications of film fan tourism.
7. Study fan events at filming locations and their role as pull factors for future film fan tourists.
8. Promote studies on the sustainability of film fan tourism.
9. Conduct research on geographic regions that have not been studied or that have received less scholarly attention.
10. Integrate data on the sociodemographic and cultural profile of fan tourists into the analysis.

The interest in this tourist profile is evident in the growing number of studies using samples made up specifically of fans. This is a phenomenon that may be explained in part by the increasing importance of fan studies and the gradual

destigmatisation of fan communities (**Gray *et al.***, 2007). However, studies that actually deal with film fan tourists continue to represent only a small percentage of the literature on film-induced tourism. A cursory review of the literature might give the impression that this tourist profile receives special or even excessive attention, given the numerous studies that refer to film tourists as fans or using other similar terms. However, a more detailed analysis of those studies reveals that all too often the word "fan" is used in a way that is ambiguous, confusing or even misleading, as no clear distinction is made between general and specific tourists. This tendency in turn leads to findings attributed to film fan tourists that are actually related to tourists in general, creating a kind of "phantom attention" to film fan tourists and the acceptance in the academic community that it is a concept that has been quite extensively studied.

Tourists who travel to a destination they have seen in a series or film do not always do so as fans but as part of a broader trip, or because they are accompanying another tourist, or simply because they are interested in travelling to a destination that that caught their attention while watching an audiovisual production. This does not necessarily mean they should be classified as fans. Nevertheless, as noted above, **Connell and Meyer** (2009) use the term "elite tourists" to refer not only to fans of *Balamory* (i.e., the small children who watch the series) but also to their parents, on the basis that if it were not for the series they would not have made the trip, despite the fact that their motivation for travelling is different from that of their children. Many studies of film-induced tourism in New Zealand also tend to refer to the tourists analysed as *TLOTR* fans even though many have not actually engaged with the saga. In the study by **Croy and Buchmann** (2009), a third of the study participants had not seen the films or read the books. Such findings reflect the pressing need not only for a consensus on the definition of the film fan tourist, but also for a rigorous set of selection criteria to ensure that the participants in a fan study are in fact fans.

The identification of an audience member as a fan and/or their level of involvement in the story cannot be left up to the study subjects. **Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai** (2015), for example, point out that their study sample includes two tourists who identified themselves as specific film tourists, even though one of them had not even watched a single Korean film (the object of study in their research) and the other did not have any film-related travel motivations but had purchased the film pilgrimage tour package because of the "good value for money" of the tour. Conversely, some tourists might reject the "fan" label even when they really are fans, in order to avoid social stigma. Researchers should therefore dismiss the idea of asking respondents to self-assess their level of interest in the fan object. Instead, drawing inspiration from **Stever** (1995), studies could use "fan indicators", a list of activities typical of fans that could serve to distinguish them from the rest of the audience. In the case of the relationship between audiovisual fiction and tourism, this list could include watching (and re-watching) all instalments or episodes, purchasing related merchandising, joining a fan club, attending conventions dedicated to the production, visiting filming locations and/or creating fan fiction. In a similar vein, the fan cultural capital of participants in a study could be measured by adapting the scales proposed by **Lee** (2017) or **Báez-Montenegro and Devesa** (2020) for measuring cultural capital. The application of these indicators would facilitate the rigorous selection of fans and the exclusion of audience members who have only watched some of the audiovisual content and/or who just happen to be visiting a location associated with an audiovisual production.

Furthermore, very few studies have used quantitative methods and meaningful statistical samples. The predominance of qualitative methods can be explained by the object of study: fans. While tourism studies often use quantitative methods, fan studies are more likely to adopt qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, systematic observation, and autoethnography (**Reichenberger; Smith**, 2020; **Karpovich**, 2010; **Booth; Kelly**, 2013). The preference for such methods is consistent with the active and engaged behaviour that characterises the film fan tourist. The literature reviewed explores how the film fan tourist's subjectivity gives tourist activity its meaning, motivates travel and establishes certain expectations. However, the methodologies employed in most of the studies reviewed were based on small, discrete samples that make it difficult to extrapolate the results. Larger scale studies remain a challenge but are necessary to take the research to the next level. A degree of methodological flexibility that can match the phenomenological complexity of so much fan experience is also needed, but such flexibility should have the objective of identifying patterns or general tendencies among film fan tourists. The studies by **Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai** (2015) and **Rittichainuwat *et al.*** (2018), with general samples of 1,852 and 942 participants, respectively, are exceptions to the norm, as are the studies by **Mitev *et al.*** (2017), **Ono *et al.*** (2020) and **Jørgensen and Reichenberger** (2023), whose findings are all inferred from samples of more than 100 film fan tourists.

While it is true that over the years there has been a gradual increase in interest, and consequently, in scholarly output on film fan tourism, the preference for qualitative methods and small samples has resulted in a large number of exploratory and/or descriptive studies whose findings, although valid for particular contexts, do little to advance the research agenda. Very few of the studies in this field develop theoretical questions in depth (**Connell and Meyer** (2009), for example, admit this quite frankly), and thus their conceptual frameworks are founded on a reformulation of existing case studies. This is a symptom of a relatively new field of study, and of the desire to examine a phenomenon that until very recently had been given no scholarly attention.

