

# Understanding the Tourist Experience

## **The Case of Outlander**

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**Abstract:** Visiting settings of movies, TV series, or books is now seen as a significant field of tourism studies. Yet little is known regarding how tourists make sense of their travel experience. Thus, this research focuses on the case of Outlander and how fans experience visiting Scotland. Fourteen interviews were conducted with Outlander fans who had visited Scotland during the time of them being a fan. These interviews show that by visiting the place of their fandom, the trip can have a profound impact on their life. Fans already have a deep connection to Outlander before the trip occurs. However, the trip itself deepens their connection both to the series and to Scotland because they have the opportunity to feel the world of Outlander firsthand. On a theoretical level, this paper adds to the literature on fan or media pilgrimages, by showing how the fictional world effects a fan's perception of the real world.

**Keywords:** Media Tourism, Fandom, Imagination, Authenticity, Place

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## **Introduction**

I made it to the top of the rock, and paused to look around. The view was spectacular. The dark bulk of a mountain rose to the east, while far below to the south the foothills ran out into a vast, barren moorland (Allnovel, 2019, p. 33).

I read this quote from the book *Outlander* back in high school, which is when my obsession began. As soon as I was on the bus heading home, I would immediately open the book I was looking forward to reading all day: *Outlander*. Even though it is a lengthy book,

I devoured it as quickly as possible and immediately began reading the other books within the series.

Although the romance between the two characters is a central theme of the books, it was the romantic nature of Scotland that I was truly interested in experiencing and itching to see firsthand. I longed to journey through Scotland, just like the main characters Jamie and Claire had done in the books, and to see the mystical highlands and experience Scottish culture. The clans, the kilts, the accent, all make Scotland an intriguing place to visit because it is completely different from my American background. Also, my Scottish ancestry increased my desire to visit the country and experience part of my heritage. Luckily my dreams came true when my Mom asked me where I would like to travel to as a graduation gift. Scotland, I said!

My experience with desiring to visit Scotland is hardly unique. Scotland is considered to be a tourist hotspot and is currently outperforming the rest of the UK with a higher increase in visitors to its various tourists' attractions (BBC, 2018; Barrie, 2019). This can be attributed to a variety of factors such as the weakness of the pound, the apparent safety of the country, and marketing strategies from within the country (Gallagher, 2018). However, many sources are claiming that the main cause for the increase in visitors is the TV show *Outlander*. Due to the increase in tourists, the phenomenon has been dubbed the "Outlander Effect" by the media (McEachern, 2019). In addition to the media, Scotland's national tourism agency, Visit Scotland, has published a report in March of 2019 devoted entirely to the Outlander Effect (VisitScotland, 2019).

How can the Outlander Effect be explained? To first understand why people are flocking to Scotland because of a TV series, the origin of the show will be examined. In 1991, American author Diana Gabaldon published a book titled *Outlander* (Gabaldon, 1991).

Over the years, seven more books have been written which make up the Outlander Series (Jean-Philippe, 2019). The series is still being written, since the ninth book is rumored to be published in late 2019 (Gabaldon, 2019). Overall, 25 million copies of the books are in print and have been published in about 40 countries (Alter, 2014).

Although the series is popular, it can be difficult to describe the genre of the books, which the author readily acknowledges, as seen in the following quote when she describes the first book:

Frankly, I've never been able to describe this book in twenty-five words or less, and neither has anyone else in the twenty years since it was first published. I've seen it (and the rest of the series) sold—with evident success—as <deep breath> Literature, Fiction, Historical Fiction, Historical Non-fiction (really. Well, they are very accurate), Science Fiction, Fantasy, Mystery, Romance, Military History (no, honest), Gay and Lesbian Fiction, and...Horror (Gabaldon, 2019).

However, it can be argued that the book is more historical fiction compared to the other categories since the majority of the book takes place in 18th century Scotland. The book follows the main character Claire Randal, with the events being seen through her point of view. Claire, a nurse during World War Two, is married to historian Frank Randal at the start of the first book. During their honeymoon in Scotland, Claire accidentally goes back in time through ancient standing stones at a site called Craigh na Dun and ends up in 1743. Unable to find a way back to her own time, Claire eventually falls in love with Jamie Fraser, a handsome and brave highlander, whom she marries.

The success of the book series made it an attractive option to be turned into a TV show because there was already a built in fanbase. Therefore, in 2014, a television adaptation of *Outlander* premiered on the Starz cable network in the United States (Jean-Philippe, 2019). The show, which was also recently released on Netflix (Vincenty, 2019), has become even more popular than the books and due to its success, it has been renewed for two more seasons (Bradley, 2018). Although fans of the books like myself may have visited Scotland after reading the books, it was not until the release of the TV show that Scotland began to see a dramatic increase in tourists (VisitScotland, 2019). This indicates that the TV show is what brought the world of Outlander, and in turn, Scotland, alive for many fans. The scenery, landscapes, and people are discussed in depth during the books, however with the TV show, people can actually see these sites with their own eyes. As Mike Cantlay from Visit Scotland

states, “Scotland really is the star of Outlander and its focus on stunning scenery; romance, adventure and ancestry make it a fantastic advert for Scotland” (Ruggia, 2014).

This is obviously good news for the fans but is also good news for the tourism industry in Scotland. Scotland has prospered because fans long to visit in person the land that they experienced through the media (Donnelly, 2018; Dickinson, 2018). This is even more relevant currently because Outlander fans are experiencing a “drought”. When the show is off the air and fans have to wait for the next season to begin, “droughtlander” occurs. Visit Scotland states that during “droughtlander”:

Fans are looking for activity related to the show, such as attending related events, visiting the filming locations and researching the topics which are reflected in the show such as ancestry and heritage (VisitScotland, 2019).

This quote demonstrates that VisitScotland believes that traveling to Scotland itself can provide a solution for fans who are missing their favorite fictional characters because fans have an opportunity to engage with the story in the ‘place of fandom’ (Booth, 2018).

Fans desiring to visit a place because of a book or movie is hardly a unique occurrence. This common phenomenon, often called Media or Film Induced Tourism, is a widely studied field of tourism research (Beeton, 2016). Scotland can be seen as a prime example of media tourism because of the close relationship between the media and tourism. Previously movies such as *Braveheart* and *Highlander* inspired people to visit Scotland (Martin-Jones, 2014; Connell & Meyer, 2009). In recent years *Outlander*, with its interesting story and vivid portrayal of Scotland, sparks audiences’ imaginations. Thus, it is clear that there are many aspects of Scotland which attract fans to the country. However, it is not as clear how fans interpret their visit. What do their behaviors indicate about their feelings and thoughts? How do people in their own words classify their experience?

Thus, this research addresses the following research question: how do fans of the *Outlander* series ascribe meaning to their experience of visiting Scotland, and in what ways does this relate to their affinity with the series? In order to answer this question, an interview study commenced in the winter and spring of 2019 among fans of the *Outlander* series who had visited Scotland. The analysis of these interviews will be presented within this paper, providing more understanding of the behaviors and feelings of *Outlander* tourists.

This research is particularly relevant because *Outlander* is a current phenomenon. Additionally, the phenomenon is scheduled to continue at least for the next few years based on the fact that the show and books are still in production. Therefore, *Outlander* is proving to have an ongoing effect on the tourism industry in Scotland. Thus, understanding tourist's thoughts and desires can help policy makers better serve their needs and enhance their overall experience. Although from a practical perspective, gaining insight into tourist's feelings has many advantages, it is also important from a psychological point of view. This is due to the fact that travel can be a highly emotional experience for some people. In regard to *Outlander*, fans already had an emotional connection with the series before the actual visit occurred. This research can further our limited understanding of how fandom and tourism connect, and how people find meaning in their travels.

Before presenting the results and concluding thoughts of this research, theories such as postmodernity (Jansson, 2018), authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), places of the imagination (Reijnders, 2009), and destination image (Inglis & Holmes, 2003; Reijnders, 2011) will be addressed under the theoretical framework section in order to connect this research with what has previously been said in the field of media tourism. Additionally, who was interviewed, how people were found, and how the data was obtained will be discussed in the methodology section of this research.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Tourism in Postmodernity*

Tourism practices are not static, they change continuously throughout time. Likewise, the motivations why people travel have also evolved. For example, in the Middle Ages, people mostly travelled for religious reasons. These pilgrimages were a journey to worship at some holy shrine, where the journey was expected to be some form of penance (Sharpley, 2018). However, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, traveling was more likely to be for educational and self-developmental reasons, although only for a privileged minority. Aristocracy sent their sons, once they graduated from university, on a tour of Europe (Sharpley, 2018).

These motivations for traveling still exist, but in today's world, travelling has become much more accessible and with it much more diverse. Modern, mass tourism originated in the industrial, economic and social transformations that occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Enabling factors of time, money and transport technology provided the means for more widespread participation in travel and tourism. This greater number of tourists planned their trips mostly for pleasure or sightseeing (Sharpley, 2018).

Numerous experts argue that we are currently in a phase called 'postmodernity', a term used to describe the changes that occurred during the latter half of the 20th century, when society supposedly shifted from modern to postmodern (Sharpley, 2018). Similarly, tourism changed with it, as "tourism is both a product of modernity and a unique microcosm of the whole post/modern experience" (Oakes & Minca, 2004, p. 280). To understand current travel practices, it is therefore important to define modernity and postmodernity, even though it is not the scope of this research, since postmodernity and tourism strongly influence each other (Oakes & Minca, 2004). It is also important to note, that not everyone agrees that postmodernity has occurred (Harvey, 1990; Sim, 2011), while others believe society has evolved past postmodernity, suggesting terms as super or liquid modernity (Auge, Howe & Harvie, 1996).

Simplistically put, modernity is based on absolute objectivity, expressed in dualisms (black – white), whereas postmodernity is more diffusive (grayscale). Modernity resulted in a separation of rational from non-rational desires, with tourism "as one of the institutional manifestations of this separation" (Oakes & Minca, 2004, p.282). Tourism offered an escape

from the world of work into a paradise of pleasure. However, modern, mass tourism can be seen as an illusion: it promises escape, which is in fact a standardized, carefully controlled simulation of pleasure (Oakes & Minca, 2004).

