

Chapter 2

POPCULTURE TOURISM A Research Manifesto

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Abstract: Tourism in the wake of films, literature, and music is gaining interest among academics and practitioners alike. Despite the significance of converging tourism and media production and popcultural consumption, theorizing in this field is weak. This chapter explores complex relationships among popcultural phenomena, destination image creation, and tourism consumption. By taking a broader social science approach, it revisits and connects research themes, such as symbolic consumption, negotiated representations,

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fans and fandom, technology mediation, and media convergence. The chapter concludes with an integrative model, or “popcultural place-making loop,” which is qualified through six propositions. **Keywords:** Popular culture; mediatized tourism; fan cultures; destination development; placemaking

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have an acquired taste for special interest tourism. Owing to the increased diversification of the tourism phenomena in the past 20 years, research efforts in this field have branched out to describe and conceptualize a range of niche tourism activities. Leisure mobility today may be induced by a variety of pastimes, extensively documented in publications on adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003; Weber, 2001), food tourism (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Hall & Mitchell, 2001), wellness tourism (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006a), hip-hop tourism (Xie, Osumare, & Ibrahim, 2007), film tourism (Frost, 2006, 2009; Kim & Richardson, 2003), and tea/beer tourism (Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009; Plummer, Telfer, Hashimoto, & Summers, 2005). Albeit describing different contexts, these topical volumes seem to share one conventional template and similar features. The special interest phenomenon is described in terms of its evolution and economic potential, which is often the sole rationale for scientific investigation. This claimed significance is followed by a portrayal of special interest consumers and the diversified supplier base, as well as discussions of documented or estimated impacts on destinations.

Ultimately, special interest volumes conclude with managerial or policy perspectives for the future. The majority of research articles on these topics are case-based, which implies that the emerging body of knowledge has so far failed to tap into wider social science paradigms and theoretical frameworks. Special interest tourism activities are treated in a decontextualized manner, isolated from contemporary advances in cultural consumption and leisure research *per se*. This is particularly true for the subfields of literary, music, and screen tourism. Popular cultural (hereafter, popcultural) expressions like films, TV-series, and books are considered significant boosters of place image and have been documented to impact destinations' development to a great extent. Specific destinations affected by cultural expressions or phenomenon impacting tourism have

been in focus, such as the “Lord of the Rings” movies and New Zealand (Buchmann, 2010; Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010; Croy, 2010; Jones & Smith, 2005; Tzannelli, 2004), “Dracula” and Romania (Bányai, 2010; Huebner, 2011; Light, 2007, 2009; Reijnders, 2011; Shandley, Hamal, & Tanase, 2006; Tanasescu, 2006), Australia (Beeton, 2004; Frost, 2006, 2010; Ward & O’Reagan, 2009), the “Twilight Saga” and North America (Lexhagen, Larson, & Lundberg, 2013; Lundberg & Lexhagen, 2012; Lundberg, Lexhagen, & Mattsson, 2011).

Attention has also been focused on the “British Isles” (Bolan & Williams, 2008; Brereton, 2006; Meaney & Robb, 2006; Young & Young, 2008), with examples like “Notting Hill” (Busby & Klug, 2001), “Braveheart” (Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley, 2000), “Heart Beat” (Mordue, 2001; Tooke & Baker, 1996), “Pride & Prejudice” (Sargent, 1998), and “Harry Potter” (Iwashita, 2006; Mintel, 2003). Furthermore, a few publications deal with the specific phenomenon of music tourism, based on case studies of Nashville, USA (Raines & Brown, 2006), and Beatles tourism in Liverpool, UK (Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004; Rångeby, 2007; Vaughn & Booth, 1989; Visit Britain, 2012). These iconic success stories have inspired destination management organizations to jump on the bandwagon to attract film tourists and develop niche products (such as movie walks) for acquiring aficionados, assuming a linear causal relationship between destination placement in popcultural productions, increased awareness, and visitation. However, as Frost (2010) argues, the mere viewing of particular locations may not in itself be sufficient to heighten place appeal or induce decision making; and the majority of these cultural expressions will only generate feeble tourist flows (if at all).

