CINEMATIC JOURNEYS: ANALYSING THE APPEAL OF POP CULTURE TOURISM THROUGH TOURIST PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract

Pop culture tourism, particularly media-induced tourism, is an increasingly relevant phenomenon in which travel decisions are shaped by popular media such as films, TV series, literary works, and other forms of media. This paper explores the intersection of media consumption and tourist behaviour, focusing on how audiences engage with cinematic franchises through travel and how these experiences influence travellers' decisions. Using quantitative data collected through a questionnaire with a sample size of 116 respondents, distributed during a pop culture event – London MegaCon 2024—the study investigates the impact of demographic variables such as age, gender, and country of residence on preferences for franchise-related destinations, guided tours, and trip duration. The data were analysed with IBM SPSS and show that gender and country of origin significantly impact travel motivations, while age has less influence. A strong interest in guided tours and visits to franchise-related locations was recorded, especially among frequent travellers. The data also revealed interest in multiple franchises, suggesting that tourism experiences can be multifaceted, encompassing various fan interests rather than being tailored to a single franchise. These findings have implications for destination marketers and tourism product developers. Strategies such as immersive storytelling, customisable tour packages, and product diversification can enhance the appeal of pop culture sites.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, pop culture tourism has become a significant trend in the tourism industry. Destinations featured in iconic scenes from movies, television shows, comic books, literary works, and other media have seen a marked increase in tourist interest and visitation, highlighting the cultural and economic value of pop culture tourism. The global reach of streaming platforms and social media has further amplified the visibility and influence of media on tourism behaviour. Services such as Netflix, HBO Max, and Disney+ have greatly expanded access to visual content worldwide, allowing audiences from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds to engage with the same franchise simultaneously (Warwic & Araque, 2024). This has resulted in previously lesser-known filming locations becoming internationally recognisable overnight. For example, the success of Game of Thrones has transformed tourism in Dubrovnik, Croatia (Tkalec et al., 2017), and Malta, while The Witcher has increased interest in Hungary and the Czech Republic (Yang and Nair, 2025).

The convergence of digital media and tourism demonstrates a new way in which destination images are constructed and consumed, opening the door to a new market. Understanding how visitors perceive and act on these images is important not only for academic purposes but also for destination marketers and cultural heritage managers seeking to capitalise on or manage this influx. As destinations are increasingly curated through the lens of fandom, the boundaries between entertainment, identity, authenticity, and place-making are becoming more fluid. This study positions itself at the intersection of media influence, emotional attachment, and consumer behaviour by examining how individual preferences and demographic factors shape travel decisions. The use of quantitative survey methods provides a measurable perspective on the evolving relationship between media, travel, and film-induced tourism. The influence of demographic variables such as gender is often overlooked in studies related

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to screen tourism. This gap is relevant for events like MegaCon, where attendees' motivations and behaviours can vary widely across different groups. The research objective is to expand the existing literature on pop culture tourism, with an emphasis on broader pop culture value rather than a specific franchise, film, or location. The study addresses a gap in tourism literature by offering a data-driven analysis of pop culture tourism behaviour, with a strong focus on how demographic variables influence tourist preferences. While previous research has mostly examined specific franchises or destinations, there is limited understanding of how different fandoms collectively shape travel decisions in the broader context of cultural consumption. This research provides original demographic insights that can contribute to the advancement of tourism management theory by expanding existing models of media-induced travel. The paper situates film-induced tourism within the broader realm of pop culture tourism, clarifying their relationship. It examines how demographic factors, such as age and gender, influence tourist motivations, preferences, and behaviours. Additionally, it explores patterns in tourists' perceptions, including interest in guided tours, repeat visitation, and franchise preference, that inform destination marketing and tourism product strategies.

2. Literature review

Film tourism has emerged as a significant growth sector within tourism research and is now widely recognised as a driver of tourism development for many destinations (Connell, 2012). It has become an important source of information in shaping mental images of destinations (Ünüvar & Ahmed, 2022). Initially considered a form of niche tourism, film tourism has recently seen a notable increase in interest from travellers, tourism stakeholders (destinations, locations, DMCs, theme parks, etc.), and academics. However, most research focuses on Western media or media popular in the Western world, which may limit the generalisability of findings to a broader context that includes other cultures.

