

date: January 31, 2019

# Under the Spell of Media Tourism



**Master Thesis Tourism and  
Culture**

**Arts and Culture Studies**

**Radboud University Nijmegen**

*Harry Potter* tourist sites and tours in London as lieux d'imagination

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## Abstract

A phenomenon that for a while has been considered niche tourism, has now become more widespread and popular: media tourism and in the case of this dissertation, *Harry Potter* tourism. Almost everyone knows the narrative about the young wizard and his friends, many have read the books and seen the films and it has become more mainstream to also visit places that are connected to the series. In this research, the focus has been put on places of imagination, which as the name suggests are physical points of reference which help tourists to immerse themselves in a fictional universe. This theory has been broadened by the notions of souvenirs and photographs and their materialization of the visited places. In this thesis, the offer of *Harry Potter* related tourists sites in London has been analyzed in connection to the effects of places and objects of imagination. The focus has mainly been put on Platform 9¾ and *Harry Potter* related tours, which are a combination of feeling the emotional connection to the series and acquiring new information, which can de-mystify the visited places. The significance of the phenomenon and its importance within the academic field of tourism studies has furthermore been analyzed.

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## 1. Introduction: The boy who lived (and still lives on)

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“He couldn’t know that at this very moment people meeting all over the country were holding up their glasses and saying in hushed voices ‘To Harry Potter – the boy who lived!’”  
– Joanne K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*

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When walking through London, they cannot be ignored any longer – *Harry Potter* related tourist sites are everywhere. Let it be the ‘Platform 9¾’ sign and luggage trolley at King’s Cross Station (and the station itself), which marks Harry’s first entry to the wizard world in the first book and film, the Millennium Bridge, which gets destroyed in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, or Leadenhall Market, filming location of the Diagon Alley in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*: one can find something related to the series around every other corner. Apart from these sites, there are shops filled with *Harry Potter* related artefacts such as The Noble Collection, *Harry Potter* inspired walking tours through London offered by various suppliers, *The Making of Harry Potter* tour in the Warner Bros. Studios near London and houses, streets, and other places in the city which allegedly inspired Joanne K. Rowling to describe certain parts of her books in the way she did. These places and their connotations indicate that a fictional universe, in this case, the universe of *Harry Potter*, can influence and even become part of the physical space of a city. They change the experience of London and the public space for visitors and locals alike, even for those who are unaware of it or are not familiar with the *Harry Potter* universe. There is no escape from the young wizard and his friends.

Even though the *Harry Potter* book- and film series has been hugely successful and many readers are probably familiar with the series, there follows a short overview to put the topic of this dissertation into context. The British author Joanne K. Rowling has written the *Harry Potter* chronicle as a series of seven fantasy novels for young adults. The reader follows the protagonist Harry Potter, a young wizard, during his seven years at wizarding school and accompanies him while growing up. This entails things that are familiar for many young adults such as making friends, falling in love or struggling in school, but also fantastic plot lines as having class about magic beasts, learning how to fly on a broomstick, and fighting the most powerful and evil wizard of all time who had killed Harry’s parents when Harry was only a baby. This story starts “with a print run of 500 copies”<sup>1</sup> of the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, in 1997. Before that, twelve publishers had turned

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<sup>1</sup> Gunelius. *Harry Potter: The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon*: 6.

down Rowling's book series<sup>2</sup> - and by the end of the year, 70.000 copies had been sold in Britain alone.<sup>3</sup> The last book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows*, has been published in 2007. By now, 500 million books of the *Harry Potter* series have been sold since its first publication<sup>4</sup>, which makes it the most sold book series in history.<sup>5</sup> The seven books have been adapted onto the screen in the form of eight films between 2001 and 2011 and the series is currently the third highest grossing franchise in history.<sup>6</sup>

The wizarding world is not limited to books and films, however. Apart from fan articles and clothes, there is an official *Harry Potter* website called Pottermore with short stories by the author and further information on the series.<sup>7</sup> The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, a theme park in the Universal Orlando Resort, has been opened in 2010 and additional books about the wizarding world have been published by Joanne K. Rowling. One of the books, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, is mentioned frequently in the *Harry Potter* series as one of Harry's school books for the subject 'Care of Magical Creatures'. It recently has become its own series of films, which functions as a prequel to the *Harry Potter* series. The first film has been released in 2016, the second one in November 2018. Joanne K. Rowling, who is writing the scripts for the films herself, has explained that there will be five *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* films in total.<sup>8</sup> The wizarding world is consequently, more than twenty years after the publication of the first *Harry Potter* book, still developing and expanding. Old fans pass their passion on to their children and new fans join the fandom. Due to the series' presence in (popular) culture, some places even become intrinsically linked with the series and there is no end to '*Harry Potter* tourism' in sight so far.<sup>9</sup> This is why the quote from the first book above fits so well – Harry is called the boy who lived, because he has survived a magical attack when he was just a baby, but he also lives on in the books, films, his own theme parks, and other places to visit in the whole world.

### Fictitious series in tourism

The case study of *Harry Potter* tourism can be regarded within the broader themes of literary and film-induced tourism. The literary scholar Nicola Watson describes literary tourism as a phenomenon which has first been a niche hobby, but has slowly become more common during the eighteenth

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<sup>2</sup> Idem: 9.

<sup>3</sup> Idem: 7.

<sup>4</sup> Pottermore. '500 million Harry Potter books have now been sold worldwide'.

<sup>5</sup> Hypable. 'Harry Potter – History of the Books'. & Rusli, S. 'The charts that shows how the UK loves Harry Potter'.

<sup>6</sup> N.N. 'Harry Potter becomes highest-grossing film franchise'.

<sup>7</sup> Pottermore. 'About us'.

<sup>8</sup> Bulman, M. 'Fantastic Beasts: JK Rowling announces there will be five films in Harry Potter spin-off series'.