Confined case studies of film or literature tourism have so far been unable to fully explain the rise and fall of mediatized destinations. Instead of a simple causal relationship between tourism promotion and consumption, a wider, ideological context seems to play an important mediating role (Gold, 1994). This implies that special interest tourism is driven by more complex processes than those identified in the state-of-the-art literature. Researchers must address this complexity by transgressing the spatio-temporal ontological straightjacket imposed by classic scholarship and by treating tourism as an extension of everyday mass culture rather than its periodic and out-of-the-ordinary transposition. It is argued that studies on film, TV-series, literature, and music tourism would benefit from taking note of a wider social science agenda, which acknowledges cross-disciplinary synergies between cultural geography, tourism studies, film and media studies, marketing, and consumer psychology.

In a comprehensive review of the progress and prospects of film tourism research, [Connell \(2012\)](#) identifies major themes and conceptual frameworks developed in these respective areas and points at the lack of synthesis characterizing contemporary scholarship. Yet, in Connell's framing of knowledge gaps, future research agendas are still kept within the conventional topical divides between managerial, psychological, cultural, and economic geographical aspects of film tourism. Consequently, the dynamic and interconnected processes of popcultural and tourism consumption are not fully considered. This chapter addresses this gap by synthesizing film tourism research with a broader social science approach. By revisiting seminal theoretical thoughts of the experience/cultural economy, the complex relationships among popcultural phenomena, destination image creation, and tourism are explored.

POPCULTURE AND THE CIRCUIT OF TOURISM

Popculture is described as a cultural construction “for the people and by the people” ([Lindgren, 2005](#)). As such, it is a representation of societal change. Such changes become evident in all different popculture expressions, whether they are films, TV-series, literature, music, fashion, or games. Research on popculture phenomenon is also known as “the science of the everyday” ([Strinati, 2004](#)). This has its origins in cultural studies, as well as in sociology, ethnology, media studies, literature studies, and anthropology ([Lindgren, 2005](#); [Traube, 1996](#)). A number of criteria have been presented as defining popculture. First, it is culture consumed by people on a daily basis ([Lindgren, 2005](#)), known as mass culture (quantitative value criterion) ([Strinati, 2004](#)). Second, popculture is often seen as entertainment and as a counterpart to fine culture (ethical value criterion) ([Heilbrun, 1997](#); [Lindgren, 2005](#)). In addition to this, it is described as commercial in terms of being the product of economic considerations (monetary value criterion), as well as accessible to many (accessibility value criterion) ([Lindgren, 2005](#)). Hence, popcultural expressions contain powerful spatial representations with extensive impact on taste cultures, consumer preferences, mobility flows, and even regional dynamics.

Tourist imagination of distant places are usually “constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as TV, literature, magazines, records and videos” ([Urry, 1990](#), p. 3), implying that popculture carries and circulates important reference frames for both tourism

marketers and experiences. By exploring the character of popcultural tourism through a cross-disciplinary lens, one can integrate interrelated, but hitherto singularized topics (such as fandom, technology mediation, media convergence, and placemaking) with tourism research. In a seminal article conceptualizing the “circuit of tourism,” Ateljevic (2000) addresses the “cultural turn” in human geography, which attempts to transgress and reconcile dichotomous notions of production (economy) and consumption (culture). Drawing on critical theorists in human geography and cultural studies (Hall, 1997; Harvey, 1993; Lefebvre, 1991; Thrift, 1996), she advocates that tourism production and consumption systems are interconnected through reproduction and their dialectics can be studied simultaneously through Gold’s notion of negotiation (Gold, 1994).

