HENRIK LINDEN
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FANS AND FAN CULTURES

Tourism, Consumerism and Social Media

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Henrik Linden • Sara Linden

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Tourism, Consumerism and Social Media

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For Bengt Lindén

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1

Introduction

An interview in 2016 in *The Guardian* with American director, screenwriter and producer JJ Abrams starts with the interviewer, Jonathan Bernstein, explaining that "JJ Abrams isn't just a geek" as he knows how to incorporate "intimate character moments" into his work (which "elevates" him "above the geek herd"). The piece ends with Bernstein showing how Abrams took an "awful question" (Abrams was asked if he believes he has made—or will make—anything as good as the films, TV programmes and books that inspired him) and "turned it into an opportunity for a candid, vulnerable moment," which is put forward as "the reason JJ Abrams isn't just a geek" (Bernstein 2016, pp. 8–11). The term "geek" is not otherwise used in the article—instead the term "fan" is used, with Abrams stressing how grateful he is for the "passionate and obsessive" *Star Wars* fans who are "so involved" with the franchise, and stating: "I'm one of them" (Bernstein 2016, p. 10). However, the explicit separation of the successful Hollywood director from the "geek" fan—not once, but twice—implies that there is a tendency in public discourse to continually refer to, at least certain types of, media fans as "other" and, in fact, less-rounded human beings inept to deal with the full range of emotions.

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In his book *The Culture of Narcissism*, first published in 1979, Christopher Lasch critiques what he sees as the narcissistic nature of consumer capitalism in America, and the increasing difficulty for "the common man" to come to terms with "the banality of everyday existence" (Lasch 1979, p. 21). To counter this "banality," Americans have thus become "a nation of fans, moviegoers" and mass media is said to "intensify narcissistic dreams of fame and glory" (Lasch 1979, p. 21). This implies that Lasch makes a direct connection between narcissism and fandom, and this connection has been made by many authors since. For example, in their chapter "The Online Community: Fan Response of *Community's* Unlikely Fifth Season," media researchers Matthew Collins and Danielle Stern (2015) argue that their findings confirm that at least some fans of the American television sitcom *Community* can be classified as narcissistic, as they want to "see themselves" within the show. They write: "These fans feel that *Community* is a smart show, and that they are smart people, and they have to tolerate and put up with anyone else who does not enjoy the show" (Collins and Stern 2015, p. 120). A study conducted in a different field, psychology, argues that one of the reasons for people to engage in geek culture may be to "maintain narcissistic self-views" (McCain et al. 2015). The study concludes, rather bluntly, that the "findings suggest that geek media is especially attractive to narcissists, independent of demographic variables." It further states that "we have also found geek engagement to be related to subclinical depression, making it potentially relevant to clinical psychologists as either a cause or a potential remedy for depressed mood." Although this study springs from a field that has not particularly engaged with geek culture previously, it also confirms the often fairly conservative nature of science studies, adhering as it does to a traditional—and largely outdated—conception of fans as "ill" and in need of treatment to overcome the obsession with their object of fandom (so that they can direct their attention towards more important things). It is therefore not surprising that the study gained widespread media publicity, with articles appearing in *The Independent* as well as *The Daily Mail*, the latter stating that "it seems those who have taken part in the mass outpouring of geek culture surrounding the new *Star Wars* films have merely been pandering to an ingrained tendency for narcissism" (Gray 2015). In the first wave of fandom studies in the

early 1990s, Joli Jensen argued that the dominant discourse defines fans as different from "people like us," which explains why these newspapers were quick to report this particular story: "Once fans are characterized as deviant, they can be treated as disreputable, even dangerous 'others'" (Jensen 1992, p. 9).

Society at large, it is said, has become more narcissistic (see, e.g., Twenge and Campbell 2009). This is most likely true. The fast growth of social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, clearly points to this, in addition to the increasing embrace of microcelebrity culture (Marwick 2013). It is therefore questionable whether or not engaging in geek culture can be singled out as being more narcissistic than, for example, engaging in politics, banking or sport, or simply using a Facebook page for self-promotional purposes.

Cornel Sandvoss (2005) provides a more nuanced discussion of fandom in relation to narcissism, and finds that narcissistic tendencies do not have to be a neurotic symptom only, but could also provide a catalyst for social progression. Through various forms of self-reflection, fans interact with their object of fandom in what Anthony Giddens (1991) would refer to as self-reflexive manner, forging dialogical relationships which open up new spaces for the formation of self in relation to others. Thus, the one-dimensional nature of engagement with the fan object is, if not avoided, at least augmented through reflexive practice. However, if the objects of fandom exist within a neoliberal consumer system, it is questionable whether these, what could be seen as co-creative, spaces oppose the status quo of the consumer society:

> To the degree that objects of fandom are rooted in existing systems of consumer capitalism, fans' narcissistic self-reflection neither overcomes oppositions to nature nor erodes surplus repression, but leads to the further integration of the self into a one-dimensional society. Thus it is not only in narcissism as a process, but in its symbolic basis, that its social and cultural consequences lie. (Sandvoss 2005, pp. 162–163)

All experiences are deemed equal in a world dominated by the urge to consume anything and everything in pursuit of fulfilling our ultimate duty: to be happy. Of course, a consumerist society is built on the myth

of happiness—an elusive yet seemingly achievable state—through the means of consumption. When the French theorist Jean Baudrilliard first published *The Consumer Society* in 1970, he had naturally not seen the impact of Web 2.0, but the integration of social media into most parts of our lives makes his theory of "the consumer society" even more relevant today than in the predigital era. Baudrilliard (1998, p. 80) pointed out that—as part of our fulfilment as consumerist citizens—we are prepared to "try everything, for consumerist man is haunted by the fear of 'missing' something, some form of enjoyment or other." The worry of "missing" something is very much present in the thoughts of self-proclaimed "millennial" Aarick Knighton (2015, p. 19), as he attempts to fight his social media addiction, which he likens to a car crash: "We have more important things to do, but social media has become like a car crash. For some reason we just can't look away."

In recent business and marketing literature, there is little agreement on exactly what consumers and customers are to be called—other than the tendency to label them *anything but* consumers or customers—with descriptors ranging from "followers" to "brand advocates" to "fans," even *raving* "fans" (see, e.g., Fuggetta 2012; Hill 2012; Kozinets 2014). Even the few examples above indicate that there are different levels to being a consumer, ranging from *following* (taking a keen interest in) to *advocating* (influencing others and "talking up" the brand at every opportunity). The *ideal* consumers are active "co-producers" with large networks of friends and associates—with "followers" of their own. This places certain demands on the consumer—he or she needs to participate and co-create the product and experience, as well as market it actively and passionately. The new contract between the producer and the user stipulates that the customers have to fulfil "their side of the deal"—that is, they have to spread the word and prolong—and *amplify*—the "text."

This book is interdisciplinary in nature through necessity, as it is an attempt to present an overview of fans and fan cultures in relation to a number of different fandoms and approaches to analysing consumer culture. John Storey tells us that "an object of study will look very different in different contexts" (Storey 2010, p. 173), and this is something we have come to understand more clearly as the work has progressed. While accepting that seemingly such diverse areas of fandom as media fandom

(e.g., television and film), music (Elvis Costello to the Eurovision Song Contest), sport (in particular football), travel (travel blogs, fan pilgrimage, food and fan destinations) and what is often referred to as "brand" fandom (is it possible to be a fan of a washing machine brand or bank?) do in fact have many common denominators, there are also important aspects that set them apart. While it is certainly an impossible task to cover the full scope of fandoms, fan culture, fans and fan communities, at least this book serves as an attempt to give an overview of some of the possibilities available to scholars, fans and brand managers alike. More than anything it serves to illustrate how diverse the field surrounding fans and fan cultures is, and that there are many coexisting discourses where the fan is talked about and addressed—and *participating*—in multiple different ways.

Chapters 2–4 will predominantly focus on setting a theoretical "scene." Chap. 2 will explore what it entails to be a fan, follower and brand advocate, and how aspects such as brand fandom, co-creation and list making are interconnected and contribute to the increasingly complex web surrounding the classification of fans, and what motivates people to participate in fan activities. In Chap. 3, we will continue to take an inclusive approach to concepts such as fans, fan cultures, fandoms and fan communities—and the chapter further explores similarities and differences between "traditional" fans and "brand fans," but with greater emphasis on (post)subcultural aspects and fans as consumers in a capitalist consumer society. In Chap. 4, we will give some background to concepts such as text, discourse and representation, as these are all important theoretical tools that will help us understand how and why fans are perceived as deviant in some media and public discourse, while they are regarded to be ideal consumers from a marketing and business point of view.

In Chap. 5, we take a closer look at how mass celebrity culture emerged, and the role celebrity plays in contemporary culture—with particular emphasis on how it relates to film and television, and the participatory culture surrounding film fandom. Chap. 6 provides insights into fandom-generated tourism, and brings some seemingly disparate areas together under the umbrella of *fan tourism*. For example, how are concepts such as fandom, fans, travel, social media, pilgrimage, niche

tourism, microcelebrity and destination branding connected? Why are we drawn to certain places because of their status as significant in the lives and worlds of our objects and subjects of fandom—from a fictional as well as a "real life" point of view—and what may these tourism experiences look like? In Chap. 7, we look at various aspects of sport fandom, such as motivations, representations and digital media, with particular emphasis on football and how the commercialisation of the football industry has affected fans and their relationships with their club. The end of the chapter is devoted to West Ham United fans and sense of place and belonging, due to the club's move to a new stadium in 2016. Chap. 8 covers some aspects of popular culture fandom, to illustrate how diverse this field is. In particular the music examples are linked to fan engagement on social media, but rather than treating these online fan activities as expressions and performances of homogenous "communities," we will view them as rather casual points of individual engagement with fellow fans and the artists or "scenes" they support.

In Chap. 9, we will look more closely at an aspect of contemporary life that we touch upon throughout the book: social media and how it relates to being a fan, and how companies use Web 2.0 technologies to further their relationships with fans—particularly millennials—and better understand them as consumers. We will also reconnect with some of the concepts discussed in the earlier chapters, particularly the discussions surrounding brand fandom and consumer culture—which will be further linked to aspects of social media usage and fan behaviour. What follows in Chap. 10 is a summary of the key points, ending with some concluding remarks on what the broadening of the fan concept—in the era of social media, with an increasing focus on fans as consumer segments—has meant for our current understanding of fans and fan cultures.

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2

Fans, Followers and Brand Advocates

Most texts on fans and fandom begin with a section that explains that the perception of fans and fandom has changed, but that traditional views of fans as "other" are difficult to get rid of. If we are to trust Comedy Central, we have entered a "new era of fandom"—as "nowadays," it is proclaimed, "You can be a fan of almost anything" (Guerrier 2015).

With that statement in mind, this chapter will explore what it entails to be a fan, follower and brand advocate, and how aspects such as brand fandom, co-creation and list-making are interconnected and contribute to the increasingly complex web surrounding the classification of fans and the motivational background to participating in fan activity. Like Chaps. 3 and 4, this chapter will predominantly focus on setting a theoretical "scene," but examples will be given of specific fan practices, where relevant.

The Fan as Consumer, and the Consumer as Fan

In his afterword to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington), Henry Jenkins (2007) discusses possible names to give to consumers, and

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argues that the new type of consumer that emerged with the Internet in fact shares most of its characteristics with the fan. Terms such as "media-actives," "loyals" and "influencers" are mentioned, and Jenkins calls attention to the fact that fans are usually early adopters of new technologies, which means that they are important trendsetters and drivers of popular culture. While Chris Anderson's (2006) theory of the "long tail" of niche products shows that the power of the consumer has increased through the spread of the Internet, offering customers more choice—as they are no longer left at the mercy of the mainstream—the Internet has also contributed to creating a culture of least resistance, as it takes less of an effort to find and access "obscure" or "niche" music and other forms of media products. This faster and easier access has also facilitated an increase in the *sharing* of information about media content, often by so-called multipliers. These multipliers, according to Jenkins (2007, p. 359), are "fans that don't fit the stereotypes." They are not merely consumers, as Grant McCracken points out; they "participate in the construction of the brand" (McCracken 2005, cited in Jenkins 2007, p. 359).

Although Jenkins noted in 2007 that this new breed of consumers resembled fans, he most likely did not foresee that in this "new economy" consumers would so frequently be *referred to* as fans or potential fans. In fact, fans have become central in the creation as well as marketing of popular culture products. This is the ultimate victory for the fan, it seems. Much has changed since 2007 and Jenkins himself—albeit still an optimist when it comes to the potential of fan networks (see, e.g., Jenkins et al. 2016)—has highlighted the limitations of fan power. This belief in fandoms as instigators of change has also been criticised by Christian Fuchs (2014), who argues from a critical theory perspective that there are downsides to some aspects of participatory culture (such as the exploitation of fan labour) and that Jenkins places too much significance on the importance of popular culture.

In recent business and marketing literature there is little agreement on exactly what consumers and customers are to be called—other than the tendency to label them anything *but* consumers or customers—with descriptors ranging from "followers" to "brand advocates" to "fans," even *raving* "fans" (Blanchard and Bowles 2011; Fuggetta 2012; Hill 2012). The examples above indicate that there are different levels to being a con-

sumer, from those taking a keen interest in a brand, or *following* it, to those influencing others and "talking up" the brand at every opportunity, or *advocating* it. The *ideal* consumers are active "co-producers" with large networks of friends and associates—with "followers" of their own. This places certain demands on the consumer—he or she needs to participate and co-create the product and experience, as well as market it actively and passionately. The new contract between the producer and the user stipulates that the customers have to fulfil "their side of the deal"—which means that they have to spread the word and prolong the conversation, thus *amplifying* the reach of the brand. In this context, the "consumer-as-fan" is an "advertiser, entrepreneur, marketer, and producer" (Kozinets 2014, p. 170). In a consumer society, this type of fan-consumers are merely performing their duty as ideal citizens (Baudrilliard 1998), their loyalty to the brand providing a deeper sense of meaning to their lives.

The large number of Hollywood superhero movies that have been produced in recent years, and the boost for "cult" movie franchises, suggest that the media fandoms portrayed by Jenkins (1992) and Hills (2002) as marginalised in society have exercised their influence over the development of popular culture in the early twenty-first century. To some extent, this supports Jenkins's thesis that organised fandom has the ability to push for certain types of entertainment—but we have to tread with caution when we interpret fan influence as a sign of the democratisation of the producer–audience relationship. The logical explanation is that consumer power worked here, as it posed no threat to the predominant hegemony—as superhero movies and popular science fiction and adventure stories often reinforce existing gender and class structures, as well as simplified notions of good and evil. It is evident that consumer power exists as a phenomenon, but the power is not as fully with the consumer as most of us would like to think. As we saw above, Christian Fuchs (2014) has highlighted that scholars such as Jenkins are perhaps too keen on emphasising the wider importance of fan participation and co-creation, and Fuchs certainly has a point—if the end goal of a fandom is to persuade a large corporation to produce more and better entertainment, then we may have to question the merit of upgrading these fan communities to important political entities. In a way, many of the fandoms that previously used to be regarded as subcultures are now

such established parts of mainstream society that they have lost any form of ability to instigate change on a deeper level and serve as vehicles for alternative lifestyles.

Brand Fans

There is a long tradition of entrepreneurs and CEOs of successful companies sharing their insights through books—their insider status providing some credibility to their often bombastic and generic advice. These books are, of course, nothing more than a promotional tool for their own services, such as Vernon Hill's (2012) *Fans Not Customers*—serving to furthering the reputation of Hill as an entrepreneur in the wake of the Metro Bank launch in the United Kingdom. Another such example is Rob Fuggetta's (2012) *Brand Advocates: Turning Enthusiastic Customers into a Powerful Marketing Force*. Fuggetta differentiates between fans, followers and advocates, with the latter category being the most sought after. He stresses that customers cannot be forced to "like" a company to be able to take part in conversations about it—like, for example, the previous approach of Facebook, where, to write something on the Facebook "wall," the contributor also had to "like" the brand (whether or not the comment was positive).

Fuggetta, founder and CEO of the marketing company Zuberance, argues that the terms *fans* and *followers* are used interchangeably by business owners and marketers, while they, according to his theory, refer to different types of people—or rather, different types of customers or consumers. An analogy is presented to explain the difference between a fan, a loyal customer and a brand advocate, accredited to Joe Bunner, a colleague of Fuggetta's. The analogy—based around sport spectatorship in an American context—states that a *fan* sits in the stands cheering for the favourite team; a *loyal customer* attends every home game, rain or shine; while a *brand advocate* comes onto the field and plays in the game (Fuggetta 2012). This analogy is transferable to some fan areas, especially where the *consumer* aspect is emphasised. However, despite the subject it is not particularly compatible with sport fandom (unless the brand advocates are limited to the playing staff). Fuggetta, it seems, would not

have a problem with the mission of the owners of Liverpool FC, Fenway Sports Group, to turn Liverpool fans into customers (see Anfield 2016; Gibson 2016), as the main objective for companies such as Zuberance is to improve sales—albeit without damaging the brand image. In the context of "brand fandom," it appears that football clubs have the "wrong" kind of customers (as we will see in Chap. 7)—at least the core "loyal customers" who hold season tickets, as they often spend very little on merchandise and other "augmented" products at the stadium (and, in addition, they are not afraid to criticise the club and its owners when they feel it is justified).

For Metro Bank, channelled through co-founder Vernon Hill, "fans," or FANS as they put it, represent the most coveted customer type. A fan, for Hill, is all of the things in Fuggetta's analogy. Hill states: "Fans tell their friends about you. They join your team. At family and friends' barbecues, they tell everyone about something magnificent your employees did for them, above and beyond the call of duty. They don't patronize you, they *become* you" (Hill 2012, p. 4). Robert V. Kozinets (2014, p. 170) notes that this type of consumer, "intrinsically motivated and loyal to the brand for life, entrenched in networks bound to the brand, becomes even more committed to the brand than any merely career-driven marketer or executive ever could."

If we return to Fuggetta's theory, a *fan* is someone who "likes" a product or brand on Facebook and follows them on Twitter, motivated by the chance of getting discounts. A *loyalist* is someone who frequently purchases the brand's products, and who is driven by savings opportunities and convenience. A *community member* asks and answers questions (e.g., on online forums), and is active in the community largely to learn. A *brand advocate*—the most attractive customer group in Fuggetta's model—takes every chance they get to recommend a company, brand, product or service, simply because they want to help others (Fuggetta 2012). According to this logic, a fan is not particularly attractive from a business or marketing point of view, almost implying that a fan has a superficial connection with the brand they are a fan of. It certainly shows that there is a big difference in how fans as consumers are perceived and approached by companies, as Fuggetta's model contradicts Koos Zwaan et al.'s (2014, p. 1) notion that fans "appear to be the holy grail of media

culture." It is, as we have seen earlier, partly a matter of language use and what to ascribe to the concept of the fan—but returning to the subject of Bunner and Fuggetta's sport analogy, a traditional "fan" (or, supporter) of a football club does not normally "take every chance" to persuade others to "love" their team. On the other hand, when Leicester City won the 2015–2016 English Premier League, much media attention was given to the City fans and what the championship meant to them, indicating that traditional sport fans are important, even the "heart and soul" of a club.

The Zuberance website states that "Zuberance builds and unleashes your 'Advocate Army,' driving positive Word of Mouth and sales" (Zuberance n.d.). In business and marketing, both in practice and in the literature, there is a bit of confusion with regard to consumer terminology. For example, a brand ambassador and a brand advocate appear to fill the same function, and many commentators seem to equate a fan with a brand ambassador. Community groups serve the brand, and in that capacity it is difficult to see how they can be a force for change. It is easy to understand how they contribute (through word of mouth marketing, improving the product by sharing comments, producing content to drive traffic to online platforms, and adding authenticity to the brand) to the success and credibility of a brand, but it is more difficult to understand what the fans themselves get out of it. It is, of course, possible that all they want is to "help others" making informed purchase decisions, even if it is a washing machine they are recommending and not an LP by an obscure Finnish band. This fits into what Guy Debord and the Situationists were trying to fight against already in the 1950s, as they saw how the banalisation of life threatened generational renewal of creativity and engagement in art, politics and urban life: "Banalization was a mental and material disease afflicting life in general. Everything needed changing: life, time and space, cities. Everyone was hypnotized by production and conveniences, by sewage systems, lifts, bathrooms and washing machines" (Merrifield 2005, p. 25).

The term subculture should be used with caution, but as we will see later, it is used widely and uncritically in management and marketing literature, often simply referring to a niche segment of the market, or a particular group of sport practitioners. What interests marketers is how these groups use brands to express their identity: "Brands are used as

one form of expressive culture, similar to film, TV or music, that can be used in their identity projects" (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al. 2015, p. 84). This is an interesting statement. Brands are seen as *similar* to film and music. Young people express themselves through affiliation—not necessarily with an artist, art form or subculture, but with a brand such as Nike, Vans or Apple. Studies have revealed that fans feel love, or at least something akin to love, for traditional objects of fandom such as television shows, sports teams, musicians and actors (Baym 2000; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005; Duffett 2013). But, is it possible to love a brand? Blanchard and Bowles (1993/2011) and Hill (2012) certainly think so, and Sharon Richey, the CEO of BEcause Brand Experience, states that consumers want "meaningful interactions with brands" and that they seek "something deeper" than mere products—"it's all about fans who love a brand," she says, "not customers who simply like a brand" (Richey 2015). Kevin Roberts (2004) has come up with the idea of a "lovemark" to illustrate how brands should make their consumers fall in love with them—and B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore's (1998) concept of the "experience economy" is also closely linked to emotional aspects. It is hammered home throughout Hill's (2012) book *Fans not Consumers* that a lot of people "love" Metro Bank, and that the customers who are actually "fans" frequently tell their friends and family that "I love that company." In addition to building increasingly intimate relationships with their customer base, a common strategy to make people connect with and "love" brands is through product placement, sponsorship, celebrity endorsement and various other forms of tie-ins with popular culture products that are surrounded by large and loyal fandoms (such as *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, the UEFA Champions League and Rihanna).

We can all agree that the concept of fandom has changed over time—but perhaps not *how* it has changed, or *why* it has changed, or to what degree. Fans have become an integral part of artists' and organisations' marketing and business strategies, yet the perception of fans, and the representation of them, has largely remained a complex issue in mainstream media culture. This was illustrated through the "geek" example in the introduction, and as we shall see later in the book, many football clubs in the UK struggle to understand that fans feel a sense of ownership over

the teams they support (thus posing a threat to—and showing resistance towards—the widespread commercialisation of English football).

From Degenerates and Socially Awkward to Valuable Co-creators of Brand Image

One "problem" (of many, it has to be acknowledged) with discussing fans and fandom is that the term "fan," and the meaning of it, is difficult to define. Since this is not a book looking at fans of a particular media text, art form or sport, it is quite impossible to provide a satisfactory "this is what we mean by fans in the context of this book" statement. However, we cannot completely shy away from this particular "problem," since the topic of the book is fans and fan cultures. In 1982, The Human League sang about the "Mirror Man" who "says he's a people fan." In this song, the term "fan" is undoubtedly used in a casual manner—"he's a people fan"—much like the term is used by Scarlett Johansson's character Kelly Foster in *We Bought a Zoo* (2011): "I'm a big fan of people being exactly who they are." This use of the term does not imply any particular fandom, because it is not considered remarkable to be a fan of "people," and fans of people are not part of a group or community behaving in a certain way. However, the growth in popularity of social media has shown that *fandoms* also have to deal with casual fans and people proclaiming that they are a "fan" of this and that without having much knowledge of, or a deeper connection with, the object of their attention (after all, as we saw above, one "can be a fan of almost anything").

Facebook did, in 2010, abandon their initial "become a fan" option, which has instead been replaced by a "like" function. The meaning, however, is actually much the same in the context of particular Facebook pages, and what it entails for the artist, organisation or brand in charge of it, in terms of augmentation and potential reach, and for the customer who "likes" a page the digital consequences are therefore also the same, the difference being that it *feels* like less of a commitment to "like" something rather than officially becoming a fan of it. Still, Facebook's utilisation of the word "fan" has arguably contributed to the broader and

more holistic use of the term, and thus promoted—for better or worse—a more casual approach towards fans, fan cultures and fandom.

This more casual approach translates well to the world of sport fandom. There is a traditional saying, uttered in this manner by French footballer Eric Cantona (2009) in the film *Looking for Eric*: "You can change your wife, change your politics, change your religion. But never, never can you change your favourite football team." However, even football fans are becoming less loyal and more demanding, thus following the wider trend concerning consumer behaviour and customer expectations. In a global and digital world, the distance is shorter between all kinds of products and experiences, and it is much easier to make comparisons—even if the products compared are in completely different areas. Much like the "Supermarket of Style" concept in subculture and fashion (Polhemus 1997), there is also a supermarket of football teams to choose from, and Kuper and Szymanski (2014) have shown that many football fans support several teams at the same time.

The comparative acceptance of fans as legitimate citizens goes hand in hand with the broader use of the term—not in the sense of the use of the concept by The Human League or *We Bought a Zoo*—but rather in the sense of the strategies of Nike, Apple, and other corporations calling their customers fans (and the customers also *identifying* as fans). Viacom urges their young Comedy Central viewers to take a more casual approach towards being a media fan—stating that "this isn't your parents' fandom" (Guerrier 2015). This is an important statement. Like so much else in life, boundaries are constantly renegotiated, and the meaning of concepts and ideals are redefined. At the moment, the "fan" is an attractive demographic for any manufacturer of goods, services or experiences—and therefore it is made attractive to be a fan. Especially a fan of something which is successful and attracts a lot of other fans. As we have already touched upon—and which will be explained in more detail later—not all kinds of fans are popular with the dominant producers of popular culture, but the urge to be a "good" consumer is widespread and encouraged through various forms of discourse reinforcing that our power as consumers is constantly increasing.

One of the main differences in the development of fandoms is the increasing top-down approach, where the object of fandom (e.g., a pop

artist) or the producer of the fan media text (e.g., a broadcaster) takes ownership of the fandom. Sometimes a fandom is created even before there is an artist to be a fan of, as many commercial artists come "ready-made" with a seemingly strong following of labelled fans (e.g., Canadian star Carly Rae Jepsen and her "Jepseners"). While social media arguably facilitates "organic" development of fan groups and fan clubs, it appears that the opposite is often the case. The ideal fan for a brand (including TV shows) is a *balanced* person, and not a fanatic who cares "too much" (like football fans who protest against corporate powers making questionable decisions about the future of their club) or "too little" (like someone who does not "share" information about the brand). The balanced fan is an "influencer" with a big social media network—online is the key here, as it makes it easier for the brand to measure the engagement—who is active (but not too active, and certainly not too "creative" with copyrighted material) and "loves" the brand without being "obsessive" about it. A "raving" fan is thus not the same as an obsessive fan.

What Constitutes a Fan?

Stephen J. Sansweet, an author and ardent collector of *Star Wars* memorabilia, emphasises the link between geek culture and fans in the foreword to *Fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*: "Before geek culture conquered the world, we fans were a misunderstood lot" (Sansweet 2014, p. 1). The response for Sansweet, to being stigmatised as a media fan, was "usually to compare myself to the most ardent fans of whatever the top sport was in that particular country." He argues that *Star Wars* was the breakthrough for geek culture—and both *Star Wars* and geek culture are now very much part of popular culture and mass media, signified by the possibilities to "instantly connect with like-minded others" (Sansweet 2014, p. 1).

The root of the term "fan" can be found in the Latin word *fanaticus*—"insane, mad, possessed by the gods" (Cochran 2008, pp. 239–240), which may explain some of the widespread "otherness" connotations of fans still evident today. Kristin M. Barton (2014) argues that it is difficult to define the term fan, and that many scholars have attempted to differ-

entiate between various types of fans. Referring to Matt Hills (2002), she states that a fan becomes a cult fan once the object of his or her fandom has left the mainstream. In the case of *Star Wars* fans, and many other media fandoms, this would then imply that a cult fan could become a mainstream fan again—as the increasing penchant for remakes and the frequent reintroduction of science fiction and superhero franchises bring these fandoms back into the mainstream.

Due to the diverse motivations behind fandoms, most texts on fans and fan cultures explore what a fan does "rather than trying to define what a fan *is*" (Barton 2014, p. 6). A clear trend in fan studies is to focus on fandom as participatory culture, such as fan fiction (Barton 2014), and a common denominator is to regard fans as active and creative, which may explain the penchant for putting so much faith in fans and fan communities as forces for good in society, and potential instigators of social and political change. The "subcultural" model of viewing fans, according to Lawrence Grossberg (1992, p. 52), implies that "fans constitute an elite fraction of the larger audience of passive consumers."

Ever since the *Star Wars* breakthrough mentioned by Sansweet above, it has become more accepted for adults to spend time and money on what were previously regarded as activities and products aimed at children. In her text *Block Party: A Look at Adult Fans of LEGO*, Jennifer C. Garlen explores how the relationship between the Danish toy manufacturer Lego and its adult consumers is maintained and developed. The obvious main target market for Lego toys are children, and in particular boys (as evidenced by the creation of a "pink Lego" alternative for girls), and Garlen argues that many parents see it this way. However, she confirms that "LEGO products also boast a large, devoted, and well-organized adult fan base" (Garlen 2014, p. 119). These adult fans are known as AFOLs (Adult Fans of Lego) and they "have a tremendous impact on the decisions made by the LEGO company, officially known as the LEGO group" (Garlen 2014, p. 119). AFOLs are presented as active, supporting "their hobby through local clubs, conventions, websites, user groups, publications, and even an official global ambassador programme with the LEGO company, which gives adult fans a direct line of communication with the industry about product lines, prices, events, and consumer concerns" (Garlen 2014, p. 119). Garlen calls the AFOLs a subgroup of

"geek culture," thus giving the fandom a kind of "outsider" status. This status seems only to exist on paper, however, as Lego is one of the world's most powerful brands. Indeed, in 2015 it was regarded *the* most powerful brand by *Brand Finance*, and in 2016 it is second only to Disney in *Brand Finance*'s ranking, largely due to the success of another staple of "geek culture"—the latest instalment of the Disney owned *Star Wars* saga (Dill 2016). Having such devoted adult fans—as they are the ones paying for the products regardless of who uses them—is extremely valuable for the Lego group. The brand, due to its fans' affinity for its products, has come out largely unscathed from their initial decision, on the grounds of "corporate policy," not to sell Lego bricks to the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. The company explained that the refusal had nothing to do with pressures from China (where Weiwei is highly controversial), but was an error of judgement made by a lower-level employee (Tan 2016). Lego continues its rise, with several theme parks around the globe and the release of *The Lego Movie* in 2014. The company is also partnering with other powerful brands: "The product line continues to expand today, with new sets, new building elements, and other new LEGO themed items becoming available every year. LEGO video games, partnered with lucrative franchises like *Rock Band*, *Star Wars*, and *Batman*, have been tremendously successful over the last few years" (Garlen 2014, p. 121).

Historically, fans have been confined to the domain of popular rather than "high" culture, but Grossberg (1992) does not favour distinguishing fandoms based on what are legitimate art forms and what are not, so that "fans" only exist in the sphere of popular culture. It is, of course, difficult to define what popular culture is, and what distinguishes it from high culture—and if this distinction is to be based on moral or aesthetic criteria—in particular as "history has shown us that texts move in and out of these categories (for example, what was popular can become high art), and that a text can exist, simultaneously, in different categories" (Grossberg 1992, p. 51).

Some views of fandom include the fan as a juvenile "waiting to grow up," and that popular culture appeals to the "least critical segments of the population"—the "cultural dopes" (Grossberg 1992, p. 51). This term—"cultural dopes"—sprang from Horkheimer and Adorno's (2002 [1944]) theories concerning popular culture as a means to keep the masses preoc-

cupied with trivial matters (thus preventing them from questioning capitalist economic models and the uneven distribution of wealth and power). Although Grossberg wrote this in the early 1990s, it is still of significance today (as what were previously seen as childish interests, such as Lego and video games, have been elevated into the mainstream and are viewed as legitimate activities for adults). In postmodern thought, and cultural studies at large, there is very little questioning of the motives of the audience—and long before Grossberg's dismissal of the concept of the fan as a "cultural dope," the insight that "people are often quite aware of their own implication in structures of power and domination, and of the ways in which cultural messages (can) manipulate them" (Grossberg 1992, p. 53) had been promoted by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS, founded in 1964 at the University of Birmingham).

Not only the "fan," but the audience in general, is seen as being able to differentiate between what is authentic and what is commercialism. While, as Grossberg suggests, there may be "a difference between the fan and the consumer," this difference is increasingly difficult to define—especially if the fan is celebrated as *resisting* consumerism on the one hand (in accordance with the cultural studies perspective), and as an *ideal* consumer on the other (in line with marketing and management literature). Grossberg acknowledges that audiences are active, but at the same time they are never in complete control of their media consumption. Both audiences and texts can exist in multiple contexts, and take on different meanings and functions in each of them. Neither a text nor the audience is static. It is a complex task to define fandom, and it is dependent on many variables.

Fans often divide their worlds into "us and them" and the "fan gives authority to that which he or she invests in, letting the object of such investments speak for and as him or her self" (Grossberg 1992, p. 59). While Gilmore and Pine (2007) come from a completely different field (business studies) compared to Grossberg (1992), they both share a fluid approach towards the concept of authenticity, in that they argue that there are many types of authenticity. In Gilmore and Pine's (2007) view, anything can be regarded authentic as long as it *seems* authentic from the point of view of the consumer (meaning that authenticity—or, rather, perceived authenticity—can be achieved through strategic marketing

planning). Grossberg would not go as far as this, but he states that what is experienced as authentic may differ depending on context and expectations. In addition, Grossberg's take on the fan concept comes surprisingly close to Comedy Central's (Guerrier 2015) interpretation of fandom for the millennial generations:

> In fact, everyone is constantly a fan of various sorts of things, for one cannot exist in a world where nothing matters (including the fact that nothing matters). In fact, I think that what we today describe as a 'fan' is the contemporary articulation of a necessary relationship which has historically constituted the popular, involving relationships to such diverse things as labor, religion, morality and politics. Thus, there is no necessary reason why the fan relationship is located primarily in the terrain of commercial popular culture. (Grossberg 1992, p. 63)

Fans and fandoms are everywhere in everyday life, simply because popular culture *is* everyday life (Waskul and Vannini 2016). It is in the "mundane doings of people" we enter into the core of consumer society, and through being a fan of something we give our lives a deeper meaning. This urge to be passionate about seemingly meaningless things is ingrained in most of us, and in our current consumer society we are encouraged to "follow our dreams," "try new things" and "experience life fully"—to be good consumers. Fans are, due to their strong relationship with their object of fandom, potentially good consumers. It is therefore not surprising that brands and organisations want to create fans—and that media producers want to get the most out of their fans to generate maximum profits.

Francesca Coppa (2014, p. 73) writes that "fandom is increasingly understood to have economic and promotional value to content producers, and there is a danger that fandom-as-enthusiasm is being encouraged by producers even as fans are in danger of being alienated from their creative labour and from each other as a community." Coppa (2014, p. 80) aptly ends her paper by stating that "if all of fandom starts to look like Comic Con, i.e. an industry convention disguised as a fan convention, we run the risk of reducing *all* fans to followers."

In this light, fandoms are often converging with corporate interests, where the objective of the fandom is merely to help the brand create a

better product (*within* the established media system controlled by the dominating powers). Jenkins (2008) makes an effort to see convergence culture as a positive force, and gives several examples of where fans have worked together towards a greater good (see also Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* 1992), but there are structural issues that go beyond the artificial (but nonetheless existing) boundaries of social and cultural norms (Habermas 1989 [1962]; Debord 1995 [1967]; Baudrilliard 1998 [1970]; Foucault 2002 [1969]; Bourdieu 2010 [1979]) and economic and ideological "rules" of power distribution (Althusser 2014 [1971]; Giroux 2005). It has been popular to view the fan as an active agent, somehow in charge of his or her own destiny—thus challenging much of the work of Bourdieu and Foucault, and particularly Horkheimer and Adorno—and albeit this is a fair approach (after all, fans do possess consumer power, and many fans are creative in their own right), it trivialises and brushes aside some of the negative issues surrounding co-creative practices and fan labour.

As long as the "grassroots power" operates within the capitalist system, it is difficult to see how the "achievable utopia" that Pierre Levy (1997, p. 180) proposes will ever truly see the light of day. Fandom, as understood in relation to the context of "brand fans," will only reinforce the status quo and act as a substitute for creating political and social change—the discourse surrounding brand fandom is thus trivialising attempts of media and sport fan communities to resist the very system which brand fandom supports. As Jenkins suggests, the "move from medium specific content toward content that flows across multiple media channels" does not automatically mean that the audience is in charge. Jenkins (2006, p. 243) does however see convergence culture as a sign of a more even playing field, where audiences—if they are "ready to push for greater participation"—have the chance to influence the future of the media landscape:

> Despite the rhetoric about "democratizing television," this shift is being driven by economic calculations and not by some broad mission to empower the public. Media industries are embracing convergence for a number of reasons: because convergence-based strategies exploit the advantages of media conglomeration; because convergence creates multiple ways of selling content to consumers; because convergence cements consumer

> loyalty at a time when the fragmentation of the marketplace and the rise of file sharing threaten old ways of doing business. In some cases, convergence is being pushed by corporations as a way of shaping consumer behavior. In other cases, convergence is being pushed by consumers who are demanding that media companies be more responsive to their tastes and interests. Yet, whatever its motivations, convergence is changing the ways in which media industries operate and the ways average people think about their relation to media. We are in a critical moment of transition during which the old rules are open to change and companies may be forced to renegotiate their relationship to consumers. The question is whether the public is ready to push for greater participation or willing to settle for the same old relations to mass media. (Jenkins 2006, p. 243)

This statement puts pressure on the consumer, on the fan, to "demand" content that is "responsive to their tastes"—and it is this superficial pressure to become a "good" citizen in the capitalist consumer society that drives much of the recent focus on fans as ideal customers. It is difficult to see what "serious" changes Jenkins is hoping for—as yet, the "public" appears to be content with greater influence over *how* messages are delivered, but their demands and achievements (such as more superhero movies and adventure stories) only seem to reinforce existing dichotomies and favour the more commercial aspects of popular culture. Fuchs (2014) has also pointed out that new forms of digital media delivery are not necessarily more democratic than traditional print media. More and more people get their news via social media sites—Facebook users, for example, are around 50 % more likely to get their news from the site in 2016 compared to 2013—and if the public "choose" to have their news delivered through Facebook feeds based on questionable selection methods (Gottfried and Shearer 2016), then surely this must be a victory for democracy and another sign of increased consumer power. However, it has been shown that these news feeds are not always based on bias-free ranking systems (Chatfield 2016), and the argument that Facebook is better suited to select what news we are exposed to than any "traditional" news mediator therefore falls flat. It is also naïve to suggest that one of the largest companies in the world is less ideology driven than "old-fashioned" media outlets.

Jenkins (2006, 2008) argues that "critical pessimists" such as Noam Chomsky (see, e.g., Herman and Chomsky 1988), base their approach on theories of "victimization," while his own "critical utopianism" springs from a "notion of empowerment"—in that "grassroots" media production carries the potential to challenge the dominant media industries. It is easy to understand why this is an attractive prospect, but when many "fans" (a.k.a. consumers) prefer to view their fandom as a hobby rather than a vehicle for social change (Taggart 2008), this theory may be far-fetched. Alice Marwick (2013) has also pointed out that much of the initial optimism surrounding the early development of Web 2.0 has proved to be utopian in nature, and that social media is instead very much ideology driven and based around neoliberal values.