Film-induced tourism, also referred to as screen tourism in the literature, generally describes on-location tourism resulting from the success of a film, television show, video, or DVD in a particular region (Beeton, 2016). Although it is part of the larger category of popular cultural tourism, which includes music, gaming, books, and other forms, screen tourism has been the most extensively theorised and analysed segment, prompting this paper to focus primarily on it. While this study uses film-induced tourism as a category, it acknowledges its place within the broader context of pop culture tourism. In this paper, although the concepts are not interchangeable, screen tourism is treated as a representative example of the broader understanding of pop culture tourism. The varied use of terms and overlapping definitions among scholars highlights the need for greater theoretical clarity in the field of film-induced and pop culture tourism.

Tourists interested in film-induced tourism may visit real-world sites depicted in media or fictional settings recreated through production. Such visits can include studio tours, trips to theme parks based on specific productions, or attractions inspired by film or television. Visitors may also seek out active filming locations or places recognised as film-related sites. Additionally, they may participate in organised tours of film locations, visit celebrity homes, attend film festivals, or travel to destinations hosting movie premieres (Connell, 2012). Film tourism broadly includes travel motivated by moving images, such as films, television, pre-recorded content (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006), and digital media.

In its early development, scholars were hesitant to study the effects of film and television on tourism, with many initial studies focusing on fictional portrayals that create destination imagery, often emphasising attractive scenery or romanticised, nostalgic depictions of rural life (Frost, 2006). However, it is now understood that film-induced tourism can influence both cognitive and affective perceptions of a destination. These influences can shape a viewer's desire to visit the featured location. Notably, increased tourist visits have been recorded even when the influence was negative (Araújo Vila et al., 2021). While these findings indicate the strong impact of media narratives, they may overstate tourism benefits without fully accounting for contextual factors such as accessibility, local infrastructure, or community receptiveness. Research suggests that tourism linked to a particular film can help revitalise local economies, with increased visitation continuing for three to four years after a film's release (Ünüvar & Ahmed, 2022).

Studies indicate that interest in film-related travel typically peaks after a film's release, with visitation increasing by approximately 50% and remaining high for several years. Film tourism can enhance the cultural value of a location by conveying a range of cultural meanings and values. Many heritage sites

used as filming locations have gained popularity due to the narrative significance attached to them (Prasanna, 2019). Additional benefits include increased tourist arrivals, greater use of tourism venues, higher employment rates, enhanced cultural exchange, and more efficient use of both natural and managed environments (Qiao et al., 2016), suggesting that both positive and negative aspects should be considered in future research. Despite these benefits, one of the primary concerns surrounding film tourism is the potential for overtourism resulting from large influxes of visitors (Heitmann, 2010) and loss of authenticity (Qiao et al., 2016). Nevertheless, film tourism continues to play a significant role in influencing travel decisions (Araújo Vila et al., 2021). The transformation of a location's mythology through on-screen narratives becomes a compelling reason for tourists to visit. Many tourists are drawn to these destinations to reenact or relive specific scenes, reconnect with the emotional experiences evoked during viewing, and share their enthusiasm with like-minded individuals (Li et al., 2017). Although films are not created with tourism promotion as their primary goal, they often shape the viewer's perception of a place indirectly, functioning as a subtle backdrop to a film's message (Hudson et al., 2011). In this way, places become attractions as historical realities are reimagined for tourist experiences, blurring the boundaries between reality and hyperreality. Film tourists often express a desire for authenticity in a world that is increasingly simulated. For example, some visitors to New Zealand describe their experiences in terms of the mythology of Middle-earth, seeing it as an integral part of New Zealand's identity, much as ancient Greece is perceived in relation to modern Greece (Buchmann et al., 2010).

Film tourism is often classified within the broader category of pop culture tourism, a form of travel focused on emotional and social experiences, identity expression, and perceived value (Lundberg et al., 2024). Pop culture comprises mass-produced cultural products that resonate with wide audiences. For many fans, pop culture travel provides unique opportunities for immersion and interaction (Reichenberger, 2021). Film tourism is one of several subcategories, alongside literary, music, special events, food, and art tourism (Labuschagne & Burger, 2022).