“Post-tourism” on the other hand is a mode of travelling in which the traveler is aware of the staged nature of mass tourism (Feifer 1985; Jansson, 2018). Moreover, post-tourism is characterized by the blurring of boundaries between tourism and other areas of social life, especially since some of its fundamental preconditions, like media infrastructures, have changed (Jansson, 2018). Post-tourism suggests that the post-tourist starts his travel to a certain extent “at home”, for example in front of a computer screen, consuming sites while being physically immobile. This suggests a growing fragmentation of tourism practices, otherwise known as a de-differentiation between tourism and other social realms (Jansson, 2018), as opposed to ‘traditional’ modern tourism, where someone is only a tourist when on holiday.

Due to the fact that tourist’s actions and motivations are changing in postmodernity, research is quickly trying to classify people’s actions by placing them into different categories. These spheres of tourism have developed because they hope to classify tourist’s motivations for traveling, but also understand their overall behavior (Yiannakis & Gibson, 1992). Yet, this idea of typologies in tourism comes in sharp contrast with the postmodern notion of de-differentiation. This ‘traditional’ modern approach is too stationary as mentioned by Richard Sharpley in the following quote:

There is, however, no room in the typologies for an individual to adopt different tourist characteristics or to seek different experiences according to specific needs and constraints whereas, in reality, the distinctions between different categories are likely to be much more blurred (Sharpley, 2018, p. 114).

Although tourism typologies may be too fixed, the goal of classifying and understanding tourism remains vital. Therefore, it is important to discuss ‘media tourism’ and how it relates to this research. But even though this research focuses on media tourism, it is important to realize that when a tourist engages in media tourism, they might be simultaneously involved in other forms of tourism, like food tourism or heritage tourism.

## *Media Tourism*

As mass tourism was the by-product of modernity, in postmodernity people increasingly find new ways of being a tourist. Post-tourists are concerned with authenticity and therefore search for authentic environments (MacCannell, 1973). In today's postmodern world, authenticity, like tourism itself, has become an ambiguous term due to an increase in staged environments (Wang, 1999; Jansson, 2018; Feifer, 1985). This is important to note because the backlash against mass tourism and types of tourism that are considered inauthentic, make people desire experiences which feel real (Jansson, 2018).

Media tourism is one of the tourism niches that has grown rapidly in recent years (Reijnders, 2011). The locations people see on the screen or read about in books can have a huge effect on their desire to visit that location (Lundberg & Ziakas, 2018). A significant amount of research suggests that more people travel to locations because they saw them on their TV screen or read about them in a book (Booth, 2018). This is because the media is a central facet of daily modern life, and has tricked into many areas, including tourism.

Consequently, a significant amount of media tourism research has been conducted in order to understand the impact that media has on tourism activities (Reijnders, 2009; van Es & Reijnders, 2015; Beeton, 2015). It is also common for media tourism research to focus on understanding the relationship with popular culture and globalization (Lundberg & Ziakas, 2018; Telotte, 2011). Yet, media tourism is a broad term that encompasses a variety of media types such as film, books, theme parks and video games. Sue Beeton explains that:

The relationship between such popular media and tourism is between simply more than movies and TV- as noted earlier, the moving image in all its forms has the potential to move us, and can include computer/video games, film studio theme park 'reality' experiences and even holograms (Beeton, 2015).

In this quote, Beeton does not address books, even though they are a type of media. Instead, Beeton focuses more on the "moving image" and what has been viewed on screen. In addition, Beeton rejects the term 'media tourism' itself, stating that 'film induced tourism' is a more appropriate term (Beeton, 2016). Meanwhile, other scholars prefer terms such as 'screen tourism' (Connell & Meyer, 2009) or 'cinematic tourism' (Tzanelli, 2007). Nonetheless, these various terms describe a relatively similar phenomenon; being influenced to visit a place that was previously experienced through the media (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006).

Although the term media tourism incorporates many different types of media, as seen in Beetons's quote, screen and literary tourism are two subcategories in this field of research. These will be the main focus for this research, because The Outlander Series is both a book series and a TV show. It should be noted that screen and literary tourism studies are highly case specific (Li, Li, Song, Lundberg & Shen, 2017). Although case specific research cannot be directly generalized, knowledge regarding the media tourism phenomenon can slowly be gained, and results between various studies can be compared. Since this research is also case specific, because it focuses purely on the Outlander series, the results of this study can build upon what is already known and help better understanding the phenomenon as a whole.

Not only are screen and literary tourism studies highly case specific, a significant portion of them focuses on high profile cases such as Dracula and Game of Thrones. High profile cases have been consistently researched due to their popularity and profitability. Game of Thrones had a major tourism impact on the places where filming was done. Consequently, much of the research also focuses on the relationship between the media and the economic impacts on a country's tourism industry. For example, Dubrovnik, Croatia, which is used as the location for King's Landing in Game of Thrones, has seen a monumental increase in tourists (Tkalec, Zilic, & Recher, 2017). Not only has tourism increased in the city itself due to some Game of Thrones scenes being shot there, but it has also been observed that there is a spillover effect, meaning that other parts of the country have seen an increase in tourists (Tkalec, Zilic, & Recher, 2017).

Since tourism in places like Dubrovnik have dramatically increased due to movies or TV shows, people begin to associate these places with their respective movies or shows. Thus, another theme of media tourism research is that there is a focus on how media effects a place's image or identity. Research aims to understand the association between destination image and the media, with a significant amount of research showing that the two are directly related (Kim & Richardson, 2003). This concurs with other research about how movies are a new form of cultural landscape because how a place is portrayed in a movie has a significant impact on how visitors perceive the location (Jewell & McKinnon, 2008). Dracula is a prime example of how a book or movie effects how a country is viewed by foreigners (Light, 2007; Tanasescu, 2006). Some of the research shows that although a country like Romania is happy about the positive economic effects, they are not as pleased about how the image of the country has been altered (Reijnders, 2011).

Lord of the Rings is perhaps the first and biggest case that garnered a lot of attention in the media. This is due to the fact that New Zealand saw an influx of tourists from the release of the film because the movies prominently display New Zealand's landscape, possibly inspiring people to visit (Ruggia, 2014). As a result, much of the research focuses on the economic effect on New Zealand from Lord of the Rings tourists (Li, Li, Song, Lundberg & Shen, 2017; Mitchell and Stewart, 2012). It is especially worthwhile researching a case like Lord of the Rings, which are stories which mean a lot to people but were always based in the fantasy world. One could argue, before the release of the respective movies, there was previously not a strong connection to a physical space in the real world. However, with the release of the movies and TV show, fans had a real-life place where they could visit. These filming locations where fans can visit are considered to be places of "media production" (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016) because the media fueled an interest in these locations. In the next section, 'Understanding the Impact of the Media', fandom and its influence on media tourism will be discussed in more detail.

Overall, there has been a significant amount of research focusing on the socioeconomic impact of the media on the tourism industry. However, with the release of John Urry's seminal work titled the "Tourist Gaze" (1990), a gradual shift in research began to occur. Urry's work brings the attention to the tourist's themselves and how cultural stereotypes and other factors influence a tourist's perspective (Urry, 1990). Consequently, in recent years, there is an increasing amount of research focusing tourists and how they act, feel, and make sense of their tourist experience (Reijnders, 2009; Van Es & Reijnders, 2015; Roesch, 2009). However, since research on the tourist's experience is still relatively new, this research can help fill in some of the gaps in knowledge, or back up other research theories.

## *Understanding the Impact of the Media*

Digitalization, mediatization, and globalization have started a new era in tourism and “since the 1970s, it is argued, this differentiation between tourism and other practices has become less apparent” (Sharpley, 2018, p. 61). This de-differentiation which has occurred during postmodernity means that tourism can occupy many different times and spaces (Urry, 1994), and thus it is difficult to separate tourism from everyday activities such as watching T.V. or playing video games (Lash, 1990; Munt, 1994). Therefore, when someone is watching the Outlander series for example, it could be said that they are touring Scotland just by viewing it on the television.

Recent developments in media infrastructures have not only allowed better information availability in the travel decision making process (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014), but also made people in general (co)producers of travel imagery (Jansson, 2018). Moreover, social media platforms allow people to connect in specialized groups of mutual interests, for example to share their experiences with each other. Consequently, questions regarding how people share their experiences and the effect this has on tourism are now beginning to emerge (Chow & Reijnders, 2019; Jansson, 2018).

The internet helps fans from across the world to connect and share their thoughts and emotions with one another. Previously, one’s location may have hindered one’s ability to connect with other likeminded people, however “the internet allowed communities to form regardless of its members’ physical location” (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016). Additionally, locating other fans can be difficult, yet the internet eliminates this problem since there is a multitude of fan groups online. Furthermore, people of all ages can use the internet, and thus fan communities are also not restricted by age. To continue this point, the internet allows for anonymity, so fans do not have to reveal who they are if they are perhaps embarrassed by their fandom.

Fan communities, such as those found on Facebook, come to mind, where people can discuss their fandom with likeminded people. There are different ways in which fans participate. Some fans might be happy with simply reading what other fans have wrote and never writing anything themselves (Duits, 2015). Meanwhile, other fans might be more talkative and thrive off of sharing their experiences (Jenkins, 1992: 2006). The fans that do share “the knowledge, behaviors, emotional investment, and creative production (...) with the fandom community, reinforce fans’ social identity, and self concept” (Booth, 2018). This is

an important aspect of this particular research because the data for this research could not be obtained unless people were open and willing to share their experiences.