Now, with a decade of research behind us, it would seem that the time has come to move on from case studies towards

conceptualisation. This could be done, for example, through the contextualisation of cases within different disciplines, especially taking into account that film fan tourism presupposes a connection at the very least between film studies, fan studies and tourism studies. In recent years, especially in the last four, there has been an evident shift towards interdisciplinary collaboration, which has enhanced the theoretical foundations of this area of knowledge and allowed the research to move from the descriptive to the explanatory. This shift is especially evident in studies of the fan tourist experience, which, as noted above (section 5.1), has been fully explored in fan studies (**Waysdorf; Reijnders**, 2019; **Williams**, 2019; **Garrison**, 2020; **Jang**, 2020; **Milazzo; Santos**, 2022; **Thelen; Kim**, 2023; **Garrison; Wallace**, 2021), and has also been analysed from other perspectives, such as social psychology (**Jørgensen; Reichenberger**, 2023; **Liu et al.**, 2022), media/film studies (**Waysdorf; Reijnders**, 2018; **Promkhuntong**, 2019), anthropology (**Nishijima**, 2020), heritage studies (**Pookaiyaudom; Tan**, 2020) and architectural studies (**Promkhuntong**, 2021). With the aim of consolidating the interdisciplinary nature of this field of research, it is also recommended to continue exploring the tourist experience from the perspective of the emotional and affective involvement that characterises fans, which fan studies has been examining for several years. This is all the more relevant in an era when the consumption of TV fiction, thanks to the rise of streaming platforms, allows for the repetition of content over the course of time, effectively reinforcing the connection between the story and the audience. At the same time, there is also a need to promote comparative studies that would produce results that can extrapolated to other destinations, tourists or audiovisual productions.

The different thematic categories have also received uneven levels of scholarly attention, very much to the benefit of the tourist experience. Visiting places associated with the fan object, such as filming locations, can be a very powerful emotional experience. This area of study has therefore been given considerable scholarly attention and many studies have compared the tourist experience of fans with the tradition of religious pilgrimages. Following in the wake of **Couldry** (2003), one of the first researchers to point out the relationship between religious pilgrimages and specific journeys to places of significance in media narratives, 27 studies in the sample use the term "pilgrimage" to refer to trips taken by fans. Ten of these 27 studies also use the expression "sacred place" to describe the destinations visited, nine of which study productions made in Japan, where the term *seichi junrei* (sacred site pilgrimage), traditionally referring to religious sites, has been expanded and popularised to designate visits to places of particular importance to anime fans, underscoring the affective and ritualistic dimensions of these visits, but without any specific connection with religion (**Okamoto**, 2015). According to **Nishijima** (2020), the term *seichi junrei* came into popular use to describe the almost religious veneration for certain places among unconditional fans and even became a national buzz word in 2016. It is clear that most of the studies that use the terms "pilgrimage" or "sacred place" do so without discussing them critically. The only exceptions are studies by **Jang** (2020) and **Toy** (2017), which do consider the debate over the distinction between religious and secular pilgrimages. Both studies stress the need for a more flexible understanding of the category of the "sacred" so that it can be incorporated into the analysis of fan cultures, without this implying that all fans necessarily consider such places to be truly sacred.

In any case, researchers would be well-advised to follow **Brooker**'s (2007) suggestion to be cautious about applying models from religious belief systems to secular fan communities. The studies that use the terms "pilgrimage" and "sacred place" rarely offer any evidence that this terminology accurately reflects the fans' interests. In fact, **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2017) observe that the "sacred" aspect of being at the location seemed to be absent among *GoT* tourists, and in some cases these fans even directly rejected the concept. On the other hand, while some of these studies justify the use of such terms based on the observation of the ritual practices of fans at the filming locations, it is still unclear whether such practices are performed with a strictly ludic objective or actually reflect a spiritual connection between audience and text. For example, **McCloud** (2003) suggests that pop culture fans may engage in activities similar to the canonical practices of a religion not because they consider their hobby a religion but because such actions are the most effective way of expressing their emotions, regardless of whether they consider the locations to be truly sacred. More research on the religious and/or spiritual implications of fan tourist visits is therefore needed before any further comparisons of the two experiences are made.

A thematic category within the area of the tourist experience that also needs more scholarly attention is that of fan events at filming locations. Events of this kind offer an opportunity to analyse not only the tourist experience but also the productive activity of fans (especially when the events have been promoted or even produced by fans themselves) and the duration of the effect of the film or series on tourism. An example of this type of research is the study by **Waysdorf and Reijnders** (2019) on *The Prisoner* and Portmeirion, which facilitates the simultaneous analysis of both the redefinition of the space by the fans and the importance of community to the experience, as well as loyalty, an area that has been largely ignored in research on film fan tourism to date. The celebration of Cáceres City of Dragons, the biggest *GoT* fan event in Europe, is another example of a destination capitalising on its resources to continue attracting tourists, which warrants detailed study. Similarly, volunteer activities promoted by fans at filming locations, such as those studied by **Shao et al.** (2011) and **Mori** (2022), also constitute an excellent area of research for further analysis of relationships within fan communities, as well as between fans and local or host communities and residents of film tourist locations.

