

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

Millions of people consume media and interact with each other to talk about the same interest through new media; the internet. There are no more boundaries and obstacles in accessing media and reaching out to other people, even when they are located at the other side of the world. All becomes possible because of new media. Media, both old and new, enables people to be introduced to popular movies, discuss topics related to the movies, and even criticize certain properties of the movies. In other words, media consumption allows the citizens to participate in participatory culture.

People can engage in multiple activities while consuming media, such as chatting while watching a movie, to share the state of movie one watched, keeping one's virtual friends up-to-date on what one was doing, supplying each other information, and even annotating the movie. All of these happen in online media. Rejection and reception towards some movie products are usually shown through media like Twitter or Facebook as well. The virtual interactions of gathering in certain movie fan's based forum, such as; creating rules, products, mini commentary posts, articles, quizzes to test member's knowledge about trivia things up to complex questions which the reward could be a trip to visit a place where the movie was filmed, or to get merchandise etc., can all happen via online.

Audiences who share common interests, develop networks, and create a common culture to build community of their own 'new' culture. The shift towards

a more engaged participatory relationship between media and active audiences represent interest in modern society now. “Digital social networks are continually shaped by shared control (where content and expertise are continually co-created by participants) and transformative interaction (where individual users and groups of users are customizing both the content and format for enjoyment or ease of use)” (Xenos and Foot qtd. in Hickey, McWilliams and Honeyford 249). In other words, the knowledge in the media is searchable and easily replicable.

The popular movie trilogy that gets huge attentions from people around the globe is The Lord of the Rings (henceforth LotR) movie trilogy directed by Peter Jackson [henceforth PJ]. It is adapted from a novel trilogy with the same title authored by J. R. R. Tolkien, which consists of: 1] Fellowship of the Ring (1954), 2] The Two Towers (1955), and 3] The Return of the King (1956) which was voted the greatest books of all time.

The LotR is saga of a group of heroes who set forth to save their world from evil. Frodo Baggins at the age of 33, the age of adulthood among Hobbits, received a magic Ring of invisibility from his uncle Bilbo. Frodo learns later on that the ring has the power to corrupt its owner and to control the entire world; *one ring to rule them all*. A fellowship of the ring is a brotherhood that embodies: 1 Maia, 4 Hobbits, 1 Elf, 1 Dwarf, and 2 Men, that are formed to destroy the ring by casting it into the eternal fire in Mount of Doom. PJ, a New Zealand [henceforth NZ] nationality chose NZ to be the location of the LotR trilogy movie setting because the landscape of his homeland is viewed similar to what he imagined as of reading the Tolkien’s works.

LotR then has been made into three films from 2001-2003 with the complete trilogy out on DVD in 2004. Later Guardian Magazine states PJ himself claimed that he was struck “by the similarities between New Zealand’s unspoilt terrain and Tolkien’s depiction of a ‘rugged Middle Earth’” (Guardian in Tzanelli 22).

NZ was chosen as a movie location by LotR filmmaker PJ and New Line Cinema. Movies such as the LotR trilogy have put NZ on the world map. Encyclopedia Britannica defines NZ as follows:

Island country in the South Pacific Ocean, a remote land, one of the last sizeable territories suitable for habitation to be settled and populated; It has two main islands: the north and south island, and a number of smaller islands. Its capital city is Wellington and the largest urban area is Auckland; both are located on the North Island. The country is known for the great contrast and diversity. Caves, lakes, valleys, active volcanoes (part of the Ring of Fire), beaches, snowcapped peaks of the Southern Alps on the South island, and its unique vegetation developed during the country’s long isolation.

All contributes to NZ’s scenic beauty; the vast and various terrains that the country has, and what the LotR movie trilogy needs are in one whole country and in such a close proximity.

From the very beginning, the shooting of the LotR movie trilogy was supported by NZ government agencies. Brodie says for Tourism New Zealand [henceforth TNZ]: “I imagined a blend of Middle Earth, a bit of Maori mythology

and all the other things that are part of New Zealand” (TNZ in Wong 92). Other factual piece of information also had been reported that:

In 2001 three government agencies, Tourism New Zealand, Trade New Zealand and Film New Zealand, converged in order to maximize the economic benefits generated by the films. This resolved in international marketing campaign, aided by production staff at New Line Cinema and the films’ starring actors. The campaign emphasized the fact that LotR had been filmed in New Zealand by a New Zealand director. (Crossley 171)

The NZ government had a high intention to increase its tourism aspect, to make NZ a tourist destination. “The tourism experts tell us that Tolkien's imaginary realm ‘actually existed’. It is only after Peter Jackson’s LotR that millions of audiences ‘recognized’ New Zealand as the ‘living reflection of Tolkien’s imaginary world’ and it ‘became’ Middle-earth” (Wong 91) - making NZ a real-life Middle Earth [henceforth ME].