<sup>9</sup> Lee. 'Have Magic, Will Travel': 65.

century.<sup>10</sup> In the eighteenth and later in the nineteenth century as well, the tourists participating have been mainly literature enthusiasts, while the phenomenon has become part of the mainstream today. The definition of literary tourism Watson gives, starts with tourists traveling to places “of purely literary interest, associated with dead authors and their writings.”<sup>11</sup> In the nineteenth century, they have got a “newly powerful desire to visit the graves, the birthplaces, and the carefully preserved homes of dead poets and men and women of letters; [...] and eventually to traverse whole imaginary literary territories, such as ‘Dickens’s London’ or ‘Hardy’s Wessex’.”<sup>12</sup> This can still be seen today; Watson explains that “these genres, these practices are still very much alive in today’s tourists”.<sup>13</sup> Tourism researcher Sue Beeton defines film-induced tourism in her book *Film-induced Tourism* as “visitation to sites where movies and TV programmes have been filmed as well as [...] tours to production studios, including film-related theme parks.”<sup>14</sup> These two phenomena within the tourism field can be merged into the more inclusive term ‘media tourism’, as the Dutch cultural scholar Stijn Reijnders does in his book *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*.<sup>15</sup> This new term acknowledges the multimediality of this branch of tourism – it is not always only film tourism or literary tourism, but it can be both and much more than that. The given definitions do not mean that the sites which fall into those categories must appear exactly in the books, films, and so forth the way they exist or that sites have been built for the purpose of being a culturally related tourist sight – they can simply be mentioned once, have allegedly inspired the author to a certain place in the book or be just in any way related to the writer, director or the fictional universe. At least, this is the working definition for the research in this thesis. In the same book, Reijnders also introduces the concept of ‘lieux d’imagination’ or ‘places of imagination’. Based on Nora’s famous ‘lieux de mémoire’<sup>16</sup>, Reijnders claims here that tourists travel to media-related tourist sites because they need their physicality to imagine.<sup>17</sup> He supports his thesis with three case studies: *James Bond*, *Dracula*, and three detective series. There has been done only a small amount of research on this particular concept and what has been done could have been extended with the use of souvenirs and photos. This is why the concept will be applied to *Harry Potter* tourism in London in this dissertation with the extension of those artefacts to create an additional focus. Therefrom the following research question generates: How far can media tourism, specifically the case study of *Harry Potter* tourism in contemporary London, be considered as lieux d’imagination (places of imagination)?

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<sup>10</sup> Watson. *The Literary Tourist*: 12.

<sup>11</sup> Watson. *Literary Tourism and nineteenth-century culture*: 3.

<sup>12</sup> Idem: 3.

<sup>13</sup> Idem: 3.

<sup>14</sup> Beeton. *Film-induced Tourism*: 11.

<sup>15</sup> Reijnders. *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*: 13.

<sup>16</sup> Nora. ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’: 7 – 24.

<sup>17</sup> Idem: 15.

One might wonder about the scientific relevance of researching a fantasy novel series for young adults. Generally speaking, the field of tourism research is a relatively new one compared to others, which means there has not been done an extensive amount of research. This applies even more so to Stijn Reijnders' new concept of the lieux d'imagination. It is interesting, however, that media-related tourism, especially in the cases of *Harry Potter* and other fiction series like the *Sherlock Holmes* series by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, has been studied to some extent. The focus in those studies is usually put on the tourists themselves, their experiences, and their motives to take part in such kind of tourism activity. What the tourism sites and/or lieux d'imagination have to offer as well as the development and advertisement of the supplying side and the dialogue between those two cooperating parties seem to be less important in the existing research. This is why I have opted for a detailed analysis of the sites themselves rather than the behavior of the media tourists visiting. This research furthermore combines two fields of study, film-induced, and literary tourism, now merged into media tourism. By shifting the focus and studying the correlation of different kinds of media tourism with the help of the specific case study of *Harry Potter*, the goal is to gain more detailed insights into the demanding and supplying sides in the field of tourism as well as to establish a broader framework for the concept of the lieux d'imagination. Additionally, the *Harry Potter* series is not just any series of children's books – it is in fact, as already mentioned, the most sold book series in history<sup>18</sup> and still developing and growing. The unprecedented success of the media franchise alone would be reason enough to study the series and the qualities that make it special to so many people.

This research has been focused on two particular case studies within the field of *Harry Potter* tourism: guided *Harry Potter* (walking) tours through London as well as on King's Cross Station or rather the magical (and fictitious) Platform 9¾. The guided tours visit various sites which are related to the *Harry Potter* series one way or another and explain their connection to the series. Usually, Platform 9¾ is not visited in the context of these tours due to its popularity as one of the main sites for *Harry Potter* fans in London, which is always crowded during the day. In the middle of the London station King's Cross, there is a luggage trolley mounted to the wall with a sign saying Platform 9¾ above. Next to it, there has opened a *Harry Potter* shop with fan articles. The people who work there also help tourists to stage photos with the luggage trolley, taken by a professional photographer, which then can be acquired in the shop.

A wide range of sources have helped to conduct the research. The books and films of the *Harry Potter* series, which mention or show the chosen sites, have functioned as primary sources.

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<sup>18</sup> Hypable. 'Harry Potter – History of the Books'. & Rusli, S. 'The charts that shows how the UK loves Harry Potter'.



Their use has been the presentation of the sites in the series in comparison to the actual sites. This comparative analysis has formed the groundwork for the dissertation, because it has been used to establish the authenticity of the sites and how close they are to the original. The essential secondary sources are theoretical books about film-induced and literary tourism, which offer definitions, research in the field which has been done and methodological insights. *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*, the book by Stijn Reijnders, will be one of the main secondary sources as well, because of his concept lieux d’imagination and his definition of media tourism. The tourism researchers Morgan and Pritchard as well as Urry have also given insights into the use of souvenirs and photographs within tourism, which have especially influenced the fifth chapter. Furthermore, the research has been able to build on books and articles written about *Harry Potter* tourism, even though they focus on other aspects than the research in this dissertation – this will only offer a new angle for the negotiations between the supplying and demanding sides. The two chosen case studies have been analyzed with the help of content analysis on the basis of their own website and what they offer as well as online reviews of their services by customers on TripAdvisor.