According to the National Brands Index, screen tourism appeals to a wide demographic, with a particularly strong influence on travellers aged 18 to 34, one in four of whom report being influenced in their travel choices by media content (National Brands Index, 2024). This trend has prompted a response from companies and stakeholders across the tourism sector. For example, Expedia reports that 60% of users have been influenced by television when selecting destinations, while Skyscanner attributes 50% of outbound flights from the US to film-induced travel. British Airways reportedly consults Netflix releases to understand spikes in ticket sales (Warwic & Araque, 2024). The influence of screen tourism extends beyond film and television, encompassing other media such as video games. Interest in animated or game-based narratives has begun to spark real-world travel, helping destinations access new markets (Yamamura, 2015). A term gaining traction in this subgenre is "set-jetters" – tourists who travel to destinations associated with their favourite media. The SetJetters app enables stakeholders to list specific filming locations and promote local attractions (SetJetters, 2025).

Some scholars draw parallels between dedicated film tourists and religious pilgrims. Both groups embark on deeply meaningful journeys to often distant places. Their experiences combine scripted itineraries with personal interpretations, offering emotional reassurance, empowerment, social support, and a sense of belonging (Buchmann et al., 2010). McKinnon defines film pilgrims as "people who inspire nostalgia and local identity motivation for film and television works" (Du et al., 2020).

Narratives and portrayals have long influenced destination choice and travel preferences. Pop culture resources can significantly aid in developing niche tourism offerings, particularly in film tourism (Lee & Bai, 2016). Nostalgia and emotional connections to characters, stories, and locations are often key motivators, sometimes even the primary reason for travel among film pilgrims (Li et al., 2017). Notably, some pop culture tourists are more captivated by the mythology of a place than its actual geography (Hudson et al., 2011). Few studies systematically compare how different types of media or narrative genres influence destination choice, which presents an opportunity for future research.

Film tourism has become a significant aspect of contemporary travel. What was once a small, niche area has now become a major influence on destination choice, with films, television shows, and even games shaping perceptions of destinations. It is not just about visiting a location from a favourite film;

it is about the emotions, stories, and connections people associate with these places. With apps, tours, and global events (The World Screen Tourism Summit, 2025) built around it, film tourism is more than a trend; it is becoming a meaningful part of how and why people travel.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study uses a quantitative research design, employing a questionnaire-based method to collect data on tourist perceptions of pop culture tourism. The questions are structured and closed-ended to standardise data collection, making it suitable for identifying trends and correlations among tourist motivations and behaviours. This approach was chosen for its efficiency in gathering data from a relatively large and diverse group of participants within a short time frame.

Quantitative surveys are particularly effective for detecting measurable patterns across variables such as age, gender, and frequency of travel, which are central to this research. The questions are organised into thematic sections covering demographics, media interests, travel preferences, and travel history, with a focus on pop culture. A pilot test of the survey was conducted with a small group of participants ($n = 7$) before distribution to ensure clarity and estimate completion time, resulting in minor adjustments to the questions. The final questionnaire consists of thirteen closed-ended questions, designed to minimise response fatigue and encourage full participation during the high-traffic event.

3.2 Data collection

The data were collected during MegaCon London 2024, a large-scale fan convention that attracts a diverse demographic of visitors with established interests in film, television, and other popular media. The event was chosen as an ideal site for data collection due to its high concentration of potential respondents likely to be interested in pop culture-related travel. As noted in the literature review, Great Britain is among the countries that best utilise film-induced tourism resources, making it an appropriate location for this survey. A convenience sampling method was used, targeting any attendee at MegaCon to ensure a wide variety of respondents. To maximise accessibility, the questionnaire was distributed digitally via a QR code printed on flyers placed at key locations throughout the venue. To further expand the reach beyond physical attendees, the survey link was shared in the event's Discord channel, ensuring inclusion of remote fans who represent the same interest group.