This refers to sensemaking processes along which promotional expressions and individual experiences are being attuned into a wider ideological framework. Seen through this conceptual lens, tourism is a nexus of production-consumption placemaking circuits, where producers and consumers “feed off” each other in endless cycles of place creation, imagination, perception, and experiences (Ateljevic, 2000, p. 372). The circuit of tourism acknowledges the simultaneous presence of Lefebvre’s threefold spatial dimensions, connecting representations of space (in advertising, fiction, and mass media), material space (the actual and experienced), and symbolic-imagined spaces of representations. As Ateljevic notes:

The circuits [of tourism] rest upon the crucial point of negotiation between interests, infrastructure and social relations of production, and consumption forces of changing class, gender, race, locality and culture distinctions of motivation and taste within the potential population of visitors. (2000, p. 377)

In other words, tourism is a *negotiated reproduction of space*, and this notion enables researchers to address contested and multilayered place identities, cultural translations of global consumer tastes and lifestyle values or material, and spatial and cultural transformations. While Ateljevic (2000) recognized the infinite and nonlinear character of interpretive processes linking the production/consumption of tourism spaces and places, the conceptualization of the circuits of tourism remains vague. What are the stages of negotiated reproduction? What are the drivers and consequences of mediatized tourism? The popcultural placemaking loop (Figure 1) captures Ateljevic’s suggestion of co-constructed and

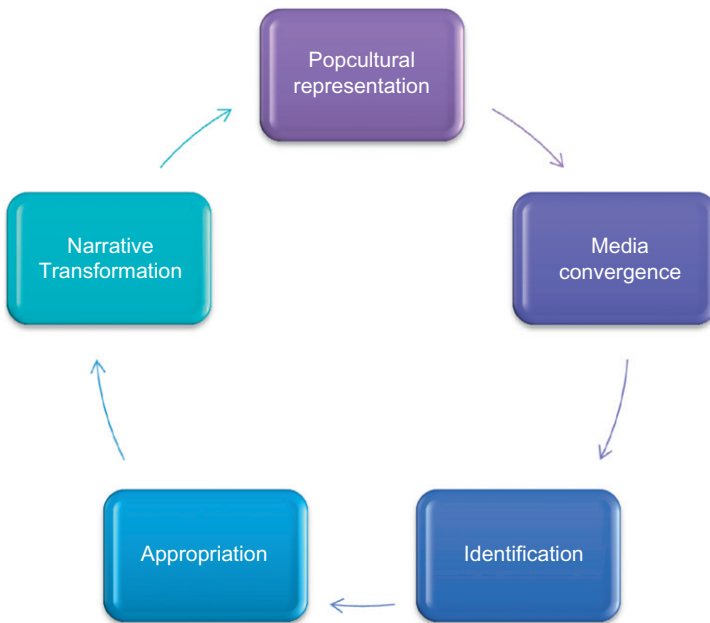


Figure 1. The Popcultural Placemaking Loop

co-consumed tourism spaces and refines the notion of interlaced, multi-layered and negotiated place narratives. The model depicts interconnected stages of popcultural representations, media convergence, audience identification and appropriation leading to narrative transformations in an infinite loop.

Placemaking is induced or gets a new momentum through narratives embedded in popular cultural expressions. When these representations converge on multiple media platforms (crossmediality), they engage audiences intellectually and emotionally and may stimulate the emergence of fan cultures. Fans will likely appropriate parts and elements of these stories and (re)use them as an accessory to convey a particular identity message. These appropriating practices may entail mimicking and even stalking behavior (e.g. re-enacting iconic scenes on the original filming location, emulating the habits of fictive characters or following in the footsteps of lead actors). Movie maps or postings on social media add new narrative layers and

(re)produce the iconography of landscape. Ultimately, culturally constructed, circulated, and altered place meanings trigger material transformations in a locality (Gyimóthy, 2015). Popular film locations are increasingly augmented with props and signpost alluding to the fictive narrative, and there is an upsurge of packaged experiences (movie walks, souvenirs and fan events).