According to John Fiske (1992, p. 30), "fandom is typically associated with cultural forms that the dominant value system denigrates—pop music, romance novels, comics, Hollywood mass-appeal stars (sport, probably because of its appeal to masculinity, is an exception)." It is clear that Fiske—in presenting sport fans as an exception—is not writing from a UK perspective. Particularly football fans, as we will investigate more closely in Chap. 7, have at times been seen as a problem in society, and often represented as a faceless, mass crowd only aiming to cause trouble.

The elevation of fandom, and its inclusion in the mainstream, may have led to it being viewed as less "dangerous." Being a fan may also be associated with status, more broadly speaking (not only within the fan group, but in society at large). The "negative stereotypes" argument may thus not be as easily applied anymore—as other, more accepted, stereotypes replace the old ones. In addition, the "shadow cultural economy," which according to Fiske (1992, p. 30) is separate, has increasingly become part of (or, integrated into) the mainstream cultural economy. This is due possibly to several factors:

- Popular culture has gained higher status (the expansion of university degrees into "popular culture" subjects, the "creative industries" terminology and the elevation in status of "quality" television)

- Technological advances, in particular the Internet and Web 2.0 (the "social media revolution," the long tail theory, and the instant dissemination of information)
- Fans are seen as key audiences (the fan concept has been broadened so that it can be seen as a "good thing" to be a fan, co-creation and co-production and the evolution of the sports fan)
- Globalisation (the commodification of cultural expression, the global world of sports and the increasingly free movement of people and goods between countries)
- The experience economy (the constant craving for new and novel experiences, the urge to share these experiences to gain status and accumulate "social currency" and fan-related tourism and travel)

List-Making as Fan Practice

Paul Booth (2015) argues that one key aspect of the media ritual of fandom is making and sharing lists. List-making is an integral part of being a fan of anything from football (e.g., lists of best ever players, or best goals, or worst goalkeeper errors) to music (e.g., best 1970s albums, or best songs about London, or best opening songs on an album's second side). Lists form a big part of Nick Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* (1995), and while most of these "top-five" lists are music related, central to the plot is record shop owner Rob Fleming's (the book's protagonist) list of most memorable break-ups.

The hierarchical structure of a fan community differs depending on the fandom, but it is common for most fan communities to create and encourage some sort of hierarchy within the group or community. Higher status can for example be gained through greater knowledge about the fan subject, or through better access to it, or through a larger collection of memorabilia. Fans, certainly in most media fandoms and often in sport fandoms too, are expected to be experts—not just to those outside of the fandom, but also from the point of view of other fans within the community. The term community is used in a similar manner to the word group, and both of these terms should be flexible. After all, many fans do not regard themselves as belonging to a specific group. However,

people within a certain fandom often share common goals or values, and may from the outside be viewed as a homogeneous group or community with specific entry barriers.

Booth (2015) mentions that there are few academic studies trying to find common links between sport, media and music fans and that, since it is a common activity in all three, the study of list-making could open up for interesting and fruitful comparisons. List-making for fans revolves around memorialising, influencing and arguing—all at the same time (Booth 2015).

Also "official" lists can be compiled with the help of fans. For example, music magazines often include lists of best singles and albums of the year voted for by the readers. Another example is football clubs and their end-of-season lists of best goals and the prestigious Player of the Year award, often voted for by a club's fans.

Booth (2015) states that engaging in fantasy sports (such as various computer games, and/or forms of fantasy football) and creating own virtual teams therein is an activity similar to that of writing fan fiction. This is perhaps to overestimate the "production" element of fantasy games, as there is a set number of predetermined movements within any given game, while fan fiction is based around creativity and the actual production of new content. There are, however, several behavioural tendencies that link sport fans with fans of media texts and music—and while Mark Duffett (2013) and Fredrik Strage (2005) have highlighted the motivational differences between supporting a sports team and being passionate about a film or an artist, media fans can also be competitive and tribal in their behaviour (Booth 2015). The "anorak" aspect is something that runs through most fandoms, that is, the tendency to memorise release dates, cast changes, script writers, awards, team selections, league tables, and so on, but Booth (2015) highlights that scholars have not studied this type of fan activity as it is seen as coded as a particularly male endeavour. Matt Hills (2014) states that in media fan studies, the tendency is to focus on female-centred fandoms and fan cultures, which could serve as an explanation. However, looking at fan scholarship from a distance, a picture emerges of fandom as a predominantly male activity, which seems to contradict Hills's (2014) observation that masculine types of fandoms are less discussed in academic fan literature. It is, perhaps, a matter of—as

Booth (2015) suggests—methodology and scholarly tradition (and field of study), as much as anything else. One could add other fandom domains to the list of sport, music and media, to further complicate matters, such as brand fandom. Marketing and business management literature tends to focus much more on material aspects of fandom, and often motivational aspects of sport fandom (or brand affiliation). While one of the key purposes of culture, media and communication studies is to better understand the larger structures and how we as individuals and groups cope with society (essentially, to ask the big questions), marketing and management literature (often relying heavily on input from the field of psychology) do not tend to question the larger structures. One of the main purposes in these fields is instead to figure out what drives consumers—for example through studies focusing on segmentation, sales, trends, motivations, values and branding. This may be a slight generalisation—we have to acknowledge that there are differences *within* the disciplines (and depending on geographic locations too), and that many studies are interdisciplinary in nature (as well as multidisciplinary, like this particular work)—but it is still key to understanding why certain topics are favoured by different disciplines.

Recently, in fan media studies the term consumer is increasingly used when the authors refer to fans (see, e.g., Scott 2013), which implies that disciplines focusing on society and culture are looking more frequently towards marketing and business literature and terminology. As per tradition, this exchange of information does not work both ways, as the business, marketing and management literature mentioning fans rarely goes beyond a specific business or marketing issue, in that it usually has a narrower aim: to increase efficiency and profitability. This illustrates the direction in which society at large is moving—away from the problematising of complex ideas and questions towards the quantification of information, towards a more measurable, and thus controllable, consumer society.

In online journalism, lists are increasingly common as a format for an article—partly because they are easier to read on a mobile device. This type of journalism, argues Okrent (2014, paragraph 2) "caters to our Internet-fed distractible tendencies […] replacing complex arguments and reasoned transitions with snack-packs of bullet points." In a "media

snacking" culture, this makes sense, as it makes it easier to navigate from one text to the next.

Media events have become so central to everyday life, that it is difficult for most to imagine life without them. So unbearable seems life without multiple TV channels (not to mention the Internet, and access to computer games) that stand-up comedians in Sweden evoke laughs from the audience just by reminiscing about times (not so long ago) when television test cards existed. In sport broadcasts, British commentators often refer to Ceefax (a form of teletext) with a chuckle. This is all part of the naturalisation of mobile technology, and the equation of increased sophistication in digital technologies with a better quality of life.

Communication can be seen as a cultural ritual, as can the ways in which various media texts and events are mediated—and how they are represented and talked about (and what aspects of the texts are highlighted, and what texts are ignored) to make them seem important and central to our lives. The media ritual is not confined to what is performed *in* the media, what makes it a media ritual is thus "*not* whether it is performed in the media, or involves an act of media production or consumption, but the media-related categories around which it is structured and the media-related values to which it directs our attention" (Couldry 2003, p. 29).

Following on from Debord (1995 [1967]), Booth (2015, p. 17) writes that "by their very nature as *not* everyday, events actually inscribe the everyday as meaningful." The event, in fact, "determines the everyday." Booth views list-making as an important and central part of the relationship between media producer and fan-consumer:

> List-making is one of an infinite number of ways fans can approach their text or game; but it also symbolizes the clear link between fan audiences and producers. By staying attuned to the development of a canon, fans naturalize the seeming-universality of media, music, and sports in a given community, and centralize the relevance of fandom. (Booth 2015, p. 17)

Before the introduction of Web 2.0 these lists were compiled and shared in less visible but at the same time less restricted spaces (in person, but also in written form in fanzines and closed forums of various

kinds). When lists are shared on Facebook, for example, the ultimate ownership of the list is not that of the fans, but that of the owner of the digital platform. Coppa (2014) therefore sees it as a priority for fan scholars and educators to inform fans of the implications of using social media sites, instead of independent websites, to post their creative work. Even if fans are actively engaged in creating their own alternative stories, the fact that most of the Web 2.0 infrastructure is owned by a small number of global corporate digital media giants implies that "structure" may still triumph over "agency." In a sense, notwithstanding the power of Internet technologies to bring people together on a scale previously unthinkable, the key function of Web 2.0 is to make visible to corporate powers and marketing managers what was previously hidden in private conversations between like-minded people (who, throughout history, have always had a way of finding each other one way or another).

Everyone is a potential entrepreneur, even when they are sharing lists or pictures with their friends—and every social media user is a potential money maker. Being an entrepreneur is, according to Marwick (2013), seen as the ideal approach to life in a neoliberal world—in fact, the ideal citizen is an entrepreneur. This is not to say that fans posting lists online are doing so to potentially launch a career as social media "microcelebrity" entrepreneurs, although young people are increasingly aware of social media in itself as a strategy for finding work in the Web 2.0 era.

Summary

In this chapter we have established that the "fan" concept is multifaceted, and that there are different ways of approaching the study of fans and fan cultures. There are both similarities and differences in how brand fans and more "traditional" fans behave, but it is also interesting to note how differently these types of fans are approached by brands and media producers.

The terminology used in marketing and business literature is often vague and paradoxical, overlooking the aspects of resistance that are often integral to many fandoms. At the same time, businesses in their quest for

a larger market share want fans, not customers, and brand advocates, not followers. But, with the popular image of the media geek in mind, why do they want fans? The most straightforward explanation is that their take on the fan concept is very selective, and rather one-dimensional, and very likely shaped by the "Facebook vocabulary."

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3

Fans and (Post)Subcultural Consumerism

In this chapter, we will continue to explore the similarities and differences between "traditional" fans and "brand fans," but with a greater emphasis on (post)subcultural aspects and fans as consumers in a capitalist consumer society. Concepts such as structure and agency will be discussed, particularly through the lens of the French theorists Guy Debord (*The Society of the Spectacle* 1967/1995), Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction* 1979/2010), and Jean Baudrilliard (*The Consumer Society* 1970/1998)—and with reference to fan studies scholars such as Cornel Sandvoss (2005), Henry Jenkins (1992, 2006, 2007, 2016), Mark Duffett (2013) and Matt Hills (2002). While fan studies in its early stages—what Jonathan Gray et al. (2007) refer to as the "Fandom is Beautiful" era—focused largely on fans and fan cultures as communities who worked together to help democratise the meaning-making in popular culture discourse, in recent years more emphasis has been placed on fandom as empowering for individual members of fan networks. What aligns these two modes of approaching fan studies is the focus on fandom as *participatory* culture, thus emphasising the agency elements of being a fan. Albeit idealistically presented as potential instigators of change in cultural studies literature, and as counterparts to established media producers, the world of business

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and marketing managers views fans as ideal consumers—thus seemingly exploiting the creativity and loyalty of fans.

As we saw in Chap. 2, the term “fan” is a complex construct, and we will continue to take an inclusive approach to concepts such as fans, fan cultures, fandoms and fan communities. After all, the main purpose of this book is to try to find some kind of synergy between seemingly disparate fields of scholarly and professional practice, and their take on fans and fan cultures.

The “Miracle” of Consumption

In fan studies, there is sometimes a tension between what is a fan and what is a consumer, but it is very difficult to separate the two—after all, fans are *consumers* of goods, experiences and interaction. Our own identities are increasingly constructed in relation to consumerism, as no other terrains are available in a consumer society. Grossberg (2006, p. 589), however, argues that we relate to the appeals of the consumer industries (“popular images, pleasures, fantasies and desires”) as *either* consumers or fans, and that it “is in consumer culture that the transition from consumer to fan is accomplished.” Businesses and brands want nothing more than to turn consumers into fans, as fans are seen as loyal customers and advocates. Thus, a fan is a form of consumer, which means that the fan-consumer dichotomy is overplayed. While fan scholars find signs of resistance in fan practices and participatory fan cultures, marketers are more interested in forging lasting relationships with fans through integrating them in their media strategy as key consumers.

As Amber L. Hutchins and Natalie T. J. Tindall (2016, p. 3) note, two-way communication with the public has always been seen as important for organisations, but in the era of social media—where people “have seemingly unlimited opportunities to become engaged with organizations, content, and each other”—this process is more complex and requires a new set of skills for public relations and brand managers alike. The job title “community manager” is also used more and more frequently by entrepreneurs, business managers, marketing practitioners and public

relations firms, further emphasising the impact of Web 2.0 and a more visibly *engaged* public.

A key to understanding the difference between "traditional" fans (understood here as sport, media, arts and popular culture fans) and the new breed of brand fans can be found in Arunima Krishna and Soojin Kim's (2016) explanation of what a fan public is. Writing from a public relations point of view, they state: "Fan publics are conceptualized as publics who evaluate their relationship with an organization positively and support the organization by engaging in positive word-of-mouth behaviour" (Krishna and Kim 2016, p. 23).

John Storey (2010), in his *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* (first published in 1996), discusses fans in a chapter entitled "Consumption in Everyday Life." A section on "subcultural consumption"—beginning with the statement that it is "in work on youth subcultures that the cultural studies engagement with consumption begins"—leads into another section discussing "fan cultures and textual poaching," which is highly indebted to Michael de Certeau's (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau (1984, p. xiii) argues that dominated groups can "escape" the dominant social order "without leaving it" through various means of consumption. Storey (2010, p. 148) writes that, for de Certeau "the terrain of culture is a site of continual conflict (silent and almost invisible) between the 'strategies' of cultural imposition (the power of production) and the 'tactics' of cultural use (consumption or 'secondary production')." The step from de Certeau is thus not very far to Henry Jenkins's (1992) theory of fandoms as active communities of consumers who reinterpret popular texts, so as to integrate them into their own lives and add meaning to future encounters with various texts. Fan culture, notes Storey (2010, p. 151), is in Jenkins's interpretation "not just about consumption, it is also about the production of texts—songs, poems, novels, fanzines, videos, etc.—made in response to the professional media texts of fandom." Another important aspect of how fans consume texts, according to Jenkins (1992), is that they do it as part of a community, where communication with other fans is a central part of the meaning-making process—and that there is something *empowering* about what fans *do* with these texts, and how they are utilised in the respective lives of the fans.

Jean Baudrillard (1998, p. [31]) finds that "consumption is governed by a form of *magical thinking*," as he argues that "the blessings of consumption are not experienced as resulting from work or a production process; they are experienced as a *miracle*." To consume, of course, is not always synonymous with buying something—at least not in the tangible sense of paying directly a certain sum of money for a particular object, service or experience—but consuming is also about ingesting or absorbing something. Often, we consume dreams. Baudrillard argues that we consume news through images, signs and messages that "represent our tranquillity consecrated by distance from the world, a distance more comforted by the allusion (even where the allusion is violent) than comprised by it" (1998, p. 34).

Subcultural Ideals and Post-subcultural Reality

Before we dig deeper into fans as consumers, let us have a closer look at subcultures and how the understanding of these (and the supposed demise of them) have coloured our understanding of fans as "other." Traditionally, subcultures have been formed around marginalised groups in society, as a form of necessity to cope with their outsider status—and to resist the oppression of dominant values . In more recent times, however, Ross Haenfler (2014) argues that groups with subcultural identification markers (such as goths) are marginalised through choice (by way of dressing and behaving) rather than through necessity. Thus, terms such as tribes and neo-tribes seem to better fit groups and communities like these.

Paul Sweetman (2004) argues that one way of approaching the term "subculture" and subcultural expressions is through accounts of "reflexive modernization," thus suggesting that "consumption and related practices have become more individualized and are dedicated increasingly towards constructing an individual sense of identity" (Sweetman 2004, p. 79). This does not, however, mean that individuals have abandoned the concept of seeking a sense of belonging, since coming together as a group (in any shape or form) may "provide individuals with a sense of belonging and identification *as well as* a sense of individual identity or style"

(Sweetman 2004, p. 79). This is possibly what makes the Internet such an attractive communication tool for fans, as it gives the individual a voice and a platform to express their own identity in relation to the fandom and other fans, but also a stronger sense of belonging to a group, while maintaining the position of the individual within the group.

Since at least the early 1990s, it can be argued that there has been a certain fragmentation in youth style and thus easily recognisable subcultures. This has resulted in an approach to the study of youth culture termed "post-subcultural" theory. Subcultural divisions have broken down, through the mixing of styles, and the jumping in and out of various "subcultural" fashions. On the other hand, Ryan Snelgrove et al. (2008) and Hans K. Hognestad (2012) present more segmentation-led understandings of subcultures. For example, Snelgrove et al. (2008, pp. 166–167), building on Ken Gelder (2007) and Chris Jenks (2005) describes a subculture as "a subgroup of society composed of individuals who come together to share a common facet, such as a sport, brand, or activity, and who thereby develop distinctive attitudes, beliefs, and values." This is a much looser definition of the term subculture, and must be understood from a sport studies perspective rather than from a cultural studies point of view. The use of the term brand is particularly interesting, and further links subcultures and fandom to brand affinity and brand values. (Note that subcultures specific to a sports management context will be further discussed in Chap. 7.)

Highlighting the work of Steve Redhead (1990) and David Muggleton (2000), Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris (2004, p. 11) note the "increasing fragmentation of youth style since the 1980s," which has led to a "breakdown of subcultural divisions" where styles are mixed in innovative albeit superficial ways. A critique towards this tendency of "going back and forth" between different subcultures is given by Ted Polhemus (1997, pp. 149–150), who states:

> What really sets our age apart from the golden age of subcultures is the sheer proliferation of options. We now inhabit a Supermarket of Style where, like tins of soup lined up on endless shelves, we can choose between more than fifty different style tribes. Jumbling geography as well as history, British punk circa 1976 sits on the shelf next to 1950s American Beatnik or late Jamaican Ragga.

Polhemus's point is further emphasised in our current social media climate where images of various religious and cultural symbols can be collected and displayed without any consideration of the original meaning or context. This approach, of course, is only "natural" in a postmodern society where previously intrinsic values of taste and quality are constantly questioned, and where cultural appropriation is worryingly common both in everyday conversation and edited media content. The penchant for retro-culture also contributes to neutralising and disarming what was once a counterculture or an authentic protest against the dominant order, or an expression of frustration with the establishment. A current example is how punk has been picked up by cultural institutions and turned into a commodity ready to be displayed at museums and more commercial institutions (which, one expects, was probably part of Malcolm McLaren's plan all along). For example, *Punk Fest* at the Design Museum in June 2016, and *Punk 1976–1978* at the British Library are part *of Punk.London: 40 Years of Subversive Culture 1976–2016*, a year-long programme that was endorsed by the then Conservative Mayor of London, Boris Johnson (London & Partners 2016). The Punk.London (2016) website presents the initiative as a "year long programme of gigs, exhibitions and films [that] will look back at the excitement and energy of the movement's genesis, and at punk as an on-going catalyst that continues to inspire, refuse categorisation and spark creativity around the world." It is an effective strategy to render movements harmless through inviting them into the establishment canon, but although there is a worry that the focus will be more on style than substance, at least initiatives like these may shed light on and explore aspects of past movements and emphasise the importance of counterculture and resistance.

The term "lifestyle" has been favoured over subculture by, for example, Mike Featherstone (1991). Lifestyle implies that a choice has been made, suggesting that the consumer is in control. Scenes, tribes and so on are not local or geographically bound—they make up a space that is not place bound. This may also be one of the reasons as to why these "scenes" are not as present in the cityscape as they were in the days before the Internet. Communities stretch over long distances (Larsen et al. 2006) which is necessary in an increasingly mobile and global society. Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004, pp. 14–15) thus ask *where* "youth cultural activ-

ity takes place," and write: "Such is the fluidity and fragmentation of youth culture that there are only barely identifiable and transitory spaces to whose vagueness terms such as a lifestyle, neo-tribe and scene provide an appropriately opaque ambiguously spatial response." They further state that subculture can be a useful place of departure in research about youth culture, even if it is just to confirm "what contemporary cultural activity 'is not'." It is increasingly difficult to explain what youth culture actually is, and it is questionable how relevant it is to the wider discussion of fans—as there is already a significant, and perhaps too dominant, emphasis on youth when discussing fans and fan cultures. After all, if "everyone" is a fan, then we must move beyond subcultures as well as youth cultures. It is also fair to say that it is not only youth who are susceptible to consuming culture, in whichever form or shape it may be.

In certain fandoms, such as the adult LEGO fans for example, bonds between generations are preserved and enhanced through the sharing of an interest—which is also present in football fandom, and increasingly in popular music fandom too. It may be that the self-representation behaviour on social media sites is more often associated with teenagers, as are narcissistic tendencies—but as Marwick (2013) has shown, social media values are based around neoliberal ideals, which favour status seeking and self-branding, no matter the age of the social media user.

Self, Structure and Agency

Anthony Giddens, in *The Transformation of Intimacy*, states that "the self today is for everyone a reflexive project—a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future" (Giddens 1992, p. 30). This further establishes the "self" as more important than the "community" in a consumer society, but it also implies that we as individuals have the nous to reflect upon our actions in a wider context. Reflexivity (see also Sandvoss 2005), and its indicative subjectivity, may be a utopian way of viewing fandom as a creative and boundary-breaking endeavour. Matthew Adams (2006), in line with Lois McNay (1999), argues that reflexivity as a creative possibility is "founded upon pre-reflexive commitments originating in the social world, which shape that possibility" (Adams 2006, p. 517).

Thus, creating one's own world to escape the reality of social and political boundaries is only a possibility within the existing system (that is, world order), limiting the potential of fandom as a force for social, cultural and economic change. This is closer to Pierre Bourdieu's (2010) habitus theory, in which social and cultural capital is determined by external factors, like, for example, class. Scholars such as Henry Jenkins (1992) have found Bourdieu's ideas limiting and too deterministic, but in a society that seems to have readily accepted capitalism as the per-default ideology to adhere to, and neoliberalism as its most natural expression, it is perhaps a somewhat idealistic interpretation of the capability of fans and fandoms. There is little doubt, however, that fandom is an effective strategy to cope with everyday life (as in the mundaneness and everydayness of routine consumerism) and can also be a powerful means for individuals and groups to cope with adversity and exclusion. In a world increasingly controlled by global corporations—and where we are served entertainment through a top-down model (despite the "YouTubisation" of media engagement)—the main question is possibly whether or not "alternative" lifestyles, subcultures, tribes and fan communities offer anything other than providing *individuals* with a sense of meaning and belonging. This voluntary segmentation gives corporations, brands and businesses ample opportunity for targeting niche markets and entering into otherwise "closed" communities. While the long tail concept (Anderson 2006) can be viewed as proof of increased customer power in the twenty-first century, it is likewise an opportunity for companies to spread their net further through the commodification of the alternative and "independent," and through immersing contraculture into the mainstream—effectively rendering contraculture impossible.

The habitus is learned from an early age and reflects a shared social and cultural context—but even if one is taught how to behave and react, the formation of habitus remains largely unconscious (Bourdieu 2010). There is little room for reflexivity in habitual behaviour, since the competencies developed are not conscious, which means they cannot be consciously mastered. Therefore, entering a higher social "sphere" is by default extremely difficult, since "the reproduction of 'classed' identities happens via unwitting determinancy" (Adams 2006, p. 514). Although Bourdieu, through the complexity of his work, opens up for the possibility of self-

reflexive practices, these are predominantly associated with requirements within a particular field (such as academia or science) and thus form part of the "habitual game" played within that field. This means that standing back from a field and consciously reflecting on the workings of it—and fully understanding everyone's role within it—may at times seem possible, as the controlling effect of habitus preserves the status quo. McNay (1999), in her work on gender and habitus argues that one of the reasons for the persistence of gender restraints is that we all act as "agents," to use a term utilised by Bourdieu (2010) to describe individuals and groups operating in a field or domain, within a broader system made up of rules and structures of which the agent is unaware. It is a pessimistic world view, but one that explains—along with Jean Baudrilliard's (1998) ideas surrounding the "vicious circle of growth"—why social and economic injustice largely prevail, and why gender equality is still such a contested territory. It is, to an extent, easier to comprehend in light of the overwhelming dominance of capitalist values in the Western world. However, the current system relies on the view that the individual is capable of shaping his or her own future, and that we are not surrounded by invisible predetermined structures. As Debord (1995) and Baudrilliard (1998), among others, have pointed out, consumer capitalism is built on this very principle—that individuals are driven by their pursuit of happiness and enjoyment. The popularity of self-help books, and the foundation on which a vast proportion of business management literature is built, is in Bourdieu's universe based on false premises. Unfortunately, Bourdieu's ideas—along with those of Debord, Baudrilliard (and to some extent Karl Marx, whose ideas the former are indebted to) are not deemed fashionable in business studies, and they are certainly not welcome in a world where everything is possible as long as the *individual* will power and determination is there. Thus, success and failure can be ascribed to the individual, and individuals are less likely than groups or communities to forge change. Margaret Thatcher's statement from 1987, that there is "no such thing as society" (Margaret Thatcher Foundation n.d.), seems to summarise much of the content of contemporary business and management literature.

It was mentioned above that to fit into a field or domain, it may be possible to "play the game," which indicates that it is possible to con-

sciously and voluntarily accumulate skills or currency to affect one's own position and status within that field (or one's children's position)—and to possibly even enter a different field. This is possibly where the hybridisation of structure and agency, or habitus and reflexivity, comes into play. However, it can be argued that the hybrid is formed *within the larger* system of constraints referred to by McNay (1999) above, thus skewing the hybridisation more towards structure than actual agency. As Adams (2006, p. 517) puts it: "reflexivity is bounded in advance by the limits of social structure as embodied in one's habitus."

There is no such thing as a *strict* dichotomy of audience and media, and audiences are not necessarily out to shape their own experience and co-create media content. Groups of fans are certainly not always groups of disadvantaged individuals, although the popular image of fandoms gives this impression, and this was possibly reinforced by early fandom scholars who wanted to see fans and fan communities as agents of transformation (see, e.g., Sandvoss, 2005, p. 156).

There may have been an overestimation of the capabilities of cults or fans to challenge the existing social order. Several studies since the turn of the twenty-first century have highlighted how in "organized fandom, as in the cases of cultists and enthusiasts, social hierarchies are constituted and fan activity becomes itself a form of distinction, discrimination and preservation of existing power structures within society" (Sandvoss 2005, p. 156). Sandvoss also argues that choice of fan object cannot be directly linked to class, or representations of class, which indicates that instead of "functioning as a practice of subversion, fandom, through the adaptation of existing social hierarchies in a subcultural context, further cements the *status quo* by undermining the role of class as a vector of social change" (Sandvoss 2005, p. 156). This, as we saw earlier, is something that many fans themselves are largely oblivious to.

The millennial generation is said to be sceptical towards messages of consumption, but at the same time they are also more likely to be fans of brands (Luttrell and McGrath 2016). They are more conservative, and more dependent on their parents—and studies of university students indicate that they are less independent and require more guidance from tutors compared to earlier generations (Twenge and Campbell 2009). At the same time, they are impatient consumers with high demands on

service and experience quality. When it is highlighted that they resist advertising that is too blunt, and that they do not take a company's word for its excellence (but require "fans" of that brand or company to point out its advantages, thus rendering it more authentic and worthy of their endorsement), it is difficult to understand how this would indicate a greater sense of independence or autonomy. The whole discussion of "millennials" is paradoxical and filled with inconsistencies and contradictions. The emergence of millennials is closely linked to the spread of digital media, and the normalisation of social media as a vehicle for communication and self-representation (and understanding of the world—a majority of Americans get their news via Facebook, as indicated by Gottfried and Shearer 2016). With the close connection between millennials and their parents, perhaps we are all millennials, as it would be presumptuous to argue that people born before 1980 are excluded from most Web 2.0 discourses and that it is only people born after 1980 that are fully connected and integrated in virtual realities.

Consuming Experiences

> There is much talk of the right to health, to space, to beauty, to holidays, to knowledge and to culture. […] One should not mistake for objective social progress (something being entered as a right in the tables of the law) what is simply the advance of the capitalist system—i.e. the progressive transformation of all concrete and natural values into productive forms, i.e. into sources […] of economic profit [and] of social privilege. (Baudrilliard 1998, p. 58)

Jean Baudrilliard states that, at least since the late 1950s—through the publication of *The Hidden Persuaders* by Vance Packard (1957) and later *The Strategy of Desire* by Ernest Dichter (1960), to mention two different but influential takes on the subject—"the conditioning of needs (by advertising in particular) has become the favourite theme in the discussion of the consumer society" (Baudrilliard 1998, p. 71). Dichter, in *Getting Motivated by Ernest Dichter*, explains that he is "not concerned with the specific problems for which the motivational research techniques

are being used. […] I'm more interested in perfecting the techniques of persuasion" (Dichter 1979, p. 83). Packard, who criticised the ways in which marketers used subtle strategies to persuade audiences to buy their products, helped Dichter gain fame through his portrayal of him as a chief manipulator and "immoral" expert in consumer motivations. As we saw earlier, in today's popular marketing and business literature, there is an increased focus on *fans* as the consumer group with the deepest needs and the strongest motivations; thus the fan is part of the new consumer "star segment."

In accordance with the views of Foucault (2002), Althusser (2014) and Baudrilliard (1998), the "system" controls demand in a capitalist society, which means that the control does not rest with the consumer but instead "manufacturers" (including experience providers) control and guide social needs and attitudes. Thus the individual does not exercise power in the economic system. Baudrilliard argues that consumer needs are not produced one by one. Consumption is instead our common language, "the code by which the entire society communicates and converses" (Baudrilliard 1998, pp. 79–80). Baudrilliard sees consumption as something which is forced upon us, and it has become our *duty* as citizens to be good consumers.

Baudrilliard is in many ways discussing the "experience economy" (a concept—albeit in a different form—mostly associated with Pine and Gilmore 1998), whereby citizens are driven by a "universal curiosity" and have to "try everything, for consumerist man is haunted by the fear of 'missing' something, some form of enjoyment or other" (Baudrilliard 1998, p. 80). This idea of missing out, the "fear of missing out" or so-called FoMO, is ever more present in the age of social media (JWT 2011). Sites such as Facebook and Twitter thrive on FoMO, as they—and often in real time—make individuals aware "that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" (Przybylski et al. 2013, p. 1841), thus making other peoples' lives seem more exciting and fulfilling.

In a society driven by participation we fulfil our potential as consumers through a constant endeavour to be happy—which means that consumers are certainly not passive, as we are engaged in repeated activity. Thus the elevated status of co-creation and co-production is an effect of

the acceptance of consumption as an active pursuit requiring agency on behalf of the consumer, and a participatory and thus more "democratic" approach to consuming. This is heightened in the consumption of experiences (see Pine and Gilmore 1998), such as travelling, attending events and physical exercise (taking "control" of the body).

While most fan scholars would like the opposite to be true, it appears that fans are not able to carve out an alternative to the pursuit of *consumption as duty*, but attempts at doing so merely heightens the fact that we live in a consumer society where even the everyday and mundane needs to be elevated to meaningful experiences. However, with regard to football supporters for example, some fans do paradoxically seem to counteract the "duty of happiness" paradigm, as they often seek—by supporting average or poor teams—the opposite of just that. The continuous pursuit of misery, however, can in a consumerist society be interpreted as happiness through misery, as the support of the club provides a certain form of satisfaction. It is more difficult to separate "brand fandom" from the more dystopian construct of Western societies as consumer societies. When Baudrilliard (1998, p. 193) states that consumer society "consumes *itself* as consumer society, as *idea*" he identifies advertising as "the triumphal paean to that idea." To "advertising," which has become increasingly difficult to classify as a separate marketing tool (Kotler and Armstrong 2015), we could add social media behaviour—in itself a form of advertising, even if it is often on an "individual" basis—showing that consumption and production are fully integrated and give the illusion of a balanced synergy between media producer and fan producer (but in fact this co-productive approach is only an additional means for the media producer to control and maintain the myth of consumer power). With this we can conclude, perhaps unsurprisingly but at least with some more conviction, that the "fan" so desired in a top-down approach regards it as his or her duty to be "happy" and to force upon others this "happiness" (through being an influencer or brand advocate)—thus performing the role of an ideal fan from the point of view of brands and mainstream media producers, while the fan in a bottom-up context (if there is such a thing) is still regarded by society as a nuisance, an outsider. Even those who do not buy into the logic of "growth" and "progress," (such as the corporatisation of state assets and the commodification of subcultural

expression) find it increasingly difficult to resist the "franchisation" of their fandoms.

The ideal type of creativity in consumer society builds on existing frameworks, and although participatory culture is a positive force it may be that the value of fandom as transformative agency has been overrated. The whole world is like a computer game with pre-decided options to choose from. They may seem vast, but they are limited. It is certainly possible to view the many popular culture franchises as strategic "consumer-led" initiatives to encourage consumerism and to help fill the coffers of multinational corporations.

One cannot help but wonder if the "experience economy" is designed for uncritical people, with no desire to protest, and with a pathological urge to conform. The "much-maligned" (Hills 2002) theories of Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/2002) were for a long period unfashionable in media and cultural studies, but appear more relevant than ever since it is taken for granted in much literature (see, e.g., Fletcher et al. 2013; Fromm and Garton 2013) that younger generations are by default more critical towards marketing and biased media content (since they are "no dopes"). However, this taken-for-granted view is paradoxical, as millennials are also seen as less adventurous and more conservative than previous generations.

In a formulaic experience society, with a multitude of entertainment options, "passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity" (Debord 1995). Social media (or Web 2.0), as shown by Marwick (2013), encourages us to seek the spectacular, and although we are constantly told that we are engaging in meaningful experiences that make us grow as individuals, we rarely stop and think *why* we behave this way. Debord, to illustrate that everything may not be what it seems—in that we take for granted certain dominating ideologies—states the following: "In a world that *really* has been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood" (Debord 1995, p. 14). So, when Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that the creation of and participation in spectacular experiences are what motivate us in our pursuit of happiness, it may not be as straightforward as it seems, as the spectacle "is the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire globe, basking in the perpetual warmth of its own glory" (Debord 1995, p. 15).

A Balancing Act

Fans are often accused of not being balanced, or of lacking balance in their lives (devoting too much time and money, for example, to their object of fandom and fan-related activities). Balance is something we are all meant to achieve (work/leisure, work/family, family/leisure, a balanced diet) to enjoy the status as healthy, functional human beings. This is nothing new, as many aspects of our lives and surroundings are explained through theories of balance (like yin and yang)—not least throughout the history of medicine, where the balance of the four humours (a theory ascribed to Hippocrates and based largely around Pythagoras's idea of the balance of opposites) has held a prominent place. These four humours, or bodily fluids (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile), were until the seventeenth century said to hold the key to a person's physical and mental health. Hippocrates (ca. 460–370 BC) and his disciples argued that illness "occurred when the humoral balance was upset" and that the "physician's goal was to restore a healthy balance" (Kiple 1993, p. 11). Even Pine and Gilmore (1998), when suggesting what the ultimate consumer experience would be, came up with a model where their "four realms" of the experience—entertainment, escapism, education and aesthetics—need to be appropriately balanced so that the experience provider can hit the "bull's-eye." Being a fan is thus also a balancing act, and it is so in more respects than one.

Fans need to be perceived and represented as balanced, so that they can be regarded as worthwhile consumers or customers. From a company's point of view, an ideal fan is active, popular and passionate. One of the reasons, we could argue, for fans—or at least certain types of fans—being more accepted than others is that they come across as balanced. Social media proved the perfect platform for turning the concept of fandom into a mainstream commodity—through the corporatisation of fans and fan cultures-and provided an opportunity for brands and media producers to quantify seemingly unquantifiable aspects of consumption, such as levels of emotional engagement and connections with dreams and aspirations.

Performance of Ideology

Fans perform ideology. In line with much of Louis Althusser's work, in that he argues that our beliefs come from the practices we are involved with (rather than the other way around), fans form part of a larger system within which they operate. This means that—as is the case with Comic Con, to use an obvious example—fans are seen as buying into the wider ideology (re)presented by the media system and supporting it through their actions within and outside of the fan discourse. So, instead of a "grassroots" movement or fan-led enterprises, a top-down model is supported where everything is organised for the fans with the help of a number of corporate brands, incorporating numerous tie-ins and urging fans to behave in a certain way. Of course, fans are no "dopes." They have spoken. They want this. This means that they also need to take responsibility for it and own up to their ideological choices. Many fan scholars, such as Hills (2002), Sandvoss (2005), Jenkins (2007) and Coppa (2014) argue that one of the important functions fandom and fan cultures serve is as forces of resistance against hegemonic structures. While the Internet has facilitated the increase in visibility for fan communities and enhanced methods of alternative readings of popular texts (and the spreading of fan-produced material, and the quantification of power of "the fan"), it has also made it easier for brands to take control of the discourse and enter into the conversation at various levels. Everything is marketing we are told, and everyone is marketed to, all the time. Social media provides almost total access to individuals and groups of consumers. Fans do, however, as Francesca Coppa (2014) notes, occasionally affect the ideological playing field. She states that fandom provides "opportunities for collective action" (Coppa 2014, p. 77) and that these fan networks have "huge real world effects." What can be deducted from much of the literature on fans and fan cultures is that a fan is meant to be *active* in some sort of capacity, and that they make use of their fandom in the *real world*.

There are many sides to participatory culture, but in public discourse there may be an overemphasis on the need for audiences to be active. Of course, fans keep the conversation going, leading to interesting breakthroughs and collaborations and often result in authentic networks of creativity. But in the age of social media where we are all critics and cura-

tors (Marwick 2013; Obrist 2014), it is questionable whether all forms of participation are equally meaningful. Coppa (2014, p. 78) writes: "We watch tonight's episode with an eye to writing tomorrow's blog post." Further, she argues that this participatory fan culture is "this century's equivalent of the sing-a-long, the backyard show, the community dance" (Coppa 2014, p. 78). This approach assumes that we need to leave a (preferably digital) footprint to show that we have been active and contributed to the discourse, that we have truly *participated*. When members of an audience (when everyone is doing it) take photographs or are filming what is going on, we know that the "here and now" aspect of the spectacle is just a small part of the experience. The concert organiser wants it, the artist performing wants it, the television network wants it. It is a win-win situation. Or is it? As Coppa notes:

> If fannish participation is reduced to 'likes' and 'reblogs', if technology keeps drawing our attention to official Tumblrs and Twitters and YouTube channels (who will get paid for all the eyeballs they bring, and if even fan-made content becomes a source of industry revenues), if all of fandom starts to look like Comic Con, i.e. an industry convention disguised as a fan convention, we run the risk of reducing all fans to followers. (Coppa 2014, p. 80)

Mark Duffett (2014, p. 4) writes in the introduction *to Popular Music Fandom: Roles, Identities and Practices* that although fan behaviour has changed with the introduction of online technologies, for the most part digital platforms such as social media have predominantly reinforced behaviour that already existed in a predigital era:

> For many of us fans, the net has offered new and better ways to more easily do what we previously did before. What has changed is that it is hard in the Internet era not to see and therefore to say that fans are, at best, communicative, imaginative, communal, expert, interesting and intelligent. Online social media platforms demonstrate this in a more public and visible way than, say, talking on a mobile phone. They have operated as a forthright challenge to the idea that electronic mediation is an alienating and impersonal process. Uses of the net have visibly brought music listeners together

> (see, for instance, Hodkinson 2004). In an age of 'geek chic,' fandom seems to be at the forefront of an astute, techno-savvy consumer culture.