Furthermore, in NZ film industry website’s main page it can be found a link to “*New Zealand Home of Middle Earth*” (<http://www.filmnz.com/middleearth/index.html>), which displays shooting locations in NZ with many pictures, and videos. Therefore, it is a whole country engaged in the campaign to grab global audiences’ attention.

The construction of NZ through the portrayal of ME in the LotR movie trilogy contains PJ’s interpretation which uses NZ scenery as the background of the setting. PJ emphasizes: “The Lord of the Rings remains one of the greatest

books ever written. All I am offering is an interpretation, but hopefully one that will take the fantasy film to an entirely new level of adventurousness and believability” (qtd. in Beahm 64).

The supporting role of landscape and scenery to illustrate the story’s elements contributed to make particular movies become more attractive and more alive. Taglines such as: “*Middle Earth is New Zealand*”, “*The Search for Middle Earth*”, “*100% Middle-earth 100% Pure New Zealand*”; are several promotional taglines provided by TNZ in order to push the promotion of NZ globally. The NZ government even goes to the length of preserving the shooting location of Shire; the Hobbiton. It currently becomes a favorite tourist destination which is hard to miss when visiting NZ. “*‘The Search for Middle Earth’ helps to advertise New Zealand as a fantasy-land and prefigures the project later developed by the extended edition’s documentary features*” (Voci 340).

In recent TNZ website, they campaign to explore the nature of NZ which is constructed as the fantasy-land with a tagline *everyday a different journey*. Moreover, “In 2004, Six percent of visitors to New Zealand (around 120,000 - 150,000 people) cite The Lord of the Rings as being one of the main reasons for visiting New Zealand. One per cent of visitors said that the Lord of the Rings was their main or only reason for visiting” (TNZ Sector Marketing Fast Facts).

LotR movie trilogy audiences are assumed to be two types of audiences, one who is LotR novels reader and another one is a movie-goer who has not read the novels. Then, it turns out that from those two types of audiences, sparks a group of people who is emotionally and intellectually invested in the LotR trilogy

(movie trilogy and/or novel trilogy) to create an online community – society – fandom, where they can share the same interests with other fans. The term “fan” itself is an abbreviation of “fanatic” one who can value and show devotion. Fans further create online communities in which they share their experiences or rework the texts. “Online fan groups originated as a means for providing a niche group of fans of similar interests a supportive environment to interact” (Reysen and Lloyd 293), which in this study is called fans virtual community.

It is participatory culture prior to intense engagement with media done by LotR fans that paved the way for LotR movie trilogy to be successful; active audiences’ activities and interpretations increase the credibility of the movie trilogy. A critical awareness of an increasingly participatory culture in multicultural societies is developed as a tool to explain the success and impact of media in making a culture well known to become popular culture.

This study explores on how fans perceive and define NZ in the LotR movie trilogy before and after watching the movies in correlation with their age and their understanding toward NZ in LotR trilogy; and fans understanding toward NZ in LotR and fans consideration to visit NZ. In order to do that, this study applies qualitative and quantitative data analysis, which uses Audience Research for the qualitative study and Partial Correlation analysis for the quantitative study.

The writer uses mix methods data analysis to avoid subjectivity of the tendency that comes with qualitative data analysis; speculations without facts. Therefore, in order to keep the neutrality, the quantitative data are necessary to be

used to support the explanation of the qualitative findings; to strengthen the writer's arguments.

The purpose of using Audience Research is to get surveys on (active) audiences' value of 'real world' context and the availability of mass data in developing information about human actions. However, these advantages are bought at the cost of a lack of inconclusive endings. So that is why the writer needs to elaborate with the Partial Correlation analysis which has the purpose of most quantitative research studies to investigate a predicted relationship between the occurrence of some variation of one variable: the fans age, fans understanding towards NZ in LotR movie trilogy and fans consideration to visit NZ.

To say that there is a relationship between two variables in the Partial Correlation means that if the state of one variable differs or changes, we can expect that the state of the other will also change or differ. Thereby, the data which are taken from the opened questions of in-depth interview (qualitative) and the closed questions (quantitative) from LotR fans in five Facebook groups are in order to gain strong worthy findings to be analyzed and elaborated.

Library research is conducted through reading from international journals, essays, books, and other related academic resources to support the qualitative and quantitative data. As for the qualitative data analysis, this study uses audience's responses that later is coded by using Initial Coding and Focused Coding (Saldana). The first coding uses Jenkins' themes on Participatory Culture activities. After the first cycle of coding are generated, then the second cycle of coding (Focused Coding) is done to categorize recurring themes that apply on

related theories.