In the wake of prevailing popcultural trends and phenomena, these transformations are also addressed in larger scale destination strategies, which may subsequently lead to a new wave of popcultural representations and metanarratives. In order to qualify the particular character, drivers and impact of popcultural placemaking, six propositions are elaborated in this chapter, with due attention to fan cultures, media convergence, collective consumption, narrative sedimentation, and spatial transformations. These shed light on previously under-researched areas or disconnected aspects and may open new avenues to consolidate popculture tourism research.

Proposition 1. *Popculture tourism is driven by fan cultures.*

What makes people travel to quaint locations like Forks, Volterra, or Glencoe? By engaging with topical stories appearing on multiple media platforms, people tend to build strong emotional bonds with the characters and the landscapes portrayed. The spatial implications of this attachment are comparable to those of long-standing fan subcultures of cult productions or bands with lasting careers (ABBA, U2, and Beatles). For some, the emotional ties trigger a primary travel motive of experiencing the mythology of a place “in real life” (Connell, 2004); however, tourism induced by fandom alone is normally very narrow scaled. In order to fundamentally understand such behavior, the theoretical advances put forward by consumer theories on fandom and fan travel (Reijnders, 2011) must be acknowledged. Research on sport spectators has shown that they invest substantially more time, energy, and money in their fancied sport than any conventional tourist (Smith & Stewart, 2007). In addition to this, the more the fans identify themselves with the object of their fascination, the more likely they will be to participate in travel:

Fans with stronger identification have sport more deeply embedded in their self-concept, and are more likely to attend games and travel greater distances to do so, purchase

merchandise, spend more on tickets and products, and remain loyal. (2007, p. 162)

These mechanisms may be further explained by the sociological concept of serious leisure. Stebbins (1979, 1992, 2005, 2006) found that some individuals are committed to free time sport or hobby activities to an extent that it may be regarded as a lifelong leisure vocation. Serious leisure hence entails a long-term, systematic engagement with any recreational activity (jazz playing, charity work, film interest, or mountaineering), resulting in the development of specific skills, knowledge, and experience. Serious leisure and regularly exercised recreational activities are intertwined with one's self-image, and may mark social status or belonging to a subculture. Similar to football fans and spectators, aficionados of popcultural phenomena would regularly attend special events or post actively on virtual sites in order to mark their affiliation with the serious leisure community and mingle with people with similar interests.

The related concept of casual leisure is equally relevant, as it denotes a superficial version of hobbyist activity. It is an "immediately, intrinsically rewarding relatively short-lived pleasurable activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it" (Stebbins, 1997, p. 18). Consumers engaging in casual leisure are more likely to just flirt with a special interest activity, enjoying immediate sensory benefits, but have no ambitions of embarking on serious leisure pursuits or of becoming members of a fan group (Gyimóthy, 2009). This may also explain why a substantial volume of popcultural-induced travel typically manifests itself in random consumption decisions related to the fictive universe (participation in Murder Walks or a visit to a themed attraction park).

Proposition 2. *Popculture tourism is collective and user-driven.*

Fan studies have mapped motivations across conventional typologies, entailing psychological, sociocultural, and social belonging dimensions. Psychological motives include eustress (positive stress, arousal, or stress release), escapism, drama, and entertainment (Crawford, 2004; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Smith & Stewart, 2007; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000; Wann, Melnick, Russel, & Pease, 2001; Weed & Bull, 2004). Sociocultural motives, on the other hand, include social interaction (spending time with friends, family, and like-minded people), as well as experiencing cultural links to mythical images, icons, and symbols (Smith & Stewart, 2007). Social belongingness motives are made up by tribal connections (norms,

symbols, and language), and vicarious achievement and self-esteem (Kim & Chalip, 2004; Morris, 1981; Trail et al., 2000).