Writing from a music fandom perspective, Duffett (2014, p. 7) further states that "celebrity and fandom have been openly *contested as research objects*." This is certainly not the case anymore. Fandom can of course be both collective and personal—and there are various types of fandom. Even the concept of "music fan" is difficult to define, as there are a multitude of motivations to take into account, as well as different music styles and genres—and there is a generational difference too, to name but a few of the components that constitute fans and fan values.

The (rather vague) recommendations presented in ZenithOptimedia's *The Pursuit of Happiness* study are: humanise the brand, create meaningful assets, create purposeful value exchange, orientate on user experience, and share your customers' stories (ZenithOptimedia 2015). How does this tie in with fandom? People increasingly turn to brands for unique "ready-made" experiences, and as we have seen above, millennials put a lot of trust in brands they "love" and like brands to interact with them via a multitude of media platforms. Jenkins's (2006) concept of convergence culture takes on a slightly different meaning in the view of the above—as brands should "make the consumer pathway effortless. Brand experiences should migrate across different platforms and devices: Millennials expect brands to know them and remember their past interactions" (ZenithOptimedia 2015, p. 27). This further strengthens the theory that the contemporary consumer is satisfied with accepting the system as it is, and to view the capitalist consumerist society as natural. While it is more reassuring to think about the possibilities for agency in a technology-driven society that has not yet settled in its organisation of communication and information exchange, we run the risk of overestimating the political motives of "fans" and fandoms. When the consumer influence is all about how to make the customer experience better (which, of course, benefits the corporate interests as much as those of the fan) it is a "win-win" situation. From a neoliberalist business management and marketing point of view, this is exactly the argument. How can it be wrong to invite fans to improve a product if it makes everybody happy? The counterargument is that this approach, which is ideologically

grounded, only serves to make the rich richer and the already powerful more powerful. Marwick (2013) rightly argues that scholars, media commentators and policymakers are not as positive towards Web 2.0 as they once were, and that the utopian hopes of a new world order where relationships and hierarchies are rebalanced have been significantly quelled.

Linda Tan, Strategic Insights Director at ZenithOptimedia, has described millennials as "very savvy, discerning and astute consumers" (Walsten 2015, p. 30). It is worrying, though, that the term consumer is used interchangeably with the term fan—and although the traditional dichotomy between fan and consumer does not exist, as we are all bound to be consumers if we are fans of something, the *normalisation* of the fan goes hand in hand with the advancement in status of the "consumer." Even Suzanne Scott (2013) refers to the struggle of female comic book fans as being predominantly about becoming visible as a market segment. It is, then, quite difficult to see how any genuine transformative work is taking place—as the logic of the market follows the logic of the larger structures in society.

Summary

In contemporary discourse, the fan is seen as an active consumer and a lucrative market segment for sport and media brands—and in our post-subcultural era, many countercultures have been rendered harmless through their incorporation into mainstream culture. The idea of fans as potential instigators of hegemonic upheaval is largely utopian in a capitalist consumerist society context. In line with Baudrilliard (1998) we argue that the urge to be a good consumerist citizen results in an anxiety-driven experience economy, where the fear of missing out on the extraordinary is a key motivator in everyday life—where consumption is seen as a duty.

Fans are seemingly gaining more and more power as consumers, and it is within the consumerist paradigm that fans have the opportunity to perform agency. This indicates that, at best, fans are able to affect popular culture media content as long as it does not threaten the dominant structures and hierarchies. Fandoms are still important as spaces for transformative work—but it is likely that this work serves as a means to coping with existing discriminatory systems rather than fully resisting them.

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4

Text and Representation: The Community and the Individual

In this chapter we will give some background to concepts such as text, discourse and representation, as these are all important theoretical tools that will help us understand how and why fans are perceived as deviant in some media and public discourses, while they are regarded to be ideal consumers from a marketing and business point of view.

In the previous chapters we have established that the fan concept is complex, and that being a fan means different things in different contexts. However, to further clarify some of the vocabulary, the term "fandom" can refer to either a person's involvement with something as a fan (as in "her West Ham United fandom is central to her life") or as the collective body of fans of something, sometimes referred to as subcultures or communities (as in "the *Gilmore Girls* fandom").

Fan Visibility

In comic book fandom, traditionally a male-dominated world, female fans are increasingly gaining ground and finding their voice. In recent years, more scholarly work has also been produced about routine sexism

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in comic books, and how female characters are treated (in particular focusing on meaningless violence, rape, etc.). Suzanne Scott (2013), in her article "Fangirls in refrigerators: the politics of (in)visibility in comic book culture," notes that the legitimisation of objects of fandom is closely related to visibility, and states that "female comic book fans' recent efforts to make themselves visible as a market segment suggests a similar desire to legitimate their identities as comic book fans" (Scott 2013, paragraph 2.1). The vocabulary is interesting, as it clearly illustrates the commercialisation of comic book culture. (We have already seen that Hollywood takes a keen interest in comics through blockbuster movies and franchises, and the Comic Con is all-absorbing and constantly growing as an industry vehicle, rendering alternative readings and expressions harmless.) Using one's power as a consumer not to alter the system, but to get a better (or bigger) share of what is already offered, appears to be the end goal for many fans. The misogyny running through comic book fandom can also be found in other male-dominated "subcultures," such as gaming. This is increasingly highlighted both by scholars and by fans active on social media platforms such as Twitter. However, some scholars writing in the fields of media and cultural studies contribute to the coding of these fandoms as male (see, e.g., Tankel and Murphy's (1998) deduction that 100 % of comic book collectors are male), and in industry analysis there is seldom an explanation for *why* efforts from publishers to reach female audiences fail (the analysis stops at noting *that* the attempts fail, merely contributing to reassuring publishers and fans that the gendering of comic book culture is justified from a market analysis point of view). This book does not explicitly address gender theory, but it is important to highlight that much of media fan culture is gendered one way or the other, as are most sport and music fandoms.

American scholars and writers (such as Jenkins 1992; Sansweet 2014) often put forward sport fandom as being represented by society as a more legitimate type of fan engagement than, for example, a passion for gaming or boy bands. In a British context, this point of view is more problematic, mainly as an effect of hooliganism in football in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s—but also due to the deeply rooted class system that has generally disfavoured traditional working-class activities. It is probably the visibility, to follow on from Scott's (2013) suggestion, of sports fans

that gives them more credibility—and possibly also the fact that it is still largely coded as a masculine pursuit.

This book began with a representation in *The Guardian* of fans as "geeks" (Bernstein 2016), showing that despite the status fans currently have as key consumers of popular culture products and experiences, the old—and largely outdated—image of the fan as a dysfunctional outsider persists in popular discourse. It is convenient to dismiss these geek fans as narcissistic and "weird," while "upgrading" people like JJ Abrams and Steven Spielberg (who seem to fit the description, but are too successful to be represented as geeks) to well-adjusted citizens serving the mainstream consumer society.

Text and Discourse

Discourse is a concept widely used in both academic and non-academic contexts but it is not easily defined: it is often simply referred to as a form of "language in use," and although this is fairly true, it may not always be adequate. Teun van Dijk (1997, pp. 2–5) urges us to explore what this "language in use" actually means, and to do this we must ask questions about what components are involved in this "language use," how these are ordered (and how they may be combined), but also about processes of communication and means of action. Michel Foucault (2002), for example, revealed that a common type of discourse is the "discourse of power" by pointing out that seemingly objective, or even so-called natural, structures in society conceal inequalities and justify punishment for non-conformity. The field of discourse analysis is thus much indebted to the work of Foucault, in that it investigates relationships between power and ideology. There is no one method for performing discourse analysis, let alone critical discourse analysis. Foucault, for example, did not write an explicit methodology for discourse analysis—yet discourse analysis is widely used within many academic disciplines. "Text" could be described as an observable product, something that can be transported from one context to another, for example an art review, a fan letter, a photograph, and so on. "Discourse," on the other hand, is a process rather than a product—"a text is part of the process of discourse and it is pointless

to study it in isolation" (Talbot 2007, p. 10). Discourse could be seen as a "body of knowledge," in the tradition of Foucault—such as ideas, opinions, beliefs, knowledge. We also have to acknowledge that there is more to a text than its physical form, a text is "a node within a network" [Foucault (2002), cited in Talbot (2007, p. 12)] as it only exists in relation with other texts. Sigfried Jäger (2001, p. 34) implies that "discourses are not interesting as mere expressions of social practice, but because they serve certain ends, namely to exercise power with all its effects." This goes some way towards explaining the reluctance in society to accept alternative ideologies and lifestyles, as anything that does not fit into the dominant discourse is regarded with suspicion (while what is already established in the discourse is seen as natural or the consequence of common sense attitudes).

Representation, Myth and Mediation

To further explain what we refer to when we use the term representation, it would be useful to consult Stuart Hall's work *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, a work first published in 1997 but that has been reprinted several times. Hall defines representation as "the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language" (Hall 1997, p. 17), and suggests that there are two "systems of representation": mental or conceptual representations, and language. He states that our "shared conceptual map must be translated into a common language, so that we can correlate our concepts and ideas with certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images" (Hall 1997, p. 18), and further that the "relation between 'things', concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'" (Hall 1997, p. 19). This links well to the ideas promoted by Ferdinand de Saussure (1966 [1916]) in that we interpret the world through signifiers that tell us what different signs (e.g., a text such as a picture, a political statement or a religious symbol) mean.

In line with these thoughts, then, codes fix the relationships between concepts and signs. Languages are something that we learn, as we have

to learn that a book is a book, for example, and what it entails. Meaning is thus produced, constructed, it is "the result of a signifying practice—a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean" (Hall 1997, p. 24). Hall suggests three ways of showing how representation of meaning through language works, through the reflective, the intentional and the constructivist approach. The reflective, or mimetic, approach suggests that language merely mimics the world; it reflects what is already there. The intentional approach is opposite to that of the reflective, as it implies that the speaker, or author, "imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language" (Hall 1997, p. 25). This is problematic since the essence of language is communication, which is based on shared linguistic conventions and codes—language can never be a "private game," since our private intentions "have to enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood. Language is a social system through and through" (Hall 1997, p. 25). The third approach, the one that is mainly prevalent in this book, is the constructivist approach to meaning in language. This approach acknowledges that "[t]hings don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems—concepts and signs [and…] the meaning depends, not only on the material quality of the sign, but on its symbolic function" (Hall 1997, p. 25). Laura J. Shepherd, in her discourse-theoretical analysis of gender, violence and security, argues that discursive practices "both manifest and construct discourse through (re)presentation and (re)production" and therefore "practices of (re)presentation and (re)production are the sites at which it is possible to locate power in a discursive terrain" (Shepherd 2008, p. 24). Just like in Shepherd's discourse-theoretical approach, we are also concerned with representation as a source for the reproduction of meaning and knowledge.

To further emphasise the importance of the concept of representation, it can be argued that common sense, assumptions, "general" knowledge, popular attitudes, general beliefs and "common knowledge" are all part of "the context of meanings within which representations are produced and circulated. They also form the basis of our own cultural knowledge, varied though it may be" (Swanson 1991, p. 123). In simple terms, there is no absolute version of how things are. The constructivist approach to representation also touches upon stereotypisation, as described by Roger Fowler:

> A stereotype is a socially-constructed mental pigeon-hole into which events and individuals can be sorted, thereby making such events and individuals comprehensible [...]. [I]t is of fundamental importance to realize that stereotypes are creative: they are categories which we project on to the world in order to make sense of it. We construct the world in this way. And our relationship with newspapers makes a major contribution to this process of construction. (Fowler 1991, p. 17)

These explanations may seem obvious, it is just that we need to be clear about what is referred to when using a term such as representation, since we view it through a constructivist perspective, and thus regard representation to be a constructive practice: "Events and ideas are not communicated neutrally, in their natural structure, as it were. They could not be, because they have to be transmitted through some medium with its own structural features, and these structural features are already impregnated with social values which make up a potential perspective of events" (Fowler 1991, p. 25). Mary Talbot (2007, p. 47) further emphasises the ideological work that is performed in creating and disseminating texts:

> Any text can be said to have an implied reader, an imaginary addressee with particular values, preoccupations and common sense understandings. In having to construct an imaginary person to speak to, media producers are placed in a powerful situation. They are in a position to attribute values and attitudes to their addressees, presenting them in a taken-for-granted way.

When we consider texts (that can, for example, include films, reviews and advertising), it is apparent that linguistic, visual and other kinds of sign are used to denote something, "but also to trigger a range of connotations attached to the sign" (Bignell 2002, p. 16). This is according to Roland Barthes a social phenomenon, this "bringing-together of signs and their connotations to shape a particular message, the making of 'myth'" (ibid.). Barthes's use of "myth" does not refer to mythology in the usual sense of traditional stories, "but to ways of thinking about people, products, places, or ideas which are structured to send particular messages to the reader or viewer of the text" (ibid)—this means that myth should be regarded as "a type of speech" [Barthes (1973, p. 109), cited in Bignell (2002, p. 20)].

An uncritical—or, rather, *selective*—reader may regard certain aspects promoted in a text as a natural state of affairs, and in line with this Barthes (1993) states that the function of myth is to make particular ideas seem natural (such as the domination of one group over another, for example, or the call for a return to a more traditional approach to the construction of families), and that they therefore will not be resisted or fought. Bignell states that the function of criticism and analysis of myth "must then be to remove the impression of naturalness by showing how the myth is constructed, and showing that it promotes one way of thinking while seeking to eliminate all the alternative ways of thinking" (Bignell 2002, p. 21). Semiotic scholars are often working to reveal the selectiveness and distortion of myth, and as such take on a critical perspective towards society and politics. That is one of the reasons as to why semiotics is a useful approach to text-based analysis: its implicit critical stance. A key concept in critical semiotics, as favoured by Barthes, is the analysis of ideology, which as we saw earlier (and which will be further emphasised below) is central to most discourse analysis approaches, along with the analysis of power (these two concepts are, of course, closely related). Simply put, myth serves the ideological interests of the dominating groups in society, and promotes the status quo so that ownership, power and control will stay unchanged and unchallenged, and myth "is a type of speech about social realities which supports ideology by taking these realities outside of the arena of political debate" (Bignell 2002, p. 25). Michael Clarke (2007) recalls Barthes's Mythologies to explain the importance of questioning taken-for-granted ideas about our society and what shapes its values: "Barthes shows the extent to which myth relies upon unquestioned clichés and stereotypes, blurring the distinctions between the signifier and the signified in order to make verbal and visual representations appear as natural, given truths" (Clarke 2007, p. 17).

Bernstein (2016), in his interview with JJ Abrams (see Chap. 1), does not need to explain what is encapsulated in the word "geek": his readers know what he means because it is "common knowledge"—although we would argue that what is hidden here is "the ideological abuse," which Barthes (1993, p. 11) speaks of. This is what is mediated to the reader, regardless of what the reader "reads into it"—it is explicit within the

interview, it forms part of a wider discourse surrounding geek culture. It is "out there." It is an important representation.

Neoliberalist Myth

In line with what is regarded as a natural state of affairs, we have come to accept capitalism as the common-sense economic base on which society rests. As Marc Augé (2014, p. [47]) states: "capitalism has succeeded in creating a market that extends across the whole earth. Big companies are escaping from the logic of national interests." Augé concedes that the class struggle has long been lost by the working class, and that any protests—including the Occupy movement—are doomed to failure. For a short period, there was an optimism surrounding the development of Web 2.0, and a belief that interactions through technology would decrease inequalities and facilitate large-scale work for the greater good of society and its marginalised members. However, Marwick (2013) has shown that this optimism was based on empty promises and hopes—as the whole structure of Web 2.0 is modelled on neoliberalist ideals. In line with Alice Marwick's interpretation of neoliberalism, we view it as a form of "governmentality," in that what is referred to as the "free market" carries its own rules and regulations and is thus an "organizing principle of society" (Marwick 2013, p. 12)—in itself just another form of *governance* (Foucault 2002; Bourdieu 2010). The very promotion of the entrepreneur as the ideal citizen is thus a further form of governance: "This governance takes place through the creation and popularization of technologies that encourage people to regulate their own behaviour along business ideals" (Marwick 2013, p. 12).

In view of the above we note that "convergence culture" does not work as a utopian possibility, since we are firmly settled in ways that promote and reinforce neoliberal attitudes and ideologies. While a neoliberal system and its free market approach encourages agency, it is an agency without self-reflexion and the questioning of dominant structures that is favoured. Thus, the "good" fan accepts that he or she can affect the production of media content by establishing himself or herself as part of a visible and vocal market segment—without openly questioning the

"rules" of the free market. Marwick (2013, p. 12) notes that Internet technologies are "teaching their users to be good corporate citizens in the postindustrial, post-union world by harnessing marketing techniques to boost attention and visibility." The foundation for neoliberalism, just like capitalism in general, is the necessity of an uneven playing field, but one that seems to be "fair," and—in line with Barthes's (1993) concept of myth—"common sense." Henry Giroux (2005) argues that this free-market logic ignores structural inequality and that "markets are touted as the driving force of everyday life," and, again evoking Barthes, that it is seen as a natural state of affairs that "power should reside in markets and corporations rather than in governments (except for their support for corporate interests and national security) and citizens" (Giroux 2005, p. 2).

In the age of social media, we are meant to operate as self-interested subjects, not civic-minded citizens. Self-regulation is key here, as we must not—since social media is based around cohesive brand building—appear vulnerable or insecure, and above all, we must not come across as passive or inactive. Marwick explains how an "effective neoliberal subject" behaves:

> An effective neoliberal subject attends to fashions, is focused on self-improvement, and purchases goods and services to achieve 'self-realization.' He or she is comfortable integrating marketing logics into many aspects of life, including education, parenting and relationships. In other words, the ideal liberal citizen is an entrepreneur. (Marwick 2013, p. 13)

Marwick further states that "Web 2.0 sites instruct wannabes in the art of entrepreneurialism, self-promotion, and careful self-editing" (Marwick 2013, p. 15) which follows the cultural logic of celebrity. This is why social media sites contribute to the reinforcement of neoliberal values in postmodern consumer capitalist societies. The idea of microcelebrity confirms the entrepreneurial ideal where an individual "views his or her friends or followers as an audience or fan base, maintains popularity through ongoing fan management, and carefully constructs and alters his or her online self-representation to appeal to others" (Marwick 2013, pp. 15–16). Thus, "social media has come to promote an individualistic,

competitive notion of identity that prioritizes individual status-seeking over collective action or openness" (Marwick 2013, p. 17).

A commenter under a YouTube video for Elvis Costello's "Tramp the Dirt Down," in response to a comment from another—"Yes, I am a Thatcher supporter, well, was and her legacy, for me, is the best since Churchill" [YouTube comment by Matt Harper (2014), in Elvis Costello—Tramp the Dirt Down 2010]—wrote that "then I guess you'll be pleased to be a fan of the worst thing since smallpox" [YouTube comment by xthetenth (2014), in Elvis Costello—Tramp the Dirt Down 2010]. YouTube has, in this sense, generated a discussion referring not only to Elvis Costello but to the subject of the song: Margaret Thatcher (who was prime minister at the time of the release of the song, in 1989). In 2016 we have arrived at a point where Margaret Thatcher's well-known quote from an interview with Douglas Keay of *Woman's Own* in 1987 would no longer cause a significant reaction. Margaret Thatcher said:

> There is no such thing as society. There is living tapestry of men and women and people and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and each of us prepared to turn round and help by our own efforts those who are unfortunate. (Margaret Thatcher Foundation n.d.)

The article eventually led *The Sunday Times* to publish "most unusually a statement elucidating the remark was issued by No.10, at the request of *The Sunday Times* and published on 10 July 1988 in the 'Atticus' column" (editorial comment, Margaret Thatcher Foundation n.d.). Supporters of Thatcher often argue that the quote is taken out of context, but it certainly reflects the essence of her ideology. Slightly earlier in the transcript she states:

> I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!' or 'I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!' 'I am homeless, the Government must house me!' and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no

government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. (Margaret Thatcher Foundation n.d.)

This sentiment is exactly what is favoured in the Web 2.0 era, and may partly explain why fan communities, in the form of cohesive—almost subcultural—groups working towards a common goal (as in Jenkins's early work, or in the work emanating from the Birmingham CCCS) are less visible.

Technologies are often hailed as revolutionary tools to change the world for the better, and for people to make demands and have an impact on media content—effectively a call for a more deeply rooted democracy (Jenkins 2008; Jenkins et al. 2016). Although the Internet has arguably contributed to giving marginalised groups more visibility and a voice, at the same time it has—especially through Web 2.0, as we have noted above—reinforced consumer capitalist and neoliberal values. As Marwick (2013, p. 19) states in *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity and Branding in the Social Media Age*: "there are consequences for moving our social lives into realms that are so focused on the free market."

A term associated with the exploitation of fan-created content to boost revenue for the company or organisation is fan labour, often synonymous with the less loaded (and more democratic sounding) concept of co-creation. In essence, these terms can refer to anyone who drives interest to a site or network or produces content for free by being an active audience. So, while this can be empowering (Jenkins 2007) and self-reflexive (and certainly beneficial to the fan producer, albeit not financially in an immediate sense), those who stand to benefit from an economic and material point of view are the corporate media producers. The benefits for the fans are thus (mostly) limited to being part of and contributing to a community, sharing a passion or realising creative ambitions—often leading to increased *social* currency (and higher status, greater reputation—after all, status-seeking is one of the cornerstones of the social media age). Fan labour is then closely linked to "immaterial labour" and "affective labour," as for a "brand advocate" (see, e.g., Fuggetta 2012) the real reward is to help others and to spread the word about the fantastic brand they are supporting—to convert people into customers who will *consume* the brand, product or service. Brand advocates, or fans doing

affective labour, contribute to the authenticity of a brand; after all, a customer who is using a certain product is deemed more reliable than a marketing executive trying to sell it.

In Fuggetta's (2012) view, brand advocates are viewed as more desirable than fans [Hill (2012), would argue they are the same thing], as they cannot keep a secret. For fans, perhaps, the most important thing is not to convert others to become fans. In fact, for football fans there is often a worry that sudden media exposure (better results, a new stadium, etc.) will attract new fans who do not understand the history and culture of the club and team they are supporting (see, e.g., the West Ham fans in Chap. 7). Also, in sport fandom, there is no reason for fans of one team to suddenly wish that rival fans start supporting their club (for several reasons, including aspects of territory, authenticity, history and loyalty). Most fans will attest to the fact that it is nice to get recognition from the media and fans of other clubs, but this has traditionally not been a central aspect of being a fan. However, this may very well change, as indicated by Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski (2014). The same can be said about fans of music, as the meaning and interpretation of concepts such as exclusivity and authenticity keep evolving. In addition, in the Web 2.0 era bands and artists are increasingly expected to market themselves via platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Baym 2013), and for younger-generation musicians this is seen as a natural component of being an artist.

For brands, it is important to keep track of fan communities and learn about their consumer behaviour, as Tom McCourt and Patrick Burkart state: "discovering affinity groups, and tapping into their searching and sharing operations, has become a lucrative business" (McCourt and Burkart 2007, p. 261). The *recommending* function is a central part of what businesses such as Amazon are doing, and through increasingly sophisticated software, online companies are able to steer potential customers in a certain direction. Consumers seem to like this, as they do not seem to mind buying what others have bought. Perhaps, rather than convergence culture, we should be talking about convenience culture, as we are increasingly being "spoon-fed" by the company trying to sell us products. Chris Anderson (2006) has long been an advocate for this "recommendation" culture, as it ties in well with his theory of the long tail.

Representation of Fans

Mel Stanfill (2013, p. 17) states that being a fan "is a subject position fraught with baggage from historical and contemporary media representations," and that fans often identify themselves as different from other fans. In her overview of previous research on the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001), she shows that depending on type of study, fans of the show have been presented as either passive and scared, or empowered and sophisticated. Stanfill (2013, p. 118) argues that journalists often represent fans negatively, while academics—who are often fans themselves (see, e.g., Hills 2002)—have a more positive view of fandom: "news media have typically framed fandom as a practice of uncontrolled, socially unacceptable desire, scholarship has equally tended to understand fans as empowered through their fandom to have more control over their media experience, either by fighting the media industry or by being courted by it." Stanfill, in her own analysis (based on interviews with *Xena* fans), concludes that many of the fans agree with dominant "anti-fan" media representations, but that this stereotyping refers to *other* fans within the group, and not themselves. States Stanfill (2013, p. 118): "To exist as a fan is to be both (a) immersed in dominant ideas about the "right way" to interact with the media and (b) emotionally invested in a subculture that is often understood to violate those norms." This seeming paradox can be explained through the theories of discourse and representation presented above, as we are socially and culturally "trained" to interpret certain ideas in a specific way, and that we perform, often subconsciously, ideological work in our self-reflections and communication with others.

Similarly to Paul Booth (2015), Stanfill (2013) notes that most scholars interested in fan culture are focusing their research on transformative production practices and community organisation, which leaves some areas with little or no existing research. Representation is such a topic, she argues, and one that should be given more attention in fan studies—after all, just because fandom has been normalised, it does not mean that the older stereotypes have not survived. This is especially concerning when the fans themselves agree with many of the stereotypes—stereotypes which the scholarly community largely see as outdated. It is possible that

the widening of the fan concept (see Sandvoss 2005; Hills 2002; Baym 2000) has contributed to a more balanced view of fans and fan cultures in general, but that within media fandoms (and occasionally sport, too) the tension explained by Stanfill above has survived. In addition, sport fans are still vilified in the press, and media fans are routinely mocked (albeit often lovingly) in popular shows like *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*.

If we revisit the discussion about the relevance of subcultures in today's society, we may also note that the highest goal for a fan is not necessarily to be seen as "normal" in the eyes of the general public—one objective could be to separate herself or himself from the norm, especially when normative ideals represent the polar opposite to what the fan (or the object of fandom) represents (in terms of values). After all, a subgroup does not form in isolation—it is formed *in relation* to, or for example as a protest against, dominant cultures (see, e.g., Haenfler 2014; Stanfill 2013). In self-representation, there is often a conflict between what is desirable in relation to the wider context (that is, the dominant ideology of that particular society) and what type of behaviour and appearance is rewarded within the subgroup. It is not unusual for people to belong to a subgroup, or fandom, while at the same time functioning "normally" in mainstream society (such as travelling sport fans, AFOL's and fans following bands on tour for long periods of time). The fandom might be a way to cope with the mundane, with everyday life—and while it is an important aspect of life, it is not necessarily seen as transformative (see, e.g., Baym 2000). In line with this approach, Eve Marie Taggart suggests in her review of Cornel Sandvoss's book *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (2005) that Sandvoss tries to read too much into the reason behind fans engaging with their "hobby," as she calls it, and that most fans are not necessarily conscious of their status as potential political and social activists through their fandom: "Many fans would argue that their hobby—by definition something they do for fun—should not be expected to be a vector of social change" (Taggart 2008, paragraph 4). One could thus argue that, while academics often represent fans as vehicles for change of some kind—in a rather utopian fashion—fans themselves may only be interested in the often superficial enjoyment of consuming a film, book or sport event. However, the corporate world—including various industries that regard fans as key customers—are also engaged in the transformative aspects of

fandom, albeit from a very different point of view compared to that of fan studies scholars. Industry commentators and market researchers are generally not interested in transforming social and cultural norms, but instead they seek to learn about emotional responses to media content to improve their understanding of a core customer segment (which, in turn, benefits their marketing strategies). Of course, some groups of fans are left out (such as the female comic book fans mentioned by Scott 2013), if they are seen as questioning or trying to resist the dominant discourse.

Like Hills (2002) has pointed out, there are norms to adhere to also *within* the fan community, and there are hierarchies too. "Good" fan practice thus exists internally as well as externally. The intrafandom boundaries built around what is "good" or "bad" fan practice are not different from dominant-cultural boundary building—which seems to imply that "the natural order of things" seeps into the fan culture and provides a wider structure to adhere to. Scott (2013, p. 122) suggests that "internalized stereotypes about bad fans and the need to define oneself as appropriate leads to the production and maintenance of boundaries."

There has been a shift since the publication of the Lisa A. Lewis's edited volume *The Adoring Audience* in 1992, in the way fans are perceived and discussed by established society. Partly, this can be credited to the normalisation of—and thus commodification—of fandom and the fan, and the more inclusive fandom paradigm that seem to dominate current discourse. The cause for this normalisation in perception and representation of fans is linked to the acceptance of consumer culture and, perhaps, also the acceptance of neoliberalism as a natural order, as *within* the ideology everything seems "natural" and logical. With the development of the Internet, and in particular Web 2.0, fans became more visible, and as such they could be segmented into a market—meaning that fans all of a sudden were transformed into potential customers that could be targeted and from whom profits could be made. After all, if someone is a fan, they are more likely to feel strongly about something, and care enough about something to buy related products. In addition, the Internet made it clear that companies needed to engage more visibly with their customers (through co-creation, two-way communication and on- and offline experiences).

One of many key texts in *The Adoring Audience* is Jolie Jensen's "Fandom as Pathology." In her essay, she argues that fans are often regarded as a form of "other," as "members of a lunatic fringe" who unlike the "us"—the dominant social and economic classes—are not in touch with reality. By conceptualising the fan as deviant, "we" are reassured that we are not vulnerable and susceptible to mass media influence. Jensen writes: "'We' are safe, because 'we' are not as abnormal as 'they' are, and the world is safe, because there is a clear demarcation between what is actual and what is imagined, what is given and what is up for grabs" (Jensen 1992, p. 24). However, in today's media climate, one could almost argue the opposite—that being normal equals being a fan, and proclaiming it as often and as loudly as possible is "good" social media behaviour. One can be a fan of different things, and the word has lost its stigma (but perhaps also its value and meaning). LEGO, *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, One Direction, FC Barcelona, Apple and Disney all have enormous fan bases, and these fans cannot automatically be viewed as marginalised. The term is used in a non-stigmatised manner by London & Partners' (2016) "Fans of London" campaign and is also frequently utilised by the "Fans of London" partner, the hotel chain Hilton.

The manner in which the expression "I am a fan of" is used in media texts, and the way companies use the expression "for all of you fans" (and so on) may serve to trivialise the whole concept of fandom. Being a "fan" is thus nothing special. One can be a fan of The Blue Nile, and also a fan of brown bread or a certain brand of pasta.

A different type of literature, such as marketing or business literature, follows a separate logic to that of cultural or media studies. In fact, in marketing literature it is more often than not taken for granted that people are emotionally driven. It is possible that, in the so-called experience economy, we are not supposed to be too rational. We are supposed to seek adventures and identify wholeheartedly with corporate brands such as Nike and Apple. The comparative success of coffee brands like Starbucks, Costa and Café Nero are held up as prime examples of how the customer has been valued and their needs have been addressed. Gilmore and Pine (2007) even argue that their success is based on an *authentic* approach to running businesses. Some of Pine and Gilmore's (1998) predictions still seem odd (such as people willingly paying an entrance fee to shopping

centres) but are not far from the reality of today. However, what Pine and Gilmore regard as an ideal world of selling and consuming experiences, Debord (1967/1995) and Baudrilliard (1970/1998) would see as a commodified nightmare. In Pine and Gilmore's (1998), Fuggetta's (2012), Hill's (2012), and Lovelock and Wirtz's (2011) view the customer is always right. The fan, as a powerful customer, must thus be highly regarded. Looking at this type of business and management literature, it is perhaps not always clear exactly how the customer is right—and as we have established already, the view of the "fan" is often selective and vague.

The "normal" is studied in these areas (sport, tourism, marketing, business, psychology)—while from a cultural studies perspective it is often more interesting to explore what is different or marginalised, and does not adhere to the norm. This also introduces the question: what is normal? Normal, studies have shown, is to play computer games several hours per day. In the early days of fan studies, this was regarded as abnormal and a danger to society. Normal is also to be a "fan" of something, often of several things.

As Gray et al. (2007, p. 8) note, "the field of fan studies has become increasingly diverse in conceptual, theoretical, and methodological terms, and has broadened the scope of its inquiry on both ends of the spectrum between self and society." They also highlight the ambivalent attitudes in society towards fans: "Rather than ridiculed, fan audiences are now wooed and championed by cultural industries, at least as long as their activities do not divert from principles of capitalist exchange and recognize industries' legal ownership of the object of fandom" (Gray et al. 2007, p. 4). They agree that the attitudes have changed, and state that we need to go far back in time to evoke images of fans as stereotypes: "none of the high-profile fan cultures in recent years—from X-Philes via Eminem fans to *Sex in the City* enthusiasts—had to endure the derogative treatment of *Star Trek* fans" (Gray et al. 2007, p. 4). This is perhaps a simplification, and an overly positive view of the current climate, but in general terms it has become less of a stigma to be classified as a media fan or a sport fan.

Texts move in and out of categories such as high art, high culture, popular culture and popular art—and many of them exist in more than one category at the same time. Therefore, it is less fruitful than it perhaps

appears at a first glance, to confine the "fan" to a limited set of categories. While Grossberg (2006, p. 581) stated that "it makes little sense to describe someone as a fan of art"—in our current media culture there are many self-proclaimed fans of art, and major institutions such as Tate Modern have long used similar terminology to address their audience. In 2010, for example, the following message could be read on the Tate Facebook page: "Gauguin at Tate Modern—for those late night fans of Gauguin…we've extended our Sunday opening hours at Tate Modern until 10 pm" (Tate 2010).

Grossberg acknowledges that human life is multidimensional and finds that there is a certain "sensibility" that helps define the relationship between fans and particular texts, and that the key to understanding fandom is to understand these sensibilities—built, as they are, on different sets of apparatuses depending on the cultural context of the engagement with a text. "There is," he argues, "more to the organization of people's lives than just the distribution or structure of meaning, money or power" (Grossberg 2006, p. 584). Grossberg writes predominantly from a rock music perspective, but his theory about affect in relation to fandom seems to apply equally well to football fans. Despite the comparative sense of powerlessness among football fans in England in the "Sky" era, they keep supporting their team and turning up to games despite the vast increase in ticket prices. Grossberg (2006, p. 586) notes: "For the fan, certain forms of popular culture become taken for granted, even necessary investments. The result is that, for the fan, specific cultural contexts become saturated with affect."

Affect is, of course, an interesting concept from the point of view of marketers who—as we have continuously seen—regard fans as a lucrative consumer segment. The line between advertising and news is increasingly blurred—particularly evident today in the clickbait climate on many news sites—as journalists and marketers alike are "mythic operators." Advertising and "news" are both representatives of "neo-reality," which does not automatically mean that they are "false" or "inauthentic"—for us to make that judgement we need to know what is "real" and "authentic," which is increasingly difficult (if at all possible) in a hyper-real world that is to such an extent dependent on the spectacle (there is, for example, seldom a clear distinction between events and pseudo-events). In a

sense, if not all media outlets at least most [and not only advertising and news, as referred to by Baudrillard (1998) and Boorstin (1992)], could be seen as constituting "a single visual, written, phonic and mythic substance; they succeed each other and alternate in all the media in a way which seems *natural* to us—they give rise to the same curiosity and the same spectacular/ludic absorption" (Baudrillard 1998, p. 126). Fandom thus contributes to give meaning to the everydayness within this single substance, or "system" or "code." Resistance to the code is, if we return to Jenkins, a possibility for fan communities. The fan is attributed with the knowledge, expertise and motivation to question dominating ideologies and to find alternative routes to navigate in the consumer society. If we follow this logic—that every individual has the freedom to act as agency—multinational companies, global corporations and film studios are not to be blamed for continuously producing biased and reactionary content. It is instead our supposed willingness to be seduced by their offering that contributes to maintaining the status quo, in a popular culture context and beyond.

Summary

This chapter has shown that a text can be anything from a film to an athlete to an event, and that fans interpret texts in relation to other texts, and also in the wider context of their life and society at large—in much the same way that representations of institutions and groups of people are dependent on a number of factors. Hierarchies and hegemonies are often built on so-called common-sense attitudes (Barthes 1993), which are often ideologically driven rather than signs of a natural order of things.

In fan studies discourse, fan cultures and fandoms are often viewed as potentially driven by an urge to resist these hegemonies, and they therefore pose a threat to established society. However, in the era of social media, neoliberalist values are reinforced through the very design of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and the ideal citizen in this context is an entrepreneur dealing largely in self-promotion. Since fans, from the point of view of brands and large corporations, through their social media activity have become more visible as a

market segment, they have also been elevated to key consumers. There is, therefore, a conflict surrounding the representation of fans—as in some contexts fans are desirable and in some they are viewed as a threat to the established order.

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5

Celebrity Culture and Modes of Participation Through "New" Media

The emergence of mass celebrity culture was made possible thanks to the film industry. There had of course been prominent people before the invention of cinema that were well known to the wider public. Writers like Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, whose texts were widely spread, regularly went on lecture tours. Dancers and theatre actors had large followings that frequented their performances, read about them in the papers, and maybe even waited for them backstage. But it was with the invention of cinema that stars could reach a larger audience and really create mass appeal. With theatre there was a strictly limited number of people who could see the star perform, whereas film could be made into a limitless number of copies and distributed all over the world. Thanks to the new film technology, a mass audience could get close to the stars without them being physically present in the room.

The role celebrity plays in contemporary culture "across many cultural fields has certainly expanded and multiplied" (Turner 2004, p. 4) in a way that is unprecedented. Celebrity is becoming part of our everyday lives. According to David Marshall (1997), celebrity functions to construct and maintain links between consumer capitalism, democracy and individualism. In doing so, celebrity culture legitimises the capitalist

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system by demonstrating that "the individual has a commercial as well as a cultural value" (Turner 2004, p. 200). To understand the function of celebrity, it is necessary to understand the origin of the phenomenon. The historical emergence of celebrity is often seen as a break with traditional hierarchical systems that allowed for a new form of identification with the stars, and also made way for close connections to consumerism to be formed.

The Origin of Mass Celebrity and Fandom

The development of movie stardom has its own history, as opposed to celebrity in other fields. Although some authors have argued that celebrity has been around as far back as the Roman times [e.g., Leo Braudy in *The Frenzy of the Renowned* (1986)], most researchers see a connection between celebrity and the growth of mass media. The invention of new technologies, such as photography and the close-up shot, has also played an important part in shaping fame. Alexander Walker (1970) argues that the new moving images technology, especially the close-up, was a break from the traditional stage convention. The close images of actors' faces allowed for a new intimacy, where the actors could portray or communicate emotions in a way that was unprecedented.

As the earliest films did not have credits, film actors were more or less anonymous. Some of the more popular actresses became known as a particular studio's "girl," like Florence Lawrence, who was nicknamed "The Biograph Girl" by the media. When Lawrence left Biograph studios, Mary Pickford became the "new" Biograph Girl. This relative anonymity was sometimes welcomed by the actors as they feared that they could ruin their stage careers by appearing in lowly moving pictures, but another reason for keeping their names a secret was that the studios actively discouraged stardom to be able to control the actors and keep their wages down. But the moviegoers were curious about the people they saw on screen, sending droves of letters to the studios asking for actor's names and personal information. Celebrity fandom was not a new concept; audiences had flocked to see dancers and actors, writers and royalty, even to the point where contemporary media described it as a

frenzy around especially popular performers. What was new about movie fandom was the desire from the fans to get to know intimate details about the stars. The need to see the authentic person behind the performance was enhanced and to some extent created by the illusion of intimacy the new technology created, which was allowing the fans to come very close (through close-ups) while at the same time being distant.