A total of 116 respondents participated in the study. The sample included participants from multiple countries, various age groups, and a balanced representation of genders, with a majority aged 18–34. Participants had different levels of travel experience and engagement with pop culture franchises, providing a diverse perspective on pop culture tourism motivations and behaviours. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent before completing the survey. Respondents were invited to participate in the survey at random, either in person or at their convenience online, thus avoiding bias from collecting responses from only a particular group or fan base.

3.3 Data analysis

The data collected were analysed using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics summarised participants' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and country of residence. Cross-tabulation analyses examined the relationships between demographic variables and tourist behaviours, such as preference for guided tours, length of stay, and willingness to visit franchise-related destinations. The Chi-square (χ^2) test for independence determined whether these associations were statistically significant. To assess the strength of these associations, effect sizes were calculated using Cramér's V and Phi coefficients, depending on the size of the contingency table. Following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, associations were classified as small, moderate, or strong to interpret significance beyond p-values. The combination of descriptive and inferential statistics provided insight into how pop culture-driven motivations intersect with demographic identity.

The methodology combined non-targeted sampling at a highly relevant setting, a structured questionnaire, and statistical analysis to identify patterns in how pop culture influences tourism behaviour. While this approach has limitations, it is appropriate for exploratory research in this growing

and dynamic subfield of cultural tourism.

4. Results

4.1 Tourist preferences for pop culture fandoms

To ensure the survey results accurately represented the opinions of individuals interested in pop culture mythology, respondents were asked to select their favourite franchises from a predefined, alphabetically arranged list of major and successful options. The distribution of preferences was relatively even, indicating that participants generally showed interest in multiple franchises rather than exclusively favouring one. Doctor Who was the most frequently selected franchise, with 16.70% of respondents indicating it as a favourite. It was followed by Harry Potter (15.11%), Marvel (13.20%), Star Wars (12.92%), The Lord of the Rings (12.52%), Star Trek (11.53%), Game of Thrones (9.54%), and the DC Universe (8.55%).

Because the data for this question were similar across franchises, no statistically significant results were found in any of the crosstab analyses. These findings support Labuschagne and Burgers's (2022) conclusion that fan travel motivations are often multifaceted and not tied to a single media property. The data suggest that destinations promoting only one franchise may miss opportunities to engage visitors whose interests span multiple fandoms. This could encourage locations such as London, which has multiple fandom resources, to develop hybrid theme packages that allow fans to experience a diverse fictional setting within a single itinerary, while also prompting them to extend their stay.

4.2 Duration and travel patterns

One of the first travel pattern questions examined in the study focused on the frequency of leisure travel. The applied χ^2 (Chi-square) test showed that participants' responses were not statistically significantly influenced by age ($p > 0.05$), but there were significant differences based on gender ($\chi^2 = 9.89$, $p = 0.042$) and country of origin ($\chi^2 = 24.65$, $p = 0.017$). The strength of these relationships was moderate (Cohen, 1988), with Cramer's V = 0.299 for gender and Cramer's V = 0.266 for country of origin. The next question examined whether participants would prefer to take a guided tour of a destination related to one of their favourite pop culture franchises. The test results showed that responses were not statistically significantly influenced by age or country of origin ($p > 0.05$ for both), but were influenced by gender ($\chi^2 = 7.97$, $p = 0.047$), with a moderate strength of association (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's V = 0.268. Further crosstab analysis was conducted on the preference for guided pop culture tours and the type of tour preferred. The χ^2 test revealed a statistically significant relationship between the two ($\chi^2 = 69.114$, df = 12, $p = 0.000$), and the association was strong according to Cohen's criteria, with Phi = 0.772 and Cramer's V = 0.446. The connection between how often people travel for leisure and their preference for the duration of a pop culture-related tour also showed statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 38.174$, df = 12, $p = 0.000$). The strength of this relationship was moderate (Cohen, 1988), with Phi = 0.574 and Cramer's V = 0.331. Finally, when analysing the relationship between leisure travel frequency and the importance of understanding the local language fluently, the χ^2 test again showed a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 38.302$, df = 20, $p = 0.008$). The strength of this association was also moderate (Cohen, 1988), with Phi = 0.575 and Cramer's V = 0.287.

