ABSTRACT

Pangastuti, E. A. A. *Audience Research on Participatory Culture by Lord of the Rings Fans in Perceiving New Zealand in LotR Movie Trilogy.*

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Over sixteen millions internet sites refer to New Zealand as Middle Earth. More than seventeen million refers to Lord of the Rings fan. Participatory culture emerges as the culture responds to the explosion of internet or new media technologies. This qualitative-quantitative study is a virtual ethnographic examination of LotR fans activity in fandom, which aims to investigate how participatory culture by LotR fans affects them in defining and perceiving NZ in LotR movie trilogy - fans significant role in participatory culture; and to find out the correlation between LotR fans age, fans understanding towards NZ in LotR movie trilogy, and fans consideration to visit NZ by applying Partial Correlation Analysis. The writer identifies a range of active audiences' perceptions which are seen as fans' experiences, perspectives and common concerns towards NZ in LotR movie trilogy from Initial Coding and Focused Coding. Data are collected from survey in five LotR fans Facebook groups, which gained 79 Respondents, who represent 24 countries across the world. The writer argues that NZ has both shaped, and been re-shaped by fans 'involvement' in perceiving and defining NZ in present days after watching LotR movie trilogy. It is proved that they have refined views after watching LotR movies trilogy. The quantitative findings indicate that fans age and understanding towards NZ in LotR has weak negative correlation ($r = - 0.35$), while fans understanding towards NZ and fans consideration to visit NZ has moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.44$). The writer hopes that participatory culture of LotR fans can open up new vistas for redesigning participating environments in new media age, and this study will be of much relevance to those interested in significance of participatory culture theories to contemporary cultural studies.

Key words: *Audience Research; Fandom; Lord of the Rings movie trilogy; Participatory Culture; Virtual Communities*