David Marshall describes how this new type of celebrity led to a "new sense of the public sphere" (1997, p. 6) that broke with the traditional bourgeoisie hierarchy which emphasised the individual hero or great man. According to Marshall's way of understanding mass celebrity, it is a democratisation of fame where the star is dependent on the fans in a way that previous celebrities were not. Attainability became a factor, and the fans' curiosity about these new faces of the cinema made way for the fan magazines: "Celebrity itself generated an entire industry by the second decade of the twentieth century with the emergence of movie fan magazines […] that openly celebrated movie stars and their lives" (Marshall 1997, p. 8). Fan magazines played an important role in this new form of celebrity culture as they provided the "reality" of the stars. The fans knew very little about the actors they saw on screen, and as films were in black and white, they did not even know the stars' hair or eye colour. To find out, fans turned to fan magazines, and as Marsha Orgeron (2003) points out, one of the movie magazines' functions was to provide "visual realism" for fans. Richard Schikel (1985) sees the invention of celebrity as a natural follow-on from the new public relations industry that required sensational and easy-to-follow stories continually for the public, and provided the press with material to fill the pages. Daniel Boorstin (1961) argued along the same lines some 20 years earlier. He saw the emergence of mass media and the celebrity culture that followed as a significant shift in popular culture. He regarded American contemporary culture as inauthentic and dominated by the "pseudo-event"—an event staged for the media. Boorstin was also behind the often-quoted phrase "the celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness" (1961, p. 58). According to Boorstin's way of seeing it, rather than being distinguished by their achievements celebrities are dependent upon their ability to successfully distinguish their personality from the competition in the same field, leaving popular culture shallow and deprived of authenticity, and

the celebrities interchangeable since none of them possesses any real substance.

There have of course emerged other less conservative readings of celebrity culture since the early 1960s, when Boorstin wrote his book. Marshall (1997) argues that audiences actively participate in the construction of celebrity rather than just being passively manipulated by the media. According to Marshall, fans invest in the relationship with the celebrity and are rewarded with a sense of belonging that to some extent replaces the social relations that seems to be in decline in society. Celebrity culture is based on constant negotiation between the fans and the star: "…we are using celebrity as means of constructing a new dimension of community through the media," Graeme Turner (2004, p. 6) argues, and the cultural meanings and associations of the celebrity "leak into all kinds of locations in our daily lives" (2004, p. 17). Chris Rojek (2001) also emphasises the importance of mass media for the formation of celebrity culture. Like Marshall, Rojek connects mass celebrity culture with the democratisation of society, where celebrities took the symbolic space of "recognising and belonging" (p. 14) previously occupied by monarchy, as well as with the commodification of everyday life.

The fan magazines did address the fans' curiosity by answering questions about stars, but to start with they would refuse to respond to anything regarding private details such as marital status—one of the things the fans were most eager to find out—considering it sensationalist.

Actors were initially referred to as "movie personalities," and they would portray the same type of character in a number of films. As De Cordova (1990) points out, the illusion was that the personality the actor portrayed on film was also their real personality. This was a way of promoting the films to the audience, to make fans come and see the new productions with their favourite "personality." Therefore, it was important to construct a personality that transcended the screen performance, showing the actors' "real" self on screen as well in the promotional material produced by the film studios.

The shift from "personality" to "star" came rather swiftly, and the actors' lives outside of the movies became the prime focus. The audience realised that actors were in fact acting, and they became admired for their craft: their ability to portray and convince on screen. The stars became separated

from their off-screen personalities, and audiences would accept them in a variety of different roles. The original Biograph Girl, Florence Lawrence, chose to leave Biograph Studios for IMP, where apart from more money she was also offered billing—making her the first actor to receive credits for her film, as well as becoming the first celebrity movie star. Her move was preceded by a PR campaign where rumours that she had died in a car crash were circulated—an early example of Boorstin's pseudo-event staged for the press. The fans' desire to get to know the true personality of the stars was constantly increasing, and by the 1920s the approach of the movie magazines had noticeably changed (Barbas 2002). Stars' private lives, including romance, were now a popular topic for articles. Samantha Barbas distinguishes between casual moviegoers and fans, stating that the casual spectator did not need to be convinced that the stars were authentic; they were content that the stars were as nice and lovely off screen as they were on it. The fan, on the other hand, needed to be reassured through writing to fan magazines and sending fan letters to the stars, some just expressing their admiration, but others aiming to form a personal relationship by asking the stars to dinner, or for a personal item. For the fan, the "real" person off screen was as important, if not more, as the screen presence and they sought to get to know the "authentic" person. The stars were the primary interest for the fans, not the actual films.

No longer limited to playing a particular type and model their public persona upon it, the stars gained greater flexibility and more control over their careers. They could now construct their own personalities that resonated with the fans, and choose film projects without having to think about it fitting their screen personality. The construction of personality was mainly conducted through the media, especially the fan magazines. Articles that focused on the stars' lifestyles also came to function as guides for fans to model their own lives upon (Barbas 2002). By consuming the same products and imitating the same look, the ordinary fan could emulate the lifestyle of their idols. Stars had a behavioural influence on fans, who not only saw the movies and bought the products, but wanted to be like their idols (Schulberg 1981).

As movie stars were beginning to develop personalities rather than being just anonymous faces, they also started to create meaning. Richard Dyer (1979) proposes that stars function like signs: they are coded with

different cultural meanings that fans do a semiotic reading of. Stars are constructed for mass audience consumption using film, media, advertising and so on. The purpose of the construction is both identification and differentiation—the audience should be able to identify with the star, but at the same time the star should be different enough to stand out. As Turner points out, "celebrity is highly individualized," and fans have their "own menu of personalities and attributes in which they maintain interest—and their own reasons for doing so" (2004, p. 110).

Movie stars were clearly linked to the growing consumer culture in the 1920s America. Details about stars' favourite beauty products, cigarettes, taste in clothes and interiors and so forth served to commodify the stars. Max Factor started out as a make-up artist in Hollywood, and built his brand on that legacy using stars like Ruby Keeler, Joan Bennett and Ginger Rogers in his advertising. Clara Bow, famous for her red hair, reportedly caused the sale of henna colour to soar. Stars not only appeared in advertising, they were also offering advice in magazine columns and even publishing self-help books—they had become educators, giving lessons in style as well as personality, leisure and grooming. As Barbas puts it, stars "became the nation's most prominent spokespeople for modernity" (2002, p. 37). The fan magazines functioned to make the stars' lifestyles seem more accessible by presenting them as "real" in a way that movies did not—they bridged the fantasy world presented in the movies and real life, mixing editorial material with advertisements. Through consumption the fan could aspire for the star's lifestyle, and the magazines provided inspiration as well as information. Fan magazines "constructed and trained a particular kind of ideal reader" (Orgeron 2009, p. 3). "Not only were the details of the star's life made public, they 'belonged' to the public and were made readily available—purchasable is perhaps a more accurate way to put it—through the medium of the fan magazine" (Orgeron 2003, p. 77). Fan magazines functioned to "extend the world of the cinema" (Orgeron 2003, p. 94), turning film fans into consumers by showing products that could be purchased to attain the lifestyle of the movie stars.

As Turner dryly observes: "celebrities are developed to make money" (2004, p. 34). Stars are not only paid for their cultural labour; they are also property that can be used to sell other things as well. Dyer (1979) points

out that many people stand to gain from the star's commodification—networks, managers, advertising agencies and so on. The development of the celebrity persona, and the application of that persona in different contexts, increases the celebrities' earning power. Marsha Orgeron (2009) calls this process "institutionalization of fan culture" through fan magazines (2009, p. 3). She looks not only at how fan magazines were gendered towards women, and bridged movie-going and consumerism, but also tries to understand how fans responded to them by including fan letters in her analysis. She rejects the notion that fan magazines purely functioned as a commercial vehicle, suggesting that fans made use of the "discourse of empowerment" these magazines endorsed by "urging the readers to think themselves worthy of participating in the culture of celebrity and fandom" (2009, p. 4). The readers were encouraged to move from being passive spectators to becoming active participators. These actions could consist of anything from consumption, to writing letters with questions or opinions, to becoming amateur experts on movies or particular stars, or even trying to pursue a Hollywood career themselves. Fans were urged to recreate themselves "by sending their images, thoughts, money, and so on into a remote public sphere" (2009, p. 4), forming a "framework of empowerment, providing a very tangible, attainable mode of participation for the otherwise potentially disconnected fan" (2009, p. 9). Fans became part of a community through reading the fan magazines. "They linked women in particular to the public space of movie theatres, to patterns of correspondence and consumption, and to a broad community of fans and spectators" (2009, p. 8).

Fans, especially female, were actively encouraged to not only engage with movies through consumption, but also by trying to become actual movie stars themselves. Motion Pictures Magazine held a yearly competition—"Fame and Fortune"—where the prize was a starring role in a Hollywood production. Clara Bow won in 1922 and went on to become one of silent cinema's greatest stars, making the step from fan to star seem like an achievable goal. Movie magazines often encouraged women to go to Hollywood to find work, and the film industry came across like an attractive alternative to factory or clerical work for women with little experience. The magazines published stories about previously unknown ordinary girls that had been discovered and turned into stars making

dreams of stardom seem realistic. During the period 1910–1930, young fans, girls especially, flocked outside the studios in the hope of stardom or other employment. Hollywood championed the "new" independent woman, and as Barbas points out, Hollywood represented a potential to "earn the income, power, and respect denied them through other channels" (2002, p. 61). Stars seemed to be in control of their own destiny and represented freedom, and in light of the harsh economic climate of the era, it seemed a logical step for young women to explore work opportunities in this new, thriving industry.

Marshall identifies how celebrity creates a new world order with new values where the celebrity is reliant upon the fans. As fame is no longer dependent upon wealth or merit "celebrity status invokes the message of possibility of a democratic age" (1997, p. 6). The celebrity becomes more attainable, while at the same time remaining distant. "Concomitantly, celebrity is the potential of capitalism, a celebration of new kind of values and orders, a debunking of the customary division of traditional society, for the celebrity him- or herself is dependent entirely on the new order" (1997, p. 6). Consumerism was an important part of the democratic aspirations through celebrity culture: "images of possibility provided by films, radio, and popular music represented an accessible form of consumption" (1997, p. 9). As fame and fortune became more, at least seemingly, accessible fans had little to lose by trying to achieve stardom themselves.

The film studios did not, however, appreciate the floods of young fans coming to Hollywood, hanging around the studios in the hope of being discovered as stars or at least securing a less glamourous job in the industry. Apart from the administrative problems and extra cost of dealing with all the job applicants, the studios feared for the industry's reputation. In 1922, William Hay was employed to clean up Hollywood's image, and one of his early initiatives was to take out a series of announcements in national newspapers warning fans against coming to the city. "DON'T TRY TO BREAK INTO THE MOVIES," one of them read.

The studios were so concerned they enlisted writers to pen articles for fan magazines warning fans against travelling to Hollywood to pursue their dreams of stardom. This was met by mixed reactions from the magazine editors, as they knew that advising readers to seek careers in the film

industry sold more copies. Some magazines found a middle ground by putting on competitions encouraging readers to send in scripts or ideas for films, where the winning contribution would sometimes be rewarded with a cash sum, which offered the opportunity of active participation without the physical relocation. The idea was to make fans feel part of the industry, and magazines "emphasised that fans' opinions shaped the industry" (Orgeron 2009, p. 6). This was to little prevail though, as the contemporary media reported that the flood of young women coming to Hollywood only seemed to increase, with some of them, unable to find or afford accommodation, sleeping on the streets. The fan magazines as well as the newspapers started to publish more and more stories about hopefuls that had their dreams of Hollywood stardom brutally crushed.

However, the studios did not want to alienate these dedicated fans. They saw the potential of turning fans eager for participation into consumers, encouraging them to "become glamorous stars of their own lives," as Barbas puts it. She demonstrates how a solid relationship between corporations, fan magazines and the film industry was established in the 1920s, encouraging young girls to stay put at their jobs rather than coming to Hollywood with the hopes of a movie career, and spend their earnings on products frequently promoted with the help of the stars. Collecting autographs and photographs of stars also became important fan activities.

Hollywood quickly became a tourist destination for fans hoping to spot the stars. Star tours were established as early as the 1920s, and fan magazines published addresses to homes and hangouts of the stars. Although most fans were not successful in getting a glimpse of any famous faces, by the 1930s Hollywood tours were a minor industry (Barbas 2002).

The focus of fan participation was thus shifted from being part of the film industry to consuming products. How satisfied fans were with this transition from dreams of stardom to purchasing cosmetics and clothes could be questioned, but that it was a strategy that worked for the film studios is clear—in 1932, half a million copies of the dress worn by Joan Crawford in the film *Letty Lytton* were sold (Eckert 1990). After two decades of fan magazines and studio publicity, the dream of stardom had been replaced by realistic insight of the minimal chance of actually "making it" in Hollywood. As Barbas concludes: "the movies were no longer seen as a potential way to *earn* money, but an excuse to *spend* money on

fan magazines, movie tickets, and a variety of products" (2002, p. 82). This might imply a passivisation of fandom, but Barbas argues that fans quickly realised the consumer power they possessed and made use of it to influence studios' decisions and support their favourite stars.

Fan clubs became a tool for fans to get organised to share information about stars, but also to gain influence over the filmmaking process. From the early days of Hollywood, promoting or boosting a star was an important activity for the serious movie fan. Fan magazines were an important source of information, providing fans with insight into the film industry. Fans understood the importance of assisting their favourite stars by writing to the studios, demanding bigger parts, more flattering photographs, better scripts, more publicity and so on for their idols. By organising themselves into groups fans gained more power and influence over the industry. Fan magazines highlighted the relationship between fans and stardom, explaining that if a star did not receive enough fan mail, he or she would not be cast in films anymore. As Orgeron (2009) points out, this suggested a cause and effect model where fans had the direct power of deciding who was a star and who was not.

To respond to the mail, studios introduced fan mail departments that dealt with the millions of letters the stars were sent. This was a considerable cost for the studios, but they realised the importance of receiving these letters as they voiced the public opinion and was a valuable indicator of what the market wanted. David Selznick, head of production at RKO, had lists of requests and wishes from fan mail commissioned and presented to him regularly, but more important than the content was the *volume* of fan mails—the more mail a star received, the more popular he or she was. Selznick had monthly fan mail reports compiled, accounting for the number of fan letters each star received. Fans realised this, and saw sending letters to the studio to boost their favourite star as one of their most important task, as they were thereby helping to shape the star's career.

Fan letters can be viewed as an example of co-creation, as they were often written with a specific purpose to influence the film-making process. Film fans had a good understanding of how the industry worked, and not satisfied with just expressing admiration fans used their efforts to help boost their favourite star's careers. "Creative and determined, fans

transformed the movies from images on the screen into an activity with great personal meaning" (Barbas 2002, p. 187).

Participatory Film and Television Fans

The fans shaped the dynamic of Hollywood early on. Film studios were keen to listen to the fans—the consumers—and their opinions were taken into consideration when making decisions on casting and marketing. The letters fans sent to the studios were, however, mostly one-way communication, and even though fans would receive thank-you letters and photographs autographed by the star (or, more commonly, someone working at the studio who had learned how to copy it), it was only the more dedicated fans who would form communities and engage with fan activities.

Television also generated loyal fans that have often been very successful in organising themselves and directly affecting the network's decisions. *Star Trek* is an early example of fan power, as the fans managed to keep the show on air after the network announced that they were cancelling it after two seasons. The show's ratings were low, but the fans were determined and organised a letter-writing campaign and put on demonstrations outside NBCs office and studio. They were successful and managed to convince the network to keep *Star Trek* on air. Campaigns like this are now a rule rather than an exception when a show is announced to be cancelled, as the examples below will show, but in 1968 when the *Star Trek* campaign took place it was a new phenomenon in television and made enough of an impact on the network executives for them to let the show continue. The success was rather limited though, as there was only one more season made and it aired on a late-night slot. The show did not manage to get the ratings it needed to stay on air, and the loyalty of the fans did not change that fact. It did however create a cult around *Star Trek,* with fans producing fan fiction, organising meetings and forming communities. The show was never off the popular culture radar, and in 1987 the show returned to television and ran until 1994. *Star Trek* has also spawned several spinoff television series, feature films, an animated

series, comics, video games, toys and not to mention a steady stream of fan fiction and fan videos.

Other shows had more immediate success after being saved by campaigning fans, like *Cagney and Lacey* that was cancelled after the first season, but seven more seasons were made and the show picked up several awards. It was not only the grass-roots fans that were engaged with keeping *Cagney and Lacey* on air; celebrities like Gloria Steinem were also speaking up in favour of the show.

This is testament to the power of fans. In 1991, David Lynch's show *Twin Peaks* suffered from declining viewer ratings and faced cancellation. Lynch himself went on David Letterman's *Late Night* talk show and not only encouraged fans to write letters to the network asking for *Twin Peaks* to stay on air, he even read out the address to the president of the ABC network. Lynch said: "He needs to know certain things from the people." Fans took Lynch's request seriously, writing letters and holding rallies, and even organising themselves into a group named after the lead character Agent Cooper: COOP, an acronym for Citizens Opposed to the Offing of Peaks. However, the campaign was not successful and the show was cancelled. Like *Star Trek*, *Twin Peaks* had a loyal following and it soon became a cult show. There are still annual fan conventions organised in both the USA and UK with members of the original cast as special guests, quizzes and dress-up competitions. The American festival includes a bus tour of the filming locations. The continuing interest in the show has contributed to a new season being made, 25 years after the cancellation.

Veronica Mars fans unsuccessfully campaigned in 2007 against the show's cancellation. However, in 2013 *Veronica Mars*'s writer-executive producer Rob Thomas launched a successful Kickstarter campaign to raise money for a *Veronica Mars* movie. Matt Hills (2015) has considered how Thomas positioned himself as a fan, outside of the commercial business system. He highlights that the *Veronica Mars* Kickstarter campaign was based on both economic and fan capital—the interest from the fans in turn generated a wave of interest from the press. He notes how Thomas consistently tried to decommoditise the show and position himself closer to fandom, hoping to come across as more authentic by "dissolving conventional industry routes" (Hills 2015, p. 186) by using fan sites and Kickstarter to communicate news rather than tradi-

tional press releases. Fans are turned into co-financiers of the film, but it can be questioned how participatory the fans really are allowed to be as they can merely choose between different awards tiers depending on how much money they give, and not actively participate in textual productivity. Crowdfunding has been dismissed as "a neoliberal exercise in individualistic consumerism" (Hills 2015, p. 189) by scholars such as Harvie (2013) and Brabham (2013) who see it as a process where fans are financing the film without sharing the profit and therefore being exploited by the film industry. Others have highlighted that there might be other motivational factors for fans to give money to the campaign that is not related to direct participation or monetary rewards, like a sense of "being there" from the start and increasing status within the fan community (see, e.g., Jenkins 2013). Hills also points out that the rewards for fan funders do bring value in the form of fan cultural capital, as well as an "insider" perspective (2015).

Fans have developed more creative approaches to get noticed not only by the network, but by the media too, hoping that the attention will help their cause and maybe increase the ratings to save their favourite show. The fans of *Roswell*—a teen show about aliens living undercover in a small American town—organised themselves through a website when the show was under threat of cancellation in 2000. The fans sent the network letters and bottles of tabasco sauce, a reference to one of the character's favourite food, but they also made use of the Internet for their campaign. Through the website crashdown.com, named after the restaurant on the show, fans created an online community in the process. The television network realised the value of dedicated fans and the growing online culture, and renewed the show for a couple more seasons. Even though the show was finally cancelled in 2002, the crashdown.com site is still up and running, being continually updated by fans. The site contains episode guides, information about the actors and their new projects, a travel guide to the city Roswell, fan fiction and so forth. The site also regularly organises Twitter campaigns. Sometimes the purpose is to try and get a *Roswell* film made, but at other times it is simply to get fans to share their favourite memories of the show. The campaigns are well organised, with special hashtags created and schedules to follow, making sure that everyone tweets at the same time.

"Since it is the anniversary of the very last *Roswell* episode, we will start our #RoswellRewatch of the 'Graduation' episode along with a live tweeting session at 6 PM EST, too. Please join us, if you can!" (Lena, Loveletters and Zalima'Deb), the site encouraged fans. There was also a schedule listing the local times for all time zones, and fans that were not able to live tweet were instructed to pre-programme their tweets to follow the time schedule. This live tweet session took place on 14 May 2016—14 years after the show was cancelled. The website functions as a place for fans to come together and the interaction with other fans keeps the show alive. The site is also for new fans, who can find other fans to discuss the show with even though it is not on the air anymore. DVDs and streaming have changed the way fans watch television, making the fact that no new episodes are produced less important. *Arrested Development*, which aired between 2003–2006, was cancelled despite a loyal although relatively small audience, but the streamed viewings of the old episodes were so high that Netflix funded new episodes, six years after the show had been cancelled.

Today there are more ways than ever for film fans to participate and create meaning. Mark Poster dubs this *The Second Media Age* in his 1995 book. He sees this age as fundamentally different from the first media age—which was a system of few producers and many consumers—as new technology makes it possible for fans to participate and create communities on a level that was not possible before the Internet. Fans have always been participatory, so it is no surprise that they were early adopters of the new IT technology. Social media has become an important space for fans to communicate with the film and television industry, as well as with each other. Sometimes fan campaigns take on political dimensions, like the petition aiming to give the animated character Elsa from the Disney success *Frozen* a girlfriend in the upcoming sequel, *Frozen 2*. The campaign comes after it was revealed that Disney failed to include a single LGBT character in any of their 2015 major releases and has generated substantial media interest. The actress Idina Menzel, who voices Elsa, supports the idea of a girlfriend: "I think it's great. Disney just gotta contend with that" (Ungerman 2016). The campaign started when Alexis Isabel Moncada, founder of the website Feminist Culture, posted a simple tweet reading: "Dear @Disney, #GiveElsaAGirlfriend."

Fans can also very easily express their dislike. The trailer for the reboot of *Ghostbusters*, with an all-female cast, is reportedly the most disliked trailer in the history of YouTube. The film's director Paul Feig was quoted in an interview with the *New York Daily News* (Klicksten 2016) saying "Geek culture is home to some of the biggest assholes I've ever met in my life." Barbas (2002) has shown how film fandom was never considered "normal" and was often compared to a disease, "the movie bug," and loss of control of the senses. The friendless loner and the frenzied mob quickly became two of the most commonplace clichés when talking about movie fans, which was further reinforced by the masses that turned out for the silent movie star Rudolph Valentino's funeral in 1926, which was described by the press as hysteria. The hostility towards dedicated fans can be further traced to the fan community that began to form around *Star Trek* in the mid-Sixties which was dismissed as "dupes" mindlessly staring at the television set (Bury 2016). Fans of popular culture have often been on the receiving end of abuse. The classic 1986 sketch "Get a life" from *Saturday Night Live* is testament to the sometimes ambivalent power relations between the fan and the celebrity. The sketch features William Shatner at a *Star Trek* convention where he is asked very detailed questions about the show from fans dressed in *Star Trek* slogan T-shirts, rubber Vulcan ears and nerdy glasses. Not being able to answer, Shatner becomes frustrated and turns on the fans, telling them to "get a life." He then storms off the stage, but the organiser approaches him waving a contract, and Shatner reluctantly returns to the podium. The sketch became infamous. Fanlore, an online site for fans and fan communities, notes: "[Get a life] has become [a] phrase that is now used as a (sic) insult to fans, suggesting that fandom is a waste of time and that fans are losers" (Fanlore 2016). William Shatner later went on to write a book about *Star Trek* fans based on material he collected when attending fan conventions, where he expresses gratitude for the livelihood the franchise and the fans' commitment to it has given him. The book was called *Get A Life* (Shatner and Kreski 1999).

Feig (2016) later clarified his comments, saying they were from an interview he had done over a year earlier in response to a general question about fan culture. He posted a clarification of the context in which the comments were made on his Twitter account, saying that they were directed towards the bullies within the community and not the com-

munity itself. His explanation showed him eager not to distance himself from any of the *Ghostbusters* fans that will make up the audience for the film upon its release, calling "the vast majority [...] wonderful, thoughtful people who make up *our* [our emphasis] geek community"—and by using the word "our" it is clear that he is trying to include himself in this "wonderful, thoughtful" community.

Fans are not only loyal to stars, but as the examples discussed above demonstrate fans sometimes care more about the actual text—the film or television show—than the stars. This is a significant shift from the earliest days of film fandom and the Biograph Girl, when films were produced to fit the image of the anonymous "screen personalities" to attract the fans to the movie theatres. *Star Wars* has some of the most loyal fans of any film franchise. When director George Lucas decided to "improve" the original three movies by adding CGI effects, claiming that it would reflect the original vision he had when the movies were shot but the technology had not been available, many fans reacted negatively feeling that the authenticity of the films was being compromised. Fans wanted a high-definition original version to be released, but Lucas did not adhere to the fans' wishes, insisting on only making the "Special edition," that is, the CGI version, available and not the originals. Some fans took matter into their own hands and created a version without the changes Lucas added, using their technological skills and different versions of the films that have been released over the years to create a copy of the film closer to the fans' vision of the movie, rather than the director's. Fiske (1992) points out that fans often feel a sense of ownership towards their object of fandom when the distance between the text or artist and the fans is minimised. *Star Wars* fans have invested both time and money into their fandom by joining online communities, buying *Star Wars*-branded products, going to conventions and engaging in other fan practices. By re-watching the movies over and over again, reading about the films and discussing with each other, fans become experts, and as their motives are purely based on fandom they might become protective when they feel that the object of their fandom is being exploited, even if it is by the creator. Fan work often has no monetary motives, which reinforces the feelings of ownership from fans as their motives are pure and production is mainly within the fan community, for the fan community. When reworking texts and

creating new meanings fans not only open the text up for new interpretations, they also produce their own popular cultural capital.

Even though Lucas did not agree with the fans on how *Star Wars* should look, he did realise the promotional potential of the Internet early and established an official *Star Wars* website in 1996. It emphasised community and brought together already existing fan sites and blogs to create fan involvement. As *Star Wars* is a franchise, with new films still being released, there is a need to cultivate audience loyalty to keep the interest up between releases. Creating a community where fans can communicate as well as get information on other *Star Wars*-branded products to purchase is one of the means of doing this (Erickson 2008).

Fan culture has traditionally been linked to consumerism, but many fan activities have been outside of the capitalist system and part of the gift economy—fans have created for the joy of creating, and shared their work for free with other fans. Fans have always made use of the text in different ways, but it was *Star Trek* fans that really popularised the phenomena by producing fanzines that among other things contained stories about the *Star Trek* characters written by the fans. Fan fiction has become a popular activity, reaching big audiences—the bestseller *Fifty Shades of Grey* started out as fan fiction, for example. The webpage Fanlib.com (2007-2008) was an attempt to capitalise on the popularity of fan fiction, aimed to function as a hub for fan fiction writers and provide a portal where fans could read and discuss each other's texts, as well intending to make it more mainstream. Apart from fan fiction, written by fans especially selected by the site, there were official competitions where fans could write scenes for popular television shows, like *The L-Word* and *Ghost Whisperer*. The price for the winner was to have their work shot and incorporated into the show's storyline as well as a small cash sum. To use fan labour with little or no financial compensation is a strategy almost as old as Hollywood, as previously shown, and the site proved controversial and was only up and running for about a year. Fan researcher Henry Jenkins (2007) explained why this approach is problematic on his blog:

> You say 'User-Generated Content'.
> We say 'Fan Culture'.
> Let's call the whole thing off!

As the quotation demonstrates, Jenkins views fan labour as pure and a labour of love, and the problem he, and many with him, had with the FanLib page was that it was not run as a bottom-up project, but instead by a board of business people who planned to make a profit from the free labour the fans provided. Jenkins argues that “fan fiction should be valued within the terms of the community which produces and reads it, and that a fan writer who only writes for other fans may still be making a rich contribution to our culture which demands our respect” (Jenkins 2007). FanLib scouted the Net and invited selected writers to publish on their site, but writers who agreed to do so were subject to a clause where FanLib owned everything the writers posted, but leaving the writers libel for all legal actions that production companies might take against them for infringing on intellectual property rights—leaving all the profits to the website, and all the risks on the individual writer.

Summary

The rise of mass celebrity culture was made possible thanks to new technology, like photography and film. Movie stars quickly emerged as a new class of celebrities, more attainable than stars had been before. A commercial link to movie stardom was soon established, where fan magazines played a big part in educating fans as consumers. Stardom created whole new opportunities for commercialism, and stars could use their platform based on fame to sell products. “The celebrity can develop their public persona as a commercial asset and their career choices, in principle, should be devoted to that objective. As the asset appreciates—as the celebrity’s fame spreads—so does its earning capacity” (Turner 2004, p. 35).

Fans have always been early adopters of new technology, and online fan communities started forming early on. As social media has become part of our daily lives, so have activities previously considered to be fan activities. Social media has made it easier to participate, and as more people engage with it (73 million people follow Kim Kardashian on Instagram, Vin Diesel has almost 100,000,000 likes on his Facebook page), it has facilitated a broadening of the fan concept. “[W]e are using celebrity

as means of constructing a new dimension of community through the media," Turner (2004, p. 6) argues, and the cultural meanings and associations of the celebrity "leak into all kinds of locations in our daily lives" (2004, p. 17). Fandom has become normalised and in the process many of the negative associations previously associated with fans have faded away.

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6

Fans and Tourism

This chapter will provide insights into fandom-generated tourism, and bring some seemingly disparate areas together under the umbrella of *fan tourism*. For example, how are concepts such as fandom, fans, travel, social media, pilgrimage, niche tourism, microcelebrity and destination branding connected? Why are we drawn to certain places because of their status as significant in the lives and worlds of our objects and subjects of fandom—from a fictional as well as a "real life" point of view—and what may these tourism experiences look like?

Fan Travel as Pilgrimage

Pilgrimages have traditionally been undertaken as part of religious travel, with the key purpose to bring the traveller closer to a religious ideal or the object of worship through the visitation of a sacred place. However, the term pilgrimage has in recent years frequently been used in relation to more secular activities (Hall 2002; Digance 2006), and a "sacred" place may refer to a location or site that has a meaning in the "text" surrounding a popular culture figure. A well-known example is Graceland

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in Memphis, Tennessee, the former home of Elvis Presley. This is also the place where he died (in 1977), which gives the site an even greater significance as a destination for pilgrims who want to get closer to the "spirit" of their idol. Graceland was opened to the public in 1982, and is one of the most popular visitor attractions in Memphis—attracting over 600,000 visitors annually (Graceland c2016a). Elvis is continuously present in popular culture discourse, which further explains the high visitor numbers—"The writing goes on," states Stephen Hinerman (1992, p. 108), and "the tabloid articles continue, the books are still published, new combinations of previously released material appear on CDs, and Graceland continues to play host to apparently unending battalions of the curious and the ceaselessly devoted."

The official Graceland website emphasises the pilgrimage aspects in their description of the site, and the visitors are told that they will get to know the "personal side" of their idol during their visit: "Take an unforgettable journey through the most famous rock 'n' roll residence in the world. Explore the personal side of Elvis Presley and learn how his revolutionary style and unique sound changed the face of popular music and culture forever. This legendary rock 'n' roll pilgrimage will show you why Elvis lives" (Graceland c2016b). In an effort to invite fans to actively participate and create their own memories, in May 2016 they encouraged fans to upload their photo to be included in a "Graceland Fan Mosaic." This initiative was advertised on the start page, and a further incentive to take part was that the photo will be kept in the Graceland Archives: "Upload a photo of yourself to be part of the official Graceland Fan Mosaic. Your photo will become a part of the treasured Graceland Archives" (Graceland c2016c). Fans can also experience Elvis events remotely through live online streaming. Events include the annual Christmas lighting ceremony in November, various auctions, and events relating to the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artists Contest.

British artist Morrissey rose to fame in the 1980s as the singer of The Smiths, and has maintained his status as a pop icon throughout his solo career. In Manchester, the city where he grew up, fans and tourists can go on various walking tours, and visit places that are important in the narratives surrounding Morrissey and The Smiths. In 1988, Morrissey released

his first solo single, “Suedehead,” and in the promotional video for the song he embarked upon a pilgrimage of his own.

In the video, which begins in Kensington, London, he visits Fairmount, Indiana, the home town of James Dean (Morrissey 1988). Erin Hazard (2011, p. 32) observes that “if Fairmount was once Dean’s Fairmount, post-‘Suedehead’ it is Dean’s and Morrissey’s Fairmount.” Intertextuality is important to understand the fan as an active participant in the meaning-making surrounding a fandom. From a marketing and artistic point of view, Morrissey can be seen as benefitting from the status and aura of Dean (including Dennis Stock’s photos of Dean in Fairmount in 1954, for *Life* magazine), as he incorporates the myth of James Dean into the fabric of his own work. Morrissey often makes reference to artists or popular culture figures in his songs and videos, thus opening new worlds for his fans, through sharing his own passions as a fan—including the sacred pilgrimage to worship at the altar of his own hero, James Dean. Hazard (2011) “came to Fairmount seeking some cocktail of Morrissey and Dean, heavy on Morrissey,” which indicates that even if it is Dean’s hometown, it is of more significance to her as a place connected to Morrissey.

Another celebrity who is known for his deep interest in popular culture is the American film director John Waters. In *Crackpot*, a collection of essays and observations previously published in various magazines, Waters (1983/2003) presents a tourist guide to Los Angeles, “John Waters’ tour of L.A.,” first published in 1985:

> Los Angeles is everything a great American city should be: rich, hilarious, of questionable taste, and throbbing with fake glamour. I can’t think of a better place to vacation—next to Baltimore, of course, where I live most of the time. Since I don’t make my home entirely in what the entertainment industry considers a “real city” (L.A. or New York), I’m a perpetual tourist, and that’s the best way to travel. Nobody gets used to you, you make new friends without having to hear anyone’s everyday problems, and you jet back still feeling like a know-it-all. (Waters 2003, p. 1)

Waters is here what John Urry and Jonas Larsen (2011) would term a “post-tourist”—someone who has an ironic relationship with the place

they visit (which does not imply that this relationship is not genuine). The post-tourist gets as much pleasure out of "fake authenticity" as tourists who prefer to see themselves as travellers get out of experiencing first-hand "authentic" expressions of tradition and culture. Authenticity, of course, is a social construct and is largely a modern Western concern (Cohen 1988). It is a very important concept, nonetheless, and from an existential point of view the individual—by escaping the shackles of work and other responsibilities—views tourism "not as a corrupting and commodifying influence but as a way of being that is genuine and natural" (Smith et al. 2010, p. 16).

As we saw above, it is not only the places that artists come from or where they have lived that fascinate fans. Anything included in their body of work, and idols of their own, or places referred to in their work and art may carry drawing power. Fandom is, after all, a key instigator for travel—and there are numerous festivals built around famous "sons" or "daughters" of a place, such as centenary celebrations commemorating their births and deaths (e.g., Hieronymus Bosch in 's-Hertogenbosch, Dylan Thomas in Aberystwyth and William Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon).

We seldom speak about art lovers as fans (Grossberg 2006), but when a large exhibition—along with an ambitious festival programme, including a themed canal tour—was held in 's-Hertogenbosch in February–May 2016 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch's birth, the tourists who travelled to this small Dutch market town to view original Bosch paintings and drawings could be defined as fans of Hieronymus Bosch. After all, it was their fascination and love for the works of Bosch that drew them to 's-Hertogenbosch. In addition, they could experience walking in the footsteps of Bosch in his hometown, akin to the Graceland and Fairmount pilgrimages touched upon earlier. It is also evident that some Bosch lovers self-identify as fans, as indicated by this TripAdvisor review of the National Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon, posted by a person from Coleyville, Texas:

> I am a fan of Hieronymus Bosch, so I had to see The Temptation of St. Anthony. It is an amazing painting. (Frank 2012)

In addition, under Jonathan Jones's review in *The Guardian* of the exhibition mentioned earlier, *Hieronymus Bosch—Visions of Genius* at the Noordabrants Museum in 's-Hertogenbosch, one commenter writes:

> I'm a fan. Plus, they discovered a new Bosch painting in America. As in, a couple of days ago…. (Legion7, in the comments section of Jones 2016)

Art critics also seem to use the term. Boyd Tonkin (2016), in his review for *The Independent*, refers to "hippie-era Bosch fans" to illustrate a period in time when Bosch's work came back into fashion: "Most influentially, for hippie-era Bosch fans, in 1947 Wilhelm Fraenger argued that Bosch did not warn against the erotic frolics he depicts but rather celebrates them as a higher form of innocence." Again, this shows that the word "fan" is used in mainstream media also in relation to fine art, albeit in Tonkin's contextualisation he aligns them with the hippie culture of the 1960s and 1970s—a subcultural and popular culture phenomenon. As we saw in Chap. 4, Tate Modern (Tate 2010) notified in a Facebook post "fans of Gauguin" that the museum had extended its opening hours, and the GREAT Britain destination marketing campaign—managed by Visit Britain—posted this Twitter message in February 2016, recommending various art experiences to potential cultural tourists: "From Banksy's Bristol to the iconic Tate Modern—the best bits of Britain for art fans" (GREAT Britain 2016). Along with the tweet came a picture of Tate Modern at night, and a link to *Rough Guide's* "12 top destinations for art holidays in Britain."

Fans of Destinations

It is well established that the "performance turn" in tourism has highlighted "how tourists are co-producers of tourist places and tourists can experience a given place through many different styles, senses and practices" (Urry and Larsen 2011, p. 206). The "gaze," despite being largely "*pre*formed" through architectural theming and representations, is "never predetermined and fully predictable." The tourist as consumer is thus not necessarily passive, and there are various ways of "resisting" dominant

tourist discourses for the post-tourist traveller. In "'I Love Ibiza': Music, Place and Belonging," Cornel Sandvoss (2014) asks if it is possible to be a fan of Ibiza, the Spanish island, as he draws on John Urry's (1990) theory of the tourist gaze. This is an intriguing question: is it possible to be a fan of a destination? Before we revisit Sandvoss and Ibiza, we need to look a bit closer at the meaning of destinations, drawing on destination marketing, cultural studies and tourism literature.

Destinations are increasingly being branded and marketed to people so as to attract them on an emotional level (Pike 2015). The role of DMOs (destination management/marketing organisations) has grown more and more important, and indexes such as Simon Anholt's biannual City and Nation Branding Indexes and the World Economic Forum's annual Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index are increasingly becoming benchmarks for governments and the tourism industry. Sandvoss (2014, p. 116) rightly argues that a place is much more than its geographical location and its tangible elements—and that places, like texts, "are *socially constructed through symbols, discourses and representations*. In this sense places, and in particular places of pleasure and affect, are also always texts." Places thus *represent* something, and in place marketing and destination branding places can be given attributes that they have traditionally not been associated with. Places rebrand themselves just like companies and sports teams do—cities can be reinvented to suit the market. Through, for example, the invention of traditions (Hobsbawm 1983), hyperreality (Boorstin 1961), festivalisation (Urry and Larsen 2011) and urban regeneration (Gold and Gold 2007), cities and regions manage their images and make themselves known as attractive destinations to visit (and, to some extent, live and work in). A recent global trend is to bid for and put on mega events (like the World Fair, the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup), and in Europe cities of all sizes and reputations compete every year for the right to the European Capital of Culture title. Since a place can be redesigned it can also be rediscovered.