As for the qualitative, the writer seeks the audiences' activities in participatory culture especially their perception about NZ before and after watching the LotR movie trilogy. For the quantitative, the writer wants to correlate between four variables using partial correlation to prove the writer's hypothesis. The older participants are usually the better comprehension one can understand, and the better understanding people get, the more they want to visit NZ.

The writer chose the object of the study because the settings of movie trilogy took place in the whole country of NZ amazed many people in the world. The phenomenon is hard to miss and makes it really interesting to be studied. There are many landscapes, and scenery that awed the writer when watching the LotR trilogy, furthermore it won many awards as well. Its settings embody a great deal of portrayal of scenic beauty of NZ.

The LotR trilogy movie setting comes from the 'well done' representation by PJ, which mostly portrayed the magnificent view and places of ME represented in NZ locations. The role of human's knowledge that helps them to represent the places and NZ's citizen (mostly), putting them in a unique and better position in the world. There is mass media interference that affects LotR's fans in perceiving and defining NZ in LotR movie trilogy.

Related to these phenomena, this study is conducted in order to know how NZ displayed in the movie trilogy is perceived by the LotR fans or active audiences. Baker & Mathijs approvingly quotes Puoroy, who says that: "when



fiction cinema does rely upon real life landscapes, with their own historical and ideological weights, two processes are set in train: the transfer of meaning from landscape to film, and from film to landscape” (qtd. in Baker & Mathijs 108). The landscape could add up the value of the movie on the eyes of the audiences. The particular feeling of enjoying the scenery in a movie can enrich additional meaning whether audiences knew it is a real place or not, and whether the fans would have new definition towards the place or not. “There was an overwhelming consensus that Jackson’s visualization was not only very good, but by far the nearest to what Middle Earth ‘would’ and ‘should’ look like” (Barker and Mathijs 110).

There are many efforts done by fans on presenting ME such as visualizing the locations and landscapes of LotR, from maps, drawings, paintings, and illustrations. The LotR trilogy, novels and movies, becomes long lasting and grows its popularity even more because of fans contributions and their active participation.

There were some differences in levels of participation such as passive and active participation. Further, fans contributions are supported by the technology development. Fans activities and its fandom are no longer left at the computer in home anymore. It is now part of daily life as more people are using technology such as smart phones and laptops. People can access anything from everywhere by a touch of fingertip only.

Technology has enabled fans to spend their daily lives to be within a fandom. In this case, the writer wants to find out fans active role or involvement

(through participatory culture in virtual community) in developing the new image of NZ through its portrayal in mass media.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problems**

Based on the background of the study, the writer formulated the research questions as below:

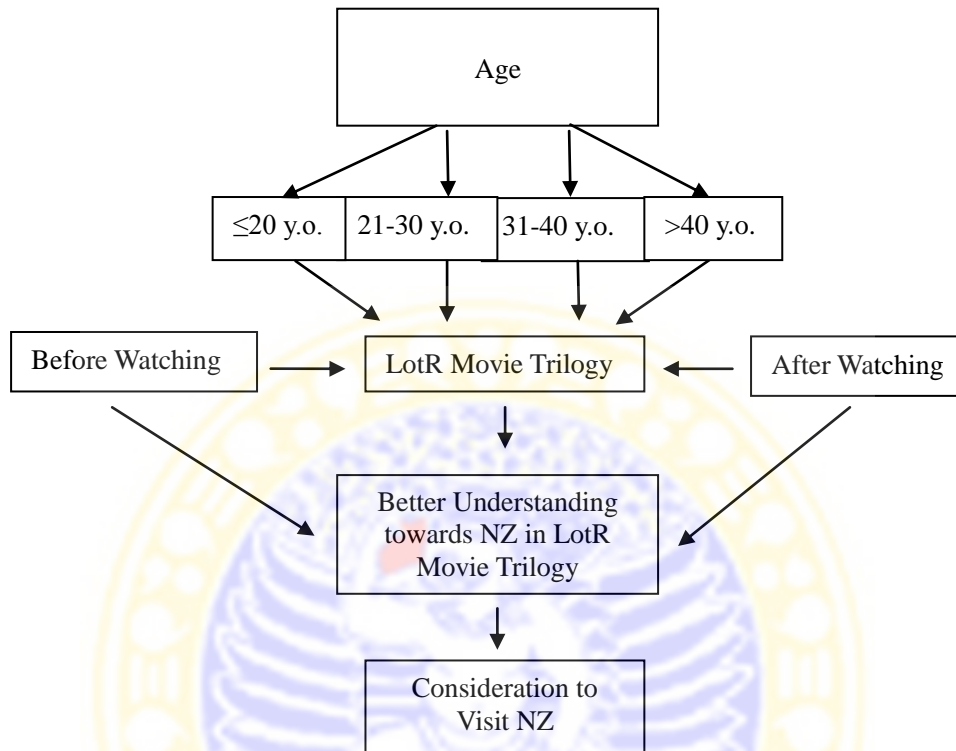
1. How is participatory culture conducted by LotR fans in virtual community?
2. How does ME in the LotR movie trilogy affect the LotR fans in defining and perceiving NZ?
3. Are there any significant correlations between: a) fans age and their understanding toward NZ in LotR movie trilogy; and between b) fans understanding toward NZ and their consideration to visit NZ?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