An important aspect of the fandom is the shared collective experience with like-minded individuals. Fan communities may be real or virtual, converging on digital platforms to exchange information to build clusters of social affiliations with peers across geographical or temporal divides. Accordingly, popculture tourism research may benefit from theoretical approaches highlighting the role and social dynamics of consumer tribes (Cova & Cova, 2002; Maffesoli, 1996). Consumer culture theorists (Arnould, 2006; Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 1998) suggest that citizens in the 21st century are more interested in social links and the identities that come with them, than the pure consumption of objects.

Tribes are heterogeneous networks of individuals, who are linked by a shared passion or emotion toward a brand or a product. People sharing cultural or subcultural traits are today gathering in virtual communities, and the emergence of these “tribes” is often accountable to brand fandom or other consumption interests (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007). In the popcultural context, such enthusiasm may result in user-generated interpretations of the narrative, for instance, fan fiction or fantasy artwork, which point beyond commercial contexts and intentions (Brown, 2007). The endurance of a given popcultural phenomenon is often a function of the extent to which fan communities appropriate its fictive universe. Popcultural tourism often manifests itself in tribal gatherings where the sense of community is as important as the fancied story or characters. Yet, there is very little research on the collective power of the community in conveying unique meanings of a popcultural narrative to the specific destination of interest. Insights from consumer culture theory may inform future studies on the strategic potential of a consumer tribe with regard to influence on tourism decisions, product development, and new business concepts for popculture destinations.

Proposition 3. *Popculture tourism is stimulated by media convergence.*

With the emergence of social media, fan communications have been extended to digitally mediated, virtual platforms, which bear several implications for popcultural tourism research. First, as Kozinets puts it, online consumers are “more active, participative, resistant, activist, loquacious, social and communitarian than they have previously been thought to be” (1999, p. 261). Second, depending on the type of digital platform, interaction among community members often has a social, ludic, and symbolic

character. Hence, by posting brand meanings or promotional messages in these environments, marketers must be prepared that these will be creatively altered and transformed to serve communal purposes. In order to understand the dynamics of popcultural phenomena, one must acknowledge the sociality of virtual tribal communications. Albeit fragmented and fluid, digitally mediated fan communications reveal discursive processes appropriating and negotiating fantasy themes related to popcultural phenomena (Gyimóthy, 2013; Lexhagen et al., 2013). Social media augments non-digital tribal practices and ceremonies and redefines the communicative practices of traditional communication channels.

It is notable that high impact popcultural tourism is stimulated by cross-mediatised, serial narratives, which are today strategically coordinated across various segments of the creative industries. Such is the case of the Twilight Saga or Harry Potter books which are subsequently adapted to big screen, television, computer games, toys, and fashion merchandise. An important driver of popcultural tourism is media convergence (Jenkins, 2004, 2006), that is, when topical stories are recirculated and adapted to multiple media platforms. Media convergence also marks the establishment of synergies across the creative industries resulting in a wide portfolio of entertainment products related to the same popculture phenomenon. From a strategic perspective, commercial appropriations of fiction themes (merchandise packages) are developed to maximize the share of fan wallet and tap into popcultural brand associations.

Recently, national destination management organizations and other tourism operators harnessed the opportunities of such synergies. For instance, Qantas launched a viral safety video featuring elves and halflings from Midgard (as depicted in the Lord of the Rings trilogy by Peter Jackson), while Visit Scotland offered cryptic treasure hunt packages inspired by the Da Vinci Code (Månsson, 2011). Media convergence augments the likelihood and frequency of popculture phenomenon “popping up” in the minds of consumers and will consequently strengthen the bonding among them, the narrative, and its characters. However, media convergence is not solely commercially driven. Månsson (2011) applied the convergence approach to visitor narratives about Rosslyn Chapel on social media networks and found that tourists actively contributed to Da Vinci Code-induced placemaking by adding their own personal experiences on Flickr, YouTube, and Facebook. There is a need for more empirical research which further problematizes and extends mediatised tourist practices and sensemaking processes to highlight the collective capacity of virtual tribes in influencing and altering popcultural narratives (Brown, 2007).