The analysis of leisure travel frequency revealed notable trends. Gender and country of residence showed statistically significant correlations, while age was not a significant predictor of how often participants travelled. This may be due to differing cultural and social norms related to travel access or disposable income. These findings are consistent with Hudson et al. (2011), who suggest that tourism motivations for fan tourism are embedded within national media consumption.

A strong correlation was found between leisure travel frequency and the preferred duration of pop culture-related tours associated with film-induced tourism. Respondents who travelled frequently were more likely to express interest in longer, multi-country tours, indicating a desire for deeper engagement and immersion. This supports the idea that frequent travellers, who may already be familiar with more popular types of sightseeing, seek more meaningful, narrative-driven tourism experiences.

These findings are consistent with Buchmann et al. (2010), who examined the increasing importance of emotional involvement and immersive participation. Another pattern emerged, showing a growing

interest in guided tours, with a clear gender difference in response patterns. Women were significantly more likely than men to express a preference for guided tours. This may be attributed to factors such as perceptions of safety, social engagement, and a perceived stronger emotional connection.

These findings are consistent with Lee et al. (2018), who suggest that emotionally resonant experiences with a rich narrative are more appealing to certain demographics, particularly those attracted to character-driven or romantic storytelling genres. The current research did not consider genre preference, so there is insufficient data to support this suggestion with adequate variability.

4.3 Franchise influence on travel decisions

When asked whether they had previously visited a location connected to a favourite franchise, the applied χ^2 (Chi-square) test showed that participants' responses were not statistically significantly influenced by age, gender, or country of residence ($p > 0.05$ for all three demographic variables). However, when participants were asked whether they would be interested in visiting such a location, the results indicated that responses were not significantly influenced by age or country of origin ($p > 0.05$ for both), but were influenced by gender ($\chi^2 = 11.597$, $p = 0.003$). The strength of the association was strong (Cohen, 1988), with Cramer's V = 0.323. Examining the relationship between those who had already visited a pop culture-related destination and those who expressed interest in doing so, the χ^2 test showed a statistically significant association between the variables ($\chi^2 = 95.227$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$). Although several cells had an expected count below 5, the relationship remained strong (Cohen, 1988), as reflected in Phi = 0.906 and Cramer's V = 0.641.

The data analysed suggest that there was no significant correlation between age, gender, or residency and whether a location was visited in the past. This indicates that travel behaviour may be influenced more by economic and logistical factors than by demographic characteristics alone. The high interest shown by participants in the idea of visiting such a place in the future, especially among those who had not yet done so, demonstrates a strong aspirational component in media-induced travel.

This highlights the untapped potential for a new market. There was a strong correlation between those who had already visited a destination connected to one of their favourite franchises and those who expressed continued interest in visiting again. These findings support the concept of repeat travel driven by emotional attachment and nostalgia, as proposed by McKinnon (Du et al., 2020), which suggests that once a tourist has engaged with one aspect of a franchise in a real-world setting, they are more likely to seek additional related experiences. This supports the previously suggested untapped market, which in this case may be developed through diversification of the tourist product or by expanding it to include inclusive tours with behind-the-scenes access, interactive elements, or fan-led events.

4.4 Overall findings

The analysis of the survey data revealed notable trends in the relationship between demographic characteristics and pop culture-related travel preferences. Gender and place of residence had a statistically significant influence on responses to certain questions, including interest in guided tours and frequency of leisure travel. In contrast, age generally did not emerge as a statistically significant factor, suggesting that gender identity and cultural context may influence how individuals engage with film tourism more than age does. These findings differ from earlier research, which found that pop culture-related travel was primarily associated with younger travellers (National Brand Index, 2024). The researchers had different scopes, with this study conducted on a smaller scale but targeting respondents most likely to be interested in this type of travel. Another key difference is that while this study addresses the general idea of travelling to a location associated with a favourite franchise without specifying the destination, the National Brand Index focuses on incoming tourists to Great Britain.