Sandvoss (2014), in his analysis of Ibiza, links together the tourism development in Ibiza over the past three or four decades with the emergence of clubbing and Electronic Dance Music (EDM). Sandvoss's idea of what constitutes a fan of Ibiza is broad and inclusive, citing "enjoyment of" and "attachment to" various practices and activities associated

with Ibiza, and is therefore in line with a widespread contemporary view of fandom as a legitimate form of consumerism, as opposed to fandom as stigmatised and fostering "dangerous" and obsessed fanatics (see, e.g., Jensen 1992). He acknowledges that Ibiza is more than a territorial place—it is also a concept, an abstract place, a representation. Therefore, visiting Ibiza is performative: "Place (rather than territory) thus, much like a text, lacks clearly definable boundaries. Ibiza is many different things to different people, precisely because of its many representations that shape and frame our experiences" (Sandvoss 2014, p. 117).

Sandvoss's chapter is interesting also as it incorporates classifications of visitors, indebted to both Fiske (1992) and to some extent Abercrombie and Longhurst's (1998) audience typologies. Sandvoss has identified three particular groups, which he terms fan/tourist, cultist/regular and enthusiast/veteran (2014, p. 120).

Focusing largely on an online forum, Spotlight, Sandvoss deducts that its active users and contributors are more likely to be highly engaged in Ibiza as a place—and he therefore terms them enthusiasts. In terms of age, these are older than the average clubber, and many of them have been members for ten years or more. The forum is predominantly male, which is in line with similar platforms as argued by Christenson and Petersen (1988). Sandvoss (2014, p. 120) states, referring to Christenson and Petersen, that "males tend to have higher genre-specific investment in music than females [which] suggests that males are likely over-represented among board users."

Sandvoss refers to the term "neo-tribes," and contests Bennett's (1999) claims of what constitutes these, and concludes that it is difficult to assign Ibiza fans the title of neo-tribalists. The community, in this case we must assume "fan" community, extends beyond Bennett's definition of the concept, and incorporates in Sandvoss's interpretation for example also local cab drivers and (in the words of one of the respondents) "a hippy-looking Spanish dude" (Sandvoss 2014, p. 127). The Ibiza community is thus made up of a more eclectic group of people, while a neo-tribe is more homogeneous.

The eclecticism leads to conflicts within the fan community, as it is possible for enthusiasts and regulars to decode people—through their appearance and behaviour—who do not seem to understand the culture

of the place. Sandvoss's respondents refer to these as "chavs" (a derogatory term that describes parts of the British working class, see, e.g., Jones 2011) who conform to a certain way of dressing and acting. Subcultural diversity is seen to be less dominant than it used to be. The Ibiza culture is based around a paradoxical value system (which is present in much fandom and fan cultures), adhering to claims in EDM culture of "equality, tolerance and inclusivity which are achieved through forms of exclusion and judgment" (Sandvoss 2014, p. 130).

What Sandvoss (2014, p. 131) shows is that "in every (subcultural) field, hierarchies and value systems, and by extension (sub)cultural capital, are structured through a history of cultural practices and their sociopolitical contexts." Fan cultures are thus developed over time, and evolve parallel to—and in resistance to—the rest of society. Ibiza is a multilayered text, and although Sandvoss acknowledges that Ibiza in many ways contributes to a hypercommercialised environment, he argues that through the "spirit of unity, tolerance and diversity" of the place and its fan community (in as much as that term can be applied) Ibiza "evades the complete commodification of place through tourism, entertainment and media industries alike" (Sandvoss 2014, p. 138). This renders the place a certain aura of authenticity, particularly as there is a clear interplay between place and music. In a sense, Ibiza offers both "existential" authenticity (a place different from the mundane and everyday "home life") and a satisfactory "post-tourist" experience:

> Rather than being rooted in the ephemerality of subcultural immersion, the pleasures and attractions of the island and its music are located in the permanence and continuity of connections with place and people that fans create in their acts of consumption and performances. (Sandvoss 2014, pp. 139–140)

Few places in Europe—and hardly any tourist resorts—have the same link to a particular kind of music, although there are plenty of cities in the United States that through their strong musical heritage are branded as music destinations—for example Detroit, Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans. It is more difficult for global metropoles to forge a cohesive identity, and places like New York and London represent different

things for different types of tourists. These cities have also been portrayed on film and television so many times (for example Woody Allen's and Martin Scorsese's very different New Yorks of the 1970s) that it is hard to separate fiction from reality (and film and media representations form an important part of the motivations behind visiting certain places).

London & Partners, the official promotional agency for London aiming to "build London's international reputation and attract visitors and investment" (London & Partners n.d.), began their "Fans of London" campaign in early 2016 (in partnership with British Airways and Hilton). The campaign, which is based around social media, draws attention to what London has to offer and—through an ongoing competition—reward loyal international fans by organising themed holiday experiences for them (London & Partners 2016). In addition, some "super fans" are targeted separately, such as through the surprise trip given to an American family of ardent *Harry Potter* fans. Initiatives like these create excitement around various aspects of a place, and by inviting enthusiastic fans these experiences multiply and spread—since, as we have seen, "fans" are more likely to share their experiences and thus contribute to the wider "story" of a destination. Due to the multiple layers of a city such as London, fans of Harry Potter, the Royal Family, popular music and Shakespeare can thus be represented as fans of London.

Harry Potter Tourism

This section serves to illustrate an aspect of a fairly recent cultural phenomenon, The *Harry Potter* franchise (books, films and "experiences"), which has come to take up a central place in popular culture and beyond. It is not an in-depth analysis of Harry Potter fandom per se, but an overview of a particular expression (and, in a sense, a subindustry) of the fandom—the desire to make tangible what is in its very nature so intangible.

There are a number of Harry Potter experiences around the globe, but London is a key location where there is a whole industry of Harry Potter-related activities to choose from. Here, fans can visit the studio sets and film locations, join walking tours and bus tours, and stay in a wizard-themed suite—"The Wizard Chambers"—at the Georgian House in

Pimlico (Georgian House n.d.). Katie Roiphe, an NYU scholar, became a *Harry Potter* tourist because of her nine-year-old daughter's close relationship with the book and film series (and the daughter's urge to visit places relating to "the real Harry Potter"). After visiting platform 9¾ at King's Cross station-where Roiphe noted that the vast majority waiting in line to have their photograph taken were not children, but "adults, young ones, from countries all over the world, including England" (Roiphe 2013)-she takes her daughter to the Warner Bros. Studio Tour:

> The pinnacle of our Harry Potter tourism in London comes when we visit the Warner Bros. Studio where the films were made, and where the props and costumes originate. I am again surprised by how many among the throng of visitors filtering in are adults. There are groups of schoolchildren and some young tourists like Violet [Roiphe's daughter], but there is also a huge number of twentysomethings in couples and groups roaming past the potions classroom and Diagon Alley and climbing onto the Knight Bus that saves wizards in need.

The Warner Bros. Studio Tour is heavily advertised on TV and online through a short promotional film where adults walk around the studio wide eyed, and voiced by children they proclaim their excitement through expressions like "I can't believe it's *really* where they filmed Harry Potter," and "there it is, right in front of me, the Hogwarts Express, it's *unbelievable*." As opposed to the people in the commercial, Roiphe's daughter appears to be less animated in her consumption of the experience, but that does not mean that it means less to her:

> Violet is very serious when she tours the studio. She is not here for fun. She takes photographs of everything. She is documenting. One might imagine the experience would be disappointing, to see the sets: the Gryffindor common room, the bed Harry sleeps in, the cupboard under the stairs. One might imagine that seeing behind the scenes would break the spell, lift the illusion, but somehow it doesn't. The props and costumes, the issues of the Quibbler, the Quidditch quaffles, the invitation to the Yule Ball, are so intricately detailed, so lovingly rendered that they feel or look like they belong to the world she has in her head. (Roiphe 2013)

In an attempt to defend Harry Potter fandom—and clarify that these fans know what is fiction and what is not—Roiphe (2013) writes: "The Harry Potter tourists and devotees seem to understand that the world of Harry Potter is not real, but nor is it quite unreal. Another way to put this is that if you read a book 10 times, it probably is more real than, say, a sandwich you eat without thinking."

Harry Potter fandom is generally accepted by society at large, particularly as the fan base is diverse and "well-behaved." In addition, in a destination as big as London, Harry Potter fans, Sherlock Holmes fans, or even rowdy fans of Chelsea, are not likely to "take over" the cityscape—thus leaving the locals and other tourists to enjoy their London trip in peace. Fiction as tourist motivator is not to be underestimated, and albeit the characters and places in the books and films are not "real," they add an aura of post-touristic authenticity to otherwise unremarkable buildings and spaces.

Social Media, Photography and Social Currency

"We live in a visual world," as Richard Howells and Joaquim Negreiros (2012, p. 1) point out, and in the age of social media it has become increasingly important to use visual images in everyday self-expressions of identity and belonging. Martin Hand (2012) argues that people want to use photographs to stand out, to showcase themselves as unique, and that they therefore try hard to be creative and original. However, when looking at photos from iconic places for tourism, this urge to do something special and out of the ordinary results in very similar images. For example, at the Leaning Tower of Pisa a common "trick" is to pretend to prevent it from falling over, and the Internet is full of pictures like that. An effect of the increase in wanting to perfect holiday pictures (by retaking them until one is satisfied) is that a lot more pictures are taken—which leads to people posing much longer in front of attractions such as the Leaning Tower to capture the perfect "moment." The "trick" mentioned above only makes sense from a

certain angle, of course, and without other people in the background spoiling the scenery (there are, in fact, several sophisticated software programmes that can be used to erase any unwanted content from one's holiday photos, to render them a deeper sense of authenticity). The people in the background, of course, are doing the same "trick" as everybody else, which means that the picture—unless edited—is likely to be filled with other tourists seemingly making silly gestures. An increasingly popular way of capturing moments is the "selfie"—not a new form of self-representation, as Uschi Klein (2016) rightly points out—which has gained popularity in the Web 2.0 era (Senft and Baym 2015). Throughout the history of photography people have taken "I was there" photos, representing themselves as travellers and adventurers and sharing these moments with friends and families (via, e.g., photo albums). The difference is that the scale of this practice is significantly larger now than ever, and people can share these moments with their friends—and fans and followers—instantly via social media platforms such as Instagram, Tumblr and Facebook. Self-representation, thus, has become much easier in the age of social media, and a picture is a quicker and often more direct way of communicating with one's "community." Klein (2016, p. 92) argues that the "selfie phenomenon is more complex than it first appears and is not necessarily driven by self-absorption and self-love, or representative of a narcissistic turn in contemporary popular culture." However, we cannot completely eliminate narcissism from what Klein (2016, p. 92) sees as an "impulse to be creative and original" to maintain relationships. The importance of being seen as somebody who is creative and does interesting things (often involving travel and various forms of leisure experiences) cannot be completely separated from the need for communicating and sharing experiences with friends and family. These "reflections of everyday life" could also be interpreted as emerging from a sense of anxiety—a worry that, as Baudrilliard (1998) has alluded to, one is failing one's duty as a citizen in the capitalist consumer society (or, the "experience economy," as Pine and Gilmore 1998, would put it) to at least *represent* oneself as constantly seeking novel and exciting ways of experiencing life.

Celebrities often take control of their public image by posting selfies or other types of pictures, either using them to cement their "normalness" or to emphasise their "star qualities." In doing so, they control the manner in which they communicate with their fans. Posting photographs, tweeting and blogging can also be a way for "regular" people to gain recognition and to accumulate fans and followers (and, sometimes, to launch a career as a social media entrepreneur).

Travel blogger Brooke Saward is an example of a "previously amateur creator" who has built a fan base "of significant size and transnational composition" (Cunningham et al. 2016). In a comparatively short amount of time she has grown her travel blog, World of Wanderlust, from a hobby into a business with five contributors. On the official World of Wanderlust website, she describes herself as "a 24 year old with restless feet and a desire to see the whole world, one country at a time!" (Saward 2016). She fits well into the new breed of entrepreneur that Marwick (2013) discusses in *Status Update*, in that she "lives her passion" and has forged a close relationship with her many fans—she has, for example, 437,000 followers on Instagram (as per 15 May 2016), of which tens of thousands frequently "like" her photos.

An Instagram post (30 April 2016) depicts Saward sitting on a yellow jeep, having just arrived in Northfolk Island, South Pacific (worldwanderlust 2016). All 59 comments (as per 15 May 2016) from her followers, apart from two, are short and complimentary, often referring to the way Saward looks (such as "You look gorgeous as always" and "Cute picture of you") and to her photographic skill (such as "Wow you take the best pictures" and "It looks like a clip from a movie!"). Saward replies to some comments, in keeping with the "close connection" aspect of her business idea, but not to the two comments that stand out from the rest (reproduced below). The two comments are connected, as one is a response to the other, and they both criticise the "lifestyle" aspects of Saward's post and how she seems to have drifted away from her previous "down to earth" image to a more luxurious and glamorous one. One of the followers writes:

> Wish I could afford hair extensions on my backpacker budget. Been to 56 countries in under 2 years and while I love your posts, I have to say you've

> gotten pretty out of touch with what the average person can afford with all of your luxury hotels. No woman traveling alone could ever afford to stay any of the places you write about. Even though I feel like that is the demographic you are trying to appeal to. Maybe I'm missing something… (sabrinasabbagh, in worldwanderlust 2016)

The other commenter, in response to the one above, writes:

> I love Brooke and her blog. I'm a huge fan, but I do agree with you. I can relate less and less because of all the expensive hotels, toiletries, clothing… I was more intrigued 1.5 years ago. It was more affordable and realistic for "normal people" Now it's starting to become a blog for the rich… She's doing a great job though. Her blog grew so fast! I can only congratulate her. But I do miss the former more affordable posts… You can always follow my blog for a smaller budget though ;-) (worldwanderista, in worldwanderlust 2016)

These posts illustrate well the complex workings of self-representation, and the spread of celebrity culture into everyday discourse. Saward is an illustrative example of how celebrity status changes the dynamics between bloggers and their audience, and although growing their social media "hobby" into a business is the aim of many bloggers and vloggers (Marwick 2013), the bigger they get, the more difficult it becomes to maintain a close relationship with the fans. As both Marwick (2013) and Baym (2010) have shown, authenticity is a key concept in social media enterprise, but the "lifestyle" aspect appears to triumph this—as it becomes more important to be successful than authentic. Many of Saward's commenters—and commenters on other travel, lifestyle, and beauty blogs—often jokingly refer to themselves as "envious" and "jealous," which is perhaps the highest accolade a blogger of this kind can get, and which firmly cements their output as *aspirational*.

Travel blogs are among the more popular on the Internet, and it is not difficult to understand why from an "experience economy" point of view. Collecting experiences represents social currency, and travel blogs feed an audience hungry for exotic pictures and stories about

other cultures. These types of blogs are not necessarily created from a "grassroots" level, and there are several examples of travel blogs that came about as marketing tools for a travel agency, destination or hotel chain. CroisiEurope, a cruise line, is an example of a company that has used social media effectively to attract a younger audience and build a "fan base of younger cruisers" (Mintel 2015). In a market report about river cruises, millennials and generation X are mentioned as two "up-and-coming" market segments for this particular type of cruise tourism:

> Two new markets are already emerging—namely 'virgin' (i.e., first-time) cruisers and younger travellers (the aforementioned up-and-coming Millennials and Generation X). Reaching these cruisers is a challenge, due to the fact that within these two groups river cruises have a low profile. Younger travellers, who do know about river cruises, tend to view them as a 'staid' form of travel, which are not particularly 'family-friendly'—less appealing to this demographic than an action-packed ocean cruise. (Mintel 2015)

CroisiEurope have attracted "fans" through first announcing, in early 2015, that they were looking for a student photo reporter (who had to be American or Canadian) who would spend the summer as an "intern" with CroisiEurope, spending "three months sailing CrosiEurope's routes in France, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Croatia and Montenegro, then the Mekong River in Vietnam and Cambodia" (Mintel 2015). In an article about the eventual winner, Christina Guan, in her local paper, "Burnaby woman wins best summer job ever," it is reported that "most of the places on the itinerary are places she's never been to, and she's especially looking forward to checking out Croatia (the location for Game of Thrones of which she's a fan), Murano, Italy and the Angkor Wat Temple in Cambodia" (Chow 2015). It is interesting to note the connection to *Game of Thrones*—indicating that sites made popular through film and television are important new "heritage" sites in the post-tourism era (Urry and Larsen 2011). The requirements for the internship (curi-

ously referred to as a summer "job" by *Burnaby Now*) included strong digital media literacy:

> The winner must be a competent, 'digital native'. He or she will be required to produce a daily blog (with photos), in addition to managing a Facebook and Twitter account to chronicle their journey. CroisiEurope's goal is to build a fan base of younger cruisers (or at least cruisers who are familiar with social media) and thus expand its clientele. (Mintel 2015, River Cruising)

Introducing herself at the CroisiEurope website, Guan (2015) states: "Traveling inspires you to live more fearlessly, to say 'yes!' more often and to slow down and enjoy the world a whole lot more, and that's why I love it so much." This attitude fits perfectly into the *zeitgeist* and confirms the dominating values of our current consumer society, where collecting experiences is the pinnacle of consumerism (Debord 1967/1995; Baudrilliard 1970/1998). The CroisiEurope campaign proved successful, in that it raised the profile of the company in North America (and worldwide), and according to Guan herself (c2016) the number of Instagram followers increased by 400 % during her term as photo reporter. However, compared to Saward's 437,000 followers, CroisiEurope's currently (May 2016) 695 followers (croisieurope 2016) suggest a less committed engagement with social media platforms. It also confirms that while, for Saward, social media *is* her business, for CroisiEurope it is just something they are experimenting with. Large businesses and brands connected to the travel industry do however often attract large numbers of Instagram followers, as we will see below.

In their book *Tourism and Citizenship: Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities in the Global Order*, Raoul Bianchi and Marcus Stephenson (2014) state that for many, travel is seen as a "benchmark of civilized life" (2014, p. 31) and a necessity for being perceived as leading a normal life. No wonder, then, that social media—where images are increasingly important and can be shared among friends and associates alike—has further emphasised this point. These pieces of tangible evidence of one's

travel experiences lead to increased social status—the social currency we mentioned above (which can be linked to Bourdieu's, 1984, ideas concerning social and cultural capital).

Travel photography has long been popular, but in the Web 2.0 era it is reaching wider audiences. The Instagram accounts of brands associated with travel, photography, nature and outdoor life, such as National Geographic, Lonely Planet, Arc'teryx and GoPro, use photography as a way to engage with their "fans." Nature photography dominates most of the sites, in particular breathtaking views of landscapes. Lonely Planet and National Geographic mainly publish pictures by staff photographers and travel authors, but Instagram followers and fans are encouraged to contribute their own pictures to Arc'teryx and GoPro (where a "fan" picture is posted regularly by the account manager—thus gaining the fan recognition while connecting the brand with the fan community). Arc'teryx is a Canadian sports clothing brand that is closely linked to travel and adventure. Therefore, it makes sense for them to post photographs of stunning views on Instagram. The Arc'teryx website also encourages customers to use the #ARCTERYX Twitter hashtag to post photos showing "your gear in action!" (Arc'teryx 2016a, b).

It is interesting to see how technology has changed travel behaviour and our relationship to images. Friends from middle class backgrounds talk about slide show viewings at family gatherings, where they had to suffer through holiday picture after holiday picture—or moments at parties where a photo album would suddenly appear from nowhere, full of holiday pictures of varied quality that the hosts wanted to show but nobody else really wanted to see. Now, with digital cameras, pictures can be made perfect (there are even software to erase background clutter) as we saw earlier. The tourist gaze (Urry 1990) takes on a new meaning, and hyperreality (Baudrilliard 1998) can more readily be created through the lens. In addition, holiday pictures become part of everyday life—perhaps representing something that does not exist, but in a mediated world that is of less importance.

Cultural Tourists as Fans

According to the "underlying principles of cultural tourism" presented by Hilary du Cros and Bob McKercher (2015, p. 106), "Not all cultural tourists are alike." They also state that tourists seek "authenticity," but that this does not necessarily equate to reality. "Tourists seeking deep experiences exist but represent only a small share of the market" (du Cros and McKercher 2015, p. 106).

In the 1990s, some authors argued that tourism consumption is merely a hunt for photo opportunities (see, e.g., Richards 1996; Human 1999), and although experience consumption has been prevalent for centuries (Urry 1990; Baudrilliard 1998; Pine and Gilmore 1998), with the spread of social media and the development of media technology most aspects of the tourism experience can be viewed as potential photo opportunities. While previously cameras were often more difficult to handle, and developing pictures was very expensive, people can now in an instant share their experiences with friends and family, as well as their wider networks. All kinds of experiences—such as shopping, trying on clothes, eating, riding a bus and the more traditional sightseeing-type photos are shared. Photography is thus used to tell a story, for self-representation purposes. The penchant for documenting everything all the time, including taking selfies, has both been described as empowering and causing anxiety (Senft and Baym 2015). In line with the anxiety argument, the urge to represent oneself in the best possible light touches on the Bovarism phenomenon—which has almost become a social media norm. Thus, chasing authenticity is perhaps not as much about the *actual* experience—whatever that may be—as it is about *mediating* it as authentic. In consumer society, especially in the experience economy version of it, it is key that we come across as active, passionate and seeking experiences, that is how we maintain our status as "good" consumers (Baudrilliard 1998).

While most people want to view themselves as being slightly better, slightly more authentic than others, du Cros and McKercher argue that there is actually "no difference between a tourist and a traveller"—the difference thus lies in the self-identification and mediation of one's experiences:

> Often, comments about the benefits or risk of tourism are biased and highly value laden. A case in point is the artificial distinction made between tourists and travellers. Travellers are felt to be the superior type of person who is seeking a deeper experience, while the term tourist is often used in a derogatory fashion to connote someone who is less sophisticated, does not care about the destination, and behaves inappropriately (Leiper 2004). We all want to see ourselves as being special and want to look at our own tourism experience as being unique and so try to disassociate ourselves from the masses. In reality, there is no difference between a tourist and a traveller, other than the observation that 'I am a traveller, while everyone else is a tourist. (du Cros and McKercher 2015, p. 112)

In an article on real-ale tourism, Karl Spracklen et al. (2013) confirm that the respondents taking part in their study would not identify as tourists. Beer tickers (wanting to add a new beer to their list—try as many as possible so that they can tick them off their list, like stadium hoppers) and real-ale tourists both contribute to bringing business to local breweries, but the former group is seen as less authentic by the real-ale community. Spracklen et al. (2013) state that "consumers consider it [real-ale] to be natural, fashionable, authentic, retro and flavoursome." Like du Cros and McKercher (2015, p. 168) point out, "tourists are consumers of products," and in light of this, "tourism destination management and marketing organisations are typically charged with identifying, packaging and promoting local distinctiveness to prospective national and international tourist markets" (Spracklen et al. 2013, p. 306).

The staff at the unnamed beer and cider festival in the north of England, the foci of Spracklen, Laurencic and Kenyon's study, were all Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) members. Spracklen et al. (2013) state that working at a festival of this kind "demonstrates one's status as an authentic real-ale fan and campaigner." Linking "authentic" and "campaigner" to the concept of fandom, shows that the interest (or passion, rather) is genuine and that the fan performs some sort of action—he or she is an active agent. Spracklen et al. (2013) argue that real-ale fans demonstrate at least some kind of agency. While they acknowledge that consumers are not as free in their choices as some may want to think, as "leisure choices in the modern world are constrained by social, cultural, spatial,

economic and political factors" (Spracklen et al. 2013, p. 319) they still evoke Jenkins's critical utopianism: "For the committed members of CAMRA, real-ale tourism becomes a way of resisting global capitalism, performing non-conformity and provoking political change through situationalist action" (Spracklen et al. 2013, p. 319). Here, real-ale tourism becomes something more than a mere hobby, as the study implies—like Jenkins (1992, 2006)—that fandom (as noted above) has the capability, or at least potential, to forge bonds that could lead to social and political change. Whether or not real-ale fans actually seek to instigate major societal changes, at least there seems to be an attempt to preserve and develop (albeit a capitalist construct to begin with) alternatives to mass-produced global brands of beer. This illustrates both how consumers as fans are a part of, and attempting to resist, the dominating system.

Football tourism is also regarded to be a form of cultural tourism, and an app was "created for each and every fan of UEFA EURO 2016" (UEFA 2016). Ahead of the European Championships, or EURO 2016, which took place in France in June and July, the app provided sport tourists with information about the tournament as well as additional activities and experiences normally associated with traditional cultural tourists: "the app is designed to enrich supporters' all-round experience of the tournament and encourage them to explore the ten host cities, their landmarks and cultural activities." Sport fans—often supporters of a team, athlete or nation—are lucrative for the tourism industry. According to a report on inbound football tourism to Britain, over 800,000 international visitors went to a football match in 2014 (Visit Britain 2015). This is an increase from around 750,000 in 2010, thus supporting the general trend that football is a global driver of tourism. International football fans are lucrative for the British tourist industry, as they—according to the same International Passenger survey—spend on average £855 per visit, which is 27 % more than the £628 inbound visitors who do not attend football matches spend. At the moment, Ireland and Scandinavia represent the biggest groups of inbound football tourism to Britain—but the United States is fourth on the list, and China is seen as an increasingly lucrative market for this type of tourism.

Summary

Fandom in relation to tourism and travel is an underresearched area, but this chapter has shown that fan tourism is a widespread phenomenon, and that media products as well as sports and culture are important motivational factors in tourism and travel. Pilgrimages to visit places associated with popular culture icons is a popular form of fan travel, but art exhibitions and festivals attract international fans as well. We have also shown that destinations have fans, and DMOs are increasingly linking up with local attractions and institutions to promote their destination as fan friendly.

Travel blogs have been popular throughout the Web 2.0 era, attracting fans and followers who are interested in the aspirational lifestyles of the bloggers—of which the most successful fit well into the ideal model of the social media professional as an entrepreneur. Instagram is a popular social media platform for sharing photos of travel experiences, and brands such as Arc'teryx are using the site to interact with their fans through the sharing of photographs and comments.

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7

Football Fans: Representations, Motivations and Place

On 16 May 2016, the whole city of Leicester became Leicester City fans. Almost 250,000 people lined the streets of the city to celebrate the team that had won the top division of English football for the first time in the club's 132-year history. Even people who do not normally like football came out to join the party, as a young couple told BBC's Sian Lloyd over honking horns and chanting in the background: "We're not really into football, but because of the atmosphere… and we're into Leicester, we love Leicester. We've all come out, it's brilliant" (BBC 2016).

Ever since Leicester City—5000 to 1 outsiders before the start of the season—were confirmed as 2015–2016 Barclays Premier League champions two weeks earlier, the city had enjoyed a big party. In fact, it all started with Jamie Vardy's party. Vardy, one of the team's key players, hosted a party at his house for his teammates in conjunction with the game that confirmed their title win—a 2–2 draw between Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur on 2 May, a day when Leicester themselves did not play. Vardy's teammate Christian Fuchs immediately posted a video of his and his teammates' reactions on Twitter, so that fans (as well as everyone else, including the established media) could share the moment and get an intimate glimpse of what it was like for the players the moment

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they found out. Other videos were posted by fans, from as far away as Thailand. Everyone, it seemed, had become Leicester City fans, and the whole world was interested.

For the most part of the second half of the season, Leicester's Italian manager Claudio Ranieri had told the players and fans to "keep dreaming," and after the title was secured, he made sure to thank the fans on several occasions for their support. The fans, not only the players, took centre stage. Without the passionate fans, this would not have been such a media-friendly story. To some extent, this shows that fans and fan cultures are important not only for the fans themselves, but for whole communities—at least for a little while.

In this chapter we will look at various aspects of sport fandom, such as motivations, representations and digital media, with particular emphasis on football and how the commercialisation of the football industry has affected fans and their relationships to their club. The end of the chapter will be devoted to West Ham United fans and sense of place and belonging. Between 1904 and 2016, the fans supported their club at the Boleyn Ground, Upton Park, but from the start of the 2016–2017 season the team play their home games at the London Stadium (formerly known as the Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Stadium) in Stratford—leaving some fans in a state of sadness and loss, while others are excited about the opportunities the move will bring.

Media Representations of Football Fans

Carrie Dunn (2014) argues that in "most forms of popular culture, the 'fan' is invariably assumed to be female. Yet in football the opposite is true. The football ground is assumed to be a male domain, and the football fan is assumed to be male, with team allegiance frequently passed on from father to son." As we have seen earlier, in fandom studies the fan is interchangeably coded as male or female, and Sandvoss (2005, p. 16) states: "Curiously, fandom has been identified as both a distinctly masculine and a distinctly feminine space." It is, however, difficult to argue against Dunn's statement, as football fandom is largely a male pursuit.

In American fandom studies, it is assumed that sport fans are regarded more highly than media and music fans by opinion makers and commen-

tators in the media (see, e.g., Jenkins 2007). In Europe, however, football fandom was for a long time closely associated with hooliganism, and no more so than in England. This has its explanations, and as we shall see below much of the aversion towards football fans stem from the British class system, where working-class activities have generally been looked down upon by established society.

Fans add colour and flair to sport events, and can raise the profile of the athletes, teams or countries they support. What would the Olympic Games be without spectators? In the context of the global Olympic Games, as the spectacle of spectacles, fans are increasingly viewed as affluent cultural tourists. Fans not only raise the profile of those whom they support, they are also a big part of the "branding" of teams and countries. Take the World Cup in football, for example. The hubris of the Scotland team of 1978 when their manager, Ally MacLeod, exclaimed that they were going to win the World Cup (McColl 2006) was mitigated by their Tartan Army—the Scottish travelling supporters who were gaining an international reputation as easy-going and friendly. A decade and a half later, the Scotland fans overshadowed the team they supported to such an extent that the *fans* won the Fair Play Award at the 1992 Euros (Finn and Giulianotti 1998).

Another well-known group of fans are Denmark's Roligans, or as they are known in English: "Cooligans" (*rolig* in Danish means calm, thereof the term cooligan). They came to the attention of a global audience during the European Championship in France in 1984, when around 30,000 Danish fans travelled to support their team—almost to the extent that France for much of the time "became a colony of Denmark" (Smyth et al. 2014, p. 77). The Danish fans—always cheerful and later in the 1980s often clad in "klaphats" and with painted faces—became known throughout the 1980s as an antithesis to the English hooligans, who, as opposed to their Viking neighbours, had a reputation for spreading fear and causing mayhem wherever they went. Torbjorn Andersson and Aage Radmann (1998, p. 150) write that the Roligans are "unique among supporters" and praised by the tabloids—when "English hooligans were stigmatised, and described as animals, the Danish *Roligans* were met with respect and other positive attitudes." In 1984, the Danish Roligans even won UNESCO's fair play trophy, evidencing what an impact they had on

the wider sporting community. Rob Smyth et al. (2014, p. 77) in their book *Danish Dynamite: the Story of Football's Greatest Cult Team*, explain well what made the Roligans so special, and it is worth quoting the passage in full:

> There are two pictures taken during the European Championship in France that sum up the story of the *roligans*, the Danish fans who supported their team throughout the eighties. One shows a bare-chested man lying on his back in a field, below a signpost for Lyon, with a Danish flag covering his face from the sun and a bottle of beer resting on his exposed paunch. The other shows two lookalike Danish fans, both wearing jaunty hats, jauntier smiles and a T-shirt sporting the Danish flag. They are chatting to an old French lady who looks intrigued and charmed.

These Danish fans promoted a positive image of Denmark and the phenomenon was instantly picked up by the Danish press, and seen as a source for national pride (Peitersen and Holm Skov 1991; Andersson and Radmann 1998). The opposite ways of describing football fans in England and Denmark can also be linked to socio-economics and representations of class. Andersson and Radmann (1998) highlight a study of English and Danish fans conducted during the 1988 Euros in West Germany. The survey revealed that the Danish fans were older, educated to a higher level and spent on average twice as much money as their English counterparts. Thus, both in the UK and in Denmark, the Danish fans represented the middle classes to a larger extent, and were less threatening and more likeable—and thus better representatives for the new, affluent, international football fan. Irish fans built a strong reputation as carefree and friendly around the 1988 Euros, and the World Cups in 1990 and 1994, and joined Danish fans as media darlings (Scotland's Tartan Army, albeit popular in the rest of the world, were not as unanimously praised in England). As shown by Marcus Free (1998) in "'Angels' with Drunken Faces?", the positive media image does not always match that of the behaviour and experiences of fans abroad, and the treatment of them by local police. Certain supporter brands are still strong globally (like Scotland, Ireland and Denmark) despite occasional behaviour reminiscent of hooliganism, at least for certain generations of football fans,

while English fans abroad are still struggling with the reputation created by previous generations as well as media representations reinforcing old stereotypes.

Media representations of fans can contribute to maintaining dichotomies and emphasising negative stereotypes. One of the most blatant examples, and certainly one of the saddest, is how part of the British media—without critical evaluation of their sources—treated the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, when 96 Liverpool supporters were crushed to death at the Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield. In April 2016, the Liverpool fans and their families were finally vindicated as a jury ruled that all of the 96 fans had been unlawfully killed and that the fans were not to blame (Conn 2016). That it took 27 years for the fans to be exonerated can be largely ascribed to public attitudes towards football fans in general, which made it far easier at the time to cover up negligence and errors committed by the leadership of the police. *The Sun* had, a few days after the event, the following text on their front page: "The Truth; some fans picked pockets of victims; some fans urinated on the brave cops; some fans beat up PC giving kiss of life" (*The Sun* 1989). This propaganda, in combination with the overarching discourse of fans as thugs and hooligans, confirmed the view that they did not count. Brian Reade (1989), writing for *The Liverpool Daily Post*, wrote in an insightful piece two days after the tragedy: "They didn't count because they were football fans and in the eyes of authority, and indeed the general public, that placed them beneath contempt." Reade's article ends: "Authority hasn't listened to football fans. It hasn't wanted to. It hasn't had to. Because society has been happy to live with the myth that every football fan is a potential criminal. Well nearly 100 people have just paid the price for this woeful misconception."

The Sun, as opposed to most British newspapers, did not run the 2016 vindication story on their front page. However, they have apologised both in 2004 and 2012 for their coverage in 1989, and wrote on their website in 2016 that "the supporters were not to blame. But the police smeared them with a pack of lies which in 1989 *The Sun* and others in the media swallowed whole." This indicates that they do not fully understand their role as a media power, despite again apologising "unreservedly" for their coverage throughout the years: "We apologised prominently 12

years ago, again four years ago on the front page, and do so unreservedly again now" (*The Sun* 2016).

The Interim Taylor Report, based on inquiries made by Lord Justice Taylor into the Hillsborough disaster in April and May 1989 and presented to Parliament in August that same year, clearly points out inadequate policing and lack of leadership as key components in the make-up of the tragedy—and does not particularly put the blame on the Liverpool supporters. The report was also generally received warmly by the survivors and the bereaved families. A certain type of fan, however, was identified as the reason for the misguided prioritisation made by the police—the "hooligan" (Taylor 1989). The fear of hooliganism had, according to the Interim Taylor Report "led to an imbalance between the need to quell a minority of troublemakers and the need to secure the safety and comfort of the majority" (Taylor 1989, p. 31). Apparently, the priority was to prevent disorder which meant that officers failed to (and were not explicitly asked to) keep track of any overcrowding at the terraces: "Indeed, the view was expressed in evidence that packing fans close together on the terraces assisted in controlling the unruly since the less room they had the less scope there was for misbehaviour" (Taylor 1989, p. 32). This, again, supports the argument that mainstream media had already decided who was to blame—which explains the force with which *The Sun* hammered home their points on that infamous front page in 1989.

As we saw earlier, there are authors who have claimed that sport fans enjoy higher status than fans of media texts—something which is largely, at least in the United Kingdom, a matter of perspective and perception. Sports fandom, and particularly football fandom, has in England been closely associated with perceptions of and attitudes toward class. The traditional football fan stereotype has been largely dissolved, and anyone going to a Barclays Premier League match at - for example - London Stadium will find that the audience (albeit predominantly male) is to a fair extent made up of families, and that there is a noticeable spread of age, gender and ethnicity. The atmosphere at a football match in England—or anywhere in Europe—is not always friendly, but this is because football *matters*—the club matters, and the club needs passionate fans—and a football ground is seldom a dangerous environment because of the fans (albeit there are exceptions). However, fans are occasionally treated by

football clubs, broadcasters and sponsors as though their contribution to the game is predominantly negative.

Big Business, Technology and Social Media

Football holds a curious place in the market economy. Since fans feel so strongly about their club—it is for a lot of individuals, families and communities a central part of their lives, and for many it *is* their life—it is difficult to walk away from it even when commercial powers have transformed the game and its surroundings. A key moment in the modernisation of the English "football industry" was the Taylor Report (1990, not to be confused with the Interim Taylor Report 1989, mentioned above), which in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster (where 96 Liverpool fans were killed due to poor crowd management in combination with an outmoded approach towards stadium safety) outlined a strategy for how to make the game safer. This report has played a pivotal part in shaping regulation and control in the football industry since the early 1990s, and in introducing all-seater stadiums. In fact, it is perhaps "the single most important catalyst for the modernisation of the English game, its clubs and their commercial strategies which have formed the basis of many of the concerns of supporters" (Brown 1998, p. 53). While Brown wrote this in the late 1990s, many of the same concerns persist today—with fans then and now being alienated by the increased ticket prices and gentrification of football culture. All-seater stadiums were introduced in the mid-1990s as a direct cause of the Taylor Report, despite protests from fans and designers of safe standing areas. There is a continuous debate in English football whether or not to reintroduce standing areas (albeit safe standing areas), a question driven by fans who argue that the atmosphere has been lost (and some fans generally spend most of the games standing up anyway). In Germany, even newly constructed or refurbished stadiums incorporate standing sections. In Sweden, where designated standing areas exist, there is a call from the media and the Football Association (SvFF) to reduce these to improve the overall safety, and "quality," of the stadium experience.

The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) in the United Kingdom are through their Safe Standing Campaign lobbying for the reintroduction of a standing option, favouring the rail seats approach (where a section of the stadium seats can be turned into standing spaces). FSF (2016) states on its website that "every week thousands stand in seated areas supporting the team they love—they deserve proper safe standing areas." In addition to the views of the fans—according to the 2012 FSF National Survey, nine out of ten supporters are in favour of introducing safe standing areas—there are also club representatives who support the idea of designated standing sections. In his book about being a West Ham fan, *Nearly Reach the Sky: A Farewell to Upton Park*, Brian Williams cites West Ham co-owner David Gold telling David Blackmore (editor of *Blowing Bubbles*, a West Ham fanzine) that it is "time to give something back to the fans," as the "fans who want to stand should be given an area to do so" (Gold, cited in Williams 2015, p. 20). This indicates that fan groups are acknowledged, and that there, to some extent, is a two-way communication between clubs and their fans.