Overall, fandom is a complex process that involves a variety of practices. Central to being a fan is an appreciation or reverence for a particular person or thing. An example of this can be seen on Facebook fan pages devoted to the Outlander series, when fans refer to the author as “Herself”; a term that is used to express admiration for her. Fandom has often been compared to religion (Frow, 1998; Jindra, 1994; Hills, 2001) because it elicits an “intense emotional engagement” (Booth, 2018) similar to what people experience from religion. Thus, visiting sites from the media is often defined as a fan or media pilgrimage (Couldry, 2003; Reijnders, 2010), as discussed earlier with the example of the Lord of the Rings.

Since media tourism studies are beginning to focus on how the tourist’s make sense of their experiences, fan studies also need to be addressed. This is due to the fact that fan studies is closely linked to media tourism and is increasingly becoming a widely studied discipline. Fandom is a central aspect of the media tourism experience because fans may be motivated to visit a place that is associated with their fandom (Booth, 2018). Although being a fan is not always the main motivation, it will be examined here due to the fact that it is vital to this research.

The ultimate goal of fan studies is to examine the characteristics and actions of fans (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorff, 2016). Fandom studies have evolved over time, and it is now believed that “fans have become active consumers, if not “prosumers”, pioneering the complex media realities of (post-) modern life through their fandom” (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorff, 2016). Unlike the belief that people passively consume media, recent fandom studies focus on how people actively engage with the media. Furthermore, fan studies generally focus on three topics: fan communities, the creation of fan fiction, and places of fandom (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorff, 2016).

With the focus of new research on the fans themselves, instead of the more common socio-economical approach, new theories based on John Urry’s work the “Tourist Gaze” (1990) begin to develop. For example, many theories now stress the significance of imagination in regard to fandom and places of fandom (Light, 2009; Brooker, 2005). Prior to visiting a place of fandom, fans experience a place mostly through their imaginations. Stijn Reijnders (2009) proposes a new concept called ‘lieux d’ imagination’, or ‘places of imagination’, to give a more complete understanding between imagination and reality:

Lieux d'imagination are physical points of reference, such as objects or places, which, for specific groups in the society, provide the opportunity to construct and subsequently cross the symbolic boundary between an ‘imagined’ and a ‘real’ world (Reijnders, 2009).

Fans can experience places through words in a book or on a screen, yet many aspects about these locations are unknown, so fans can only imagine what they are actually like. Seeing and feeling the places in person helps combine imagination and reality, possibly making for a more tangible experience (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016). Furthermore, Reijnders (2009) proposes that fans search for “points of recognition” when they travel to places associated with their fandom to help connect them to the world they had previously imagined in their minds.

Overall, fan studies have focused more on online communities than on physical spaces (Booth, 2018). Although the internet can be considered a place of fandom, because it is a place where fans can chat and connect, “one might argue: place has become even more important, as a counterweight to the current mediatization of many (fan) cultural processes in our current society” (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016). When fans can actually see the location where the events of the movie, TV show, book or video game took place, they can “experience in the physical world rather than in the imaginary, thus strengthening the connection with the story, the characters, and the fictional world” (Booth, 2018). In a physical space, fans can feel a location, making it an embodied experience (Crouch, 2000). One example of an embodied experience is when fans re-enact scenes from the series, once again showing that fandom is an active, creative and proactive process (Lamerichs, 2018). Yet, what kinds of experiences do fans have in physical places of fandom? How do they interpret their experiences? These questions are increasingly being asked in regard to places of fandom and hopefully this research will shed some new light on them.

## *Investigating the Outlander Effect*

Outlander fans who travel to Scotland because of the series is a prime example of ‘media tourism’. However, since the ‘Outlander Effect’ is a relatively recent phenomenon, there has been little academic research written pertaining to the series. Nonetheless, there has been some research addressing other media tourism occurrences in Scotland such as The Da Vinci Code (Martin-Jones, 2006) and Braveheart (Frost, 2006). Yet overall, there is still very little research on media tourism within the country (Connell & Meyer, 2009; Martin-Jones, 2014).

The small amount of Outlander research focuses on the effect Outlander has had on Scotland, both from an economic and a sociopolitical standpoint. Since as previously mentioned, the economic benefits on Scotland’s tourism industry have been immense, this is a common perspective of Outlander research (Herrero Bas, 2018). Scotland’s national tourism agency, Visit Scotland, recently published in March of 2019 a report addressing the Outlander Effect on Scottish tourism. The report shows that the increase in visitors at certain locations has been huge. For example, Doune Castle, which is a location featured in the show, has seen an increase in tourists of 226%. Scotland’s tourism industry does seem to prepare itself for this growth, the report shows. Ways to enhance the post-tourist experience are discussed such as how to “bring the story to life” and helping guests find “authentic experiences” (VisitScotland, 2019). In regard to a sociopolitical standpoint, there is some research addressing the political impact the series has had on the United Kingdom (Shacklock, 2016).

Additionally, Outlander research has been combined with other examples of literary or film tourism. For example, LuAnn McCracken Fletcher (2018) examines the impact that literature has had on Great Britain and how it influences or shapes how places are viewed. She also applies this logic when examining Outlander by stating that “a recognition of the influence of Scott’s (Sir Walter Scott) and Gabaldon’s fictional histories on the cultural memory of Scotland as it framed onsite and online is worth acknowledging in our contemporary era” (Fletcher, 2018). By comparing Scott’s 19th century works and Gabaldon’s 20th and 21st century Outlander novels, the author aims to show that Gabaldon is in a sense the “new” Scott because her novels greatly affect people’s understanding of Scotland. Other research addressing Outlander analyzes the content of the show, and whether some of the violence and rape scenes in the show are necessary, comparing scenes from

Outlander to violent scenes from Game of Thrones (Frankel, 2016). This research does not focus on the tourism aspect, but instead examines the actual content within the series (Frankel, 2016; Ormond, 2009; Donelan, 2018).

Research has also been conducted how diasporic people, people living abroad, can gain a significant amount of knowledge of their “home” country through reading books or watching movies. This has also been seen with research regarding Outlander and the role that Outlander has on diasporic Scots (Noorda, 2017). Although in the study by Noorda most people are positive about Outlander, some people were more critical of the series, believing that it does not represent Scottish history accurately and is therefore not authentic.

However, just like in previously discussed cases like Lord of the Rings, the experience of the tourists is generally ignored during Outlander research. This is particularly relevant in regard to The Outlander Series, because the Outlander series are currently still happening, with the TV Show producing new seasons every year and the author continuing to write more books for the series. Moreover, even though Lord of the Rings and the Outlander series are both fictional, the first case is based in a mythical world, whereas the Outlander series are a form of historical fiction, possibly enhancing the tourist experience.

Focusing on the experience of the tourist is therefore a blind spot, which this research hopes to fill. Understanding how and why tourists behave certain ways and how they experience traveling are two concepts that are relatively new in tourism studies. When someone reads something in a book or sees something on T.V. or in the movies, why does this inspire them to visit the location in real life? And how is their tourism experience shaped by what they have read or seen? If Scotland can better understand what the fans are doing during their travels and why, the tourist bureau in the country can better cater to the fan’s desires. These questions serve as the main focus of this research.

Lastly, it is important to note that Outlander tourists are for example also interested in their heritage and exploring their roots (Russell, 2008). Thus, ancestral tourism is possible with Outlander because the show “posits a fictional world which invites readers/viewers to reflect upon- or even vicariously experience- their own personal or family history” (Cateridge, 2018). The heritage connection was also observed during this research and will be further elaborated on during the results section.

## **Methodology**

Before analysing the results of this research, it is first important to present how the data for this research was obtained. The reason for this is to make the research deemed credible and verifiable. Additionally, by explaining exactly which steps were taken, someone else would theoretically be able to repeat the research and arrive at the same results.

There are multiple areas which need to be discussed within the methodology section. First, the research method that was chosen and why it was a suitable method will be discussed. My personal connection to the research will also be examined in order to stay transparent. Second, how the research data has been acquired will be addressed including who was interviewed and how they were found. Third, how the investigation was conducted and how the results were reached will close off the section.

The data for this research was obtained through qualitative interviews (Bryman, 2016). Interviewing was the chosen method for collecting data because the research question focuses on fan's experiences with visiting Scotland and how it relates to the Outlander series. Due to the fact that the research focuses on people's individual experiences, interviews are the best way to delve into people's feelings, thoughts and how they give meaning to their tourist experience. As a result, a constructivist approach was employed, since reality is considered to be an active process that is 'constructed' between the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2016). Thus, with an interview, the researcher can establish a connection with the interviewee, hopefully gaining the interviewee's trust and allowing for more in-depth answers to be obtained.

Creating a personal connection with the interviewees would be aided by the fact that I am also a fan of the Outlander series. I have visited Scotland twice in the past ten years. The first visit occurred in 2011 and was directly influenced by Outlander, as mentioned in the introduction. During this visit, multiple Outlander sites were visited such as the Culloden battlefield and the Clava Cairns standing stones, which are prominent locations in the books. Although Outlander was the main motivation for the trip, it was not the entire focus since many other sites in Scotland were visited. The second visit occurred in 2016, and although only Edinburgh was visited, a few Outlander sites within the city were toured.

Due to the fact that I am an Outlander fan and have participated in Outlander related tourism, a deeper connection occurred with the people being interviewed since we shared an interest. Additionally, participants talked openly during the interviews about events that have occurred during the books or TV series and how it relates to their tourism experience. Since

this occurred many times during the interview process, it was useful to be aware of what they were talking about.

On the other hand, one negative aspect is that the interviews may not entirely be objective because I may be seen as too close to the research and subject matter. However, this is a concern with interviews in general because the researcher's opinions will possibly be embedded within the questions that are being asked. Also, another concern is that the interviewer might lead the interviewee on and try to achieve certain results by asking particular questions. Thus, the goal is to remain as objective as possible. Yet, with any type of research, it is difficult to take out the researcher's bias because research is never entirely impartial. It is normal for the researcher to come into the research with a preconceived perspective or expectations for the research itself. Additionally, each person has their own personal experiences which cannot be wholly separated from the data. Nevertheless, my personal connection to the research proved to be a benefit, not a hindrance to the research since it produced high quality interviews.