Country of residence influenced several aspects of travel behaviour, including tour duration. This may reflect cultural affinity for certain franchises, such as Doctor Who in the UK, as well as economic or geographical access to destinations. For example, participants from Europe can more easily organise and plan cross-country trips, while those from more distant locations may find it more challenging.

The association between having previously visited a location associated with a favourite franchise and future travel interest was particularly strong ($\chi^2 = 95.227$), confirming that prior exposure or positive

experiences reinforce future motivation, consistent with existing literature. Similarly, a moderate to strong association was found between travel frequency and preferences for tour types and tour length, indicating that more frequent travellers may seek deeper and more diverse experiences. Language barriers were a moderate concern for some participants, with a statistically significant relationship found between travel frequency and the importance of communication with locals. This reflects the connection between pop culture tourism and cultural tourism, and suggests that immersive experiences should extend beyond set locations to include cultural exchange, storytelling, and interpersonal connection.

The main findings (Table 1) support the literature review data on interest in travel to pop culture destinations, while also providing more detailed data directly related to the travel patterns and behaviour of fan travellers.

Table 1. Summary of key findings

Variable	Significant Factor(s)	p-value	χ^2 value	Strength (Cramer's V)	Practical Implication
Guided tour preference	Gender	0.047	$\chi^2 = 7.97$	0.27 (moderate)	Consider gendered preferences when designing tours
Tour duration	Travel frequency	<0.001	$\chi^2 = 38.174$	0.33 (moderate)	Frequent travellers seek longer, multi-site tours
Language connection	Travel frequency	0.008	$\chi^2 = 38.302$	0.29 (moderate)	Language and cultural accessibility enhance appeal
Interest in pop culture tourism	Gender	0.003	$\chi^2 = 11.597$	0.32 (moderate-strong)	Marketing towards aspirational travellers, especially women
Repeat interest	Prior visit	<0.221	$\chi^2 = 95.227$	0.64 (strong)	Prior visitors are highly likely to revisit

Source: Author (2025)

The analysis showed that demographic and behavioural factors influence various aspects of film and pop culture tourism. Women show stronger engagement in guided tours and greater overall interest in pop culture tourism. Travel frequency affects both trip duration and the importance of language accessibility, with frequent travellers preferring longer, multi-site tours and connections. Prior visits are a strong predictor of repeat interest, indicating that returning visitors are a key market for film-induced tourism. The findings suggest that tourist characteristics shape preferences and engagement, highlighting the importance of tailoring tours and marketing strategies to meet the needs of different demographic and behavioural groups.

The findings also reveal that country of residence and gender have a greater influence on travel decisions related to pop culture tourism, while age was not shown to be a statistically significant factor. This suggests that cultural context and identity may be stronger predictors of engagement with media-induced travel. Franchise appeal is broad and not limited to a single franchise, indicating that interest in pop culture themes is diverse and that a multi-franchise approach could be more effective and appealing for some destinations. There is a notable gap between aspirational interest and actual travel experience, as significantly more respondents expressed interest in visiting a location connected to a favourite pop media franchise than those who have already travelled to such a destination. This suggests high potential for a new or diversified market.

Tour preferences are influenced by travel frequency, with data showing that frequent travellers are more open to longer tours and more likely to prefer tours spanning several countries. This suggests that experienced travellers may seek more meaningful experiences with added value. Another significant finding is that language and cultural connections are important, with a moderate association between travel frequency and the importance travellers place on understanding and connecting with locals. This

suggests that cultural tourism, and film-induced tourism in particular, can benefit from incorporating more cultural or language accessibility elements.

A framework of the collected data (Figure 1), based on the five key findings and the overall analysis, illustrates the various factors involved in decision-making related to pop culture travel by synthesising all the information into a simple graph.
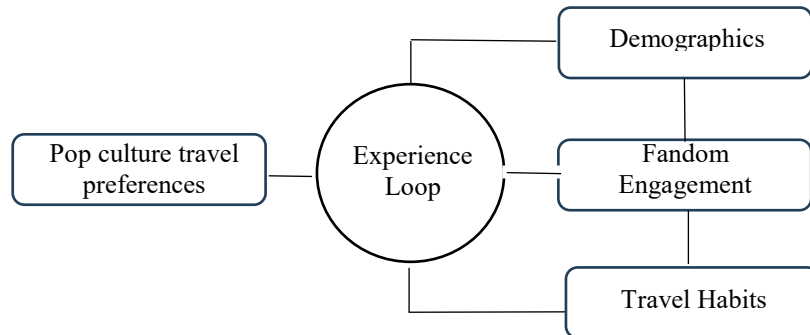