Technology forms an integral part of the sport fan experience, and particularly in the United States fans seem to expect constant access to the Internet at live events—so that they can stay connected with the world outside the stadium—as well as specially tailored apps that will make the visit to the game more convenient. Teena Maddox, in an article for *TechRepublic*, explains:

> Imagine walking into a stadium and your smartphone immediately pings you that a $30 premium seat upgrade is available for purchase on your mobile device. As soon as you settle in to enjoy that awesome view of the game, you use your smartphone to order a pulled pork sandwich and imported beer delivered right to your seat. Then, when your favorite player scores a touchdown, you use the team's app to watch an instant replay at multiple angles and a stadium-exclusive video feed of the players on the sideline. Later on, when nature calls, the app directs you to the closest restroom with no wait time.
>
> This isn't a far-fetched futuristic stadium experience. It's already available at some venues, and others are rushing as fast as they can to add next generation digital systems that will make attending a game in person an immersive, connected experience. (Maddox 2014)

This is an interesting passage, and in popular mediation millennials are seen as a market segment who crave constant access to the Internet so that they can share their offline experiences and stay connected with their friends and the people and organisations they follow online. In events and conference management, for example, service and experience development is closely linked to that of finding ways to use technology to enhance and augment the individual consumer experience, and thus help amplify and multiply the impact of the event—much like the example above from sport attendance. The privacy infringement some of these apps may cause is said to be justified by the benefits they have—as they let customers decide what, when and how they want to experience things at an event. This is very much tied in with the "convenience culture" that is increasingly forced upon us, where any increase in price (and profits made by the corporations behind these changes) can be justified by improved toilet facilities, better transport links and trendier meals.

The end of the quotation from Maddox above is particularly revealing, as it implies that we need "next generation digital systems" to be able to "immerse" ourselves in the experience while staying "connected." In marketing literature, there is a tendency to automatically assume that technology will enhance *any* experience—which of course makes sense as word of mouth is often seen as the best kind of publicity, and digital platforms facilitate this in a more "concrete" and measurable way than any offline communication and interaction. Both Marwick (2013) and Knighton (2015) have highlighted that the urge to stay connected is driven by a fear of not behaving properly and not doing the right thing, of missing crucial opportunities to take part in something by sharing and receiving images, messages and sentiments, fostering an anxiety that is central in the constant self-branding project that constitutes social media. It may be useful to revisit Baudrilliard's (1998) ideas here, who did not see the consumer as a passive victim of a concrete power, but rather a victim of the overarching invisible structure of a society where consumption (in line with Debord 1967/1995, and the Situationists) has replaced production as the driving force of the capitalist society.

Regardless of the interactive nature of Web 2.0, it is based around a top-down approach. While all this technology appears to give the consumer more freedom and agency, and thus consumer power, what it really

does is help moulding audiences into better consumers from the point of view of the "experience" and "content" producers [see Marwick's (2013), description of social media as the ultimate neoliberal communication tool]. So, paradoxically, to be fully immersed in a live event the spectator needs to consume and/or produce tangible content using a remote device so that they can stay connected with individuals elsewhere (and in the stadium). They are thus true fans from the point of view of Hill (2012), and brand advocates (Fuggetta 2012). All these new means of using digital technology are defended by business managers and marketers and put forward as a means to satisfy the customers and give them what they want. This may be true in many cases, but could also be viewed as a tactic to justify the huge increases in ticket prices and a strategy to alienate fans who are "bad" consumers (that is, those who turn up week after week and watch the game without giving too much attention to the quality of the "augmented" service, and who are not particularly interested in the merchandise) and to attract a new breed of fans—fans of the competition brand (such as the Barclays Premier League and the UEFA Champions League) as well as the club brand. Like the Taylor Report represented "an opportunity to modernise and revolutionise football, and football supporting" (Brown 1998, p. 53), the current all-embrace of neoliberalist ideals and the individualisation of supportership through social media have given clubs and governing bodies another incentive—a "common sense" market-led reason—for the gentrification of sport event audiences. The Taylor Report, according to Brown (1998, p. 53) gave clubs "a chance to change the social make-up of those attending (and thus provide a more attractive audience for advertisers)," and also "a chance to charge more for entrance and thus generating more profit." The chance to improve the relationship with advertisers and sponsors is even more significant today compared to the late 1990s, and in the context of Web 2.0 where every fan is a potential brand advocate—and in increasingly tangible ways because of the connectedness desired by (and *demanded of*) them—the main function of the event, which in a sense can be described as a "pseudo-event" (Boorstin 1961/1992; Baudrilliard 1970/1998; Eco 1986; Evans 2001) is to trigger a never-ending intertextual stream of communication and participation. The possibilities to produce, sell and consume are endless, and as they are all such an integral part of our *everyday lives* this is not likely

to change. If we are persuaded that remote connectedness, and thus the mediation of an experience, is more important than the event itself, we think and act exactly like a marketing agency. Perhaps that is the kind of "agency" we are capable of in the consumer society.

As we shall see later (in the discussion of West Ham United supporters and the move to the Olympic Stadium), many football fans want to resist this development. However, to stop going to matches as a form of protest is not an option for most fans—at least not over a significant period of time—as it is such an important aspect of their lives and who they are. Although the football industry wants to see supporters as regular consumers of a leisure product, it is not as straightforward as that. When Katrien Meire (Web Summit 2015), the CEO of Charlton Athletic, said that football fans are "strange" in that they feel a sense of ownership and are more likely to complain about the running of their club than if they are dissatisfied with a meal in a restaurant, she showed exactly why fans cannot be treated as "regular" leisure consumers (although, it has to be pointed out, that many restaurant customers who are dissatisfied with the service *do* make that explicit to the owners, if not during their visit then most likely on social media and platforms such as TripAdvisor—indicating that Meire's limited understanding of "customer relationship management" stretches beyond the world of English league football). This dilemma, for the fan in particular as they often have to go against their ideals and convictions to continue supporting the team of their hearts (e.g., they may disagree with the approach of greedy owners and the political agenda of CEOs, as well as the sometimes dubious morals of overpaid players). This is illustrated well through the views of Norwich City supporter Perry Dyball, who told BBC2 in 1993 what impact the changes to football culture would have following the Taylor Report (1990) and the introduction (in 1992) of the Premier League:

> It is not just a club, it's mine. It's one of the most important things in my life…and they know that, they can play on that loyalty and get away with anything because they know that you're still going to turn up…I don't care whether my stand's got a roof over it. I don't care if I've got a nice comfy seat to sit on. I want to see the game. (BBC2, *Open Space*, 1993, cited in Brown 1998, p. 54).

This view completely contradicts the sentiment given in Maddox's article, where millennials (with a specific emphasis on college sport in the Unites States, but where also the potential of the Etihad Stadium in Manchester is mentioned) are said to be less interested in watching the game than they are dependent on staying connected through their digital devices. This implies that the quality of the Wi-Fi is more important than the quality of the game. Connectedness provides key data for sponsors and advertisers, as they want to know what fans are doing with their Wi-Fi access, what they engage with and what apps they are using. According to Maddox (2014), millennials at sport events are uploading more information than they are accessing, thus fulfilling their role as active consumers and co-creators of the "text" surrounding and informing the sport event. Maddox (2014) notes that "another big reason stadiums are adding connectivity is simple—it makes more money through additional purchases, whether from food and drink, or merchandise or seat upgrades."

How much longer can the experience get "better and better," and what is it that actually gets better? Whom is it exciting for? We may also want to revisit the word "connected" here—as it seems less important to stay connected with the physical experience and with the players and the other fans in the arena, compared to the remote connectedness across a number of platforms and apps. "All that once was directly lived," noted Guy Debord almost half a century ago, "has become mere representation" (Debord 1995 [1967], p. 12).

Motivations of Sport Fans

It is widely argued that sport can be viewed as a microcosm of society (see, e.g., Eitzen 2015). This does not necessarily refer solely to sport participation, but can include audiences as well (Gau and James 2013). In audience studies relating to sport events, it is popular to focus on attendee motivations—to gain a better understanding of why audience members attend certain events and support certain sports, athletes and teams. In business and management literature, including sport marketing, the term subculture has often been used to describe various types of audiences and participants. However, as we have already seen elsewhere

in this book, subculture is a problematic term in postmodern society, and cannot be applied uncritically in classifications of markets and their segmentation to describe groups and individuals who are not marginalised or actively resisting the dominant culture. Todd Crosset and Becky Beal (1997, p. 73) argue that the term subculture has, in sport literature, been used so widely that it has "lost much of its explanatory power." While they agree that the term is suitable for bodybuilding and other sports that are marginalised by mainstream society (e.g., "off-beat" sports such as skateboarding and surfing), they instead suggest using the term "subworld" to describe qualitatively distinct groups and groupings in more mainstream sport participation, under the concept of the "social world"—a social world of a sport "is divided into distinct social worlds" (Crosset and Beal 1997, p. 81), which in turn are divided into subworlds (a subworld here can be understood as the type of competition someone takes part in, based on skill, age or gender and so on—thus being significantly different from a subculture). Belinda Wheaton (2007) offers a clear summary of why "neo-tribe" can be used to describe participatory sport tourists—which could also be applied to fan communities and travelling fans: "Neo-tribes suggest a postmodern 'pick and mix' world of consumer choice in which we are free to choose identities, ignoring the structural constraints that underpin identity choices and create lifestyles" (Wheaton 2007, p. 290).

If we move from sport participation, as in "serious leisure," towards sport spectatorship—where we find the fans and the "fanship"—we find a different kind of categorisation. As mentioned above, *motivation* is a key concept in contemporary sport research, as it is assumed that "fan behaviours and attitudes are driven by fans' motives" (Snelgrove et al. 2008, p. 167). Some motivational research also focuses on the willingness of fans to travel to follow their team, or to attend a global event (see, e.g., Kim and Chalip 2004). Snelgrove et al., in their analysis of motivational differences between locals and visitors at a sport event, conclude that locals and those "who are in town for other purposes [than the event] may require a higher level of fan motivation before they choose to come to the event" (Snelgrove et al. 2008, p. 177). A general weakness with this study, and others of its kind, is that it does not go much further than establishing that local spectators and visitors

are driven by different motivations. A recommendation they make, for example, is that event marketers target visitors and locals differently, which is a generic conclusion. Studies like these could learn from cultural studies—for example, the term subculture is used uncritically, as being an "athletics fan" does not necessarily equate with having a "subcultural identity."

Taking a slightly different approach, Li-Shiue Gau and Jeffrey D. James (2013) have come up with ten *values* that drive sport spectatorship. Value is here seen as "personal beliefs and goals" (Gau and James 2013, p. 3). The "10-value framework" consists of enjoyment value, sociability value, identity value, status value, spirituality value, moral value, epistemic value, aesthetic value, ritual value and no or negative value. These are the values, explained in more detail:

> The value *Enjoyment* means that people achieve the goal of pleasure and satisfaction, *Sociability* implies that people pursue a goal of social interaction, and *Identity* value means the enhancement of peoples' self-esteem, through sport spectating. The value *Status* means pursuing a goal of social recognition, *Spirituality* means inner peace, strength, meaning, and purpose in life, and *Moral* values can be transmitted, through spectator sports. *Epistemic*, *Aesthetic*, and *Ritual* are three intrinsic values as end-experiences in spectating sports. Finally, some people seek no or even negative values in spectator sports. (Gau and James 2013, p. 11)

The purpose of their study is to provide a better understanding of what motivates people to consume sport, which means that although the research is based around values it is also largely centred on motivations. However, Gau and James (2013, p. 11) state in the conclusion that their "framework is expected to better predict consumption of spectator sports than a fan motivational scale." If values are extended over time, motivations are often time-specific and short term. There are numerous fan motivational scales, but an often cited source is Daniel Wann's 23-item Likert Scale developed to measure sport fan motivations. The scale is based around eight types of factors, which are seen as motivations responsible for sport fandom. These categories of factors are eustress, self-esteem, entertainment, escape, economic value, aesthetics, group affiliation and

family needs (Wann 1995), which are abstract concepts but useful as a starting point for managers and marketers who want to learn more about fans and their decision-making.

Alan Tapp and Jeff Clowes (2002), in their article "From 'carefree casuals' to 'professional wanderers': Segmentation possibilities for football supporters," have noted that marketers and sport managers did not become interested in fan segmentation until the introduction of football as "big business" in the 1990s, when revenues from supporters began to take on increased significance. From their study, consisting of in-depth interviews and a questionnaire, they derived that fans of a club (rather than fans of football in general), were likely to stop watching live football completely if their team ceased to exist. Football fans, as it has been argued elsewhere in this volume, "have much higher levels of involvement with their sport than customers have with mainstream products" (Tapp and Clowes 2002, p. 1257), although Vernon Hill (2012) of MetroBank would perhaps think differently. Katrien Meire, the CEO of Charlton Athletic, seems to have changed her attitude—at least in public—as she, on the club's website, states: "Our fans are integral to the success of this club and we want to work together with our supporters to make sure we move forward in our pursuit to return to the Championship" (Meire 2016).

It is widely argued that poor performance of one's team may negatively affect the self-esteem of the fan, and vice versa for a good performance: "The link between psychological and emotional health and the strength of identification to a particular team leads some fans to utilize strategies that will help them maintain a balance despite losses" (Berg and Harthcock 2008, p. 204). Fans also use terms such as "we" and "they" depending on level of self-identification with a club at different points in time (depending, often, on the success of the club). The sports fan is an integral part of communications surrounding sports; they are a key component in multiplying interest and maintaining viewing figures across leagues and competitions. Lawrence Hugenberg et al. (2008) argue that the motives for going to a game and watching it in person may differ significantly from motives behind "sharing and discussing sports"—and taking into account the popularity of the English Premier League in all parts of the world, it is safe to say that most of the audience is remote—with only a

small percentage of the larger clubs' fan bases having the opportunity to see the matches as spectators inside the ground.

Fan Management: What Do the Clubs Know?

In February 2016, Liverpool fans organised a walkout after 77 minutes of the game against Sunderland at Anfield, as a protest against increased ticket prices. As Michael Calvin (2016) noted in *The Independent*: "football is being remorselessly repackaged as homogenised, tourist-friendly mush [and] being pushed beyond the reach of its traditional audience." Through overpricing and the commodification of the spectator "experience," fans all over England feel mistreated. For many fans, who have unreservedly supported their club for decades, the unwillingness of clubs to listen to their concerns over pricing (among other issues) is hard to bear. Worried about an Arsenal walkout in the wake of the Anfield protest, the Arsenal manager, Arsene Wenger, urged fans not to follow through on their plan. "You want everybody there when the game starts," Wenger reportedly told the *Evening Standard*: "For me, the game is a joy and everyone has to be part of it. You can protest before and after, but during the game, you want everybody to be there" (Wenger, cited in Olley 2016). These comments from Wenger indicates that he does not fully understand the situation for fans, as he encourages the fans to enjoy "a moment of happiness in your life"—thus trivialising the reason for the protest, by asking the fans to be content with the spectacle they are offered to be part of.

Around the time of the ticket debate, Fenway Sports Group (FSG) had on their website the tagline "Transforming fans into customers" (Gibson 2016c; This is Anfield 2016). It is not clear whether or not this was a mistake, or simply poor judgement in that it went against the grain of pretty much all business marketing discourse (where fans, *not* consumers, are sought). Of course, one could argue that this is what brands *actually* mean when they say that they want to create fans—to turn them into customers, or consumers. After all, they want to sell something, and want "good" customers to buy it. If they can refer to consumers as fans, it is not a difficult choice to make. As with society at large, where everyone

increasingly wants to be admired (Marwick 2013; Twenge and Campbell 2009), also companies and brands have realised the benefit of coming across as "authentic," and to have fans and followers (Gilmore and Pine 2007; Hill 2012). Shortly after fans had shared the tagline on social media sites, wider criticism from fans and the UK media followed, and FSG changed the tagline to—unsurprisingly—"Transforming consumers into fans" (This is Anfield 2016).

Paolo Di Canio, the often controversial Italian who enjoyed a special relationship with fans of West Ham during his spell at the club 1999–2003, said in an interview with Tony McDonald (2007) something which contradicts what many corporate executives of football clubs seem to think of fans: "The thing is, what many football clubs fail to realise is that the most intelligent people are often the supporters. They *know* when something is not right, or when a lie is being told" (Di Canio, cited in McDonald 2007, p. 237).

As we noted above, Katrien Meire, the Belgian chief executive of Charlton Athletic - a club that played in the Championship (the second tier of English league football, and Europe's fourth biggest league competition in terms of spectator numbers) in 2015-16 - told an "industry conference about 'weird' fans who fail to 'see themselves as customers … It's quite funny … they feel this sense of ownership'" (Hills 2016, p. 8). The conference talk, a Web Summit in Dublin, was recorded and is available on YouTube, where it came to the attention of Charlton fans. In context, Meire said:

> Fans don't see themselves as customers. And so whenever I now get very 'friendly' emails from fans, they say: "Get out of OUR club." So it's not the shareholders' club? I think it's quite funny because they say they pay—obviously the ticketing system is one third of our revenue stream, but they go to the restaurants with their family every week and they go to the cinema, but if they're not satisfied with the product, do they go and scream at the people in charge of it? No they don't, but they do it with a football club. And that's very weird because they feel a sense of ownership. (Meire, in Web Summit 2015)

It becomes clearer in football that corporate culture and "idealised" business models do not sit well with fans and supporters. John O'Shaughnessy,

in *Consumer Behavior* (2013, p. 298), writes that "top leaders, whether in government or business, who exclusively apply economic and technical criteria in dealing with people are likely to alienate, being perceived as callous or indifferent to human concerns." It is obvious from Meire's statement above that she does not understand what it means to support a football club, which implies that she does not understand the "customers." Some clubs, it appears, are more willing to address potential sponsors and business partners than the ticket-paying audience. Any CEO with some knowledge of contemporary customer relationship building, marketing or stakeholder management realises that "authenticity" is crucial, and that sponsors of football clubs are interested in how their club manages its fans—after all, while owners, players, managers and business models and strategies (and even grounds and occasionally names) come and go, fans remain the only constant. Fans, one could argue, are the life and blood of a football club—the *soul* of it. Even Karren Brady, while also clearly seeing supporters as customers, shows a deeper understanding of the motivations of fans. In an interview shortly after her appointment as vice chairman of West Ham United, Brady said: "What supporters really want is to feel part of the team they support and part of the infrastructure, part of the decision-making process and to feel important, and that's what we do" (Brady, interviewed by Jane Bainbridge 2011). Not all supporters of West Ham have warmed to the Sullivan and Gold ownership and the leadership style of Brady—and the move from the Boleyn Ground to the London Stadium is controversial for many reasons—but knowing the workings of football and realising that a club would not be what it is without its core fans (however much broadcast deals with Sky and sponsorships and partnerships are worth), Brady's strategic approach and knowledge of the culture is perhaps what has maintained her credibility. When Liverpool announced in 2016 that they wanted to turn fans into customers it was not that different to Brady's comment in 2011 that "the trick" is to turn "supporters into paying customers":

> Customer service is very important. A Birmingham City fan is not going to wake up and support West Ham and a West Ham supporter is not going to wake up and support Birmingham City. So you have an element of a captive customer but the trick as a football club is to turn those people who

> say they're supporters into paying customers. It's then about maximising the seats and leveraging the brand. (Brady, interviewed by Bainbridge 2011)

It is probably true that a "Birmingham City fan is not going to wake up and support West Ham and a West Ham supporter is not going to wake up and support Birmingham City," but in a world where we are shopping in the "supermarket of styles," it is possible that a Manchester United fan wakes up and suddenly supports Chelsea—or, during the 2015–2016 season, Leicester City or Tottenham Hotspur. It pains most lifelong supporters to accept this, but it is a truth we cannot escape from. After West Ham's 2015–2016 season there may even be one or two ex-Birmingham City fans supporting West Ham—particularly if they have moved from Birmingham to London. Though not the subject of this book, anecdotal evidence suggests that people who move city sooner or later are likely to also start supporting their new local team, thus ending up with split loyalties. In their book *Soccernomics*, in a chapter entitled "Are Soccer Fans Polygamists? A Critique of the Nick Hornby Model of Fandom," Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski (2014) challenge the idea of a football fan as loyal to his or her first club.

> In 2008 Sport+Markt found that Chelsea had 2.4 million "fans" in Britain. Again according to Sport+Markt, that represented a rise of 523 percent in the five years since Roman Abramovich had bought the club. Yet even that figure of 2.4 million represented a swift decline: in 2006, when, no doubt coincidentally, Chelsea had just won the league twice running, Sport+Markt credited the club with a mammoth 3.8 million British fans. (Kuper and Szymanski 2014, p. 245)

Much like the wider discussion of fans in this book, the term fan should here be viewed with caution—or, at least be seen as an inclusive concept incorporating fans of a particular sport rather than a team (who then more easily may switch allegiance from one club to another depending on current success, style of play or recent player acquisitions). See also Tapp and Clowes (2002) and their segmentation and classification of fans, and Susan Bridgewater's (2010) *Football Brands*, where she summarises some of the frameworks that have tried to offer insights into sport fandoms.

Many studies relating to sport teams and audiences are quantitative in nature, and seldom provide in-depth insights into fan motivations and attitudes. For example, Fiona Davies et al. (2006) come to the not too surprising conclusion that companies that sponsor rival teams may increase the awareness of their brand, but at the same time attitudes towards it may be ambivalent. Their study was based on the former sponsor NTL's engagement with the Glasgow teams Celtic and Rangers—the so-called old firm, and one of the fiercest rivalries in world football. This illustrates the unwillingness of companies to pick sides, as close association with only one of the clubs would alienate the fan base (that is, potential NTL customers) of the other club. Reinhardt Grohs et al. (2015, p. 1880), in a rare study about negative aspects of sponsorship, confirm that companies may alienate potential customers through "rival-team sponsorship," unless they carefully plan their marketing communication activities to mitigate negative impact from rival-team fans.

Are Fans Important After All?

When Leicester City was confirmed as champions (through Chelsea's 2–2 draw with Tottenham Hotspur—Leicester did not play that particular day), BBC Radio 5 Live (2016) immediately turned to their correspondent stationed in a Leicester pub, to speak to the fans gathered there and to transmit the celebrations (the singing of "Champions of England! We know what we are!"). Passionate fans are the spine of any club, and it is not surprising that in times of success, media turn to fans to showcase the joy and passion surrounding the sport. A Leicester fan called Tom, who was given his Chelsea season ticket holder friend's seat for the game, was interviewed (crying throughout): "I can't believe this has happened to my club" and "this is the best day of my life."

There is a strong belief that "everyone" wanted Leicester to become champions, and no more so than in Leicester. The term "people's champions" have increasingly been associated with the club. In an article in the *Leicester Mercury* (2016) after a game against Sunderland in April 2016, it

was stated that "City wouldn't just become English champions if they did manage to hold off Tottenham, they would be the people's champions." Even T-shirts and scarves were produced, proclaiming Leicester City as the "People's Champions."

On the morning of 3 May 2016, the day after Leicester's victory was confirmed, the BBC website led with this story: "Fans celebrate 'miracle' Leicester City title win." It says a lot about the current media climate, that we all want to write history in the present, so to speak, and that the latest achievement is always the greatest achievement, that there have been suggestions (not a joke) of the "Leicester story" as a model Hollywood film. Not everybody has jumped on the bandwagon, however, and in an article for Knees Up Mother Brown (KUMB), Paul Walker (2016) writes: "Their fans have discovered a form of entitlement, they believe they are everyone's heroes and deserve their place in history."

As we saw in Chap. 6, inbound football tourism to Britain increased from 750,000 international visitors to 800,000 between 2010 and 2014 (Visit Britain 2015). When we add that football tourists on average spend 27 % more during their visits compared to other inbound tourists, it becomes clear that sport tourism is a lucrative market. Most things in society are increasingly measured in profitability, and season ticket holders are less likely to spend money on souvenirs and merchandise, and certainly generate less revenue for the wider economy. The "loyal" football fan is therefore not likely to be a priority for the clubs, or for the wider business community. This was further indicated above, through the example with Liverpool and ticket prices, and Arsene Wenger urging Arsenal fans not to protest.

However, despite the changing landscape of club ownership and broadcast rights, passionate supporters going to game after game are important. Not only for the players on the pitch, and the fans themselves, but also for the broadcast giants—without the atmosphere inside the stadium, football would be a different game and would certainly not command the global interest it does. Even if watched on television, the game needs to feel authentic—and fans bring authenticity to football matches.

West Ham United: Football Fans and Sense of Place

Football is a representational sport, and the football ground is the dominant physical evidence of a football club. As Hans Hognestad (2012, p. 380) puts it, “the supporters constitute a subcultural community of commitment, loyalty and solidarity, with the stadium standing out as a symbolic representation of the club community, often drenched in topophilic sentiment.” The ground is where the action unfolds—it is the theatre where dreams are fulfilled or crushed, both from the players’ and managers’ point of view, and for the audience. Football audiences are increasingly heterogeneous, and the audience is an ever-developing and evolving concept. Members of the audience may be called fans, supporters, tourists, loyals, customers, visitors, armchair fans, hooligans, ultras, casuals, season ticket holders, plastics and so on.

It can also be said that football clubs represent, and sometimes symbolise, the place they come from. John Bale (2000, p. 91) notes that “professional football clubs represent places large and small—villages, towns, cities and nations.” Bale further states that communities are built around the football club, thus predominantly around the stadium where they play their home games. The community consists not only of the staff working at the stadium and the fans attending matches—an important part of the community is the businesses located in proximity to the stadium, for example, pubs, cafes, various other types of food outlets and retailers. They contribute to the atmosphere on match days, as they provide food and drink and spaces for fans to meet, and many of these businesses are also dependent on the football matches, as these bring customers to them.

A football club that appears to be at a crossroads is West Ham United. Firmly rooted in the East End of London, the club moved to the new Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Stadium - later renamed London Stadium - ahead of the 2016–2017 season. London Stadium is located in the same borough, Newham, as the Boleyn Ground at Upton Park (see Fig. 7.1)—home to West Ham United between 1904 and 2016—but in a completely different setting in the regenerated and to some extent gentrified Stratford area.

Fig. 7.1 View from Green Street of the Boleyn Ground, Upton Park, 2016 (Photo: Henrik Linden)

The 2015–2016 season was the last to be played at the current football ground, and a new single by Cockney Rejects, "Goodbye Upton Park," was released on 10 May 2016—the same day as the last ever home game at the Boleyn Ground, a Tuesday evening game against Manchester United. The Boleyn Ground is particularly famous for the atmosphere during evening matches, played "under the floodlights," and Cockney Rejects performed their song (and a version of the club's theme song—the American melody "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles"). The whole season had built up towards this day, with endless references to the "farewell" of the Boleyn and merchandise advertised to commemorate the season, such as "the final Boleyn game shirt."

The first ever West Ham United game at the Boleyn Ground, at the time referred to as "the Castle," was played in 1904 (fittingly against their arch-rivals Millwall, and ending in a 3–0 victory for West Ham), and the first game under floodlights was played in 1953. Most of East London suffered badly from bombings during the Second World War,

and the Boleyn Ground was no exception. It survived severe damage from a German bomb in August 1944, but reparations quickly ensued and games were again played at the Boleyn before Christmas 1944. One hundred and twelve years after that Millwall game, and 72 years after the German bomb, there is no surviving the market forces and the ambitions of the club's owners.

Gary Firmager, who runs the *Over Land and Sea* fanzine, told the *Guardian* ahead of the move to the Olympic Stadium: "I'll always love West Ham, the real West Ham. [But] they're going to become a whole new club" (Gibson 2016a). Brian Williams, a fan of West Ham United since the mid-1960s, writes in his autobiographical book *Nearly Reach the Sky: Farewell to Upton Park*: "Apparently, a new bright shiny stadium will herald a bright shiny future for the club. But, to be perfectly honest, I don't want to go" (Williams 2015, p. 15).

Trevor Brooking, the former player and twice caretaker manager of the club—and a West Ham legend, with a stand named after him at the Boleyn Ground—mainly carries positive feelings about the move to the new stadium. His words echo many fans' sentiment of loss, but he also repeats the mantra of fans and players alike, that this was an opportunity the club simply could not pass up: "There must be generations of West Ham fans who have mixed feelings about relocating to the Olympic Stadium in Stratford. Like many of them, I will be sad to bid farewell to Upton Park but the move to a brand-new stadium just four miles away was an opportunity that the club could not afford to ignore" (Brooking and Hart 2014, p. 279).

The new stadium has a capacity of 60,000, which is significantly more than the 35,000 capacity of the Boleyn Ground, and Brooking further states: "It's a fabulous, brand-new stadium with great transport links and lots of potential for increasing the club's fan base" (Brooking and Hart 2014, pp. 280–281). Brooking alludes to the "very loyal fan base" of West Ham, and sees no reason "why this cannot be extended significantly in the years ahead" (Brooking and Hart 2014, p. 281). He then again stresses the importance of the transport links to Stratford, and also emphasises that corporate clients are attractive to the club: "West Ham will be one of the easiest clubs to visit in London and I suspect that we could attract a lot of new corporate clients from the City and Canary

Wharf." The convenience culture is thus very much present here, as well as the belief in constant growth.

The club's ambitions are high, and despite a UEFA Cup Winner's Cup trophy in 1965 (and another final in 1976), the statement on the official website does not quite fit in with the history and heritage of West Ham United: "this magnificent new Stadium will be second to none in Britain, and will provide the most fitting stage for West Ham to get back into the elite of European football" (WHUFC 2016a). However, Barry Hearn, the former chairman of Leyton Orient, has stated that "West Ham, with the Olympic Stadium, in my view will become one of the major clubs in Europe within four or five years" (Hearn, cited in Keogh 2015).

We have noted elsewhere in this book that the supposed dichotomy between the fan and the consumer may be overplayed—as a fan is a type of consumer—but in football there is a clear conflict with regard to the motivations of "authentic" fans and so-called tourists which is still relevant to some extent in understanding football fandom. Karren Brady, the vice chairman of West Ham, has, despite her well-documented view of a football club as a business, managed to find a better balance than colleagues and owners elsewhere (such as Katrien Meire, the CEO of Charlton Athletic) in her communication with the fans—as she knows that fans have a deep relationship with the club they support.

There has been some controversy surrounding West Ham's move to the Olympic Stadium (which they have a 99-year lease for), as it is largely paid for by the taxpayer—and reportedly West Ham have only paid £15 million towards the £701 million cost of converting it from an athletics stadium to an arena suitable both for football and athletics (Gibson 2016b). According to reports in November 2016, the total cost could be as high as £752 million (Collier 2016).

It would now be appropriate to let the fans speak for themselves. In early June in 2015, with one year left at the Boleyn Ground, we were kindly given permission by the KUMB fan forum editors to post a link to a survey with some open questions about the coming stadium move. In addition, the West Ham forum manager at the Swedish fan site Svenska Fans agreed to post the same questions (but in Swedish) on the Svenska Fans' West Ham forum. The reason for targeting both (predominantly) English fans via KUMB and Swedish fans, was to get a better idea of how sense of

place and belonging differ in relation to physical distance (and with regard to frequency in terms of attending games). In addition to two questions relating to demographics, the following three questions were asked:

> Why did you become a West Ham fan, and what does it mean to you to be a West Ham fan?
>
> What does the Boleyn Ground mean to you?
>
> What are your thoughts about West Ham United's move to the Olympic Stadium in 2016?

The purpose was not to gather quantitative data, or to generate a representative sample of what West Ham United fans think about themselves as fans and their attitudes towards the move to the Olympic Stadium. Instead, the thoughts of the fans inform a wider discussion of what it means to be a fan and the relationship to a particular place—in this case the Boleyn Ground at Upton Park. The format of this book does not allow for a full account of the replies (81 completed via KUMB, and 19 completed via Svenska Fans—all respondents indicated that they were male) but below we will include some of the answers, to illustrate the mixed feelings ahead of the stadium move, and the deep passion the fans have for the club.

The local English fans gave answers such as "no choice in the matter" and "Father and grandfather. Means everything in football terms" to explain why they support West Ham—reasons linked to tradition and family. The non-local English fans, as well as the Swedish fans, instead predominantly stated that they support West Ham because they want to be different. Here follow some examples of what the local English fans wrote:

> My dad took me when I was 8 and been suffering ever since. It's not a hobby, it's not something to do at the weekend—it's a way of life and a huge part of who I am.
>
> it's in my blood. Almost like a DNA.
>
> My local team, my dad dragged me over there from a young age. Being a West Ham fan is something to have pride in. They're a community club and even though most Hammers have moved away the club are a representation of the people.

> Family, it's in my blood. Again, it's family, I consider West Ham to be my religion, as well as an escape from reality. West Ham bring myself, my friends & my family together. They make us bloody miserable most of the time however.

> Family. Grandad. Dad. Me.... Siblings Means to be part of an eclectic, often antagonising always emotional madcap bunch of ****s who have each other's back and argue at the slightest opportunity. That and to know it's not the despair, it's the hope.

> Dad was a West Ham fan and took me to the matches. It means I am proud of my working-class roots and like entertaining football; it's not all about winning.

Many of the Swedish fans gave more elaborate answers, as their stories were often more complex. In addition to wanting to stand out, they also stated a friend or a brother, a penchant for supporting "the underdog" or simply that they liked the kit and colours, as reasons for supporting West Ham. There is also a notable link to music, as some of the Swedish fans state musical influences as one of the reasons for picking West Ham. One respondent, who had already taken an interest in the club, became completely hooked upon realising that his favourite band Iron Maiden were fans (actually, as a teenager the group's bassist Steve Harris was offered a trial with the club). The same fan lists the Internet as a major factor in the deepening of his interest over the years. One Swedish fan mentions the Cockney Rejects in the 1980s, and another one lists "punk and misery" as the reason for falling for West Ham. There are also a few answers that run even deeper, and two of them are worth quoting in full (translated from the Swedish by the authors—the tone and style of the Swedish originals have been maintained), as they show how a wide range of events interconnect and provide deeper meaning to the fandom:

> I support West Ham largely because of a teacher in school. I was hopeless at English and she was kind and brought football related articles for me to read instead of boring English textbooks. I fell for a text about a kid from the east end who was a West Ham supporter. His childhood wasn't easy, so the football meant everything. And then West Ham have the best-looking jerseys on the British Isles and the finest supporters (and they can actually sing a little too).

> I went to Sunday school as a child. We used to give a little sum to the children in Africa since they didn't have much in the way of food and toys. Then I saw a game on *Tipsextra* [a TV programme showing live football from England on Saturday afternoons, 1969–1995] in 1971. In that game there was a black player. It was Clyde Best. The commentator said that he was the only black player in England so I felt sorry for him being all alone, so I started supporting him and his team, which was West Ham. I had the great pleasure of meeting him in early May this year [2015] when West Ham Fans Sverige [the Swedish West Ham fan club] were on a members' trip. Clyde Best did also stay at the West Ham Hotel. A truly great experience for me. West Ham is a way of life, in pain and glory, unfortunately too much of the former. But never that one would change clubs because of that. Once a Hammer always a Hammer.

With regard to what the Boleyn Ground means to the local English fans, it is evident that the place has a symbolic meaning and represents links to family through memories of key events—some from the childhood of the fans. Here is a small sample of answers:

> Lived next to ground, means everything.
>
> I had my wedding reception there.
>
> Home. It's where I feel comfortable, excited and alive.
>
> The Boleyn reminds me of my childhood, the excitement of a Saturday. I don't get the same feeling I did when I was a kid, in terms of the build-up to a Saturday, as I have other things in my life now, but I do love the place.
>
> Spiritual home, real and authentic East End ambience
>
> Everything, it's where I stood with my dad and uncles, where I saw all my heroes
>
> It is my home. Some of my best moments in life have been in there. Memories of my dad sitting next to me before he passed. The Boleyn is West Ham. It has a soul.
>
> Spiritual and emotional home; a fortress.
>
> It was where I took my son to his first football match, so it means that he feels attached to the same roots as me.

> Going over there as a kid and then into my teens evokes some great memories, will be a shame to leave all the nostalgia and history behind, but if you're honest...the area's a shit hole now. I've been down there on non-match days, it's nice when you go in the entrance, but the surrounding area is bloody awful.

The question about the upcoming move to the Olympic Stadium, at that point one year away, generated answers of various kinds from the KUMB respondents. Some fans are very much against it, as they are afraid it will not feel like home, and are worried that the new stadium (through its sheer size, and the greater publicity West Ham as a club will get with all the extra revenue and interest surrounding the Olympic Stadium) will attract "new fans" who will not understand the club, such as "tourist" fans. Other fans take a more pragmatic approach, and accept the move as a "necessary evil" and as something "that was always going to happen." Some of the voices:

> I will not go to the OS as the Boleyn is our ground, not a soulless athletics stadium in Stratford.
>
> I think it's all down to money, it may be the factor which finally makes me fall out of love with football. Poor atmosphere, 'tourist' fans, badge change all adds up to a very different club in a few years' time.
>
> Slightly apprehensive cos it's West Ham and if one club can mess up such an opportunity to join the elite it's us.
>
> An event that was always going to happen. We are extremely lucky to get what we have, but it will never be home.
>
> Don't want to move there, it's not a football stadium and new fans will moan if we don't win as they don't understand the West Ham way is about taking the mickey out of ourselves when we lose.
>
> Not happy about it. But we always seem to live in the past as fans, maybe it's time to move on.
>
> Corporate sell out, it's a Lego stadium not suitable for football and the cheaper tickets reflect the downgrade in stadium, who cares about nicer toilets?
>
> A necessary evil if the club wants to move forward, but can't see it ever feeling like home in the same way as the Boleyn, and as someone who doesn't

> support the club in any great expectation of outstanding success, would have been happier to have stayed at the Boleyn and retain our old identity.
>
> I'm hugely saddened. The club, in an attempt to move forward, have done a deal that I do not believe to be in the best interests of supporters. Many fans will have considerably worse views, and the atmosphere will be far worse—54K people in an arena built for over 80K! The club, and in particular Karren Brady has told half-truth after half-truth to force the move through. This is not in keeping with the social contract between supporter and club and will come back to bite the club on the derriere one day.
>
> I'm less against it than I was but I'm still very unsure about the OS. It smacks of corporate branding, soulless, bland, boring and plastic. I hope I'm wrong, but the West Ham I know and love could be a thing of the past.
>
> Crap. Happening for all the wrong reasons to a stadium not designed for football.
>
> Can see the sense from a business point of view, but think we're going to lose our identity.
>
> Depressing inevitability of modern football.

As we noted above, while most of the local fans were born into supporting the club, and therefore left "without a choice," none of the Swedish fans surveyed were West Ham supporters by birth. The Swedish respondents also find the history and heritage of the club fascinating, and despite the cultural and geographical distance they feel a strong sense of identification with the club and its East London roots. The answers are, through the slightly lower level of affiliation compared with the English fans, a bit more general and often *romanticise* the local area surrounding the Boleyn Ground:

> It is my favourite club's home ground. I love London and the eastern parts.
>
> Upton Park will always be West Ham in my view. Green Street and its rough areas are part of the charm of supporting The Hammers.
>
> Tradition, meeting place, working class, real supporters present.
>
> Genuinely urban English, heavily influenced by immigration.

> As a West Ham supporter, in my view Upton Park will always be the home of West Ham. The new stadium with running tracks, its central location (with even more tourists at the games) i.e., will generate a worse atmosphere…I maintain that West ham have sold their soul by leaving the East End!

> I have never attended a game there, but it still feels a bit sad that they are leaving this ground.

In terms of the move to the Olympic Stadium, the responses from the Swedish fans are mixed—like the English fans they are divided. Some are very positive while others are very negative, and some have not yet decided what they think—or they see it from both sides. A main fear appears to be that the new stadium will attract more "tourists," which would—in the eyes of the supporters—generate a worse atmosphere on match days. One fan, who is "really very sad that all the genuine will disappear," but who is also viewing the move as an opportunity for the club to join the absolute elite, is "afraid that [the Olympic Stadium] could turn into a new Emirates [Arsenal FC's stadium, completed in 2006 to replace Highbury] with lots of Chinese and Russians." Here is a sample of responses:

> The club has sold its soul.