As earlier mentioned, Watson explains that the phenomenon of traveling to places inspired by fiction and especially literature, has been a part of tourism since the eighteenth century. However, it has only become relevant to researchers in the recent past. She puts the blame for that on the phenomenon’s position between different disciplines, such as literary and cultural studies, history, heritage studies, and tourism studies.<sup>19</sup> It becomes clear that tourism studies, in general, can be considered a very interdisciplinary field, including theories from tourism studies, cultural studies, history, marketing, communication studies and many more. This can be seen in the publications that exist so far – even though the phenomenon itself is not new, the research about it is. It is thus in the early stages and includes mainly research within one field of study, for example, literary studies. Only in the past years, research has been published which integrates different fields of study, to gain deeper insights. That the phenomenon itself is interdisciplinary, becomes clear in its development. Film-induced tourism, such as used in Beeton’s book, is vaguely based on the original phenomenon of literary tourism. Media tourism could thus be viewed as a better term, because it tries to grasp the whole phenomenon, including its development in the course of history. This can be seen in Stijn Reijnders’ work: he bases his definitions of literary and film-induced tourism upon Watson and Beeton and builds media tourism out of that. He furthermore only uses contemporary case studies, in comparison to Watson who focuses on eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples. Two publications which initiate the interdisciplinary research within the field are *The Experiences of Film*

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<sup>19</sup> Watson. *Literary Tourism and nineteenth-century culture*: 4.

*Location Tourists* by Stefan Roesch from 2009 and Rhodanti Tzanelli's *The Cinematic Tourist*, published in 2007.

In order to understand the question in how far *Harry Potter* related tourist sites in contemporary London can be considered lieux d'imaginaton, the outline of the thesis is as follows. In the chapter after the introduction, this dissertation presents the state of the art, to give the reader an overview of what has been researched so far in the field and what has not been done yet. The chapter also includes the theories and scholars which have been referred to as well as the research methodology. In this way, it becomes clear what this dissertation can add to the current discussion in the field. A short third chapter with an introduction to the analysis follows: in this chapter, the different *Harry Potter* sites and activities have been categorized and the choice of the two case studies has been substantiated. In chapter four, the content analysis of the walking tours follows as well as the analysis of Platform 9¾ in chapter five. After that, the discussion evaluates, highlights, and interprets the significance of the findings from different perspectives in an argumentative structure. The conclusion completes the thesis and summarizes the most important findings.

## 2. Status quaestionis: An overview for Muggles<sup>20</sup>

As already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the concepts of film tourism, literary tourism, and media tourism are interwoven with each other and have changed during the course of time. I have opted for a historical overview because a chronological development foregrounds the interdisciplinarity of the phenomenon. Literary tourism has been the first form to be discussed since it has been a part of tourism since the eighteenth century. Film-related tourism concepts have been added to the discussion after that. These have eventually lead to media tourism and to the conclusion that the newest term in this branch of tourism is the best fitting one for the research discussed in this dissertation.

### Literary tourism

Nicola Watson explains in *The literary tourist* (2006) that the phenomenon of tourists traveling to sites associated with literature can be traced back as far as the eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> It has started as a niche hobby for the literary elite, which has slowly developed into something many people take part in today – knowingly as well as unknowingly.<sup>22</sup> Watson divides the phenomenon into two parts: tourists who are seeking for the places that are connected to the author (the corpse, birthplace, homes, and surroundings) and others who are more focused on the fictitious parts, such as the places that are mentioned in the narrative. It is especially interesting to see that the economic factor has been part of the phenomenon since the early days. Gender researcher Margaret Stetz explains that especially the homes and birthplaces of living authors and their works have been advertised in magazines, which can be traced back to monetary agreements with publishers.<sup>23</sup> This makes clear that literary tourism is not a phenomenon that has just naturally emerged, but that it has been marketed from the start – even though the economic element is often left out in its history.

### Film-induced tourism

Since film and television have become more dominant media during the past century, naturally an interest in traveling to related sites has emerged amongst fans. One of the most influential publications about film tourism is Sue Beeton's *Film-Induced Tourism* (2005). She defines what she calls film-induced tourism as "visitation to sites where movies and TV programmes have been filmed

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<sup>20</sup> Muggles = non-magical people

<sup>21</sup> Watson. *The Literary Tourist*: 1 f.

<sup>22</sup> Idem: 12.

<sup>23</sup> Stetz. 'Selling Literary Tourism in *The Bookman*': 120.

as well as [to] tours to production studios, including film-related theme parks. What is of interest here is the tourist activity associated with the film industry, be it on-site in the field, or at (or near) the production studio."<sup>24</sup> She furthermore differentiates between movie-induced and film-induced tourism by claiming that "[i]t is generally accepted that the term 'movie-induced tourism' relates to on-location tourism that follows the success of a movie made (or set) in a particular region. By using the term 'film-induced tourism', this can be expanded to include television, video and DVD."<sup>25</sup> The difference in the screening period between films and series often makes the viewer build a more emotionally developed relationship with the characters and places in television series rather than with those in a movie which they have only watched once, explains Beeton. Generally, television series have a more long-term impact on viewers' touristic behavior than films tend to have, she claims.<sup>26</sup> However, this does not cover the idea of films which accompany viewers over the course of several years, like the eight *Harry Potter* films have done from 2001 until 2011. It also ignores the multimedia aspect of franchises.

Another important point Beeton makes in her book is about the emotional aspect of film-induced tourism. She explains that "[Q]uantitative data alone is rarely sufficient to illuminate the expectations and subsequent experiences of postmodern film-induced tourists"<sup>27</sup>, which leads to Stefan Roesch's book *The Experience of Film Location Tourists* (2009). Whereas Beeton mainly tries to fathom the concept of film-induced tourism, its effects on tourism, and highlights the phenomenon from different angles, Roesch rather is interested in the perspective of the tourist and his or her experiences. He often references Beeton, but does not agree with her definition of the topic on hand. He, for example, differentiates between tourists who have been inspired by films to travel to a certain destination (film tourists) and tourists who actually seek out film locations at said destination, which he calls film location tourists.<sup>28</sup> He furthermore finds it necessary to make a distinction between on-locations and off-locations. "While on-locations are locations found in the environment, off-locations are artificial locations in film studios, film parks or other such locals."<sup>29</sup> To apply this to the world of *Harry Potter* in London, the Millennium Bridge is an on-location, which exists naturally or has rather not been built for the sake of the films. *The Making of Harry Potter* tour in the Warner Bros. Studios near London on the other hand, Roesch would describe as an off-location.

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<sup>24</sup> Beeton. *Film-Induced Tourism*: 11.

<sup>25</sup> Idem: 9.

<sup>26</sup> Idem: 12.

<sup>27</sup> Idem: 243.

<sup>28</sup> Roesch. *The Experience of Film Location Tourists*: 7.

<sup>29</sup> Idem: 7.