Furthermore, interviewing was the chosen method because there is flexibility for the researcher and the participants to bring up related topics of interest. Thus, the interviews were semi-structured because it is a more appropriate method due to the ability to freely converse with the interviewees. Additionally, interviewing connected to many of the theories that are being used regarding how people find meaning and interpret their experiences. It is important for the theories and research question to connect to the method that is being utilized. Also, for similar research that examines tourist's and how they understand their experiences, interviewing was the chosen method (Reijnders, 2009; Van Es & Reijnders, 2011). This shows that interviews are considered a reliable method for this type of research by multiple academics, and that particularly in the field of media tourism, researchers are adopting this methodology.

It was hypothesized that the best method to find people to interview who met the qualification of being a fan of Outlander and having been to Scotland, would be to contact people on either Facebook or Instagram. This is due to the fact that many people use social media to converse about their shared interests and discuss their fandom, as mentioned in the theoretical framework section (Meikle, 2016; Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016).

Firstly, Outlander fan pages on Facebook were analysed in order to determine which ones were popular among fans. Some of the pages were observed to be more active than others, with people posting messages daily. Many of these posts received hundreds of responses very quickly, so if one were to post a message about finding people to interview, it

seemed as if many people would respond enthusiastically. This is due to the fact that going on social media on a daily basis makes fans consistently reminded about Outlander, which in turn keeps up their enthusiasm for the series. Moreover, it was an ideal time to post because ‘droughtlander’ is occurring. Thus, Outlander fans will possibly be looking for ways to stay excited and keep the show alive in their imaginations; and talking about their experiences could accomplish this for them.

After the Facebook analysis, multiple fan pages such as ‘Outlander Series Books & TV’ and ‘Outlander Universe’ were subsequently contacted with a request to join. After the request was approved, a post was submitted asking people if they would be interested in having an interview to discuss their experience with visiting Scotland. Since the research question focuses on fans of the Outlander series who have been to Scotland, only people who fit this requirement would be interviewed. Thus, for the selection criteria, it did not matter for this research if someone was a fan of the books, of the TV show, or both, as long as they identified themselves as Outlander fans. Additionally, it was not essential for someone’s motivation to visit Scotland to be exclusively Outlander related, as long as they were fans of the series during their visit. Furthermore, many of the people interviewed were inspired by the books or TV series but did not purely participate in Outlander related tourism while in the country.

Outlander Series Books & TV was chosen as the first place to post because it is the most active Outlander fan page on Facebook with 130,000 members. People post constantly on the page and there are no restrictions with what people can say. Yet, in general most people discuss subjects related to the series. Subjects range from evaluating the TV show and books, talking about their travel experiences, to complaining to other members about how long they have to wait for the next book or season to come out. Thus, it was observed that people are very active on this page and hopefully people would also be enthusiastic about being interviewed. This proved to be true because within a few hours of posting the message, over ten people messaged back expressing their interest in sharing their travel experiences.

Out of the ten to fifteen people that eventually responded to the message on Facebook, personal messages were sent to everyone to confirm if people would be interested in having an interview using Skype or another type of video chat service. Not everyone replied to these personal messages due to the fact that they either changed their minds about being interviewed or forgot to answer the message. However, for those that did respond, it was confirmed through private messaging that they were indeed Outlander fans and had been to Scotland.

After multiple interviews took place, a second message was posted to another Outlander fan page, called Outlander Universe, in order to find more people to interview. Outlander Universe is less popular, with only 50,000 members. Due to the fact that the page has less followers, people generally post less on the page and there are fewer responses than with the Outlander Series Books & TV page. Furthermore, there are rules set up by the monitors of this page that restrict people from discussing certain topics, so people do not converse as freely compared to the other page. Thus, when the message was posted asking for participants, one of the page monitors sent a message reminding me that one of the rules of the page is not to make solicitations, which the post possibly violated. Nonetheless, the post was not deleted, and a few people responded saying they would like to be interviewed.

Overall, fourteen people were interviewed over a span of two months. It was observed by the end of the fourteenth interview that the fans were speaking about similar subjects and that there was no new information emerging. Thus, the raw data was deemed saturated and no more interviews were sought out. It should be noted that everyone who replied to the private messages on Facebook and agreed to an interviewing time were interviewed. Out of the 14 people interviewed, six were from the United States, three were from Canada, three were from Australia (although one was currently living in Scotland), one person was from Belgium, and one Scottish person was interviewed. This speaks to the fact that the series is a draw for people from all over the world as previously mentioned. Additionally, social media can be used to connect with people around the world because Facebook is used globally. However, since the books are written by Diana Gabaldon, an American author, the series does tend to attract a significant number of people from North America compared to other locations (Gabaldon, 2019).

All of the people that were interviewed were women, which is not surprising because the books and TV show generally cater to a female audience, with some reports stating that 64% of the viewers are women (Nededog, 2015). This is due to the fact that there is an emphasis on romance in the show which appeals to women. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for men to be interested in the show, or to watch it with their wives. Furthermore, there was a trend with the ages of the people interviewed with the women being between the ages of 44 and 70; thus, relatively middle aged. Additionally, everyone who was interviewed was generally well educated. Thus, it could be said that the sampling size was limited because all of the participants were similar being that they were all women, relatively the same age, and generally from three different countries. Although there can be fans from the show that do not

fall under these categories, the similarity between the participants demonstrates who the show's main audience is; a fact which cannot be changed.

Interviews were exclusively done online using either Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp video or Facebook's Messenger video chat. This was due to the fact that all of the people who responded to the posts lived abroad, and therefore it was not possible to meet in person. It could have been valuable to the research to have some interviews completed in person, however there were not any local people found who fit the requirement of being a fan of Outlander and having been to Scotland.

Nonetheless, interviewing people online was beneficial because people around the world could share their experiences for the research. Thus, people from different backgrounds can be interviewed which provides more diversity and different perspectives. Although there are many benefits, interviewing people online had some limitations. One problem that occurred during a few interviews was that the internet connection failed at certain points. The result was that the flow of the interview was interrupted because both the interviewer and interviewee had to stop on multiple occasions to wait for the connection quality to improve. Additionally, it can be difficult to understand what someone is saying when the connection is bad, and constantly asking someone to clarify what they said can be irritating for both parties after a while. Although this problem arose on a few occasions, overall Skype or the other video chats that were used proved to be a reliable method.

Another problem that arose during the online interviews was that on two or three occasions, the interviews were interrupted by people in the background. For example, one woman's husband was talking to her during the interview. However, this proved to be beneficial because he had been to Scotland with her, and therefore was able to contribute a bit of his experience with visiting the country. On another occasion, a cleaning lady was cleaning a woman's house, which made it difficult to hear what the woman was saying for a moment. Undoubtedly, being interrupted during an interview is not unique to online interviews because meeting in person at a café or a public space also could be interrupting for the interviewer and interviewee.

Additionally, a problem that occurred during one interview was that the woman felt she could not speak openly about her experiences. This was because the woman's husband was in the same room, and therefore she was reluctant to discuss certain subjects in front of him. Nonetheless, after the interview was finished, she sent a personal message on Facebook to discuss why she did not feel at liberty to discuss certain topics during the interview. This

proved to be beneficial because she was better able to express her feelings with the personal message.

All participants, except for the people living in Scotland, were asked the same basic questions during the interviews, so the data could be properly compared. However, there was a slight variation in questions during the interviews with the two people living in Scotland. They were asked somewhat different questions because unlike the other participants, they have intimate knowledge of Scotland. Therefore, they possibly have a different experience with touring Scotland since their visit is not confined to a limited time period like most vacations.

Before the start of every interview, people were asked if the interviews could be recorded. Additionally, people were asked verbally regarding permission to use personal information, which people agreed to. Yet, it was decided that pseudonyms would be used to maintain anonymity for the participants because some of the interviewees shared very private and emotional experiences during the interviews. As a result, all of the names in the results section, appendix and raw data are fictitious.

Once the logistical questions were asked, the main interview questions began. The interview questions revolved around people's affinity with the Outlander series, their experiences during the trip, and how they reflected on the trip. Lastly, some questions about their age and background were also addressed. Some examples of interview questions include: What do you like about the Outlander series? What are your expectations leading up to the trip? Did the series impact the kinds of places or activities that you did? Did you think about Outlander during your trip? Did the trip meet your expectations? Since your trip, do you think about Scotland or the Outlander series differently? Hence, the goal of the interview questions was to determine why fans acted certain ways while visiting Scotland, and what was their overall experience like with visiting the country they had previously seen on their television screens or read about in books.

After the interviews took place, they were transcribed verbatim in order to accurately analyse the data. Since this research relies on what people say and how they say it, it is therefore important to as accurately as possible record the data. Thus, notes that were made during the interviews such as body language and enthusiasm were also re-written to go along with the transcriptions. Then, each interview was read and re-read in order to obtain some preliminary ideas from the data, so the open coding process could begin.

Like the interviews themselves, coding and analyzing the data is a very personal process (Flick, 2009). Thus, someone's background knowledge and life experiences can

affect how they interpret the data. Therefore, it should be mentioned again that there can be concerns with bias in the coding process. In order to minimize objectiveness but effectively explore the data, thematic analysis was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Open coding took place after the transcription process in order to familiarize oneself with the data. Coding is a lengthy process with multiple steps. Firstly, initial themes that stood out in the data were written down. Two of the initial themes that emerged were fans gaining an appreciation for Scottish history through their involvement with the series, and also fans desiring to ‘feel’ Scotland through re-enacting scenes, or simply engaging with the Scottish culture. Additionally, key phrases and sentences were highlighted in order to quickly identify important quotes from the interviews. Although highlighting noteworthy sentences is not essential for the coding process, it was a personal choice that helped make sense of the data.