> On the one hand: really very sad, in that all the genuine will disappear. On the other hand: a chance for the club to become one of the big ones and have success. Hoping for a good atmosphere also in the future, but fear that it could become a new Emirates with a lot of Chinese and Russians.

> Frankly, it feels crap! To move to more central London instead of the East End is like pulling the rug out from under the feet of their own supporters, and all of this only to attract more tourists and generate more cash. This is what English football is all about! Have been to Upton Park five times, but feel reluctant about visiting the Olympic Stadium…In addition, I believe that an already bad atmosphere in the stadium will be even worse with more tourists. But today's football is of course only about money and West Ham feel compelled to join in with the others.

> It feels like part of the soul will be lost, but at the same time a new epoch begins in the history of West Ham. Could be another step towards joining the big clubs.

> Commercial, tourist football, opportunity to develop, plastic.

> Sad for us traditional people but important for those who want the club to challenge for titles.
>
> Excitement and worry; hope the ticket prices won't shoot up and that the stadium won't be half-empty. Maybe mostly worry…Worry and West Ham are synonymous.
>
> Mixed emotions; it could be the beginning of something big for the club but it is also sad that they are leaving the classic Boleyn Ground.
>
> It will be tough. We simply have to wait and see how the English fans respond.

From these fan responses we can conclude that the Swedish fans, albeit tourists themselves (but with a strong sense of affinity for English football culture and a knowledge of "how to behave" at matches) are afraid that the move to the Olympic Stadium will attract too many "tourist" fans. The local English fans share the same worries, but are also more emotional in their answers concerning leaving the Boleyn Ground. It is clear that football is a representational sport, as suggested by Hognestad (2012) above, and it is interesting to note that the further distance the fans have to the local environment, the more romantic their views are. The Boleyn Ground forms an important part of shaping the identity surrounding the club and the East Ham and Upton Park area, and many fans are worried that the spectators in the new stadium will not be able to recreate the atmosphere of the more intimate Boleyn Ground (Fig. 7.2). However successful the transition is regarded in terms of season tickets sold—at a Supporter Advisory Board meeting in January 2016 it was described, by Angus Kinnear, as "the most successful Stadium migration in the history of European football" (WHUFC 2016b)—at least the KUMB and Svenska Fans survey suggests that fans have ambivalent feelings towards the move.

Summary

In this chapter we have covered various aspects of football fandom, including representational and motivational aspects, and how English football after the Taylor report (1990) has developed into a major global business.

Fig. 7.2 Anticipation ahead of West Ham-Arsenal, 2016 (Photo: Henrik Linden)

The demographics of the football going public has changed over time, and in the Premier League era ticket prices have increased to the point that fans of some clubs, most notably Liverpool in February 2016, have staged public protests to communicate their disagreement with how English football is run. The idea of football as big business has been normalised in much contemporary discourse, and the corporate culture of some clubs has caused friction between fans and owners—in that fans are now to a lesser degree allowed to feel a sense of ownership towards their club.

Technology continues to have a significant impact on how football is consumed, and live audiences have come to at the very least expect Wi-Fi in stadiums—reports suggest that fans of American college sports would rather leave the stadium than watch a game without access to the outside world through their mobile devices.

A small survey conducted in 2015 with English and Swedish fans of West Ham United—a club that in 2016 left their old stadium, the Boleyn

Ground at Upton Park, for the Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Stadium (renamed London Stadium) in Stratford—indicated that particularly the local English fans, but also the Swedish fans, felt a strong emotional and symbolic connection with the old stadium, thus confirming Hognestad's (2012) and Bale's (2000) views of football as a representational sport.

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8

Popular Culture Fandom: Broadening the Picture

This chapter does not aim to cover all aspects of popular culture fandom; instead, we provide some examples to illustrate how diverse this field is. While Chap. 5 looked more closely at film and screen fandom, in this chapter we will predominantly look at popular music—including Morrissey, Elvis Costello, and the Eurovision Song Contest—but we will also touch upon Terry Wogan's Terry's Old Geezer's and Gals (TOGs) and actor David Suchet's relationship with Hercule Poirot fandom. The music examples in particular are linked to fan engagement on social media, but instead of treating these online fan activities as expressions and performances of homogeneous "communities," we will view them as rather casual points of individual engagement with fellow fans and the artists or "scenes" they support.

As we have already seen elsewhere in this book, it is increasingly important for artists and musicians to have a large online following, and preferably an official fan community with a name which distinguishes them from fan communities of other artists. Some of the largest fan groups include Katy Perry's "KatyKats," Lady Gaga's "Little Monsters," Taylor Swift's "Swifties," Rihanna's "RihannaNavy," Mariah Carey's "Lambs," Justin Bieber's "Beliebers," Beyonce's "Beyhive," and One Direction's

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"Directioners." The initiative for some of these names has come from the artist, while others have been named more organically by the fans themselves. In the autumn of 2012, when there was a debate on Twitter among Ed Sheeran fans about what was the proper Sheeran fan name—Sheeran himself entered the conversation and endorsed the name "Sheerios" via a tweet: "i get asked all the time what my fans call themselves. i approve of sheerios, i like that one" (Sheeran 2012). This shows how much names of fans mean to contemporary pop artists, as they are important branding vehicles and also help forge a closer bond between artist and fan.

A Different Take on Music Fandom

Paul Williams, who started the music magazine *Crawdaddy!* in the 1960s, wrote in its first mimeographed issue that "you are looking at the first issue of a magazine of rock and roll criticism" (Williams 1966, p. 2). He also made it clear that it was not a "service magazine" for the music industry (albeit record labels were later allowed to advertise in the magazine when its circulation grew). In *Rock Criticism from the Beginning*, Ulf Lindberg (2005) states that Williams—who was a teenager at the time of the launch of *Crawdaddy!*—had the "attitude of a fan," but that he separated himself from "ordinary" fans by insisting that listening to and writing about music in an intelligent manner was a serious business. Like the term "fanzine," which was used by science fiction readers as early as the 1930s, Williams had his roots in science fiction and had started a magazine (called *Within*) covering that genre before he launched *Crawdaddy!* in January 1966 (Lindberg 2005, p. 106).

In media fan studies, science fiction fans are often held up as progressive and enterprising pioneers, and it is widely argued that the idea of fanzines started in this genre and was later picked up by music and sports fans. Music fan magazines were culturally important, as they helped contextualise and make meaningful individual experiences of youth—addressing as they did, various aspects of growing up. Richard Goldstein, who helped bring rock criticism into the mainstream, put it like this in an early piece for the *Village Voice*: "Because—ask anyone. Fourteen is shit" (Goldstein 1996, p. 100). Goldstein was one of the first to understand the potential

of writing about music, and contributed significantly to raising the status of rock criticism. It is important to understand that, at least for a period of time, rock critics also had fans. In Sweden in the 1990s, for example, particularly Linda Skugge and Andres Lokko were held in high esteem and had fans of their own. The popularity of individual rock critics has waned, however, as rock criticism has taken on a different role in the age of social media—and the music industry as a whole has of course gone through significant changes since the 1990s. It is increasingly difficult for rock critics—or critics of any kind, for that matter—to find meaningful employment as newspapers and general interest magazines devote less and less space to popular music as well as art criticism.

Karl Maton conducted a survey among The Smiths fans in the late 1980s and early 1990s—research that he did not write up until 16 years later. In his chapter "Last Night We Dreamt That Somebody Loved Us: Smiths Fans (and Me) in the Late 1980s," Maton (2010, p. 181) notes that what attracted fans to Morrissey and his group was that "they articulated an alternative mode of thought and behaviour in relation to many of the concerns and issues faced by the young." The "alternative" here should not be understood as routine teenage rebellion, as Morrissey's ideas and being "ran against not only the fads and fashions of the prevailing music scene but also societal norms in general: celibacy, androgyny, a feminised masculinity, vegetarianism, dismissal of the standard pop-star lifestyle of 'sex, drugs and rock'n'roll', republicanism, valorisation of Englishness, and a penchant for such unfashionable accessories as National Health Service glasses and hearing aids" (Maton 2010, p. 181). Maton's research was conducted only two years after the split of the group, in the midst of the early stages of Morrissey's solo career. The timing meant that this, in Malton's (2010, p. 182) words, provided a "golden opportunity to capture a sense of what The Smiths had meant to fans for whom the band had been a living presence."

Morrissey has throughout his career been highly influential, illustrated by Maton's own admission that he became a vegetarian because of his idol (during a time when vegetarianism was far from as common as it is today, Morrissey was the reason for many to make the decision to stop eating meat). Morrissey also "gave voice" to many fans' already existing (but far less articulated) anti-royalist and anti-Thatcher views. Although

not explicitly formulated, Maton's research participants hint at the *transformative* nature of being a The Smiths fan, which shows that people in search of an alternative way of interpreting life were drawn towards Morrissey. A female respondent, referred to as Mariana, writes: "Morrissey is the anti-thesis of macho … This, I believe, has great appeal to females, who are directly victimized by rock and pop images, and to males, who are victimized by the pressure to live up to that kind of roughness and omnipotence."(Maton 2010, p. 190). In addition, there is a clear sense of community among The Smiths fans, as the persona of the object of their fandom transcends to include the fans too, the representation of the fans (and perception of them) is closely linked to the attitude and values of the fandom. One contributor to Maton's study states: "There is a kind of love and comradeship that I feel whenever I see someone who is wearing a Smiths T-shirt … you feel safe as if you know them. You know that they are probably very shy and vulnerable like yourself" (Maton 2010, p. 188).

Although Morrissey has a loyal following, his fans are not uncritical towards everything he does. In 2015, there was widespread criticism from fans and the media for the video to Morrissey's single "Kiss Me a Lot," directed by his nephew, Sam Esty Rayner (2015), who as a child had played a minor role in the "Suedehead" video we discussed in Chap. 6. The "Kiss Me a Lot" video was partly criticised for its poor technical and visual quality, but the main point of criticism was the deployment of, seemingly for no reason, two half-naked women popping in and out of the video—a practice widely used in music videos, but not in Morrissey's work—in fact, Morrissey had always stood up against sexism and the objectification of women. The criticism was mainly aimed at Rayner, who was deemed inauthentic and lacking an understanding of Morrissey as an artist and of the Morrissey heritage. Due to the negative comments from fans, the YouTube comments function was quickly disabled by Rayner—a decision that, according to Morrissey's fans, further showed Rayner's lack of understanding of the fan-artist relationship. The fan discussion was particularly intense at the Morrissey-solo (2015) webpage forum thread "'Kiss Me A Lot' official video directed by Sam Esty Rayner—TTY," but the video was also dissected by mainstream media rock critics. Fredrik Strage (2015), in an article in *Dagens Nyheter*

(Sweden's biggest "quality newspaper"), writes that never before have Morrissey's fans been this upset—and wonders whether the video was deliberately controversial to cause publicity. Strage, who had his breakthrough as a rock critic in the early 1990s—often seen as the golden age of Swedish rock criticism—published a book about fans in 2005, simply entitled *Fans*, with a chapter devoted to Morrissey fandom (Strage 2005).

Fellow British artist Elvis Costello's Facebook page has multiple usage areas, and consists of a mixture of ads, news messages and comments. As of 11 June 2016, the page had 530,225 likes. Sites such as Facebook provide opportunities for fans to interact with each other in a more casual manner than specialist fan forums. Fans contribute to the page through various types of comments ranging from matters relating to live gigs (such as brief reviews of them) to Elvis Costello in general. In May 2016 Costello played four shows at the London Palladium (see Fig. 8.1) and after the first of the shows, which formed part of Costello's *Detour* tour, one commenter wrote: "G[r]eat gig as usual. Disappointed not to get

Fig. 8.1 Elvis Costello at the London Palladium, 2016. (Photo: Henrik Linden)

my copy of his book signed. Maybe next time." (Nick Wright, in Elvis Costello 2016d).

The page is also used by fans for more practical reasons, as evidenced by a commenter offering tickets to fellow fans: "Hello! I have 2 tickets for Elvis Costello tomorrow night 11th May. Can no longer go, looking to sell at face value please feel free to get in touch if interested, selling first come first serve!" (Stuart Provan, in Elvis Costello 2016c).

For some, Facebook gives the illusion of a direct link to the artist—as some fans, rather than writing to and for other fans, address Elvis Costello directly. An American fan writes: "PLEASE bring your tour to San Francisco! I'm dying to see you live!!!!!!" (Qiydaar Foster, in Elvis Costello 2016b). Also, fans are seemingly attempting to contact Elvis Costello through more personal messages: "Hi Elvis can I please send you my new Cd. HONEST WOMAN?" (Thornetta Davies Thirdpage, in Elvis Costello 2016b). Facebook as a social media tool is often associated with the personal, as its vast majority of users are individuals who share information, comments and pictures with their friends and family—albeit often in a self-promotional manner (Marwick 2013). Many band pages are managed as business pages, which means that the artists themselves are not interacting with fans regularly on Facebook, but it is instead the artist's management team that maintains the page. (Twitter, however, is a slightly different proposition as Baym 2013 has pointed out—as it offers a more convenient way of communicating for many artists and musicians). The most common fan concerns and questions on the Elvis Costello Facebook page are not directed to Costello himself, but are rather linked to practical information to do with shows, such as: "What merchandise will be available at the London gigs?" (Dave Gordon, in Elvis Costello 2016a).

Although Elvis Costello has plenty of fans of his own, he is also known to be a passionate *football* fan. Costello has participated in several football-related TV programmes, such as *Football Italia* (1995) (Lpstd1 2007) and *Fantasy Football League* (1994) (Andrew Crist 2013), and has supported Liverpool FC since he was a child. Unusually, as a child he was taken by his father to both Goodison Park (the home of Everton—Liverpool's local rivals) and Anfield, so that he could himself choose the team to support. He told Stephen Done in an interview at the LFC Museum and Tour Centre in 2000:

> My dad was very fair, he took me—in 1962, alternate weeks—to home games at Anfield & Goodison. So I could make my own mind up. The worse problems would just not exist would they, if you could choose religion in the same way? (Done 2000).

In the *Football Italia* show, on 30 April 1995, he tells the host James Richardson about his support for Juventus, which indicates that his interest goes beyond following Liverpool. In addition, with close family links to Birkenhead, he also supports its local club, Tranmere Rovers.

Eurovision

Fans are well integrated into the structure surrounding the Eurovision Song Contest, and what makes Eurovision such an interesting phenomenon is that it has spawned fans of the *competition* rather than specific acts. Some of the fans who enjoy the glamour and playful tone of Eurovision post MEPs (multi-editor projects) on social media networks, such as YouTube, and organise their own virtual competitions.

In many ways, it has long been a political event—a key reason for founding it in the 1950s was to unite Europe in the wake of war and austerity (although countries from the Eastern Bloc, with the exception of Yugoslavia, did not participate until after the fall of the Berlin Wall). Freedom of expression and an LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)-friendly atmosphere have contributed to the—in many ways—progressive nature of the competition, with transgender artist Dana International from Israel winning the competition in Birmingham in 1998 (the last time that the UK hosted the Eurovision), and Austrian Conchita Wurst, who identifies as a drag queen, winning it in Malmö, Sweden, in 2014. Eurovision has been popular among fans in Australia for a long time (and televised by public broadcaster SBS since the 1980s), and to celebrate the 60th annual Eurovision Song Contest, Australia was invited to enter a contestant for the first time in 2015. They took part again in 2016, and finished in second place after Ukraine, in Stockholm, Sweden—a long way for Australian fans to travel (see Fig. 8.2).

Fig. 8.2 Australian Eurovision fans, Stockholm, 2016. (Photo: Joakim Bengtsson)

While the Eurovision Song Contest is, of course, mainly a European affair (and now also an Australian), there are fans elsewhere. China has broadcast the competition since 2014, and in 2016 the competition was officially shown in the United States for the first time, on the Viacom-owned Logo network. Logo is an LGBT-themed cable network, available in 50 million homes (Eurovision 2016). Logo's general manager, Chris McCarthy, told *The Guardian* before the 2016 show that "Eurovision is a cultural phenomenon we have admired from afar for years [and] we are thrilled to bring the event to US audiences and cheer alongside the rest of the world" (Qvist 2016). Perhaps as a nod to the American audience and in the hope of attracting new fans to Eurovision, Justin Timberlake performed as part of the show's entertainment programme.

Video blogger and long-time fan Alesia Lucas, who annually tweets, blogs and vlogs about Eurovision under the name Alesia Michelle, told Swedish public broadcaster SVT that her friends back in the United States are wondering what she is doing in Sweden—and what "that song

contest thing" is: "I basically just tell them that it's like American Idol meets the Olympics—and a little bit better" (SVT 2016). Lucas, who has watched the show for years in the United States via online streaming, ascribes to social media a major role in spreading the word about Eurovision and attracting new fans in the United States. In the interview she says: "I think there is a lot of interest now thanks to things like social media with people sort of going 'OK, what is this thing that's been trending on Twitter for, like, the past three days'—so I think people are interested in it now."

While the competition itself—despite the glamour and fun surrounding it—may occasionally have certain political connotations, neither the competition nor its fans have been taken seriously by the establishment. However, British broadsheet newspaper *The Guardian* published a survey on their website, where fans were asked to give their opinion on an important political question in the UK in 2016: "If you're a massive fan of Europe's song contest, we want to know your view on the UK's upcoming referendum on EU membership" (Walsh 2016). In the article accompanying the survey, James Walsh writes that "Eurovision is a symbol of pan-European cultural celebration" and although light-hearted in nature, the article and survey suggest that it is of interest to know what outlook on European togetherness Eurovision fans represent.

In their article "Twitter as a technology for audiencing and fandom: the #Eurovision phenomenon," Tim Highfield et al. (2013) argue that Twitter is an important medium for facilitating fan connection in relation to televised events. By looking at the Twitter activity of European and Australian fans during the 2012 competition, they show that Twitter can be an effective way of engaging live television audiences in conversations, often of an ironic or humoristic nature, to enhance the sense of fan community and belonging. Since television audiences are increasingly multi-screen users (that is, engaging with several screens at the same time—e.g., a television, a laptop and a tablet), Twitter is an effective means of communicating with a wider community of fans. Although Twitter is separate from the broadcast, it is increasingly becoming a part of it as Twitter, unlike other social media platforms, has been picked up by and used by live broadcasters. During programmes on the BBC such as *Match of the Day*, *Saturday Kitchen* and the *Eurovision Song Contest*,

tweets are used in different ways and for various purposes—and often included as a rolling newsreel at the bottom of the television screen. As we will see in Chap. 9, tweets are also used to measure fan reactions to shows and content, and thus a valuable source for marketing intelligence.

Connected to Eurovision are the many fan-led preview concerts and events all over Europe, and several of them have become “official” stops on the pre-Eurovision circuit—and endorsed by the European Broadcasting Union in charge of Eurovision. Russell Davies, co-organiser of the London Eurovision Preview Party for fans says:

> The event gives them confidence. If you think of Eurovision, such a vast event, turning up on day one with 1,000 people all wanting to grab a piece of you is difficult to cope with. You can be told what it is like, but until you experience it that is a different story. Also, the fans are the majority of journalists in the first week of Eurovision. The proper media turn up later. The relationship is more intimate because the fans want to connect personally and want a piece of the action. (Russell Davies, cited in Robertson 2014)

Formed in 1984 in Finland, OGAE International (Organisation Générale des Amateurs de l’Eurovision) is currently the biggest Eurovision Song Contest fan organisation. All participant countries of the Eurovision are allowed to have their own OGAE fan club. Some of the key objectives of OGAE UK are to promote the Eurovision Song Contest in the UK, support its fans by “providing a means of communication and interaction,” and support worldwide fans’ interest in the UK participants (OGAE UK n.d.).

During the actual Eurovision week in Stockholm 2016, fans played a central role and had better access to various events and areas than ever before. As we saw above, Eurovision promotes openness and acceptance, and embraces diversity. The slogan for the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest was “Come Together,” and fans from competing countries *did* come together, as illustrated by Fig. 8.3. A key location during the 2016 event in Stockholm was the Eurovision Village, the official festival area for the public from the 6th to the 14th of May. The City of Stockholm’s official website states: “At Kungsträdgården everybody feels welcome and at home, no matter their background or income, if you live in Stockholm or

Fig. 8.3 Eurovision fans from Sweden and Finland, Stockholm, 2016. (Photo: Joakim Bengtsson)

if you are a visitor from Skåne [Scania, a county in the south of Sweden] or Australia" (Stockholms stad 2016). While social media interactions play a major role in the now global popularity surrounding Eurovision, in Eurovision Village, fans—many whom were dressed up to showcase what country they support, much like football fans (see Fig 8.4)—met up to interact and have fun throughout the Eurovision week.

Fans - or Admirers?

Radio fandom has not generated as much scholarly interest as some other media forms, such as film and television. As Matt Hills (2009) points out, when radio has been studied in an academic context in the UK, radio channels such as BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 4 have been favoured over the less "cool" BBC Radio 2. In Hills's study of TOGs, a fandom centred on radio and television personality Terry Wogan (1938–2016) and his

Fig. 8.4 French Eurovision fans, Stockholm, 2016. (Photo: Joakim Bengtsson)

style of communication (particularly on *Wake up to Wogan* (WUTW), the breakfast radio show he led from 1993 to 2009), a picture emerges of an active fan community. Radio is, of course, in its very nature, an interactive medium that often relies on listener contributions. *Wake up to Wogan* was particularly interactive, as Wogan himself often referred to the importance of his listeners as contributors to the show, and both relied on and welcomed their input.

Hills notes that the TOGs are different from most other fan communities as they do not explicitly refer to their object of fandom, instead they emulate the philosophy that Wogan and WUTW represent: "Being a TOG means playfully mirroring the value systems of these brands, while steadfastly refusing to discuss them. In this manner, TOGs can evade any implication of media dependency, i.e. that their performed identities are derivative of Wogan/WUTW. Rather, they can self-represent as highly autonomous media consumers" (Hills 2009, p. 78).

According to Hills, the TOGs in his study did not self-identify as fans, and a community member—an academic TOG—was keen to point that out, stating that "we are not Fans we are something else!" and "This isn't fandom it's togdom" (Hills 2009, p. 79). This ties in with Mel Stanfill's (2013) observation that fans seldom identify with all of the baggage that comes with the term fan, and Lyn Thomas (2002), in her work on *The Archers* and *Inspector Morse* fandom, noted that fans of the shows were uncomfortable identifying as fans (one *The Archers* "fan" even denied the fan aspect completely), which can be seen as a "strategy for dealing with the negative connotations of fandom" (Thomas 2002, p. 121).

Wogan was also very much associated with his work for the BBC on the Eurovision Song Contest, and is by many fans predominantly remembered for his wry humour and wit when commentating on the competition. Shortly after Wogan's death (31 January 2016), the Dutch commentator Cornald Mass called him the "eloquent master of irony" on Twitter (Mass 2016). During the UK qualification round for the 2016 Eurovision, a tribute had been put together to commemorate Wogan, further cementing his status as "Mr Eurovision" in the UK.

Another type of media fandom, which was partly discussed in Chap. 5, is the admiration of actors and film stars. The British actor David Suchet—regarded as one of the most prominent theatre and screen actors of his generation in Britain—had a successful career even before he agreed to play the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot in ITV's *Agatha Christie's Poirot* (1989–2013) in the late 1980s. However, with Poirot, all of a sudden Suchet had fans—fans of the fictional character Poirot (a character who, through Suchet's honest interpretation, reached a whole new audience). In his autobiography, *Poirot and I*, Suchet writes:

> As the reviews flowed, so did the fan letters. Suddenly people I did not know were writing to me as though I were a long-lost friend, and that started a train of thought in my mind that has remained with me ever since—what was it that people liked about Poirot? (Suchet 2013, p. 85)

This transformation from being an actor who had been largely able to operate under the radar, to a global icon was overwhelming for Suchet:

"I had been used to one or two bits of fan mail in the past, but suddenly a tidal wave of fan letters overtook me, and they came as a considerable shock. They really did." (Suchet 2013, p. 150). Suchet further mentions that the letters made him realise that he had a responsibility towards the audience, and this close bond with the fans ensured that he took extra care to maintain the high quality of his work in the series. In addition, he even took on a secretary to help with the fan letters, all of which he answered—showing his gratitude towards those who took the time to write to him: "how lucky I am to have so many different kinds of fans around the world, all of whom seemed thrilled by Poirot" (Suchet 2013, p. 250). A particularly memorable letter from the United States ends "I hope that my letter means something to you"—to which Suchet states that it "most certainly did" (Suchet 2013, p 153).

It is fruitful here to emphasise how particular characters fascinate fans—more so than the actor, or other roles he or she plays. After Suchet's *All My Sons* performances in London in 2012, "group after group of fans from all over the world would come round to the stage door of the Apollo Theatre on the Shaftesbury Avenue to see me, most of them fascinated to meet both Poirot and me" (Suchet 2013, p. 315). The global reach of the character is further evidenced though this passage:

> One group came over from Moscow for the weekend to see the play, even though they could not understand a single word of it, because—as they told me, in faltering English—'We come to see Hercule Poirot.' A Japanese group said exactly the same thing, and so did a Chinese group (Suchet 2013, p. 315).

Another British actor, Alec Guinness, was already an Oscar winner and a legend with a long film career behind him when he reached a whole new audience through his role as Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars* in 1977. Guinness, however, never warmed to the films and *Star Wars* is hardly mentioned at all in Guinness's (1985, p. 214) autobiography—only on one page, in a dreamed up nightly conversation with a female journalist, about money made from the film. In his letters, cited in Piers Paul Read's (2003) authorised biography, it is clear that Guinness's main interest in the trilogy was financial, and that he found it mostly "boring" and

"dreadful" to work on the movie—"I cannot bring myself to learn the wretched lines," he wrote in 1982 about the third *Star Wars* film (Read 2003, p. 509). "Oh, I'm sick of that film and all the hype," he wrote in 1997 (Read 2003, p. 510). It is thus quite interesting, and telling, to note that Guinness's Wikipedia page devotes a lot more attention to *Star Wars*.

Summary

Fans of all ages and backgrounds engage with media content such as popular culture texts. A text, as we saw in Chap. 4, can be anything from an image to an actor, to an event. As social media users, fans are becoming more visible both to other fans and to the organisations and artists they are fans of. Many musicians have strong online followings, and they see their fans as part of their artist brands. In addition, televised competitions such as the Eurovision Song Contest generate significant social media activity—with Twitter being an effective interactive fan community tool for exchanging comments and jokes about Eurovision performers.

Facebook is also a popular platform for online engagement with a fandom, and compared to specialised fan forums (such as Morrissey-solo) Facebook pages are used in a more casual manner—with fans asking questions and commenting on news and other information mainly in connection with live tours or album releases. Elvis Costello's Facebook page, for example, serves both as a news site for fans interested in tour updates and links to reviews and as a space for information exchange between fans.

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9

Social Media: Millennials, Brand Fans and the Branding of Fans

Viewing various forms of consumption in the light of fandom as a balancing act might be fruitful to understand why and how the fan concept has changed and evolved so dramatically over the past decade or two. While being a fan is per definition a major occurrence (which takes both time and effort), it seems that—through the slovenly and "routine" usage of the word "fan," and its increasing connection to terms such as "like" and "follow"—a person can now be a fan in an instance, and all it takes is a click.

In this chapter we will look more closely at an aspect of contemporary life that we have already touched upon throughout the book: social media and how it relates to being a fan, and how companies use Web 2.0 technologies to further their relationships with fans—particularly millennials—and better understand them as consumers. We will also reconnect with some of the concepts discussed in Chaps. 2–4, particularly the discussions surrounding brand fandom and consumer culture, which will be further linked to aspects of social media usage and fan behaviour.

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Sharing and Participating: Fans and Social Media

Social media has its benefits for businesses and individuals alike, and it has facilitated easier access to communities and networks that would otherwise be near impossible to locate and join. The "access," however, travels both ways, and our propensity to post messages and status updates to social media platforms means that while we have access to others, they also have access to us. Social media is a key component in the formulation of the fan in the "brand advocate era," as Web 2.0 makes it possible for companies and organisations to measure various aspects of consumers' interaction with a brand, television show or special event. Fan forums, such as Knees Up Mother Brown (KUMB), offer multiple ways of engaging with fellow fans and share and read stories and gossip surrounding West Ham United—past and present. People are able to follow their favourite travel blogger on Instagram while at the same time engaging in Twitter conversations with politicians and artists, and sharing in-jokes with friends via WhatsApp or using Facebook to get news updates. Despite the large proportion of Americans getting their regular news via Facebook feeds, Nancy Baym (in Banet-Weiser et al. 2014) argues that traditional media products make up only a small part of the total activity on the site. "Mostly," she states, "people are participating in media by exploring and sharing musings and pictures taken by people they know [such as] status updates, memes, vacation snapshots, comments left on each other's posts, and so on" (Baym, in Banet-Weiser et al. 2014, p. 1078). This inclusive take on the concept of participation underlines that sharing and commenting are often as important as creating new creative content. A worry in the Web 2.0 age is that people who *do* create their own films, songs, artwork or stories and post them on sites such as YouTube and Facebook run the risk of giving away some of the ownership to their creative work. Francesca Coppa warns that it is important to make sure that fans do not unknowingly sign over their intellectual property to global corporate digital media giants:

> Today, when I talk about fan writing, I don't just mean fiction and nonfiction: I mean contracts and code. In the old days, fans self-published their

fiction (and put it under copyright, asserting their ownership in their words), they distributed their own VHS cassettes and digital downloads, and they coded and built their own websites and created their own terms of service. Today, enormous commercial entities—YouTube, Amazon, LiveJournal, Wattpad, Tumblr—own much of this infrastructure. (Coppa, in Banet-Weiser et al. 2014, p. 1072)

However, we live in a culture of sharing, and whole generations have grown up in an era where anything—whether legal, illegal or somewhere in-between—is readily available on the Internet. Thus, it may be difficult to understand the implications of downloading and listening to songs for free, just as it may be difficult to understand the regulations surrounding posting own original material on social media sites. In addition, some people who do not want to engage with these commercial platforms at all find it increasingly difficult to connect with audiences elsewhere (albeit there are plentiful of alternative sites for sharing fan-related material, as Coppa, in Banet-Weiser et al. 2014, points out).

The sharing and connectedness may have other drawbacks than ownership issues. Staci Newmahr illustrates this very clearly in her essay "Sharing and Waiting on Facebook," which starts with a description of the immediate aftermath of going to a concert:

While walking to the parking lot after a fabulous concert recently, I tried to upload a video clip to Facebook on my iPhone. It wouldn't upload. I stopped walking. I tweaked my settings a bit and tried again. No dice. Frustrated, I quickened my pace, intending to figure it out when I got to the car. In the car, I tried again. It just hung there. I spent 10 frustrated minutes trying to get it to work, decimating my post-concert bliss as I obsessively tried to get my video clip onto Facebook. By the time I accepted defeat and began driving, my adrenaline high had dissipated. I was antsy to get home to my much more reliable desktop. (Newmahr 2016, p. 57)

A business manager or marketing executive—and, of course, a software developer or digital media champion—would probably put this down to basic technological failure, indicating that it is a matter that can be solved by improving the technology. They would likewise state that, since this is what the consumer *wants*, and since it correlates with the idea that

"social media is good as it helps marketing," we need to look no further than solving the technological problems. In addition, some evidence suggests that younger generations do not regard posting updates and messages to social media (e.g., Twitter, Instagram or Facebook) as a disruptive aspect of their lives—but instead as a fully integrated part of it (Newmahr 2016). Aarick Knighton, an avid social media "addict," describes online posting and sharing as an integral part of life too, but in a negative sense as "deep down you know what's being said has no real affect on your life and you don't really care" (Knighton 2015, p. 19). Amongst those who *do* care, however, are media producers such as Viacom and measuring platforms such as Canvs, as we will discover below.

In Theodor Adorno's (1994) study of an institutionalised and socialised version of the occult, newspaper astrology columns, he argues that we no longer live in direct proximity to others in our "community," and often use intermediaries to communicate with each other—a phenomenon he refers to as "intermediary objectified social processes" (Adorno 1994, pp. 48–49). Jennifer Otter Bickerdike (2014) notes that these social processes are now made up largely of social media interactions, where "liking" a Facebook post or retweeting a tweet may constitute a valid form of social exchange in the Web 2.0 era. As we have seen, it is increasingly important for businesses to connect with their customers and fans in meaningful ways. Artists and musicians are no exceptions, and as Baym (2013, p. 223) has pointed out, authenticity is an "important branding strategy" for musicians, many of whom engage with social media to forge closer relationships with their fans. Twitter used to proclaim rather boldly on the site that "Twitter provides more authenticity and creative control than any other online medium" (Baym 2012), but this information has since been removed. Authenticity is central to the musician-fan relationship, as "fans identify with musicians because of the felt authenticity of the connection forged through music. As a result, authenticity can paradoxically be an important branding strategy" (Baym 2013, p. 223). Many musicians enjoy communicating with their fans via Twitter, while some find the format impersonal and difficult to manage (Baym 2013). In the age of social media, we are all meant to be entrepreneurs—after all, much of social media is designed to suit the entrepreneurial mindset (Marwick 2013)—but this does not mean that all of us are comfortable with it.

Many musicians are not interested in sharing information about themselves, and some feel that they are incapable of doing so in an authentic manner (Baym 2013).

As we saw in Chap. 6, previously amateur social media users, such as the lifestyle and travel blogger Brooke Saward, have managed to turn their online activities into their livelihood. Stuart Cunningham et al. (2016, p. 2) explain how this development may look like:

> Previously amateur creators use platforms such as YouTube (but also others such as Vine, Instagram, Snapchat, Vimeo, Vessel and increasingly cross- and multiplatform strategies) to develop subscriber/fan bases of significant size and transnational composition, often generating as a consequence significant advertising and sponsorship revenue and increasingly the attention of mainstream media.

What emerges is a picture of social media as a marketing tool disguised as a participatory facilitator of authentic interactions, thus confirming Alice Marwick's (2013) view of Web 2.0 as a vehicle for self-branding, status confirmation and selective information sharing. "[S]ocial media technologies," argues Marwick (2013, p. 77), "illuminate and reward status-seeking practices that reflect the values of the technology scene: idealism, privilege, business acumen, and geek masculinity."

In *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*, one of its authors, danah boyd, states that an important experience of what Henry Jenkins refers to as "the online world" was to allow her to "escape" her hometown in that it enabled her to "connect with people around the world" (Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 38). For boyd, it was a transformative experience, leading her to believe that most others also experienced the Internet and its networks in much the same way—instead, through her fieldwork as an academic she has realised that "most youth who go online do not look to escape their home context."

danah boyd is a self-confessed supporter of the Internet and the possibilities it has to offer ("my own love of the internet," boyd in Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 120) and is determined that it can be utilised for a good purpose. boyd is adamant that we should look at the workings of social media from different perspectives, and—highlighting her "insider"

status (having worked in Silicon Valley during different "eras" in the development of Web 2.0)—she states that those outside the tech scene "have portrayed Silicon Valley in simplistic capitalist terms" (Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 124). She argues that the entrepreneurs behind the tech companies and social media software are philosophically driven rather than being motivated by the chance to make money. However, it is problematic trying to separate "vision and beliefs" from "capitalist infrastructure"—as boyd believes that Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg's "vision is shaped more by his belief regarding how the world should work than by a capitalist agenda"—despite stating that Zuckerberg "believes that capitalism incentivizes the best minds to work hard" (Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 124). Marwick (2013), on the other hand, has showed that the "idealism" prevalent in much of the rhetoric surrounding Web 2.0 only plays a minor part—Barthes (1993) would argue that it serves as a myth-making decoy, as would Fuchs (2014) and Giroux (2014)—and it certainly seems that the development of social media technologies is ideology driven. It is therefore worrying that, as Marwick (2013, p. 281) points out, "these technologies have enabled the infiltration of neoliberal, market-driven values and ethics into day-to-day relationships with others and even into ways that we, as users of social media, think about ourselves." boyd, while seemingly critical towards the capitalist consumer society, is defending the make-up of social media and states that "there is no doubt that the logic of capitalism is baked into Web 2.0, but so are various neoliberal and libertarian beliefs" (Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 125). This is at best a simplistic view of capitalism, as it is very difficult to imagine neoliberalism without the context of the former, which means that Marxist analyses of social media—albeit perhaps not covering all aspects of the potential possibilities of shared networks facilitated through Web 2.0—seldom miss the mark completely. In effect, a neoliberalist society values profit (through "free" production and competition) above all else—including any "social desires" (unless these have a direct impact on profit). One need look no further than a city such as London to realise how neoliberalist desires are eating away at the cultural and creative infrastructure on which its status as one of the world's most creative cities was once built—instead playing into the hands of the global capital.

The participatory culture intrinsic to Web 2.0 is not a "problem" in itself—it is rather where these "participatory cultures" play out that is problematic—as many of these participatory spaces are "owned" by powerful and ideologically driven corporations (such as Facebook). In urban life, the awareness of public-private spaces has increased in *pari passu* with the decrease in completely public spaces. A public-private space is a seemingly "public" space owned by businesses who (e.g., through BIDs—Business Improvement Districts) make decisions (instead of democratically elected representatives) about how these spaces are to be used and by whom. Anna Minton (2006, p. 3) argues that "the privatisation of the public realm, through the growth of 'private-public' space, produces over-controlled, sterile places which lack connection to the reality and diversity of the local environment." This phenomenon can be applied to online spaces too—as many seemingly "public" places where people meet and exchange information, such as the major social media platforms, are monitored and controlled by powerful private companies. In the earlier days of the Internet, when fan forums were less visible, they were also less controlled and to a lesser extent used for advertising (see, e.g., the *Roswell* webpage, discussed in Chap. 5).

Millennials: A Generation or a State of Mind?

Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel (2005, p. 22) wrote already in 1964 that "there is always a gap between the generations" and that the "conflict between generations is really one form of the maturing process in adolescence, and should trouble us only when it is so wide that the maturing process itself is disrupted." The 1950s and 1960s were a time of transition, and the popular cultures as we know them today came into prominence, which meant that concepts such as adolescence and teenagers were fully formed. The difference between, for example, the baby boomers and the so-called millennials—people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, and sometimes referred to as generation Y—is that the current generation gap is not that easy to spot. One could argue that we are *all* millennials, as the concept is linked to a certain type of behaviour rather than an age group or a traditional generation. One reason for this

may be the seeming absence of subcultures (Haenfler 2014) among the millennial generation. In addition, parents and their children like the same artists and television programmes, and it is more accepted to be like an adolescent longer in life. The higher expectations of services and experiences is not age specific, but more dependent on our immediate access to remote information networks—and that we can compare, review, air opinions, comment, share photos, criticise and praise in an instant. It is a mode of living, and albeit the younger generations grew up with the Internet, marketers predominantly want to engage millennials, and we are therefore potentially *all* millennials.