Proposition 4. *Popculture tourism thrives on hyper-real narrative layers.*

Beeton (2005) argues that film tourism motives are more complex than the traditional push-pull model suggests. Tourists at film destinations may be motivated to re-experience a feeling related to a movie, to enhance the mythology or the notoriety of a place (as a result of being portrayed in a film) and celebrity spotting. The popcultural narrative, the technical portrayal or the story behind the film, provides a place with an additional narrative layer. For instance, the recent wave of Nordic Noir (crime novels adapted to the big screen) envelops the Scandinavian countryside with a gloomy, foggy, and scary atmosphere which is perfect for crime scenes. As such, popculture embraces hyper-reality (Baudrillard, 1994) and faction, which dissolves the borders between simulation and reality. Place identity is a constructed notion, mixing both fictitious and authentic foundations (Frost, 2009). Popcultural products introduce new aspects of simulated place representations which in turn will be adopted by various actors in the circle of representation.

New regional identities emerge and become performed and marketed along discursively added hyper-real layers. Destinations such as Klitmøller in North Denmark or Voss in West Norway are narratively repositioned as Cold Hawaii or Extreme Sport mecca by creatively combining urban underground popular cultural trends with outdoor living ideals. Consequently, several rural destinations are reinventing themselves as thrillscapes or wilderness playgrounds, appealing for extreme outdoor consumers (Gyimóthy, 2009). The “metropolitanization” of wilderness into a vibrating, youthful, and cosmopolitan environment is a mediated aesthetization process, skillfully mixing global popular cultural codes with classic wilderness narratives and Nordic outdoor leisure ideals. The popcultural placemaking loop thus acknowledges tourism places as:

... both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package. (Mitchell, 1994, p. 5)

Proposition 5. *Popculture tourism reorders traditional placemaking logic.*

The demand for recreational space by popcultural consumers transforms the landscape of regional competitiveness, which has led to the emergence of new destinations and the repositioning of established ones. The emergent cultural economy offers new opportunities for destinations

to position themselves along experiences loaded with symbolic values and meanings (Lash & Urry, 1994). Popcultural tourism has thus a significant effect on destination development and may affect mobility flows. Consumer trends as discussed above mark the dawn of new placemaking mechanisms. These deserve scientific inquiry and further conceptualization of the spatial implications of the cultural economy. The commodification processes of turning rural landscapes/local products into lifestyle consumption objects are traditionally deployed along three generic placemaking practices: image marketing strategies (Kotler, 2002), entailing centralized strategic campaigns led by tourism or trade organizations; infrastructure boost/rejuvenation strategies (Govers & Go, 2009) involving extensive and long-term physical development projects; and accreditation strategies (Ooi, 2011), referring to the strategic positioning of destinations through creative economy offerings (art, fashion, and events).

Given that popculture is gaining economic and social importance, intertwined popcultural and place co-branding seem to offer a new placemaking logic for rural areas with an otherwise weak market image. European regions are increasingly bringing fictive narratives into play in order to position themselves on the global market, while film producers seek to establish regional and local associations in order to enhance their appeal to consumers (Månsson & Eskilsson, 2013). Having recognized the commercial opportunity residing in colorful Bollywood-style films, actors such as the Swiss Tourism Board and Kuoni Travels offer Indian gourmet weeks or romantic wedding packages for affluent Indian travelers to “experience the magic” featured in these movies. New placemaking activities, for instance, Cine Tirol’s Tirollywood campaign, are challenging and rewriting the established Alpine imagery to fit it into Bollywood-induced fascination.