### Lieux d'imagination and media tourism

By comparing these different definitions of film tourism one encounters a few problems. It is not only hard to just focus on movies when television series are such a similar medium which have to be considered as well, but there are also different forms of behavior of the participating tourists as Roesch describes. Additionally, many movies and television programmes are either based on a book, which has presumably already been successful beforehand or they are part of a bigger media phenomenon, which again makes it difficult to label this form of tourism purely as film tourism. This problem thus leads to the notion of media tourism – a concept the Dutch cultural scholar Stijn Reijnders introduces in his book *Plaatsen van Verbeelding* from 2016.

He bases his research and the title of his book, which in English means *Places of Imagination*, on the French historian Pierre Nora and his research on collective memory. Nora describes his influential concept as follows: “a lieu de mémoire is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.”<sup>30</sup> It is thus a tangible or intangible place for people of a community to remember something. In the same way that one can refer to lieux de mémoire (places of memory), one can refer to lieux d'imagination (places of imagination), claims Reijnders. Apparently, people do need a physical place to give shape to their memory, a way of freezing time.<sup>31</sup> Reijnders takes Nora's ideas one step further and applies them to tourism studies: he claims that the people whom he describes as media tourists visit locations associated with certain books, films, and tv-series because they are looking for physical places of reference to something that is in essence fictitious.<sup>32</sup> These places are not about a collective memory, but about a collective imagination of a certain community, which is in this case not a nation for example, but rather a group of fans of a certain series such as the *Harry Potter* series. The places of imagination function as a physical point of reference for the collective imagination of a society.<sup>33</sup> He describes them as tangible benchmarks, that can be objects as well as places, which serve for certain groups of society as material-symbolic references to a world of collective imagination.<sup>34</sup> And whilst Nora indicates in his work that authentic locations can inspire the historic imagination, Reijnders explains how people actively look up material references to (re-)confirm their notions of imagination and reality.<sup>35</sup> The basis of this thought is that imagination and reality are intrinsically linked with each other,<sup>36</sup> because the visited locations are

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<sup>30</sup> Nora. 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire': 7.

<sup>31</sup> Bruno. 'Collection and Recollection. On Film Itineraries and Museum Walks': 251.

<sup>32</sup> Reijnders. *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*: 15.

<sup>33</sup> Idem: 15.

<sup>34</sup> Idem: 21.

<sup>35</sup> Idem: 28.

<sup>36</sup> Idem: 29.

complex connection points between the diegetic world of media and the real world outside of that.<sup>37</sup>

According to Reijnders, it is also very noticeable how places adapt their physical reality to the represented reality.<sup>38</sup> He does no further research to discover the reasons behind this development and he does not write about the case study of *Harry Potter* in his book, but it is the perfect example for this: in London, King's Cross Station exists as a regular train station. Platform 9¾, which is referenced in the books and films, however, does not exist in our reality. In 1999, a plaque with the inscription Platform 9¾ has been erected with part of a luggage trolley below the sign. In 2012, it has been renewed and moved to another location due to renovations of the station. Since the end of 2012, a gift shop is located next to the luggage trolley as well.<sup>39</sup> One might thus propose that media tourists add to the construction of such a tourist destination - if they were not visiting London and locations related to *Harry Potter*, for example, the plaque at King's Cross would probably not have been attached to mark Platform 9¾. They can therefore shape the image of a place and contribute to the tourist landscape of a city.

These places of imagination can occur in all different kinds of media, which is why Reijnders has chosen a more inclusive term than, for example, literary tourism or film-induced tourism. This term also works best for the case of *Harry Potter* in this dissertation: the first of the *Harry Potter* books has been published in 1997 with six more books to follow until 2007. The first film has come out in 2001, four years after the first book had been published. It is hard to separate these media from one another because they belong to the same universe and all add to the narrative in different ways. One can also not determine whether tourists visit a certain place because of the books, the films, or a combination of all *Harry Potter* related media. Because of the inclusiveness of the term, which fits best to describe the "many-sided and historical background of the phenomenon"<sup>40</sup>, it consequently fits best to discuss the chosen case study of *Harry Potter*, which is a many-sided phenomenon as well. In this dissertation, the term media tourism will thus be used consciously to describe the above-explained development.

### Materializing memory: souvenirs and photographs

As Nora already indicates in his theory about lieux de mémoire, remembering is entangled with things and materiality. In tourism, this can be illustrated by souvenirs bought during travels to either keep for yourself or bring home to friends and family.<sup>41</sup> As Munteán, Plate and Smelik write in their introduction of *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*: "The practice of remembering

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<sup>37</sup> Idem: 48.

<sup>38</sup> Idem: 145.

<sup>39</sup> Wyatt, D. 'Harry Potter shop to open on platform 9¾'.

<sup>40</sup> Reijnders, S. 'Stalking the Count – Dracula, Fandom and Tourism': 234.

<sup>41</sup> Munteán, Plate & Smelik. *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*: 1.

endows a thing with affect and hence with psychological importance."<sup>42</sup> It is thus not only the physicality of a thing but rather the psychological aspect which makes people remember. As Jan Assmann is quoted in their book: "Things do not "have" a memory of their own, but they may remind us, may trigger our memory, because they carry memories which we have invested into them."<sup>43</sup> Again, the emotions that people invest in things are crucial here and seem to be the main reason why people connect things such as souvenirs to certain memories. These invested memories can also be associated with a place – tourists can, therefore, take these memories home with them in the form of souvenirs, which makes an intangible memory more tangible to hold onto.

Munteán, Plate and Smelik are not the only scholars who are connecting materialism and memory with tourism by using souvenirs. Morgan and Pritchard write in their article about souvenirs and metonymy that material objects of tourism such as souvenirs and photos "embody emotions, memories and associations derived from personal and interpersonal shared experiences."<sup>44</sup> Just as in *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, they connect souvenirs to an emotional level of remembering and even go as far as calling them "touchstones of memory, evoking memories of places and relationships."<sup>45</sup> These touchstones have in their opinion the power to bring "the past into the present and making past experience live. Hence, these artifacts have the power not merely to act as symbols of our past experiences but to evoke and animate memories which inform our present self."<sup>46</sup> Reijnders himself does not make a connection with souvenirs in his book even though this would be a logical next step. Without knowing that Reijnders would introduce the *lieux d'imagination* years later, Morgan and Pritchard make the connection in their article, however: "There is no perception of place and landscape without memory, and souvenirs are totems that evoke memories and experience of tourism places."<sup>47</sup> A souvenir is thus a physical memory and a way of taking a *lieu d'imagination* home with you. One might even say that souvenirs are materializations of *lieux d'imagination*. They can be considered part of the imaginative experience and might have similar effects at home as *lieux d'imagination* on site: while *lieux d'imagination* help the tourists to imagine on site, souvenirs can help to imagine and emerge in a media world anywhere. In the third chapter of analysis, this concept has been further examined in the context of Platform 9¾.