Katrina Luttrell and Karen McGrath (2016) roughly divide the generations before the millennials into three groups: the traditionalists (born 1927–1945), the baby boomers (born 1946–1964) and generation X (born 1965–1980). This division aligns fairly well with other similar classifications. From particularly an American perspective (but relevant from a European perspective too), the traditionalists, or "silent generation," have been referred to as the "lucky" generation (Easterlin 1980). Merely by "playing by the rules" they were able to earn more and enjoy more security than any other generation (Howe 2014) and they are, according to Neil Howe (2014) "without doubt the healthiest and most educated generation of elders that ever lived—and, of course, the wealthiest." He adds that in the early 1960s, "the elderly were poorer than young adults by most measures"—something which is not the case, largely speaking, in the 2010s. Although mostly retired, the traditionalists, or "silent generation," remain influential and connected, and affluent. "In other words," state Luttrell and McGrath (2016), "they are still relevant in this ever-evolving world." Millennials, however, are seen as influential consumers—it is, perhaps, *the* most influential generation of consumers (Fromm and Garton 2013)—and their behaviour is closely linked to the development of Web 2.0 and "the participation economy" (Fromm and Garton 2013, p. 8). For millennials, it is important to "connect" with brands, and to actively participate in the building of a brand image (Fletcher et al. 2013). Participation and connectedness is important for most generations, but for millennials—due to having grown up with mobile technology—it is an implicit part of everyday life (Luttrell and McGrath 2016).

Millennials are also likely to be more affected by "FoMO," the fear of missing out on interesting and exciting things (JWT 2011; Przybylski et al. 2013). Aarick Knighton (2015), in his book *Generation-I: the Millennial Mindset*, describes social media "snacking" as an addiction, and an ultimately unfulfilling routine:

> Scrolling and posting was fun at first. It was this fresh, new portal that only a select demographic knew about and over time grew to be an integral part of society and our daily lives. Whether it's Myspace, Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter or Instagram, they all essentially have the same dynamic. These networks lure you in and by the time you realize it, it's too late. You're unconsciously toggling back and forth between your go-to apps even though deep down you know what's being said has no real affect on your life and you don't really care. We have more important things to do, but social media has become like a car crash. For some reason we just can't look away. (Knighton 2015, p. 19).

This gives an impression of an all-consuming behaviour that is anxiety driven rather than a source for joy and positive engagement.

The TV mentality of millennials, states Jessica Walsten (2015, p. 30), is: "what they want, when they want." Insights like these were somewhat used as an "excuse" by the BBC to move BBC Three (the more "youthful" channel) to the web. In fact, the decision to go online caused 300,000 viewers to sign a petition to keep BBC Three as a regular TV channel. The protests were to no avail, as BBC Three ceased to exist as a television channel from 16 February 2016. The BBC Trust, when they finally approved the shift in November 2015, gave as their rationale that there is a "clear public value in moving BBC Three online, as independent evidence shows younger audiences are watching more online and watching less linear TV" (BBC 2016).

At an Adobe Summit in 2016, Walter Levitt, the CMO of Comedy Central said: "If you're 18 to 34 and think something is really funny and cool, then you share with your friends […]. It's currency for the Millennial generation" (Lacy 2016). James Guerrier (2015a), summarising a Viacom International Insights study, notes that young people—or millennials—"see being self-professed experts as their key defining trait." The study

reveals that being a fan allows young people to express themselves, and it helps them "stand out from the crowd" (Guerrier 2015a). In addition, fandoms help people discover new things, and ultimately a fandom provides the opportunity to be part of a community—which may be increasingly important in a globalised world. The study refers to fandom as a "powerful force." This terminology recalls Jenkins's (1992) idealist views of fans and fandoms as forces for good, while Guerrier (2015b), in line with business and marketing discourses, refers to "powerful" as in important consumer segments.

The analysis in business literature about millennials often fails to recognise the contradictory nature of their supposed characteristics (they are independent consumers who know what they want, yet they need other millennials to tell them if something is authentic or not; they embrace new technology and seek exciting experiences, yet they are portrayed as more conservative than any other generation before them) and when they are represented as empowered agents, in complete control of their consumer experience (without wider social, cultural, political and economic factors taken into account), the enthusiasm surrounding pleasing this particular segment seems to be based around how they "should" behave rather than their actual, "authentic," needs.

The Viacom International Insights survey's (Guerrier 2015a) take on fandom is similar to that of Fuggetta (2012)—but where Fuggetta's most valuable customers are the brand advocates, the Viacom survey focuses specifically on the term "fans," while exclaiming that "this isn't your parent's fandom." The Viacom International Insights survey further states that

> two-thirds of young people consider themselves influential. […] Young people are vocal about the things they love. […] Averaging 391 Facebook friends and 231 Twitter followers, this generation is highly connected—and understands the importance of speaking up. […] Nearly 9 out of 10 agree that normal people with large online followings can be just as influential as celebrities. (Guerrier 2015b)

In their market report *The Pursuit of Happiness: Creating Meaningful Brand Experiences for Millennials*, based on surveys involving 5800 participants from ten countries (in all continents apart from Africa), ZenithOptimedia

(2015, p. 25) states that technology is so integrated into the lives of millennials that it is impossible for them to imagine life without Web 2.0 and everything that comes with it: "Technology gives Millennials the tools to keep control over their lives; it's so pervasive that many claim they cannot function without it." If millennials wish to be in control at all times, it is of course also easier to be controlled through various media technologies. This is something media users are increasingly aware of. If we are to accept that millennials are not necessarily only born between the 1980s and the 2000s, and that the category may include older generations as well (since, it appears, to some extent it is as much a state of mind as anything else), we are all learning how to make technology indispensable—and how to self-promote, self-censor and self-represent. As part of the "brand manifesto" presented in the ZenithOptimedia (2015, p. 8) market report, delivering "meaningful brand experiences" is important:

> We know that Millennials gather experiences in the way that earlier generations amassed prized possessions. Brands can help them do that, be it through helping them express what they stand for or by providing those experiences.

In light of this, it is easier to understand why there are "fans of brands"—as we are increasingly taught to view multinational media corporations as the ultimate producers of great experiences. Hence the willingness for companies to sponsor major events, as they realise that we associate the fantastic experiences with that particular brand (and they can claim that they made the experience possible through their support). Although millennials are said to regard altruism highly, and they are presented as being more genuine in their networking compared to previous generations, they are also framed as caring predominantly about their own happiness—and attending "epic events" or chasing unique experiences not only for enjoyment and adventure, but importantly also because of the social credibility it gives them (ZenithOptimedia 2015). This is in line with Marwick's (2013) findings, in that people who are active on social media build their own brand and gain status and credibility within their community (which in turn may grant them access to other fields—see, e.g., Bourdieu 2010).

Jared Feldman, founder and CEO of Mashwork, states that "we believe emotion is a currency that you will be able to trade on in the future" (Holloway 2014, p. 10). Mashwork runs Canvs, according to its website "an industry-leading technology platform created to measure and interpret emotions" (Canvs c2016a). For example, Canvs monitor social media activity in relation to televised programmes, and analyse how emotional response and resonance affect aspects such as ratings and ad recall. What is then an emotional reaction in this context? According to Canvs,

> Emotional Reactions are defined as any piece of social media content which contains an emotion. Examples of Emotional Reactions are, "I can't wait for #PLL," "That is the scariest zombie ever on Walking Dead," and "WTF Olivia Pope!" Examples of social media content that do not contain Emotional Reactions are, "I'm watching PLL tonight with my BFF" and "Gotta get back from yoga in time for Scandal." Canvs displays the volume of Tweets as reported by Nielsen, but Canvs only analyzes Emotional Reactions. (Canvs c2016b)
>
> […]
>
> From misspellings to slang, not understanding the complex nuances of the English language used by Millennials to express their emotions means not truly understanding Millennials. The unique vernacular that Millennials use—along with their penchant for social media expression—is one of the distinguishing attributes of this generation. (Canvs c2016c)

The expressions "OMG" and "WTF" stood for more than 13 % of the reactions to season five of *Teen Wolf* (Canvs c2016c).

Like other media producers, Comedy Central (which is a pay TV channel that forms part of Viacom International Media Networks) are actively involved in research into audiences and have through their "Power of Laughter" studies particularly engaged in research relating to what "fans" want. Their studies, which confirm academic studies in the fields of marketing and business management, reveal that there is a "new era of fandom," and that brands should be aware of its "three elements," which are "self-expression, discovery and community" (Guerrier 2015c). One of the key points of the insights is that "brands should align with something that is ingrained in young adults' lives—something they love and 'feel'—and do so with authenticity." This use

of the term "authenticity" evokes Gilmore and Pine's (2007) fluid take on "perceived" authenticity.

Brands are also urged to "enable fandom." "Fans yearn for more—so brands should provide access to content, information and events" (Guerrier 2015c). It is also important to reach and engage the "right" fans, because there is a big difference between active and popular fans (with "fans" of their own) and fans who may not be as extrovert as their more sought-after peers: "Brands need to know where to find the influencers—because they will be a catalyst for generating conversation and spreading the word" (Guerrier 2015c). This is an example of how corporate interests take control over and shape the fandom relating to their media content. This top-down approach to fan management—or, "community management"—is contested in traditional fan studies. While marketing literature often recommend co-creative and democratic producer-consumer relationships, the actual reality may be more complex.

Bosch, Bosch, and Bosch- and Boaty McBoatface

The Dutch artist Bosch (1450–1516), the German engineering and electronics company Bosch (founded 1886), and the American crime series *Bosch* (2014–) have more in common than their name. Despite their differences they all have fans (and one of them even makes fans, albeit the other kind). This, in itself, illustrates how vast the field of fandom can be—the *complexity* of it. It also shows that the fan can be approached from a number of different perspectives, because one assumes that there must be a difference between being a "fan" of the Bosch PSR 14.4 LI-2 Cordless Lithium-Ion Drill Driver and a "fan" of the early Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch and his pictorial world. In fact, the Bosch that sits closest to the heart of traditional fandom studies, and therefore the most likely subject of academic study, would be the Amazon drama *Bosch* and its fans. This book does not, however, take an explicit cultural studies approach to fan cultures and fan studies, and is equally interested in all three types—as well as a number of other areas of fandom.

One customer, reporting a fault on a Bosch dishwasher on the Bosch Home UK Facebook page, expresses her disappointment in the product while at the same time proclaiming her affinity for Bosch as a brand, stating:

> Dishwasher broken 6 weeks after end of guarantee….actually 4 weeks as was installed 2 weeks after delivery. Been offered free replacement part if needed but still have to pay £95 repar….fair or not fair?? I am a Bosch fan and was going to bu[y] new Bosch washing machine…having 2nd thoughts now. (Debbie Carmichael, in Bosch Home UK 2014)

Self-identifying as a fan is common among customers posting messages on brand sites, implying that there is—albeit often scattered—some sort of fan community surrounding these brands. In public relations management, social media is seen as an increasingly important tool for instigating and maintaining relationships with an organisations' "public" (Hutchins and Tindall 2016). Inviting Facebook users to make complaints on social media, and facilitating comments from other consumers as well as Bosch Home themselves, is a transparency strategy that has become the norm in online brand management. When a complaint thread becomes public, the brand exposes themselves to further criticism from unhappy customers—but at the same time they show goodwill, and if they deal with the complaints in a measured and consumer-friendly manner, they show that they care, thus publicly showing their service mindedness to the wider brand fan community.

A brand that we touched upon before, in Chap. 6 (in relation to photography and Instagram), is the Canadian clothing brand Arc'teryx, owned by the Finnish company Amer Sports (c2016). Typical for clothing brands, their online shopping function offers customers the opportunity to publicly review the products. A self-proclaimed fan—stating his age as over 65, which clearly indicates that "brand fans" engaging online are not necessarily of a younger age—states when reviewing the Cerium LT Jacket, that "I am a fan of Arcteryx as all the clothes I use have delivered: waterproof, durability, fit, etc." (JanErik, in Arc'teryx 2015b). The American retailer of outdoor gear, evo, state on their Arc'teryx page (evo 2016) that they are fans of the brand: "Northwest roots and a dedication to perfection make us fans of Arc'teryx."

What is it, then, that makes us fans of brands? The comments above indicate that it is for quality reasons—"all the clothes I use have delivered" and "dedication to perfection"—and meeting or exceeding expectations. For evo it is also based around local patriotism and pride ("Northwest roots"), which shows that there is more to their fan proclamation than tangible attributes linked to the product itself. Of course, evo want to sell the Arc'teryx product, and therefore have additional motives to just showing their appreciation—which does not necessarily contradict the authenticity in their endorsement. The commenter on the Arc'teryx website, however, is merely supporting the brand he likes and recommending their product.

If we relate back to fandom as agency (Jenkins 1992, 2006; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005), where fans take action in attempts to resist the dominant culture—there are few, if any, signs showing that brand fans share these motivations. However, they participate through posting comments and making recommendations in a similar manner to media fans, and through—as we saw in Chap. 6—posting photographs on Instagram, they also show a certain kind of creativity in their engagement with the brand.

When making a complaint about Arc'teryx—similar to the Bosch case above—customers seem more prone to present themselves as fans (thus balancing their act of complaining with a statement confirming their affinity for the brand). A post reviewing the Delta LT Jacket where "MISLEADING COLOUR" and "SO DISAPPOINTED!" are highlighted in capital letters, the customer states: "We are huge Arcteryx fans and have always been happy with our purchases but never shall I trust the online representations or your products" (Killifish40, in Arc'teryx 2012b).

On external threads and forums, commenters who defend a brand may be identified as fans by others—"Late at night and some Arcteryx fans pop out of the woodwork!" as a Backpacking Light contributor (who prefer the Feathered Friends brand) writes (Scott Jones, in Backpacking Light 2014). There is competition between brands, which means that fans engage in online debates where they—often passionately—explain why their brand is better, and position themselves in relation to other brands. This is similar to discussion threads about television shows,

musicians and sport teams. Thus, while being a fan of a brand places the fan—and their "fan culture"—firmly in the more consumerist camp, there are many similarities in behaviour between these different fan categories.

Arc'teryx fans like to recommend special offers to other fans, as in: "For Arcteryx fans out there, I'd like to share some of the websites that have some good deals going on right now" (daljunam, in Red Flag Deals 2015). They also feel an urge to announce when they have bought or discovered something—a self-promotion strategy in line with Marwick's (2013) observations of Web 2.0 behaviour, and a tendency among new generations of fans to align themselves with brands in their everyday communications (ZenithOptimedia 2015):

> So, Arcteryx sent out an announcement of the footwear line yesterday... I'm an Arcteryx fan in general and love new innovations in gear, so I jumped and I already have my pair. (Alex27, in Arc'teryx 2015a)

Fans also engage directly with the brand, via the Arc'teryx Facebook page: "Hi. I'm a huge arcteryx fan! I just have a quick layering question." (Shannon Tigani, in Arc'teryx 2012a)

In addition, Arc'teryx's blog "The Bird" links the brand to lifestyle and travel, and the blog posts are very closely associated with tourism. Due to the nature of the brand—outdoor gear and clothing—the tendency to tell stories, through blog posts and Instagram photos, is logical and well aligned with the interests of the consumer fans. The products are on the expensive side, which establishes Arc'teryx as an aspirational brand—further emphasised by the visual language on their website, blog and Instagram.

If commercial brands, through offering products (as well as lifestyles) for sale, find effective ways to engage their fan base on social media, it is more difficult for organisations in the public sphere. In the Web 2.0 era, government-funded institutions—including major museums and galleries—increasingly need to engage with the public online to showcase, in a quantitative manner, their ability to manage audience relations. Other types of organisations are also looking for publicity, and to forge relationships with the public. The Natural Environment Research Council

(NERC) in the UK is a government-funded organisation that invests in "world-leading science" (NERC [2016]a). In the spring of 2016, they announced the Twitter campaign #NameOurShip to encourage the public to contribute name suggestions and to vote for the naming of a new £200-million polar research ship. On their website, they wrote: "To celebrate the launch of our new research ship, we have launched the #NameOurShip campaign. Currently we're calling her 'NPRV', which isn't very catchy! So we're inviting you to suggest a name for her" (NERC 2016b). The tagline for the competition read: "200 MILLION POUNDS. 15,000 TONNES. 129 METRES. ONE NAME." The tone of the request suggested a casual and not too serious attitude, and the campaign was very popular with the British public. In line with the tone of the competition, the former BBC Radio presenter James Hand put forward the "catchy" Boaty McBoatface as a name suggestion. By the competition's closing date, Boaty McBoatface had received 124,000 votes—almost four times as many as the candidate with the second most votes (Ellis-Petersen 2016). More than anything, the voters were "having a laugh," and the choice of name evokes a very British sense of humour. However, the final decision was always going to be NERC's. At the closing of the #NameOurShip campaign, NERC posted the following on the website:

> Thank you to everyone who has taken part in the Natural Environment Research Council's Name Our Ship campaign. We are no longer accepting suggestions to name our ship as we have now reached the closing date of 16 April. We've had an extremely high volume of suggestions and will now review all of the suggested names. The final decision will be announced in due course. (NERC 2016b)

Perhaps this was the whole point, to receive "an extremely high volume of suggestions," which would point towards public engagement as well as two-way communication between NERC and the British public—at least from a purely quantitative point of view. From a qualitative perspective—or, for measuring actual engagement with NERC and their work—it was a less successful exercise. Everything becomes an event, a spectacle. The public did not particularly care when NERC decided to overrule the

public vote, further emphasising the pseudoness of this pseudo-event. Eventually it was revealed that the name chosen for the ship was RRS *Sir David Attenborough*. The poll winner, *Boaty McBoatface*, was instead given to an underwater research vehicle operated from the main ship. The NERC (2016b) website states: "The name Boaty McBoatface will live on as the name of the ship's high-tech remotely operated sub-sea vehicle. We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who suggested names, shared tweets and got involved with the #NameOurShip campaign."

Consumerism and Brand Fans

We will now bring the discussion back to how brand fans fit into the wider discourse surrounding fans and fandoms, and how fans as consumers fit into the "neoliberal" age of social media.

The type of "raving" fan suggested by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles (2011) indicates that brands need consumers who will stop at nothing in their support of the brand. Like Blanchard and Bowles, Fuggetta (2012) promotes the idea that customer interactions will lead to the creation of authentic fans and in his world these would ideally be "brand advocates." In marketing literature, the term "emotional intelligence" is widely used, and it is this close connection to emotions that makes the fan such an attractive customer. In addition to their affinity for the brand, fans usually engage with their object of fandom—or "fan text" (which could be anything from a jazz musician to a sportswear brand)—over multiple platforms, using a wide array of channels to gather information and engage in interactive activities. A "fan text," argues Sandvoss (2007, p. 23, cited in Kozinets 2014, p. 165), "is per definition intertextual and formed between and across texts."

Kozinets highlights a key issue, in that we cannot separate fan activity leading to emotional engagement from the concept of financial transaction (or base the concept of authenticity on anticonsumerist ideals): "As any comic book fan who has just purchased a precious title can tell you, or a sports fan who has paid big bucks for a hot ticket, financial transactions and emotional commitment are intertwined in the consumer culture of

today" (Kozinets 2014, p. 166). Above, we touched upon some different forms of fan engagement from a "brand" point of view, and as Vernon Hill (2012) makes explicit in his book about Metro Bank, "emotional brands create massive value; building fans not customers creates emotional brands" (Hill 2012, p. 25). In his statement that "we cannot maintain our growth rate unless our customers are out selling for us all the time, so everything we do reinforces the idea of fans," Hill (2012, p. 52) further emphasises that the "good" customer, the fan, is expected to do a job for the brand. This kind of fan agency, of course, is a far cry from the fan activities that Hills (2002), Jenkins (2007) and Coppa (2014) have in mind when they discuss media fans. In this brand fan paradigm, however, the producer and consumer all work towards the same goal, and the fan is locked not only in a "positive word-of-mouth behaviour" (Krishna and Kim 2016, p. 23), but in a much deeper relationship with the brand. The demands on the brand fan are summarised by Kozinets:

> The consumer-as-fan becomes advertiser, entrepreneur, marketer, and producer. The consumer, intrinsically motivated and loyal to the brand for life, entrenched in networks bound to the brand, becomes even more committed to the brand than any merely career-driven marketer or executive ever could. (Kozinets 2014, p. 170).

Kozinets identifies four "key factors," which all could be considered as incentives for marketers and brand managers to strive for brand fans and brand fandom instead of "mere" consumption of a product, service or experience. First of all, he lists the "internalization of affect," which means that the customer identifies strongly with the brand, leading to "an acceptance of a tribal identity, the adaptation and spread of various interrelated myths, an adherence to rituals, a moral stance, and a sense that the brand matters" (Kozinets 2014, p. 170). In a sense, these types of marketing goals have been present in advertising and public relations work for a long time (see, e.g., Baudrilliard 1998), and this is in generic marketing literature sometimes described as affinity marketing or aspirational marketing (Kotler and Armstrong 2015) as it is built on the evocation of emotions through semiotic sophistication and storytelling. However, the increased interest in turning customers into fans (or, per-

haps, *brand advocates*) is more recent, and may be largely attributed to the greater visibility of fans through the interactive nature of Web 2.0 and its various social media platforms. It is easier to signal one's affective commitment, and the "love" felt by the consumer towards the brand thus becomes *tangible* which means that it can be *quantified* (see, e.g., the work of Canvs above). This leads us on to Kozinets's next factor: "the identification of consumers not as isolated individuals interacting with a product or service but as part of a community" (Kozinets 2014, p. 170). Authors so far removed from each other as "aca-fan" Henry Jenkins and marketing CEO Rob Fuggetta both highlight the importance of the community in fandoms. A difference, however, is that Jenkins believes in the community as a force for resisting the prevailing order and would likely prefer fan communities to be formed organically and start out at grass-roots level, while Fuggetta's stance represents that of the body of marketing and branding literature where businesses are encouraged to create top-down "communities." While spontaneity—or, rather, the illusion of it—is encouraged on an artificial level so that the community comes across as authentic and appealing, through social media it is possible for companies to create community superstructures so that they can stay in control of the "fan community."

Third in Kozinet's summary comes the "enhanced appreciation for the role of content in the development of brand fandom," for example through transmedia storytelling that augments the brand and helps build a "brand world"—a world that "can be a mythical and imaginative play land, a window into the brand's own (often rosy-colored or stereotyped) past, or a delight-filled imagined future" (Kozinets 2014, p. 171). Concepts like Disney's "Imagineering" (Pine and Gilmore 1999; The Imagineers 2010; Ouwens 2014) and the "dream society" (Jensen 2001) spring to mind. In his book *The Dream Society: How the Coming Shift from Information to Imagination will Transform Your Business*, the Danish future studies scholar Rolf Jensen (2001) predicted how the changes that had already begun to emerge would impact upon consumer society, and he argued that the value of the product sold would be secondary to the emotional value incurred by the stories and myths surrounding it, much like Pine and Gilmore (1998) had reasoned around the experience economy concept: "the product will be an appendix, the main purpose of which is

to embody whatever story is being sold" (Jensen 2001, p. 54). Jensen, who favours an "emotion-led" marketplace, notes that the "dream society" is ideal in a global context, as our "need for stories recognize no cultural or national boundaries" (Jensen 2001, p. 57). Jensen is, by his own admission, an optimist, and argues that work has become more social, fulfilling and engaging. This is, in our consumerist society, a common narrative—implying as it does that we *must* enjoy our work. In 2013, Jensen and co-author Mika Aaltonen published a sequel to *The Dream Society*, titled *The Renaissance Society*, focusing more on how individuals control their destiny, in essence similar to Pine and Gilmore's ideas about the experience economy, and confirms Marwick's (2013) warnings on how neoliberalist values dominate the wider discourse of the social media age.

Kozinets's (2014) fourth and final factor is the encouragement by brands for fans to produce and co-create. Thus fans, or customers, become integral in the creation and production phases. Brands are in favour of this approach because it implies that consumers feel a sense of involvement in the consumption process. It supports Fuggetta's (2012) idea of the brand advocate as a spectator stepping on to the playing field to participate in the game. To fulfil our duty as consumerist citizens we have to be an active audience, which gives us a false sense of agency. When we take Kozinets's three previous factors into account, the co-creation takes place within preordinated brand stories which leaves little room for alternative stories. This sounds very much like "fan labour"—what Marwick (2013, p. 195) defines as engagement in "productive activities that financially and culturally benefit the creators of the original film, book or television series."

In this context it is difficult to fathom what fans could achieve through co-creation and agency beyond fulfilling their assigned roles as consumers. To further emphasise this viewpoint, the critical theorist Christian Fuchs (2014, p. 65) points out that "the Internet is dominated by corporations that accumulate capital by exploiting and commodifying users," which means that "the Internet" does not necessarily foster participatory culture.

Adopting market values has increasingly become the norm, even for individuals in their private interactions with other individuals, as "markets are touted as the driving force of everyday life" (Giroux 2005,

p. 2). The Web 2.0 era has reinforced this sentiment, and serves to confine our space and limit our options for "alternative" outlooks. Even for seemingly "anti-capitalist" ventures such as AdBusters (an anti-consumerist global network founded in Canada in 1989, and widely credited with igniting the Occupy movement(s) in 2011), it is increasingly difficult to instigate change in a world where there are few alternatives to neoliberal consumerism. In fact, AdBusters have been criticised for their lack of commitment to questions concerning gender and ethnicity, and for their apparent exclusivity. Max Haiven (2007, p. 91) notes that AdBusters are "cultivating (and selling) a politics of self-serving distinction which does little to confront the real sources of power in society but rather furnishes its followers with the smug satisfaction of being 'outside' or 'knowingly critical' of (and thus no longer complicit with) consumer culture." However, Haiven argues that we must not focus on the double standards of organisations such as AdBusters, and give in to a suffocating cynicism. Instead, the ineffectiveness of counterculture may be partly explained through the seeming trivialisation of online communication—as by making it "easy" to oppose norms individually when engaging with an issue, the urge to take joint action diminishes.

Perhaps, as Sandvoss (2005) and Duffett (2013) suggest, "fan cultures" should also be understood as ways for *individuals* to cope with (and enrich) everyday life and not always as a means—in organised form, with explicit agendas—to, as a *community* work to highlight inequalities and injustices, and to give voice to marginalised and exposed groups in society. At best, groups can be turned into "market segments" (see Scott 2013, on female comic book fans), because as such any group—however socially awkward or morally corrupt it may traditionally have been regarded by the hegemony—can be assigned value as (potential) *consumers*, as the group contributes to driving demand for commercial products. When the success of a brand is measured through "likes" and "followers" as a supplement to actual sales, it is increasingly important for corporate brands to engage their customers in conversations and co-productive and co-creative activities, preferably online, so that they can be monitored.

Summary

Social media is a key component in the lives of most fans, and Web 2.0 technologies have impacted significantly on how artists, organisations and brands manage their fan relationships. This has contributed to the seemingly greater importance that is placed on fans, and in particular fans from the millennial generation—often referred to as people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s—as a lucrative consumer segment.

The superstructures of social media encourage co-creation, occasionally referred to as fan labour, as it forges closer relationships between media producers and fans-as-producers—which could be beneficial for both, but often appear to favour the media producer as fans do work for them for free. However, business and marketing literature suggest that brand fans—through their "love" for the brand—willingly go the extra mile to support their brand. This explains why brands prefer fans to customers, but it also suggests that fans in consumerist society are deprived of real agency.

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10

Conclusion

Millions and millions of people continue to invest their time, money and emotions in something which is destined to have an uncertain future. Eventually the favourite band might abandon their ideals and "sell out" to gain wider popularity, the favourite football club could be bought by a dubious billionaire and turned into a "super brand," and the favourite television programme remodelled to suit the widest possible demographic. These and similar scenarios are highly likely. We are increasingly *encouraged* to make these "investments," through the recent upsurge in status of the "fan" as consumer. The fan, we are told, is perhaps *the* most important market segment. The fan is thus the key to understanding what customers really want. In addition, the consumer as fan is more than a customer—he or she is a "brand advocate," ideally with a large social and professional network (online as well as "offline") that cannot wait to hear about the latest dos and don'ts from their influential friend, colleague or Web 2.0 acquaintance.

The "fan" concept is multifaceted, and there are different ways of approaching the study of fans and fan cultures. By incorporating views and perspectives from cultural studies, critical theory and marketing and business management, we have established that there are both similarities

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and differences in how brand fans and more "traditional" fans (such as fans of music, media and sport) behave, and also how differently these types of fans are approached by brands and media producers.

The terminology used in marketing and business literature is often vague and paradoxical, overlooking the aspects of resistance that are often integral to many fandoms. At the same time, businesses in their quest for a larger market share want fans, not customers, and brand advocates, not followers. But, with the popular image of the media geek in mind, why do they want fans? The most straightforward explanation is that their take on the fan concept is selective, and rather one-dimensional, and very likely shaped by the "Facebook vocabulary." In contemporary discourse, the fan is seen as an active consumer and a lucrative market segment for sport and media brands—and in our post-subcultural era, many countercultures have been rendered harmless through their incorporation into mainstream culture. In line with the ideas of Jean Baudrilliard (1998), the urge to be a good consumerist citizen results in an anxiety-driven experience economy, where the fear of missing out on the extraordinary is a key motivator in everyday life—where consumption is seen as a duty.

Fans are seemingly gaining more and more power as consumers, and it is within the consumerist paradigm that fans have the opportunity to perform agency. This indicates that, at best, fans are able to affect popular culture media content as long as it does not threaten the dominant structures and hierarchies. Fandoms are still important as spaces for transformative work—but it is likely that this work serves as a means to coping with existing discriminatory systems rather than fully resisting them. In fandom studies, as well as in the larger context of media, communication and cultural studies, anthropology, philosophy, history, psychology, economics, sociology and a range of other fields that take an interest in human behaviour—in particular in relation to society—there is a continuous debate going on about what constitutes individual responsibility and what is predetermined by invisible structures shaping our beliefs and limiting our outlook. This could be understood as agency contra structure, where traditionally—we have to acknowledge that even a field as young as fan studies has developed "traditional" elements of its own—fan scholars have leaned towards the former. In fact, the main premise for the "established" fan studies approach is the notion of fandom as a subversive

and transformative space, particularly on a societal level—but increasingly on an individual level too (see, e.g., Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005). To potentially subvert something, *agency* is required. However, the concepts of agency and structure are not black and white, and Jenkins (2008) acknowledges that complete agency is somewhat a utopian idea. It is easy to understand why agency is an attractive concept in media and brand fandom—after all, it is not only football fans who feel a sense of ownership of their fan object—but when fans prefer to view their fandom as a hobby rather than a vehicle for social change (or, perhaps a vehicle for improving the quality of wind jackets rather than questioning underlying social and economic structures of inequality), it is difficult to fathom what this agency could achieve beyond fulfilling fans' assigned roles as consumers. Baudrilliard (1998, p. 56) argues that we cannot expect to "change the system by modifying its content," but this is perhaps not the point for most fans. The normalisation of the extraordinary has intensified not only the need for new and better experiences, but more significantly the need for mediating these experiences to others—predominantly through the sharing of words and images via social media networks. Being active and *participating* does thus not automatically mean having agency—and agency is just as likely in a passive "act," such as avoiding fulfilling one's role as a consumer. Avoiding to fulfil this role, however, is increasingly difficult in a society that is built around principles of marketing and consumption. Also in light of this, fans have very limited "agency." A football fan of a popular club, as shown in the section about West Ham United, has few other means of showing discontent than to stop turning up to matches—but then, of course, someone else will take their place and the club will not mind (at least not short-term).

Hierarchies and hegemonies are often built on so-called common-sense attitudes (Barthes 1993), which are ideologically driven rather than signs of a natural order of things. In many fan studies discourses, fan cultures and fandoms are viewed as potentially driven by an urge to resist these hegemonies, therefore posing a threat to established society. However, in the era of social media, neoliberalist values are reinforced through the very design of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and the ideal citizen in this context is an entrepreneur dealing

largely in self-promotion. Since fans, from the point of view of brands and large corporations, through their social media activity have become more visible as a market segment, they have also been elevated to key consumers. There is, therefore, a conflict surrounding the representation of fans—as in some contexts fans are desirable and in some they are viewed as a threat to the established order.

The rise of mass celebrity culture was made possible thanks to new technology, like photography and film. Movie stars quickly emerged as a new class of celebrities, more attainable than stars had been before. A commercial link to movie stardom was soon established, where fan magazines played a big part in educating fans as consumers. Stardom created whole new opportunities for commercialism, and stars could use their platform based on fame to sell products. Fans have always been early adopters of new technology, and online fan communities started forming early on. As social media has become part of our daily lives, so has activities previously considered to be fan activities. Fandom has thus become normalised, and in the process many of the negative associations previously associated with fans have faded away.

Fandom in relation to tourism and travel is an underresearched area, but fan tourism is nonetheless a widespread phenomenon—and media products as well as sports and culture are important motivational factors in tourism and travel. Pilgrimages to visit places associated with popular culture icons is a popular form of fan travel, but art exhibitions and festivals attract international fans as well. It is also worth to note that destinations have fans, and DMOs (destination management/marketing organisations) are increasingly linking up with local attractions and institutions to promote their destination as fan friendly. Travel blogs have been popular throughout the Web 2.0 era, attracting fans and followers who are interested in the aspirational lifestyles of the bloggers—of which the most successful fit well into the ideal model of the social media professional as an entrepreneur. Instagram is a popular social media platform for sharing photos of travel experiences, and brands are using the site to interact with their fans through the sharing of photographs and comments.

The demographics of the football-going public has changed over time, and in the Premier League era ticket prices have increased to the point

that fans of some clubs, most notably Liverpool FC in February 2016, have staged public protests to communicate their disagreement with how English football is run. The idea of football as big business has been normalised in much contemporary discourse, and the corporate culture of some clubs has caused friction between the fans and owners—in that fans are now to a lesser degree allowed to feel a sense of ownership towards their club. Technology continues to have a significant impact on how football is consumed, and live audiences have come to, at the very least, expect Wi-Fi in stadiums—reports suggest that fans of American college sports would rather leave the stadium than watch a game without access to the outside world through their mobile devices.

We have seen that media content producers, corporate brands and sport organisations all seek to attract specific types of fans, and that the "ideal" fan is not *too* passionate (so that they become obsessive and feel a sense of ownership of their fandom), but actually a balanced and consumer-focused "brand advocate." No matter whether the object of the fandom is a clothing label, a pop star, a film franchise or a football team, the same logic applies—at least at board-room level. However, particularly in music and sport fandom, the concept of the "balanced" fan is more complicated. The passionate fans are needed to co-create an atmosphere necessary for a fully satisfactory consumption of the experience—fans who understand the history and culture of what they are experiencing: an audience who knows how to behave, so to speak.

Fans of all ages and backgrounds engage with media content such as popular culture texts. A text, as we saw in Chap. 4, can be anything from an image to an actor, to an event. As social media users, fans are becoming more visible both to other fans and to the organisations and artists they are fans of. Many musicians have strong online followings, and they see their fans as part of their artist brands. In addition, televised competitions such as the Eurovision Song Contest generate significant social media activity—with Twitter being an effective interactive fan community tool for exchanging comments and jokes about Eurovision performers. Facebook is also a popular platform for online engagement with a fandom, and compared to specialised fan forums (such as Morrissey-solo) Facebook pages are used in a more casual manner—with fans asking questions and commenting on news and other information mainly in connection with

live tours or album releases. Elvis Costello's Facebook page, for example, serves both as a news site for fans interested in tour updates and links to reviews, and as a space for information exchange between fans.

The fan concept has changed and evolved dramatically over the past decades. While being a fan is per definition a major occurrence (which takes both time and effort), it seems that—through the slovenly and "routine" usage of the word *fan*, and its increasing connection to terms such as "like" and "follow"—a person can now be a fan in an instance, and all it takes is a click.

Social media is a key component in the lives of most fans, and Web 2.0 technologies have impacted significantly on how artists, organisations and brands manage their fan relationships. This has contributed to the seemingly greater importance that is placed on fans, and in particular fans from the millennial generation—often referred to as people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s—as a lucrative consumer segment. The superstructures of social media encourage co-creation, occasionally referred to as fan labour, as it forges closer relationships between media producers and fans-as-producers—which could be beneficial for both, but often appear to favour the media producer as fans do work for them for free. However, business and marketing literature suggest that brand fans—through their "love" for the brand—willingly go the extra mile to support their brand. This explains why brands prefer fans to customers, but it also suggests that fans in consumerist society are deprived of real agency.

As we noted above, in consumer society there has always been a "fear of missing out"—after all, "consumerist man is haunted by the fear of 'missing' something, some form of enjoyment or other" (Baudrilliard 1998, p. 80). Social media has contributed to further highlighting this, sparking the phenomenon often referred to as FoMO. Perception and representation form a large part of the chasing of extraordinary experiences, as it is increasingly important to mediate one's experiences to others—for example, through posting updates and images on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and other social media platforms. This has somewhat changed—or, at least, reinforced—the need for fans to document and capture events. Thus, the representation of an event becomes more important than the actual experience. Guy Debord wrote in 1967:

> The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation. (Debord 1995, p. 12)

When—largely speaking, there are exceptions as we have seen, both in representations and self-perception—fan studies literature state that the fan is not stigmatised anymore, we have to view it in light of neoliberalism and the reliance on the free market to supply us with everything from education and healthcare to entertainment. When brand equity or the success of a brand is measured through "likes" and "followers" as a supplement to actual sales, it is increasingly important for corporate brands to engage their customers in conversations and co-productive and co-creative activities, preferably online, so that they can be monitored. Christian Fuchs (2014, p. 65) notes that Henry Jenkins's work "stands in the celebratory Cultural Studies tradition that focuses on worshipping TV audiences (and other audiences) as 'rebelling' and constantly 'resisting' in order to consume ever more." Fuchs hits the head on the nail here in terms of the limitations of much of the work conducted on fans and fandoms. When viewed through the lens of the market, it is difficult to see how fan agency contributes to anything beyond assisting media producers—that is, large corporations—seeking to exploit the contributions of these fans in the pursuit of a larger market share and mindshare. A collaborator of Jenkins's, danah boyd (Jenkins et al. 2016), carries a strong belief in the transformative power of the Internet and social media, and it is evident that the Internet has opened up a wide array of possibilities for fans to engage and interact with each other and with media producers. However, it is questionable whether Web 2.0 engages people on a deeper level, as it is easy to move in and out of various conversations and causes, thus limiting their engagement to social media "snacking." In addition, Alice Marwick (2013) has shown that Web 2.0 and social media are based around neoliberal ideals that favour the individual as entrepreneur above all else—thus contradicting the often "taken-for-granted" approach of the Internet as a tool for social inclusion and the forging of meaningful communities.

The broadening of the fan concept may have removed some of the stigma surrounding fandom, but by allowing corporate brands to hijack the terminology and use it as part of their marketing vocabulary we have rendered it less poignant from an "agency" point of view. Perhaps this is not surprising, as for individual fans it is arguably more important to be accepted by wider society than to act as a counterweight to the established hegemony. Particularly as the previously marginalised science fiction, comics, and gaming fans are now viewed as lucrative consumer segments, with a multitude of entertainment products being produced (with input from fans) and released on to a mass market, both off- and online, to fulfil their needs. When alternative lifestyles are exploited by mainstream media producers and transformed into attractive and harmless commodities of consumption, there is little room for resistance. However, many fans continue to fight against neoliberal market forces. As we have seen, fans play a vital role in the shaping of the future of English football, and media fans continue to find ways of questioning societal norms. Thus, rather than proclaiming fans, fan cultures and fandoms powerless, we should perhaps view the current "brand fandom" era as a temporary trivialisation of the fan concept—as, when we look through the business rhetoric of marketers and brand managers, we note that it is not fans they are talking about but customers. While it is impossible to separate fans from consumers, *fan cultures*—however lucrative from a market point of view—may be more difficult to confine and define in consumerist terms.

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