In connection with the research questions, the writer states the following sentences as the objectives of the study:

1. Revealing the way how Participatory Culture is conducted by LotR fans in virtual community.
2. Revealing the way how ME in LotR movie trilogy affects LotR fans in defining and perceiving NZ.
3. Finding out if there are significant correlations between a) fans age and their understanding toward NZ; and between b) fans understanding toward NZ and their consideration to visit NZ.

## 1.4. Model Analysis



## 1.5. Hypothesis

Based on the statement of the problem number three, the writer can deduce the hypothesis as follows:

$H_{01}$  = Fans age and their understanding toward NZ in LotR movie trilogy has no significant correlation.

$H_{02}$  = Fans understanding toward NZ and fans consideration to visit NZ has no significant correlation.

$H_{11}$  = Fans age and their understanding toward NZ in LotR movie trilogy has significant correlation.

$H_{12}$  = Fans understanding toward NZ and fans consideration to visit NZ has significant correlation.

## 1.6. Significances of the Study

This study aims to inform the readers about how fans are involved in participatory culture in LotR fans activity, specifically in comprehending and defining NZ in the LotR before and after watching the trilogy; correlating with fans age, fans understanding towards NZ in LotR, and fans consideration to visit NZ. The writer hopes that the readers may learn and get better knowledge on the development of media and culture based on LotR fans participation in sustaining and maintaining its fans culture.

Moreover, the writer hopes that the readers can gain information that NZ as ME in LotR movie trilogy has effects on the birth of 'Brand New' NZ and can be a useful reference for those who are interested to analyze this study further. By emphasizing the analysis from the data found, hopefully this study can provide qualitative and quantitative contributions in the field of cultural and media studies, particularly to English Department of Universitas Airlangga, and to anyone interested in learning about Tolkien's works, PJ's LotR trilogy or anything that is related to it.

The finding of this study hopefully can contribute on giving suggestion especially towards NZ government in weighing their ways and strategies on branding and 'selling' NZ in the future related to Tolkien's ME; in making LotR spin-off for example, or filming The Silmarillion in the future - to target the 'right' audiences for its market. Apart from that, generally other countries might also be able to follow NZ footsteps in marketing and campaigning any movie that use certain setting in specific country only.

### 1.7. Scope and Limitation

To avoid widespread discussion, the writer limits the sample for each qualitative and quantitative respondent. The qualitative study which has 29 respondents requires Initiative Coding analysis using Jenkins' themes on Participatory Culture done by LotR fans in virtual community as its first cycle of coding. Then the second cycle of coding is to categorize the recurring themes under the generated codes from the first cycle of coding. The writer also would like to limit the quantitative analysis by processing the data gained from questionnaires which are limited to 79 respondents only. All samples are derived from LotR fans in five Facebook groups.

### 1.8. Definition of Key Terms

**Audience Research:** A research that is conducted on specific audience segments (e.g.: based on sex, age, nationality, spending expenditure) to gather information about their attitudes, knowledge, interests, or preferences. So the researcher gets a better insight from the target audience.

**Fandom:** a social, or collective, identity that can be conceptualized as a sense of psychological connection with other fans as sharing a common in group identity (Reysen and Lloyd). Fandom or fan culture defines its relationship to wider society and creates a group identity and group ideals.

**Lord of the Rings movie trilogy:** Adaptation from a novel with the same title authored by J. R. R. Tolkien, consists of: 1] Fellowship of the Ring, 2] The Two Towers, and 3] The Return of the King directed by Peter Jackson.

**Participatory Culture:** A culture with relatively low barriers to artistic

expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to newbie. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another. Conceptualized as a set of cultural practices such as: expression, problem solving, (re)-circulation, affiliation, transformation, annotating, appropriation, and archiving (Jenkins).

**Virtual Community:** A social aggregations that emerge, when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings that personal relationship webs begin to form the community (Rheingold).