Figure 1. Influences on decision-making in pop culture travel
Source: Author (2025)

5. Discussion

According to research by Lee and Bai cited in the literature review, popular culture significantly affects the destination image among special interest tourists, suggesting that destination marketing organisations should use popular culture to attract visitors (Lee & Bai, 2016). This is further supported by the survey findings, which show that various popular culture franchises attracted interest from respondents, with no single franchise being significantly more popular than the others. This indicates that broad appeal engages multiple demographic segments rather than limiting preferences to one franchise. Hur and Kim's research emphasises motivation within the context of transnational fandom, showing that popular culture significantly influences tourists' decision-making processes (Hur & Kim, 2020). The findings in this study indicate that demographic factors such as age or country did not notably influence the desire to visit popular culture-related destinations, but gender had a strong influence when assessing interest in specific tourism experiences related to TV and film-induced tourism.

Labuschagne and Burger provide insights into how travel motivations are linked to popular culture events, further validating the importance of understanding popular culture fans' motivations for developing destination tourism (Labuschagne & Burger, 2022). Their findings suggest that these motivations are a precursor to event attendance and can stimulate further tourism activities, which is also supported by this article's survey findings regarding the frequency of leisure travel and its relationship with preferences for popular culture-related tours.

The survey results highlight the interaction of various demographic factors and preferences for popular culture tourism among respondents, suggesting a complex interplay of personal interests and travel behaviours. This connects to the research of Lee et al., who established a framework to examine how popular culture influences travel decisions, confirming the importance of emotional connections in tourists' decision-making processes (Lee et al., 2018).

The strong association found in this survey between past and future visits to sites related to film-induced tourism supports and reinforces the concept of film pilgrims discussed by Du et al., Li et al., and Buchmann et al. in their research (Buchmann et al., 2010; Du et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018). These findings strengthen the existing literature on pop culture media-induced tourism and provide new data on demographic variables influencing tourists' motivations, while also highlighting opportunities for stakeholders to address the interests of film pilgrims.

The results of this study are consistent with prior research, reinforcing and expanding the understanding that clear patterns exist in decision-making processes related to film-induced tourism. Pop culture remains a powerful motivator in tourism, shaping destination selection and revealing demographic

trends within travel preferences. Practical implications for the tourism industry are primarily focused on destination marketing and product development.

6. Conclusions

Factors that stakeholders can use to attract more visitors include designing experiences that are inclusive and emotionally resonant, supporting Lee et al. (2018) and Lee & Bai (2016), who highlight the importance of emotional connection and narrative immersion in pop culture travel motivation. Given the influence of gender on decision-making processes, this study supports Buchmann et al. (2010)'s findings on 'film pilgrims', demonstrating the interests of different demographic groups. It is advisable to offer a diverse range of specialised tours that cater to varied gender-based preferences, such as thematic romantic-style tours and action-oriented tours with different levels of immersion. The data also indicate a high level of aspirational interest, expanding on Connell (2012) and Beeton (2016)'s findings, which framed film-induced tourism primarily around a single type of product. The current findings show that travellers often have an interest in multiple franchises, as suggested by Li et al. (2017) and quantified in this research. Many participants expressed a desire to visit destinations associated with their favourite franchises, yet had not done so. Increasing the visibility and accessibility of such locations, particularly by integrating them into established travel routes, could help convert intention into action. Stakeholders may improve the visibility and accessibility of these locations by bundling them with existing, more prominent routes to attract more visitors. Since the data show interest in multiple franchises simultaneously, stakeholders should consider designing packages that cater to fans of multiple franchises. For example, a 'British shows' tour could combine popular media such as Harry Potter, Doctor Who, and Sherlock Holmes. These bundled tours could be customisable or modular to reflect different fan preferences.