As numerous studies have shown, film fan tourists' strong engagement with and activity at the destination, by locating,

creating and marking places to visit or organising commemorative events, become pull motivations as they exert a strong attraction on future visitors. It is often film fan tourists themselves, through their networks, who give a tourist destination its meaning, proposing and organising activities that enrich fan visits. In this sense, film fan tourists need to be understood differently, as their commitment goes beyond passive enjoyment and their participation enhances their own tourist experience and that of future tourists. In the context of the tourist experience, fans have taken the leap from influencers to creators. More research is therefore needed to understand what this means for the future of film fan tourists. At the same time, closer collaborations between fans and DMOs are necessary to continue developing initiatives that can function as tourist destination pull factors.

All of these initiatives should also consider sustainability, another of the areas of film fan tourism that warrants further scholarly attention. As **Alderman *et al.*** (2012) suggest, there is a need for a critical approach that will facilitate full recognition of the material, social, cultural and environmental impacts of film fan tourism, and of the power relations and identities of place underlying the popularity of tourist destinations.

It is also worth noting that this review has not identified a single study on destinations and/or productions made in Africa or South America, two vast regions that should be explored in future research. Moreover, most of the research offers no data on the sociodemographic or cultural profile of the study participants (e.g., age, gender, ethnic background), which prevents the identification of other factors that might explain the fan's tourist behaviour. Studies by **Reijnders** (2010a) and **Sugawa-Shimada** (2015) are the only ones that make gender distinctions, while studies by **Shao *et al.*** (2011), **Sabre** (2017), **Jang** (2020), **Nishijima** (2020), **Pookaiyaudom and Tan** (2020), **Mori** (2022) and **Sugawa-Shimada** (2015) are the only ones in which the nationality of the tourists is introduced as a variable to explain fan behaviour, either partly or fully. Future studies should therefore also take the sociodemographic and cultural variables of participants into account to develop a clearer picture of film fan tourism.

7. Conclusions

This study has analysed previous research exploring film fan tourism. The objective has been to outline the current state of research in this area, to identify critical gaps in knowledge and to propose a research agenda, as described in the previous section. In addition, this literature review has facilitated the development of a segmentation of film fan tourists (Figure 2), which we consider to be useful for further research aimed at defining this consumer market.

	Newbie	Enthusiast	Specialist
Social characteristics	Member of fan clubs (online) Weak societal bonds	Member of fan clubs (online & offline) Moderate societal bonds	Member of fan clubs (online & offline) Strong societal bonds Desire for recognition and self-image enhancement
Psychological characteristics	Modest levels of energy, enthusiasm and passion Modest, short-term commitment Low involvement Low personal value	Strong levels of energy, enthusiasm and passion Moderate, medium-term commitment Medium involvement Moderate personal value Interest in fiction as an important part of their life	Heightened levels of energy, enthusiasm and passion Deep, long-term commitment High involvement Intense personal value Interest in fiction as an essential part of their life and identity
Tourist behaviour	Low investment of time and money (short stays and distances travelled) Minimal information gathering before travel Visits confirmed and publicised locations Low participation in activities and memorabilia collection Free or low-cost activities and memorabilia Passive participation in activities (spectator role) Generally travels with friends Eager to learn about story Temporary interest (close to time of reception) No revisiting intentions	Medium investment of time and money Extensive information gathering before travel Visits confirmed and publicised locations Medium participation in activities and memorabilia collection Low- or medium-cost predesigned activities (e.g., thematic tours) Collects mass-produced memorabilia Active participation in activities (reenactments, workshops, etc.) Exhibits story markers (costumes, props, etc.) Publication of evidence of visit Travels alone or with friends Eager to learn about story Attends conventions and/or related events Revisiting intentions	High investment of time and money (long stays and distances travelled) Exhaustive information gathering before travel Visits confirmed locations and identification of non-publicised locations (location seekers/pioneers) High participation in activities and memorabilia collection Specialised and tailored activities (e.g., personalised tours) Collects unique, exclusive and/or limited production memorabilia Active participation in activities (reenactments, workshops, etc.) Exhibits story markers (costumes, props, etc.) Development of creative material based on visit Travels alone or with friends Eager to exhibit knowledge of story Active participation in conventions and/or related events Repeated visits to same filming location

Figure 2: Film Fan Tourist Segmentation.

Fans are an attractive market niche for the tourist industry because they constitute a profile of consumers who are committed to investing time and money in their personal interest. Further research focusing on the characteristics of film fan tourists is needed, as the better our understanding of this sector of the audience is, the more effectively we will be able to meet their expectations as tourists.

8. Funding

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