After no new themes arose, the data was deemed ‘saturated’. Then, the themes were analyzed to determine how they related to one another and if any patterns could be identified, a process called axial coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1973). After some patterns were identified, the codes were re-analyzed to search for overarching themes. Then, a thematic map of the analysis was created to further examine the codes which were generated and to break down the main themes into sub themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2013). After the themes in the thematic map were examined, the themes were once again reviewed, with each theme being clearly defined and every sub-theme being written down. This concluded the data collection and analysis portion of this research. The next section will explore the themes that were generated and how they are linked to previous theories and research.

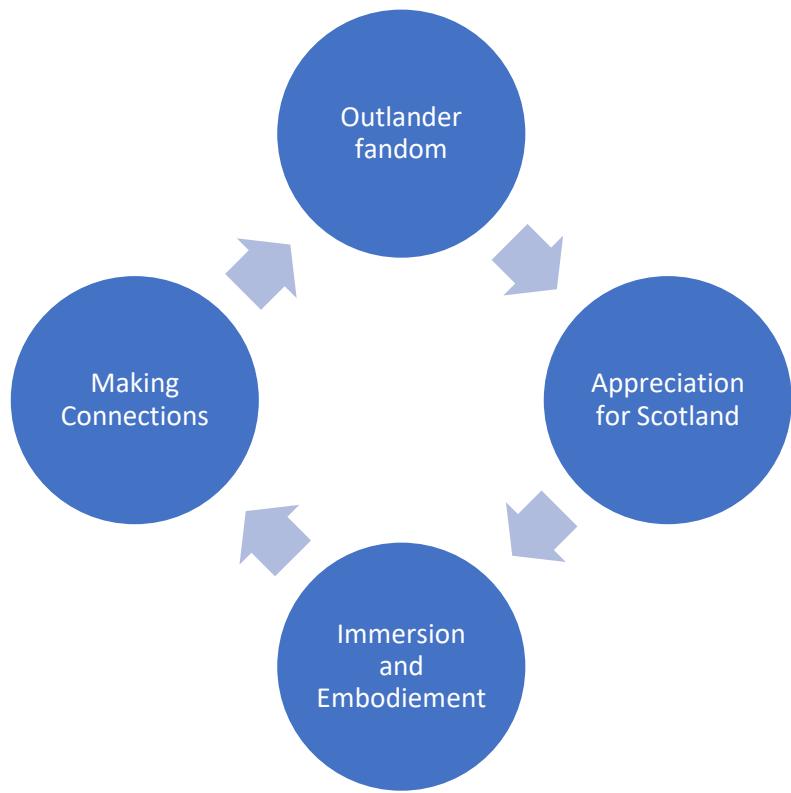
## **Results**

It was kind of one of those circular things. More connected to the country and its history and therefore more connected to the show also (Heather, 60, American).

This quote emerged as an all-encompassing theme of the research. This is due to the fact that this quote clearly demonstrates the direct connection between *Outlander* and an *Outlander* fan's experience with visiting Scotland. The participant identified as Heather uses the word "circular" to indicate she is aware of the connection and has reflected on her travel experience. Thus, she is also aware that her fandom cannot be separated from how she experiences Scotland. Since she has a deeply personal connection to the series, she begins to develop a connection to Scotland as well. This can partially be attributed to the fact that she views *Outlander* as an authentic representation of Scotland. Although authenticity is considered to be a main concern for tourists in an increasingly inauthentic postmodern world (Sharpley, 2018; MacCannell, 1973), Heather does not question the authenticity of *Outlander* and of Scotland because it is thoroughly imbedded within the series itself.

Consequently, when Heather finally gets the chance to visit Scotland, an example of a media pilgrimage (Reijnders, 2010), she fully immerses herself in the country, which is seen as a place of fandom for *Outlander* fans (Booth, 2018). During her visit, she actively engages with her fandom in many ways such as re-enacting scenes from the series, showing that fandom is a creative and productive process (Booth, 2018; Lamerichs, 2018). Upon returning home, her experience with visiting Scotland continues due to the fact that her fandom is stronger as a result of her visit. Thus, every time she talks with other fans and shares her experience, her connection to both the country and the series grows. This confirms again that different societal spheres cannot be separated from one another because 'tourism' is not an isolated experience (Jansson, 2018).

This is a brief overview of one interviewee's experience with visiting Scotland, however her experience is discussed due to the fact that it is not unique. This intertwining of experiences was observed during all of the interviews, even though every fan had a very different experience with visiting the country. The following diagram explores these connections and "circular" process and will further be explained during the body of the results section.



**Figure 1-** Visual representation of the circular process of an Outlander fan's experience

## *Diving into the Waters of Obsession*

As with any type of fandom, people relate to the subject in a variety of ways (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016). Thus, how strongly someone feels about the Outlander series can differ drastically between fans, even though they all might consider themselves to be fans. Nonetheless, everyone who was interviewed had a deeply personal connection to the series which will subsequently be discussed below.

Someone's personal life circumstances highly affected their connection to the series. In many cases, the series provided extra meaning to the person's life:

I think it was the combination of the books and the show and just where I was at in my life. Everything kind of collided into this, I dunno, this big bang thing that just happened... And I mean, I became, I became a truly obsessed fan. It was like, it is very disturbing because I was, like I said, I'm 57 years old. My last, my last celebrity crush was Paul McCartney of the Beatles (Sue, 57, American).

This quote shows that Sue's fandom was surprising, even to her. She calls herself a "truly obsessed fan" which plainly shows that the series has captured her interest on an extreme level. Also, by stating that a "big bang" occurred, Sue is implying that the series had an explosive or monumental impact on her life, although perhaps not on a cosmic scale. She states that it was not one single aspect that created the big bang, but a combination of factors including having read the books, watched the TV show, and her personal life circumstances.

In regard to this combination of the books and the TV show increasing someone's connection to the series, this was observed during many of the interviews. Everyone that was interviewed was a fan of the show, although not everyone had read the books. However, for some people who were fans of the books first, the books provided a certain amount of depth that is not found with the show. For example, the books are quite lengthy and therefore there is more room for character development and background details. Whereas the TV show provides a very visual experience where people can clearly see what Scotland and the highlands look like. This is important because as one interviewee states, "for us, the series (the TV show) was about bringing it to life" (Heather, 60, American). Being able to clearly see the Scottish landscape, hear the accent, and see the characters, was essential for many people because it increased their love for the story. Thus, this combination had the effect of bringing the series more "to life" for many fans. However, since fandom is a very personal

experience, for some fans, just watching the show was enough to create a deeply personal connection.

Furthermore, the other part of the ‘combination’ that is discussed in the above quote is the stage where Sue was at in her life. Outlander was such a powerful experience for her because it provided something that was perhaps previously lacking. She states that: “I think I was coming at a point in my life where I felt insignificant and this gave me, this gave me a, I don't know, focus” (Sue, 57, American). Sue had spent the past twenty years focusing on raising a family, and thus not a lot of time was spent focusing on herself. Outlander became more than just a book or TV series for Sue; it gave her a new hobby, but also a way for her to focus on herself. Due to Outlander, Sue left the United States for the first time in her life and has now traveled to Scotland on multiple occasions. Since Outlander became a substantial part of her life, her connection to the series also deepened as a result.

Another cause of this deep connection with Outlander is that fan’s personal interests prior to Outlander frequently overlap with the series. This will be explained with the following example regarding knitting:

So knitters, there's a very strong overlap between knitters and those who watch Outlander. There's a whole separate subclass of stuff that goes with that. I actually have two patterns that I'm finishing that I want to wear when I'm in Scotland, so I can have my picture taken in front of that place where that piece was, while I'm there (Heather, 60, American).

Heather is an avid knitter who is constantly knitting wherever she goes. Originally a fan of the books, her fandom increased with the release of the TV series because it connected with her interest in knitting. Since there are many knitters who are fans of Outlander, Facebook groups purely devoted to knitting Outlander designs have developed. On these pages, fans can share patterns with other fans. Thus, as Heather says, “knitting was a way we had sort of an intimate connection” because it tied together her interests, which had the effect of strengthening and deepening her bond with the series.

Heather elaborated on this by saying that the show frequently has the characters wearing authentic 18<sup>th</sup> century knit patterns, which Heather and other knitters try to replicate (Avina, 2019). Heather was impressed and surprised upon discovering that the patterns for the show are authentic. Although she did not seek out an authentic experience as is suggested by multiple researchers (MacCannell, 1973; Feifer, 1985), she was nonetheless appreciative

that the series made an extra effort to stay authentic. This also had the effect of reinforcing what she already assumed about the Outlander series; mainly that the show is an authentic representation of Scotland.

Additionally, Heather mentions various fan practices in the quote such as re-enacting scenes from the series and sharing her experience with other people. Wearing a shawl that she made and then getting the chance to wear it where the characters wore the same design can be seen as a form of reenactment, which is a common fan practice (Reijnders, Zwaan, Duits & Waysdorf, 2016; Booth, 2018). Additionally, Heather mentions having her picture taken which indicates that she wants to capture the special moment, but also that she wants to share the experience with other people by showing them the photo. This is also a common fan practice which will further be elaborated at the end of the results section (Booth, 2018; Jenkins, 1992).

Another example of combining Outlander with other interests is when Suzie states that “a combination of my interest in architecture and history and, and the show and everything else, just kind of happily melds together” (Suzie, early 60s, American). Thus, for someone like Suzie who has an interest in architecture, many of the buildings she sees on the show she can also appreciate in real life. This is due to the fact that a large amount of the filming locations that were used for the show are real life locations in Scotland; again demonstrating that the series is seen as authentic in how Scotland is portrayed.

Additionally, the sites look very similar in real life because hardly any changes were made to the buildings (Mitchell, 2019). Meanwhile other shows have to actively work to create a setting:

They do have to change a lot of the series in Game of Thrones or something, you know, they have to CGI or whatever they do. But yeah, it is pretty, I guess, authentic when you go to Scotland (Eliza, 44, Belgian).