Just as souvenirs, photographs can have similar effects on tourists and their ability to remember their travels afterward. Travelling and photography have been intertwined with each other since the early days of the latter.<sup>48</sup> But more than that, taking photographs while traveling soon

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<sup>42</sup> Idem: 15.

<sup>43</sup> Idem: 10.

<sup>44</sup> Morgan & Pritchard. 'On Souvenirs and Metonymy': 37.

<sup>45</sup> Idem: 41.

<sup>46</sup> Idem: 41.

<sup>47</sup> Idem: 41.

<sup>48</sup> Larsen. *Geographies of Communication*: 241.

has become the norm, a proof that a place has been visited and a form of cultural capital.<sup>49</sup> Sontag even takes it further and writes: “Ultimately, having an experience becomes identical with taking a photograph of it.”<sup>50</sup> But it is not only about the experience, it is also about the physical co-presence of the tourist and a place, suggests Urry.<sup>51</sup> This idea can be connected to Reijnders’ idea of lieux d’imagination: the act of being present at a certain media tourist site helps to imagine. Taking a photo there (especially with the tourist oneself in the photo), can help to remember as well as to imagine after the travels. Urry, who also introduced one of tourism’s most famous and most discussed terms – the ‘tourist gaze’, often focuses in his research on the visual aspects of tourism. Briefly explained, the concept addresses the tourists’ fixed expectations and images about the destination they are going to visit – seeking out sites and experiences which are already familiar due to their representation in media and culture. In addition to the original tourist gaze, Urry suggests the ‘mediatized gaze’ due to the increasingly media-mediated tourism vision.<sup>52</sup> This can especially be connected to the fact that everyone with a Wi-Fi connection has a permanent access to media in all different forms online and people are thus confronted with more media and more often than ever before. Eventually, this has an influence on what tourists actually take photos of and what not, Urry and Larsen explain in their *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. The decision-making process of tourists is “largely preformed by and with existing mediascapes”<sup>53</sup>, which means that they are influenced by images portrayed in media that feel familiar. Tourists thus take the same pictures they already know from media portrayals to take home and remember their trip by.

### **Harry Potter tourism**

The economic influence of this touristic phenomenon is also reflected in the number of academic articles about *Harry Potter* and tourism. According to Morgan and Pritchard, placing a destination in a film is the ultimate in tourism product placement, because it can raise the profile of places organically.<sup>54</sup> The influence of tourism product placement becomes clear in Hudson and Ritchie’s empirical study about promoting destinations via film tourism. In their findings, various locations in the U.K. that are connected to *Harry Potter* have experienced a 50% or higher increase in visitor numbers and tourist revenue.<sup>55</sup> This again emphasizes the relevance and impact that a fictitious text can have on physical space.

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<sup>49</sup> Bordieu. ‘The Forms of Capital’: 246 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Sontag. *On Photography*: 24.

<sup>51</sup> Larsen. *Geographies of Communication*: 246.

<sup>52</sup> Urry. *The Tourist Gaze*: 151.

<sup>53</sup> Urry & Larsen. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*: 179.

<sup>54</sup> Morgan & Pritchard. *Tourism Promotion and Power*: 72.

<sup>55</sup> Hudson & Ritchie. ‘Promoting Destinations via Film Tourism’: 389.



Christina Lee focuses in her article 'Have Magic, Will Travel' on the re-imagining of landscapes and the relationship of factual and imaginary surroundings side by side. In this study, the tourists' experiences and the physicality of the activities play the most important role.<sup>56</sup> Lee concludes that the hype is far from over because the possibility of physically re-living and re-enacting moments of the narrative gives tourists a special connection to *Harry Potter*. She furthermore highlights the "multi-media(ted) sphere composed of ever-expanding paratexts (tourism being just one of them) that will guarantee its longevity."<sup>57</sup> These paratexts can, for example, be the internet presence by Joanne K. Rowling herself on Twitter and Pottermore, as well as by fans in forums or the development of the *Harry Potter* universe with the *Fantastic Beasts* series. In this context, tourism even has the ability to rework landscapes and (inter)national imagination,<sup>58</sup> which ties in with Reijnders' ideas about places of imagination and the influence of tourism on physical space.

Abby Waysdorf mainly focuses on fandom and the tourists' experiences in her dissertation *Placing Fandom: Film Tourism in Contemporary Fan Culture*, too. In her chapter about *Harry Potter*, she focuses on the Wizarding World of Harry Potter in the Universal Studios in Florida and especially on authenticity and commodification. Again, the economic part plays an important role as well as the question of whether a theme park about a fantastic universe can be experienced as authentic. Her findings are interesting: fans embrace the theme park as an adaption of the books, that uses its medium specificities to present another interpretation of the books, which means they accept it as authentic. According to Waysdorf's findings, the embodied experience is a key factor for the tourists' experiences.<sup>59</sup> These examples of academic research into *Harry Potter* and media tourism exhibit that so far, the tourists' experience has been prioritized while researching the topic, whereas the other side, which for example includes what is on offer, as well as the interaction between the supplying and consuming sides, has often been left out.

## Methodology

To gain a deeper understanding of how far media tourism, specifically the case study of *Harry Potter* tourism in contemporary London, can be considered as lieux d'imagination, I have analyzed the content of different *Harry Potter* related tourists sites, their websites, and written reviews by tourists. A content analysis is a helpful method of research for questions where the answer can derive "directly from a description of the attributes of content."<sup>60</sup> It usually focuses on the substance, such as what is communicated, and it can also be used to analyze the question of how it is

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<sup>56</sup> Lee. 'Have Magic, Will Travel': 52 f.

<sup>57</sup> Idem: 65.

<sup>58</sup> Idem: 65.

<sup>59</sup> Waysdorf. *Placing Fandom: Film Tourism in Contemporary Fan Culture*: 129.