Studies show that places featured in motion pictures, literature, and pop-art may increase awareness of distant places and consequently affect tourist flows to peripheral areas, such as the Twilight Saga tourism in Forks, USA (Lundberg, Lexhagen, & Mattsson, 2012; Nzier, 2002). Hence, tourism promoters are increasingly turning to popculture and fiction to boost, reposition, or even tamper with the historical past of a destination in order to fabricate new spatial imageries interwoven with popular mythical narratives. Such phenomena aptly illustrate Sternberg’s notion of tourism being meaningfully multilayered (Sternberg, 1997) similar to products of other popular arts, such as cinema or painting.

Proposition 6. *Popculture tourism bears upon eventification policy implications.*

Owing to its potential for regional economic development and rejuvenation, popcultural placemaking and place consumption has wide-ranging policy implications. Repositioning destinations along cultural economy logic entails governance processes in complex stakeholder ecologies, involving local and global consumers, media, opinion leaders, retailers, and intermediaries from converging industrial sectors. Urban planners are increasingly adopting the strategy of “eventification” (Jakob, 2013), which refers to stimulating and staging local creative activities (festivals, fairs, and niche experience offerings) to enhance regional competitiveness and appeal for visitors and inhabitants alike. Even small cities strive to become more or less specialized creative micro-poles on the global market, in which topical popular cultural phenomena may balance the lack of locally concentrated economic, cultural, and creative capital.

Hence, popcultural tourism enables new kinds of embedded relationships among previously disconnected actors (visitors, fan communities, and dwellers). However, a gentrified and visitor-based regional development is sometimes at odds with the interests of local actors (Scott, 1997), which presents equally vast challenges for destinations embarking on a popculture-induced development trajectory. So far, no research has been conducted focusing on the long-term effects and solutions addressing sudden changes in demand, new tourist segments, and radical changes in imaginary attributes owing to popcultural representations.

CONCLUSION

Tourism and media are intertwined contemporary cultural phenomena. The co-presence of destinations and global popular cultural phenomena brings about new ties and increased connectivity among destinations, tourism, media industries, and fan cultures. Yet, the vast majority of descriptive case studies on literature and film-induced tourism were so far unable to conceptualize the drivers of popcultural tourism, let alone understand its role as a de/stabilizing force in destination development. This chapter argues for consolidating research on popcultural tourism by applying theoretical and conceptual frameworks developed in related social science fields. The popcultural tourism manifesto puts forward the popcultural

placemaking loop, which refines Ateljevic's notion of the circuit of tourism. Together with six propositions, the model forms the basis of an integrative framework to analyze interdependencies among destinations, fan communities, and the global tourism and media industries.

The integrative framework enunciates the cyclical production-consumption processes related to popcultural placemaking. These entail stages: representation, media convergence, identification, appropriation narrative transformation. Furthermore, the propositions identify important insights pertaining to the *drivers*, *character*, and *impact* of popcultural tourism. This consumption is driven by particular determinants, namely fan cultures (fandom) and media convergence. The sudden emergence and fading of popular cultural tourism activities are not mere random trends, but determined by the convergence of narratives simultaneously appearing in a variety of platforms (films, literature, music, radio, and games). Such pervasive and cross-mediatized phenomena may contribute to the emergence of substantial fan communities, which may lead to the temporary traveling activities to sites and locations featured in the above-mentioned narratives.

The emergence of social media platforms have further stimulated and enabled the emergence of fan communities, which are today increasingly digitally mediated. Consequently, popcultural tourism consumption is inherently collective and follows a tribal dynamics. As consumer culture theorists note (Arnould, 2006; Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 1998), fan subcultures are not mere passive recipients of its offerings, but actively contribute to narratives by personal engagement and enactment of featured stories. Hyper-real layering (a conscious mix of fiction and facts) provides significant appeal to popcultural consumers and is consequently used in strategic adaptations and commercial experience concepts. Seen from a destination development perspective, it is emphasized that popcultural narratives may be mobilized as a new placemaking logic, offering novel opportunities for destination marketers to put tertiary locations on the map. Popcultural placemaking bears upon fundamental planning and policy implications where the balancing of local community and commercial interests, regular visitors, and temporary fan travelers may be a delicate act.