This fact was expressed during many interviews because fans of the show were pleased that when they visited Scotland, they could easily identify filming locations. However, Eliza was the only person interviewed, other than Heather, that brought up the word “authenticity” or even seemed concerned about the authenticity of Scotland and Outlander. This is perhaps surprising because authenticity concerns are frequently addressed during media tourism research (Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2018; Wang, 1999; Jansson, 2018; Feifer, 1985). Thus, it should be noted that authenticity was not a major concern for Outlander tourists. This can be

attributed to the fact that the series is based on many historical events, and that sites from the series exist in real life. Therefore, authenticity may not be a concern for the tourists because authenticity is embedded within the Outlander series and aspects from the books and show feel authentic for fans due to their historical origins.

Additionally, what country someone was from, but also their ancestral background proved to be highly significant in regard to someone's degree of fandom and how they connected to the series. For centuries, Scottish people have left Scotland and emigrated to other countries around the world. However, it should be noted that places like the United States, Canada and Australia have particularly high amounts of people with Scottish ancestry (Scotland, 2014). For example, in Canada, "Nova Scotia" means literally 'New Scotland' and it has sometimes been said that Canada is almost an extension of Scotland" because of all the Scottish people and the influence they have had on the country (Scotland, 2014).

This is significant because in the 'Outlander Effect' report that Visit Scotland published (2019), it is specifically mentioned that large amounts of Outlander visitors are from the countries that were previously mentioned. Thus, it is perhaps also not surprising that most of the people that were interviewed were from the United States, Canada, and Australia. Consequently, many of the interviewees had an ancestral connection to Scotland. In some cases, the connection was quite recent because the parents or the grandparents were originally from Scotland. In other cases, the interviewees had a DNA test or had been told that they might have Scottish relatives. Curiosity about the place where their relatives came from made the interviewees nostalgic and drove them to learn more about their heritage (Russell, 2008). As mentioned in the theoretical framework, roots or nostalgic tourism is increasingly popular with people being "driven by a desire to fulfill their ancestral identity by consuming cultural experiences" (Russell, 2008). Thus, the series gives people with Scottish ancestry the opportunity to learn more about Scottish culture and in turn makes them feel more in touch with the series.

It was also observed during the interviews that fans have an interest in Outlander because the setting of Scotland is unlike their own country. In particular, the age of Scotland and how extensive its history is was interesting for fans. The United States, Canada and Australia are all relatively young countries compared to Scotland, and therefore have much shorter histories. Thus, it was observed that fans from country's with short histories, desire Scotland because it provides something that has been previously missing. This can be seen in the following quote, which also reflects the heritage connection:

Yeah, it's fascinating, especially when you come from a country like Australia, where we're only 200 years old and these places are century's old. So it's really fascinating for us. Also because we are descendants (Sally, 47, Australian)

Having ancestors from Scotland made the experience more personal and helped deepen one's fandom. Furthermore, this fascination with a history that is longer and completely different from the fan's country of origin not only impacted someone's connection with the series, but also their experience visiting Scotland. In the United States, Australia and Canada, "there's no castles or anything like that" (Sally, 47, Australian), which makes it a uniquely interesting experience for people from these countries. Of course, Scotland is by far not the only country with a long and complicated history. However, in regard to the series, the contrast between the "known" and the "unknown" overall affected someone's connection to the series.

People have long been curious about the unknown. The 'unknown' has been a draw for people traveling to Scotland for many years. Scotland's reputation as a place of mystery has long been instilled in people's mind. However, this may not be a coincident, but instead may be careful marketing (Inglis & Holmes, 2003). Scotland has been sold as a place of ghosts and monsters, with the Loch Ness Monster being the most famous example. It is now very difficult to change this image in people's minds. The Outlander confirms this image of Scotland as a place of mystery, ultimately upholding the destination image.

## *The Mirage of Scotland*

This personal connection that fans have with the Outlander series directly connects to how someone views Scotland. Fans of Outlander already feel as if they know Scotland well having read the books or watched the TV show since Scotland is the setting for many of the scenes in the series. Aspects of Scotland including the scenery, the people, and the culture are prominently displayed and discussed throughout the series, giving fans a sense of familiarity with the country. Thus, since everyone who was interviewed was a fan of the series, they also became fans of Scotland. The fondness and connection fans felt for the series translated into fandom for Scotland itself. For example, during the interviews, fans commonly talked more about the Scottish people and the beautiful landscape, than about their love for the Outlander series.

This increased appreciation for the country had the effect of increasing fans desire to learn more about Scottish history. Although the book series is considered to be a work of fiction, many of the events in the series are based on real people and real-life events from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was brought up during many of the interviews that the author Diana Gabaldon is known for being an avid researcher and fans admire her for trying to be as historically accurate as possible. This fact about the series turned out to be highly significant because it greatly affected how Outlander fans experience visiting Scotland. Unlike most people who will visit Scotland, Outlander fans already have intimate knowledge of the country's history because of having read the books or watched the TV show, as seen in the following quote:

I mean Diana is the most fabulous descriptive writer. And just how she explained Scotland and everything. So I think the Claire-Jamie romance probably not so much. I think it was more about the story about Scotland and that history and the kilts and all that stuff. Yeah. And all the clans. The fighting. And I know I'd never, I didn't know anything about Scotland and I know Outlander is not an authority on Scotland, the books, but that's how it all started with me. (Joy, 52, Australian)

This quote shows that Joy is particularly interested in the time period that is portrayed in the series: 18<sup>th</sup> century Scotland. Aspects from that time period such as the Scottish clan culture make her intrigued about Scottish history. Thus, her investment with the series leads her to be invested in Scotland and its history as well.

She also mentions that she learned a significant amount about Scotland just by being a fan of the series. This fact was expressed in many other interviews:

A lot of people are educated through Outlander, you know, about the history and what happened and how things went and yeah. Yeah. I had no clue. No clue (Sam, 66, Canadian).

Sam had “no clue” prior to Outlander about Scottish history and therefore Outlander can be seen as an educational tool because people inadvertently learn about Scotland’s history just by being interested in the show. English history is commonly taught in schools around the world, however Scottish history lessons are not nearly as prevalent, even in Scotland itself (Scotsman, 2005).

Thus, much of what Outlander fans know about Scotland is learned through the Outlander series. However, this is hardly unique to Outlander and to Scotland. In many cases, what people know about foreign locations is learned through the media which is why media tourism studies have been gaining focus (Beeton, 2016). Thus, the media has become essential in shaping people’s image about a place (Kim & Richardson, 2003). For example, as previously mentioned, the Loch Ness monster has captured people’s imaginations over the years and because of this fact, it is what most people first imagine when thinking of Scotland. Like Nessie, Outlander is shaping people’s image of Scotland. Therefore, is Outlander becoming the new Nessie?

Overall, Scotland’s history is a central component of the series because real life historical events such as the Jacobite uprising of 1745 effect every aspect of the storyline (Avina, 2019). However, since Scotland’s past is integrated throughout the series, it does not feel like a history lesson is being forced on people, possibly making it a more enjoyable experience. During many of the interviews, it was stated that “Diana has brought history to life for me... So that absolutely awakened a love of history for me. And that was a big, big part of the draw” (Sue, 57). This again demonstrates that people already feel like they have experienced Scotland and have a deep connection to its history by watching the series or reading the books.

Visiting Scotland in person not only helps increase this connection, but it also gives fans the opportunity to show off their knowledge of Scotland and its history as seen in the following quote:

And he's like, well, how did he know all of that? I'm like, well, I've read the books, but then I've gone and read history. So, you know, he was surprised at times that I was

like, oh, well this happened and then this and I went there and these than these (Sally, 47, Australian).

In this particular case, Sally was proud of her familiarity with the country and wanted to share this with her husband. This was also seen during other interviews when fans wanted to exhibit their expertise by telling other fans or friends' facts about Scotland. Having intimate knowledge about a foreign country was a unique experience for many fans and made them feel more cultured. This was particularly noticeable for someone like Sue who had previously never left the United States. By traveling to Scotland, she felt that her cultural capital had increased. Thus, this increased knowledge and interest in history that comes from someone's involvement with the series directly relates to an actual visit to the country. Not only are people already educated about Scotland's history, but the series increases their interest to learn more: "So it's almost like I've gotten more into history and the more I've gotten into this, the more you do it, the more interest, the more you go further into history" (Sally, 47, Australian).

Since the interviewees had an increased appreciation and understanding of Scotland and its history from the series, many of the historical sites in Scotland were highly impactful for them. Undoubtedly, someone who is not an Outlander fan can be impacted by locations in Scotland during their visit. However, being a fan of Outlander meant that they already had an emotional connection with the site as seen in the following quote:

Yeah, because of Outlander, being on the Culloden battlefield is a different experience. I think without Outlander I would have visited and I would have thought, okay, yes, here was a battlefield. But when you're there and you have seen Outlander or read the books, you can imagine. (Eliza, 44, Belgian)

Every Outlander fan knows the significance of the battle of Culloden because it is explicitly described in the series. The Scots famously were crushed by the British in the battle, however, the events that followed are what most people remember because the loss marked the end of the traditional highland way of life, with many aspects of their culture such as the kilts, being essentially outlawed (Scottish Tartans Authority, 2019). Since the series has the main character Jamie fighting, and almost dying during the battle, fans of the series have an emotional connection to the site. Consequently, when visiting Culloden in person, fans are hyper aware of the significance and meaning of the place that they are standing.

## *Tapping into the Source*

Due to the fact that fans have such a deeply personal connection to Outlander and an increased appreciation for Scotland, visiting the country is a logical next step in their fandom because they can engage with their fandom and the country firsthand (Booth, 2018). As VisitScotland states, lets “take the visitor into the center of their fandom where they can experience a new dimension of their favorite TV show” (VisitScotland, 2019).