<sup>60</sup> Holsti. *Content Analysis for Social Sciences and Humanities*: 43.

communicated.<sup>61</sup> Krippendorff describes the method as having the advantage of being a technique “that allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and of the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data’s sources.”<sup>62</sup> The uses of content analysis are diverse and they are for example to describe trends in communication content, to compare media or levels of communication, to identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicators or to reflect attitudes, interests, and values such as cultural patterns of certain groups.<sup>63</sup> Another purpose can also be “to make inferences as to the consequences of communication”<sup>64</sup>, which means answering the question of which effect the communicated has. One can differentiate between various kinds of content analysis, such as a semantical content analysis, in which signs are classified according to their meaning,<sup>65</sup> or an attribution analysis, which “provides the frequency with which certain characterizations are referred to”.<sup>66</sup> This dissertation is a cross-medium study as it discusses different kinds of touristic sites, their websites as well as written reviews by visitors. Cross-medium studies are not unusual for a content analysis.<sup>67</sup> A combination of the above-named types of content analysis has been applied to the case studies in the following chapters.

The analysis has started with an overview of the different sites and activities on offer to ease into the main part. The second part of the analysis focused on *Harry Potter* walking tours. An in-depth comparison has established the differences and similarities between the various providers with the help of coding methods. These are partially based on my own intuition on how to structure the given data in the easiest way, but also on Lampert and Ervin-Tripp and their chapter ‘Structured Coding for the Study of Language and Social Interaction’ for an academic approach. The bottom-up approach<sup>68</sup> has been used to structure the data at hand atheoretically.<sup>69</sup> By using a semantical content analysis, the structure and intentions have become clear as well as what kind of image the tours and their websites convey. This also includes the choices that have been made while translating the *Harry Potter* books and films into another medium. The last part of the analysis solely focuses on Platform 9¾ and the attached souvenir shop in King’s Cross Station. The focus slightly shifts towards the idea of souvenirs bought at the shop and photos taken there and their connection to memory and imagination. Again, the questions have mainly been answered with the help of a semantical

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<sup>61</sup> Idem: 59.

<sup>62</sup> Krippendorff. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*: 49.

<sup>63</sup> Idem: 50.

<sup>64</sup> Idem: 51.

<sup>65</sup> Idem: 50.

<sup>66</sup> Idem: 50.

<sup>67</sup> Holsti. *Content Analysis for Social Sciences and Humanities*: 51.

<sup>68</sup> Lampert & Ervin-Tripp. ‘Structured Coding for the Study of Language and Social Interaction’: 171.

<sup>69</sup> Idem: 171.

content analysis. However, the physicality of the space is still a focal point as well as in the first part of the analysis.

### 3. Analysis I: *Harry Potter* sites and where to find them

The variety of *Harry Potter* related tourist sites that exists just in and around London emphasizes the importance of the phenomenon of media tourism. This is reinforced by the sheer number of hits one gets on official tourism websites when searching for the term 'Harry Potter'. On Visit London – official visitor guide, one gets 41 results related to the Harry Potter series.<sup>70</sup> Visit Britain, the official tourism website of Great Britain lists 63 results.<sup>71</sup> These numbers illustrate that this is not a small phenomenon for a niche audience and it is also not just endorsed by the British tourism authorities – it is rather actively embraced by officials who use the immense reach of the series for their advantage, advertising it on their websites. This is a vast difference to other examples of media tourism which deal with darker topics and are not endorsed by tourism authorities such as the Netflix show *Narcos*. It focuses on Pablo Escobar's drug trade and its fatal consequences for especially the Colombian people and one does not find any reference to that show or to connected tourist sites on Colombian tourism websites.<sup>72</sup>

Before starting off the analysis of the two case studies in the following chapters, I have started by making a categorization of the sites and activities to provide an overview of the offer on hand. This part of the dissertation thus serves the purpose of organizing the substantial offer as well as illustrating how *Harry Potter* tourism has been given shape in and around London. Apart from giving a mere overview, this chapter also provides the basis for the upcoming in-depth analysis which tries to answer the question of what role place plays in *Harry Potter* tourism and whether those tourists sites can, therefore, be considered lieux d'imagination. Activities and sites in other places than London and its surroundings have not been discussed in this dissertation due to the extensive amount one could discuss and the limited space of this research.

Marking the start of the seven categories are *Harry Potter* related or inspired guided tours. There are different *Harry Potter* tours in London on offer by various providers. One of the categories is a 'free walking tour', a concept of tours where the participants pay the amount of money they think the tour is worth by the end of it. Strawberry Tours offers a Free *Harry Potter Tour*<sup>73</sup> and Free Tours by Foot offers a *Free Harry Potter London Tour (Film Locations)*.<sup>74</sup> Most of the tours provided, however, are paid tours which need to be booked beforehand. These tours are usually offered by companies

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<sup>70</sup> Visit London. 'Search Results: Harry Potter'.

<sup>71</sup> Visit Britain. 'We have found 63 results for 'harry potter''.

<sup>72</sup> South America Tourism Office. 'Tour Search Result'.

<sup>73</sup> Strawberry Tours. 'Free Harry Potter Tour'.

<sup>74</sup> Free Tours by Foot. 'Free Harry Potter London Tour (Film Locations)'.

which also provide other tours such as Brit Movie Tours (a company specialized in film tourism as the name suggests),<sup>75</sup> Get Your Guide, which has almost seventy *Harry Potter* tours in and around London on offer,<sup>76</sup> as well as Viator with almost one hundred *Harry Potter* related tours.<sup>77</sup> There is also a company called Tour for Muggles, which does only one tour: a *Harry Potter* tour.<sup>78</sup> As the name of the provider already implies, they are specialized in *Harry Potter* tourism. It is noticeable that a lot of the places visited during these tours, which are mostly conducted by foot, are the same: the Millennium Bridge, Westminster Station, Cecil Court, Great Scotland Yard, Goodwin's Court, and Trafalgar Square are examples of places which are visited during most of the tours.