The strong interest in guided experiences suggests opportunities for immersive storytelling tours offered in tiered packages to accommodate different levels of engagement and create a sense of exclusivity. Frequent travellers, who are more receptive to longer and more complex experiences, can be specifically targeted with add-on tour options that complement their existing travel plans, whether within the same destination or a neighbouring region. Integrating elements of pop culture mythology with local heritage, as suggested by Qiao et al. (2016), can help address authenticity concerns often associated with film tourism. This also aligns with Lundberg, Lexhagen, and Ziakas (2024), who argue that pop culture tourism should be embedded within community and cultural frameworks. Presenting this heritage as history, archaeology, and cuisine can establish a distinctive hybrid product that appeals to a broader audience.

Hosting pop culture-related events is also a highly effective strategy for shaping a destination's image and influencing travel preferences, as shown in research by Hudson, Wang, and Gil (2011). Warwick and Araque (2024) note that this effect has intensified in recent years due to streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and others. As this research was partly conducted during such an event, it illustrates how fan conventions and festivals increasingly serve as international gathering points for media franchise enthusiasts. These events provide visitors with opportunities to meet like-minded people, interact with creators, purchase exclusive merchandise, and immerse themselves in beloved fictional universes. They offer significant potential for generating both cultural value and economic returns for the host destination, with successful examples including Comic-Con in San Diego and Comiket in Tokyo. Collaborating with fandom influencers, streamers, and reviewers can amplify outreach within target demographics, especially for newly established events or destinations not yet prominent in pop culture travel.

To help destinations maintain interest in the rapidly developing technology sector, stakeholders can integrate virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) experiences that enable fans to immerse themselves in their favourite fandom universe. Other technological solutions, such as apps for collecting memorabilia by visiting locations or city games completed on visitors' phones, can also be employed. Apps like SetJetters (2025) have already demonstrated the potential for engagement with film locations from the convenience of tourists' mobile phones.

By applying the strategies identified through the analysis of research data from this case study, tourism stakeholders can better respond to the growing demand for story-driven, meaningful travel experiences

rooted in popular media. Pop culture tourism has the potential to develop from a niche attraction into a key pillar of sustainable destination development.

From a theoretical perspective, this study advances understanding of how demographic and behavioural variables such as gender, travel frequency, and prior visitation influence engagement with film-induced and pop culture tourism. Recent research (Nieto-Ferrando 2024; Crespo-Almendros 2025) indicates that the field remains largely focused on film-centric or single-franchise case studies, whereas this paper broadens the scope by incorporating demographic and behavioural dimensions within a multi-franchise framework, which has not previously been done. While earlier research has often focused on either media influence or destination branding, this study emphasises the link between tourist characteristics and media-driven motivations, extending conceptual discussions on the drivers of niche tourism, particularly in pop culture tourism. In doing so, it contributes to the literature on tourism motivation and decision-making by showing that demographic variables can be significant predictors of travel behaviour.

While this research provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge limitations that may affect generalisability. The primary limitation of this case study is the time constraints associated with the data collection process. The survey was conducted over a short period, limited to two days during a specific event, with a few additional days of availability via a Discord link. Although this approach yielded sufficient responses given the scale of the event, the time-bound nature of data gathering may have restricted the diversity and volume of the sample. Another limitation is the event-based sampling, which may have disproportionately represented highly engaged fans rather than casual media consumers, thus skewing findings towards more intense forms of film-induced tourism interest, particularly those related to popular franchises. Additionally, the study relied on intentions and preferences, which may not always translate into actual behaviour, introducing a potential bias between aspirational and realised tourism. The focus on a single case study context further limits broader generalisability, and the selected franchises reflect Western media, similar to the existing literature, which restricts the study's ability to capture interest in other international media that may be preferred by different groups.

Further research could explore the impact of technology use in pop culture tourism, specifically those rooted in virtual reality tourism and interactions with the metaverse – engagement of fans with fictional worlds in real-world spaces and locations. As the boundaries between physical and digital tourism become more aligned and begin to blur, understanding this intersection will be important for both academic theory and industry practice.

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