However, it should be noted that present day Scotland is not a direct “center” of Outlander fandom; it is merely an extension. Although it is the closest place that Outlander fans can experience their fandom, nonetheless, there are problems that fans need to contend with during their visit. For example, fans of the Outlander series are mainly familiar with Scotland in the 18th century, where most of the scenes take place. Thus, even though fans feel as if they know Scotland well, they only know Scotland from a particular time period. Undoubtedly many aspects about Scotland are the same, however many aspects are also different. This is demonstrated in the following quote:

And it's silly because the books were based back in the 1700s or whenever it was.  
And so yes, of course I had this idea in my mind, and it was absolutely ridiculous.  
Really, when you think about it, cause you get over there and it's 21st century (Joy,  
52, Australian)

Although Joy realized it was “silly” to expect Scotland to be exactly as it was in the series, it was difficult to disregard her previous knowledge of Scotland that she had learned from the series. Thus, when fans visit Scotland, they need to use their imagination to bridge the gap between the fictional and real world (Reijnders, 2009).

Although fans engage with the series on a multitude of levels, experiencing the country in person provides a more embodied experience (Crouch, 2000). Instead of just reading about Scotland in the books or watching the series on TV, fans can see, smell, and touch areas of Scotland during their visit, and better connect to the country and to the series. As an interviewee recalls:

It was really interesting because you can say, okay I've stood where Claire talked to the Duke of Sandringham in the red room. You can go out in the backyard, you can say this is where Sam and the other guys did the dual... And I think it kind of makes them a better connection for me afterwards because I can say I've been there. I've seen that (Mary, 45, Canadian)

Being able to feel sites from the series in person was shown to be important to many fans because like Mary said, she can make a “better connection”. Previously, she had only seen sites on the TV, which provides only a limited perspective on the location. Seeing and feeling a site in person can provide more background context to help bridge the gap between the story world and the actual world (Reijnders, 2009).

Additionally, viewing sites from the series in person also gives fans the “ability to visualize. This is where this scene took place, and this is where THIS scene took place” (Heather, 60, American). To elaborate, this means that’s fan can get a “behind the scenes” view, giving them more exclusive information that not everyone can obtain, further immersing them in the experience.

As previously mentioned, there has already been literature written on embodiment and immersion as seen with research pertaining to theme parks:

“Tastes, smells, sounds and physical movements that are part of the narrative world are experienced through the park. This gives them an embodied sense of a story world that, while familiar, was previously only cerebral or audiovisual” (Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2018)

Although Scotland is a country and therefore not a theme park, the two are comparable because both are extensions of a fictional narrative world. Previously, fans had only experienced Outlander through the books and TV series, making it only “cerebral or audiovisual” (Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2018). However, by visiting Scotland, fans are immersed in the fictional world of Outlander by being in the place where the story takes place.

Surprisingly, in multiple interviews, some interviewees made the connection between visiting Scotland and visiting a theme park, with Cammie stating that “it was like Disneyland for Outlanders” (Cammie, 69, American). Most importantly, theme parks are meant to be fun. Furthermore, in a theme park, people are immersed in a world that is provided by the park, but is based on a specific theme, like Disneyworld is based on various Disney creations. Being in Scotland is like being in a theme park for Outlander fans because it is fun for fans to have the opportunity to experience everything Outlander related such as Scottish food, music, and traditional outfits. Thus, every cultural aspect of Scotland provides fans with the opportunity to further immerse and increase their connection to Outlander and to Scotland.

Visiting filming locations is perhaps the most theme park like experience because they closely link to what someone has previously seen on TV as seen with the following quote:

Because I'm a geek, Jamie's house and you know, and it was um, it was just cool to see something from the show that wasn't a set that was just, it was just cool. Like, and you could stand on the steps and be like, oh, they filmed right here. (Kate, 50, American)

Not only is Kate able to see sites from the show in person, but she able to interact with them to a certain extent by standing on the steps where the actors filmed certain scenes. This was also reflected in another quote when an interviewee states that “it was just um, you know, bringing the history to life... and then, you know, going to the actual places where they film, it just, it just makes it that much more real” (Franny, early 60’s, Canadian). The fictional world is being brought to life for the fans by being in the “actual” locations (Light, 2009; Reijnders, 2009), which makes the overall experience “more real” and tangible.

Interacting with sites from the series is an essential part of the experience for many fans because they feel more immersed in the environment. Besides purely seeing the sites, touch is also highly involved during this interaction process as seen with the previous quote. Multiple fans also remarked that one of their favorite sites to visit was the standing stones from the series because they get to see and touch the stones. Although the stones from the series called Craigh na Dun do not exist in real life, there are many real life standing stones throughout Scotland and the UK, with Stonehenge in England being the most famous. VisitScotland’s website has a whole page devoted to standing stones and where to find them. The website states that:

The purpose of these stones is a puzzle that modern day archaeologists can only speculate over; these ancient sites may forever remain shrouded in mystery... Let your imagination take you back thousands of years in time (VisitScotland, 2019).

The “mystery” of the stones is one of their greatest draws because no one knows for sure what they were originally used for or why they were built. The author of Outlander has taken advantage of this gap in knowledge, and in the series has made the standing stones a portal in which people can go back in time. Likewise, when fans touch the stones in person, they are also being transported. However, instead of actually going back in time, fans are traveling to an imaged past: the world of Outlander. Thus, much like Culloden battlefield where fans can

imagine the battle taking place, the standing stones are a portal that help fans immerse in Scotland, and the imaginary world of Outlander.

The main stones which inspired the stones in the series are called the Clava Cairns and are located outside of Inverness. Unlike Stonehenge where you are not allowed to touch the stones, the Clava Cairns are open to the public and fans can actually walk through the stones and touch them. Multiple interviewees remarked that they re-enacted what occurred in the series with the stones:

Yeah, my husband wanted me to pose the way, you know, she goes up and puts both hands on the stones and I just kind of like leaned on it (Suzie, early 60's, American)

Any fan of the Outlander series can immediately picture what Suzie means by leaning on the stones. Because fans can interact and touch the stones, they can also use their imagination and pretend like they will also go back in time. Thus, imagination makes up central part of the embodiment and immersion process, as explained in other research (Light, 2009; Reijnders, 2009). During one interview, one fan stated that she was upset that she was not transported to another time period when touching the stones.

Immersing directly in the world of Outlander by visiting sites from the series may have been an important part of the trip, however fans also indirectly were immersed in Outlander purely by being in Scotland. Thus, for some fans, visiting filming sites was not crucial in the immersion or embodiment process as stated in the following quote: "it didn't matter to me to see some movie sets. It was more to feel the country" (Eliza, 44, Belgian). For Eliza, "to feel the country" meant to travel by foot, just as the characters had done during the series. When asked if she normally takes hiking or walking vacations, she stated that this was a unique trip and her choice to walk was purely influenced by the series. By walking through the country and experiencing the weather, both good and bad, she could truly understand how the characters experienced the country. Whereas driving a car is exclusively a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century activity, walking is not connected to any one century. Therefore, when walking through the highlands of Scotland, Eliza can imagine that she is not walking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but is instead walking in the 18<sup>th</sup> century where the characters from Outlander lived. Although Eliza walking through the country to "feel" it is perhaps an uncommon choice, it nonetheless demonstrates the need for sensory experiences in regard to becoming immersed in the environment.

In many cases, fans were overly successful in bridging the gap between fiction and reality since the two began to overlap as seen in the following quote:

I think a lot of Outlander fans are going there and posing on the Clan Fraser Stone... They are taking it literally the Fraser stone as if it's Jamie Fraser's clan. And I mean, there's no such thing as Jamie Fraser today... Some of the fans are a bit obsessed I think. (Joy, 52, Australian)

This quote demonstrates that fans have such a strong connection to the characters from Outlander that they began to treat the real-life locations in Scotland as if they are also related to the characters. Additionally, Outlander fans commonly leave flowers at the gravestone of clan Fraser, as mentioned during multiple interviews. Although the main character is fictional, did not die during the battle, and is therefore not buried at the gravestone, the fact that fans visit the stone and leave flowers shows their devotion to the character.

Leaving flowers at the stone is comparable to lighting a candle at a church or religious site because both acts show respect and remember ones that were lost. Thus, it is not surprising that fans visiting sites from the media is compared to religious pilgrimages (Frow, 1998; Jindra, 1994; Hills, 2001). However, fan pilgrimages are often viewed as a “solitary undertaking” and “sites are often places for quiet reflection and solitary communing” (Booth, 2018). Although this research confirms that religious pilgrimages are similar to fan pilgrimages, it was observed during the interviews that fan pilgrimages are more of a communal activity that fans enjoy sharing with other people, thus disagreeing with the previous research.

## *Sharing the Experience*

It was clear that people have a passion for the Outlander series, and this affects how they view visiting the country where the series takes place. One of the main themes that was observed during the research is that people do not like to keep their travel experiences to themselves. They have a need or desire to share their experiences with others. This is undoubtably not unique to this study. It has been observed with a variety of fandom studies that sharing the experience is a central part of the experience itself (Jenkins, 1992: 2006). Thus, it should not be surprising that during people's trips and after their trips, they would want to share their travel experience with friends, family, and even strangers. There could be many purposes of this activity of sharing. In some cases, the interviewees were sharing their experience as a way to reminisce about their trip. By sharing pictures or talking about their trip, it was a way in which they could briefly relive the trip and their experiences. Thus, the trip does not have to end in someone's mind even after returning home. A fact which reinforces the notion of dedifferentiation and the merging of societal spheres (Sharpley, 2018).

As previously mentioned, people also like to "show off" their Outlander knowledge as a way of increasing their social or cultural capital. This also applies when sharing experiences from their trip. For example, on Outlander fan Facebook pages, it is common for people to post pictures of them visiting Outlander sites as a way to share their experience with other members of the group, even though most of the other members are strangers to them. This is one of the unique aspects of fandom because without knowing someone directly, people feel like they already have a connection due to their shared interest (Booth, 2018).

Additionally, the interviewees frequently talked about the friendships they had made with other fans and how these friendships had drastically changed their lives. It also seemed surprising to some of the interviewees the connections they had made with other fans as seen in this quote: "that's the weird thing about this whole fandom thing is the friendships you make along the way" (Sue, 57, American). In many cases, the friendships that were made were more significant than the trip itself. For instance, Sue had made many foreign friends during her first Outlander trip and was invited back to Scotland to stay with them. Thus, her Outlander experience is continuous because she is constantly reminded of her journey by staying in touch with other Outlander fans.