It is furthermore noticeable that the Warner Bros. Studio Tour, a tour of the film studios where most scenes of the eight *Harry Potter* films have been shot with many of the original sets, props, and costumes, is also listed when looking for *Harry Potter* tours in and around London. The studios, however, are a separate category of activities in this list. Together with one of the latest additions, the theatre play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, which is currently playing in the Palace Theatre in London in two parts, they can be considered a special experience. Both, the theatre play and the Studio Tour, are worth traveling for because they are unique experiences which can only be found in one (or maybe a handful places) worldwide. The special character of these activities is often used as a justification for the in comparison to other *Harry Potter* activities high entrance fees: the tickets for the Studio Tour for 2019 currently are £43<sup>79</sup> and the cheapest tickets for both parts of the theatre play are £40.<sup>80</sup>

The third category is called filming locations. London accommodates many locations which can be seen in the *Harry Potter* films. While most of the scenes have been filmed on set in the Warner Bros. Studios in Leavesden, some scenes have been shot on location as well. The Millennium Bridge has a short but important appearance towards the end of the series when it is destroyed in the films. Leadenhall Market has stood in for Diagon Alley (a magical shopping street) in the first film and when Ron and Harry steal Ron's parents' car to go to Hogwarts in the second film, one sees the St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel as a backdrop. These sites and many more of the filming locations are often visited within the context of above-named tours, but also individually.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the 'traditional' filming locations, the fourth group consists out of sites that can be seen in the films but have adapted their physical reality. Just as Reijnders describes, one can see

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<sup>75</sup> Brit Movie Tours. 'Harry Potter Bus Tour of London'.

<sup>76</sup> Get Your Guide. 'Harry Potter London: 69 activities'.

<sup>77</sup> Viator. 'Showing 1 – 24 of 90 results for "harry potter london"'.  
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<sup>78</sup> Website Tour for Muggles.

<sup>79</sup> WB Studio Tour – The Making of Harry Potter. 'Tickets please'.

<sup>80</sup> Harry Potter the Play. 'Five Ways To Get Tickets'.

<sup>81</sup> Visit Britain Shop. 'Harry Potter filming locations guide'.

how places have been modified to fit a certain image associated with the fictitious text.<sup>82</sup> One example is King's Cross Station, which is one of the main train stations in London. The referenced platform in the books and films, Platform 9¾, does not exist, however. In 1999, a plaque with the inscription Platform 9¾ was erected with part of a luggage trolley below the sign. In 2012, it was renewed and moved to another location due to renovations of the station. Since the end of 2012, a gift shop is located next to the luggage trolley as well.<sup>83</sup> Another example of a place that references the *Harry Potter* books and/or films is the Reptile House of the London Zoo. Next to the enclosure of the black mamba one can find a sign which explains the Reptile House's connection to *Harry Potter*.<sup>84</sup>

The different varieties of shops illustrate a more commercial part of *Harry Potter* tourism in London. As already mentioned, there is a souvenir shop next to the luggage trolley at Platform 9¾.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, there is also a shop with collectibles in Covent Garden, called The Noble Collection, which sells collectibles of different fantasy universes, but the main share of the shop's assortment is related to the *Harry Potter* universe.<sup>86</sup> There is another shop connected to *Harry Potter*, which is run by Miraphora Mina and Eduardo Lima, the graphic design duo of the *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beast* films. Their shop House of Minalima sells art prints, stationery, accessories, and books – all connected to the *Harry Potter* universe as well as to the prequel *Fantastic Beasts*.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, there are many places in London which allegedly have given Joanne K. Rowling the idea to write certain places in her books in the way she did. These places are also tourist attractions which are often visited with tours such as the walking tours above or individually. This category is more vague and flexible, however, because the meaning of the sites is less tangible than the meaning or authenticity of other ones mentioned. These places might or might not have inspired Rowling while writing the books, which means their meaning is mainly filled in by the *Harry Potter* fans themselves. There are for example several pubs in different cities such as London and Exeter, where Rowling went to university, which are said to have inspired the Leaky Cauldron. Even though these places are more often than not unofficial in their connection to the *Harry Potter* series, they still attract visitors in the context of *Harry Potter* tourism, which is why they are included as their own category. Additionally, as already established by Reijnders, media tourism, in general, is about imagination, but needing a physical place to imagine, which is why these places are as worthy of being studied as others.

The seventh and last category is another broad one and it encompasses events and

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<sup>82</sup> Reijnders. *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*: 145.

<sup>83</sup> Wyatt, D. 'Harry Potter shop to open on platform 9¾'.

<sup>84</sup> ZSL London Zoo. 'History of the Reptile House'.

<sup>85</sup> Website The Harry Potter Shop at Platform 9¾.

<sup>86</sup> The Noble Collection. 'Covent Garden Shop'.

<sup>87</sup> Minalima Store. 'About'.

marketing campaigns connected to the *Harry Potter* universe which attract tourists. These can be film premieres as well as for example the latest campaign: an installation of giant wands between Millennium Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral in London which celebrates the launch of the *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* film in November 2018.<sup>88</sup> These kinds of special events become new visitor attractions quickly, but only temporarily. When the campaign has been dismantled or the event has taken place, the attraction for the tourists has usually dissolved because there is nothing to see anymore. The location then becomes a 'regular' place again that has nothing or little to do with *Harry Potter*. An exception is for example the Vue Cinema in which the first *Harry Potter* film had its premiere and which is visited during the Strawberry Tours walking tour.<sup>89</sup>

Most of the mentioned sites and activities can fit into two or more categories though – the boundaries are very flexible. The Reptile House of the London Zoo, for example, is not only a place which has been adapted to the fictitious text by putting up information in reference to the books and films, but it is also a filming location because the scene where Harry frees a snake and scares his cousin Dudley has been shot on location. The shops become sights themselves and the Warner Bros. Studio Tour is a walking tour as well as filming location. After giving a detailed overview of what there is on offer in terms of *Harry Potter* tourist sites and activities in and around London, the *Harry Potter* walking tours and Platform 9¾ have been analyzed in-depth in the two upcoming chapters. The tours have been chosen because they cover multiple *Harry Potter* sites at once. In this way, I have been able to analyze and discuss the biggest variety of tourist sites. Platform 9¾ and the gift shop have been chosen because souvenirs are an interesting addition to Reijnders' lieux d'imagination, which he himself has not discussed in his book and King's Cross is one of the – if not the single most – important *Harry Potter* related tourist sites in London.

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<sup>88</sup> Hoole, G. 'Giant Harry Potter Wands Will Shine On St. Paul's Cathedral For A Whole Month'.

<sup>89</sup> Strawberry Tours. 'Free Harry Potter Tour'.