Furthermore, after one of the interviews took place, one of the interviewees still felt that she had not expressed enough during the interview how life changing the experience was and the connections she made during the trip, as seen in the following quote: “while in Scotland I met a lot of new people and formed new friendships that I still maintain today” (Mary, 45, Canadian). Mary’s Outlander friends helped her feel that she belonged to a community, and thus gave her a sense of belonging. This demonstrates that the experience was not fleeting, but instead had a lasting impact on her life. A fact which was commonly discussed during all the interviews.

Although posting on the Facebook fan pages was not commonly mentioned during the interviews, posting pictures on their individual Facebook pages was mentioned frequently. Sally, an Australian woman, stated: “I posted every day on Facebook cause some of my friends are Outlander. And so they were just loving seeing the photos and they were all having a big laugh” (Sally, 47, Australian). Thus, Sally was eager to share photos with her friends as a way of including them in her experience, but also to increase her Outlander connection with them. Sharing photos on Facebook or Instagram can also be seen as part of a daily travel ritual. Furthermore, in today’s postmodern society, being able to go on social media and engage with people from back home while traveling means that someone is never completely isolated while traveling (Sharpley, 2018).

It was also important for the interviewees to post pictures of sites that would be easily recognizable for other fans. For example, one of the most significant places in the series is the house where the character Jamie has his family home, called Lallybroch. However, scenes from the show are shot at a place called Midhope Castle, which is meant to represent Lallybroch. Many of the people who were interviewed stated that they were particularly excited to see the site because of the significance it had for the character. Additionally, the site is one of the best recognizable sites from the show as seen in the following quote:

And then of course I had to post on Instagram cause all my friends that watch were like, Ooh, you’ll have to send us pictures. So, I had one where I was walking up to Midhope castle and it’s like, Where am I? And of course, right off the bat, everybody’s like, oh my God, you’re at Lallybroch! (Mary, 45, Canadian)

Midhope Castle, like many other sites from the show, looks the same in person as it does on the television. Thus, it is interesting to note that when Mary’s friends commented on her pictures, they immediately called it Lallybroch, even though that is not the site’s real name.

This once again shows that imagination and reality often overlap because people get lost in the world of Outlander. Although Outlander is only a book series and TV show, it takes on a life of its own for many people, thus breaking the imagination barrier. Places that exist in real life lose some of their own identify because they gain the identity that the series has implanted in people's minds.

## **Conclusion**

Postmodern society provides people with travel opportunities which were previously unimaginable. Yet postmodern tourists are increasingly being presented with new challenges such as identifying authentic experiences (MacCannell, 1973). As a backlash to mass tourism practices, media tourism and other types of niche tourism are seen as authentic alternatives that tourists crave (Sharpley, 2018). However, are tourists searching for authenticity or something else entirely? To determine what fans of the Outlander series think and feel, and therefore what they desire, this research focused on how fans assign meaning to their experience of visiting Scotland, and in what ways it relates to their affinity with the series.

In order to answer the main research question, interviewing was the chosen method for gathering data. Interviewing was a valuable research method because it allowed for in-depth probing into fan's thoughts and experiences. Overall, fourteen Outlander fans were interviewed over a span of two months. Since the women interviewed were from three different continents (North America, Europe, and Australia), interviews were conducted using Skype or other forms of video chat. Thus, people from different countries and different backgrounds could be interviewed, further diversifying the research. This also speaks to the fact that Outlander is a global phenomenon and fans from around the world are drawn to Scotland. Particularly for fans from Australia, visiting Scotland requires a large investment. Thus, it is important to fully understand their motivation for going and if the trip met their expectations.

Yet research regarding fan pilgrimages and how fans experience visiting a place they had previously experienced in the media are limited due to the fact that research is only beginning to focus on tourist's experiences (Booth, 2019; Reijnders, 2010; van Es & Reijnders, 2015). Thus, the goal of this research was to gain a more thorough understanding of how Outlander fans experience visiting Scotland.

Firstly, the results of this research show that Outlander is not just a book or a show for many fans but has become a fundamental part of their lifestyle. Fans experience a deep connection with Outlander because it affects each person in very personal ways. Fans are able to connect with the show in a variety of ways due to the fact that the show incorporates many genres such as fantasy, historical fiction, and romance; thus, appealing to a wide audience. Therefore, fans that are into knitting, architecture or history can all find common ground in Outlander because it connects to their previous interests. Additionally, Outlander provides a

way in which fans can explore other cultures; ideal for fans with Scottish heritage. Overall, fan's investment with the show can partially be attributed to them inherently believing that Outlander is an authentic representation of Scotland.

Secondly, the deep connection that people have with the series increases their appreciation for Scotland. Although Scotland is not always the main setting in the series, it still plays a vital role. Scotland may just be the 'setting', but because of the series and how it is portrayed, it comes to life for the fans. Thus, Scotland is not just a place for the fans; Scotland is a being with its own identity and energy. Due to the series, fans have a better appreciation of Scotland's history, its people and its scenery. It was obvious after the interviews that the fans had a better understanding of the country due to their association with the series.

Thirdly, due to the strong emotional connection with the series and with Scotland, fans could truly immerse in the country during their visit. For fans, Scotland is seen as a vessel for pure Outlander fandom. It contains everything a fan could dream of. As a result, fans sought out embodied experiences in order to feel the country and connect with their fandom. When fans are experiencing locations from the series, a leap of imagination was needed in order for the real world and the fictional world to combine (Light. 2009; Reijnders, 2009). As a result, in certain locations, like at the standing stones or Culloden battlefield, the real world and fantasy world overlapped.

Lastly, visiting Scotland had the effect of reenergizing a fan's fandom and getting them even more excited for the series. People could tell their friends they had seen sights from the show and present pictures proving that they had stood in the same location where the actors stood. Fans commonly engaged in fan practices such as sharing pictures online in order to share their experiences with other people; thus, easing the pains of 'droughtlander'.

Overall, the results show that each experience is intertwined and cannot be separate from one another. Although Outlander is a work of historical fiction, fans learn about Scotland since they deem Outlander to be a credible and authentic source of information. Thus, it follows that the fictional world that fans experience from Outlander directly effects a fan's perception of the real world. This research connects to existing concepts such as places of the imagination (Reijnders, 2009), destination image (Reijnders, 2011) and embodiment (Waysdorff & Reijnders, 2018) which have previously been explored in cases of media tourism. However, this research brings more validity to the theories because what has been

observed with other cases has also been observed with this research. Moreover, this research has many positive points because it adds to the field of media tourism studies and the recent emphasis on the tourist experience. However, there are some limitations for the research that need to be addressed.

As mentioned in the methodology section, only people from Facebook fan groups were contacted. Thus, it could be said that people who join fan groups are more on the extreme end of fandom and are therefore more motivated to visit Scotland than an “ordinary” fan. However, it was observed during the interviews that there was a range in how excited people were about the Outlander series. Therefore, not everyone was on the extreme end of fandom; some people were purely just interested in sharing their travel experience, and in many cases, their trip to Scotland did not revolve completely around Outlander.

Additionally, in regard to media tourism studies as a whole, this research could be criticized for being western centric like the majority of media tourism research (van Es & Reijnders, 2015; Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2018; Orr, 2018). Although there is research emerging which focuses on nonwestern locations such as Asia (Chow & Reijnders, 2019) and Latin America (Hernandez-Garcia, 2013), it is still relatively a new field. Thus, additional research needs to be done in this regard. Furthermore, this research purely focuses on Scotland and Outlander fans experience with visiting the country. This research, like other media tourism research, is case specific and cannot be generalized to all media tourism situations. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, this research confirms other theories, demonstrating that although it is based on one particular case, themes between different types of research are prevalent.

Overall, since this research was limited with its scope, more research needs to be done to fully understand the tourist’s experience in regard to media. Since there are some limitations for this research, future research could be beneficial. For example, since some of people’s motivations for traveling to Scotland were not purely Outlander focused, it could be beneficial in the future to have more of a limit on the people who were interviewed. Also, just interviewing fans of the books or fans of the TV series could be an option to determine how their experiences differ.

Alternatively, it could also be beneficial to expand the scope of the participant pool by interviewing people who had seen Outlander and been inspired to go due to the scenery, but who did not classify themselves as a fan of the show. Further research would also need to be

done to determine how periods of ‘drought’ effect someone’s fandom and desire to visit the country. Since this research did not specifically focus on fans visiting Scotland as a way of coping with the TV show being off air and waiting for the next book to be published, it cannot be confirmed that ‘drought’ increases someone’s motivation to visit the country.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interviewees information (pseudonyms used):**

- Jamie: 52 years old, Australian, Female
- Heather: 60 years old, American, Female
- Mary: 45 years old, Canadian, Female
- Kate: 50 years old, American, Female
- Cammie: 69 years old, American, Female
- Franny: Early 60s, Canadian, Female
- Suzie: Early 60s, American, Female
- May: 51 years old, American, Female
- Katherine: 57 years old, American, Female
- Sam: 66 years old, Canadian, Female
- Eliza: 44 years old, Belgian, Female
- Margaret: 52 years old, Australian, Female
- Sara: 50 years old, Scottish, Female
- Sally: 47 years old, Australian, Female

### **Interview Questions:**

- How long have you been a fan for?
- What draws you to the Outlander series? What do you connect with?
- Is the same true with Scotland?
- What were your expectations leading up to the trip?
- What were you most looking forward to?
- What was your main motivation for visiting Scotland?
- What was your overall experience like with visiting Scotland?
- What activities did you do while you were there?
- Did you think about Outlander when you were there?
- How did you plan your trip?
- How did the people you went with like the trip?
- Did the trip meet your expectations?
- Since going, do you think about Scotland and the series differently?
- What would you do differently a second time?