## 4. Analysis II: Walking in a *Harry Potter* land

For this chapter, four different *Harry Potter* tours in London have been analyzed, three of them walking tours and one tour by bus. The chosen tours are the *Harry Potter Tour of London* by Tour for Muggles<sup>90</sup>, the *Free Harry Potter Tour* by Strawberry Tours<sup>91</sup>, the *Free Harry Potter London Tour (Film Locations)* by Free Tours by Foot<sup>92</sup>, and the *Harry Potter Bus Tour of London* by Brit Movie Tours.<sup>93</sup> In the following, the content of the provider's websites has been analyzed as well as their authenticity, their target group, their promises and offers and the experience of space with Reijnders' lieux d'imagination in mind. An atheoretical coding method has helped to structure the high amount of data from the different websites<sup>94</sup> and the resulting chart can be seen as appendix 4. The information provided comes directly from the tour operators' websites. The information two out of the four tour operators provided via mail has also helped with the analysis.

### The tours

Tour for Muggles offers their tour at least twice per day almost every day. The duration is two and a half hours and it is a walking tour with a tube journey. This is why a tube card is required to participate in the tour. Booking beforehand via the website or via phone is mandatory. Private tours are a possibility as well. They visit *Harry Potter* related attractions such as filming locations but also places that inspired Joanne K. Rowling. However, they keep it quite vague on their website by only mentioning a few highlights as they call them, such as the Leaky Cauldron, the Ministry of Magic, Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley.

Strawberry Tours offers their tour twice every day and it also takes about two and a half hours. Again, it is a walking tour and in this case, bookings are welcome but not mandatory. *Harry Potter* related attractions such as film locations, inspirations of Joanne K. Rowling as well as shops and event locations are visited. Strawberry Tours is a bit more informative and mentions many places that are visited during the tour: Westminster Station, Diagon Alley, Trafalgar Square, Craven Street, the Ministry of Magic, Knockturn Alley, Vue Cinema, and Hardy's Sweet Shop are the ones they mention on their website.

Once a day on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, Free Tours by Foot offers their tour. This tour takes around two hours and is another walking tour. Booking is welcome and they also offer

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<sup>90</sup> Website Tour for Muggles.

<sup>91</sup> Strawberry Tours. 'Free Harry Potter Tour'.

<sup>92</sup> Free Tours by Foot. "Free Harry Potter London Tour (Film Locations)".

<sup>93</sup> Brit Movie Tours. 'Harry Potter Bus Tour of London'.

<sup>94</sup> Idem: 171.



an alternative to their regular tour: the GPS-enabled audio tour via an app, which is available at any time. The tour solely focuses on the films and film locations and all the locations visited are listed in detail. They are quite similar to the ones Strawberry Tours visits, with Downing Street, the Millennium Bridge, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Palace Theatre as additions.

Depending on the time of year and on school holidays, Brit Movie Tours offers their tour once every Wednesday to Sunday. It takes two and a half to three hours and in contrast to the other three tours, it is a bus tour. Booking is mandatory and private tours are possible as well. Again, this tour focuses mainly on the films and their filming locations. They visit the Leaky Cauldron and the Ministry of Magic as well, but also Gringotts Bank and Platform 9¾ at King's Cross Station. They give only little information about the contents of their tour, which means there are no spoilers for the participants.

It is interesting to see that in all the tours, significantly more sites from the films, such as filming locations, are represented. Different reasons may have an influence on that, for example that these sites might be easier to identify, visit and show to the tourists for those developing the tours. Inspirations for how Joanne K. Rowling has written the places in the books are harder to find and to exhibit to the participants of the tours because they have a deeper connection to the author's own fantasy. Another reason might be that many people associate the visuals from the films with the *Harry Potter* series and see them as inseparable. These locations are thus already visually familiar to many and need less explanation and marketing than other places which might be described differently in the books than what many are used to from the screen adaptations.

#### Data from mail

Two out of the four approached tour operators have sent an answer to my email, which can be found as appendix number 1 and their answers as number 2 and 3. Strawberry Tours has given very little information, but they mention that their tour exists since 2013 and they mainly use the internet in terms of marketing purposes. They stress that everyone is welcome and invited to take part in their tours, that includes all ages and demographics as well as *Harry Potter* fanatics and super muggles. Furthermore, the passion of the tour guides is emphasized which ties in with the company's wish to be authentic, which is discussed later in the chapter.

Free Tours by Foot has sent an answer that is a bit more elaborate and informs that they mainly target English speaking tourists from all age groups and ethnicities. They also offer their tour in Spanish and French, but they are less frequently booked. Their tours have also been launched in 2013 and their marketing is not only online, but in hotels as well. Their participants are mainly middle

class and some backpackers; wealthier tourists rather book their private tours. According to the mail, the owner of the company has been running tours for a decade and has thus become good at identifying trends due to his expertise and experience.

### Website

First up, the website of Tour for Muggles: the special thing about this company is that they only offer one tour, their *Harry Potter Tour of London*. The other three companies offer tours about various topics, but Tour for Muggles, as the company name already suggests, only focuses on *Harry Potter*-related content. This also means that their website is completely on brand – everything is catered to the *Harry Potter* fans who visit their website and might book their tour. Firstly, they use many illustrations of symbols connected to the *Harry Potter* universe such as Harry's glasses, lightning bolts which are a reference to Harry's famous scar, owls, the animals they use in wizard world to send their letters, the Hogwarts emblem, the deathly hallows symbol as well as many more. This makes this website very appealing for fans because one can assume that they are familiar with all these symbols and their context in the series, but they probably make no sense for people who are not immersed in the world of *Harry Potter*. However, since the tour mainly targets people who are familiar with the series or have at least an interest in the subject matter, this does only exclude a small number of people visiting the website.

One can also find fitting slogans and phrases on their website such as "mischief managed" or a review that says "9¼ out of 10", which refers to the series as well. Additionally, they call the participants muggles when mentioning the price and many decorations and words are kept in the colors of the four Hogwarts houses: red, green, blue and yellow. The squiggled font gives the website magical charm and shows their attention to detail because it could have been easily used for the *Harry Potter* book or film covers. They also mention three times on their website that their tour is award-winning to distinguish themselves from other providers. At the top of the website is a photo of a diverse group of people taking the tour. This conveys the image that everyone is welcome and *Harry Potter* unites despite potential differences. The provider very much focuses on their credibility: by saying on the bottom of the website that they are the only company just focusing on *Harry Potter*, they give themselves the authorization to offer these tours and promote them as the best and most authentic ones. The company fades in a disclaimer to say that they are not affiliated with Warner Bros. and do not own any rights to the *Harry Potter* series to point out that this not an officially endorsed tour. Eventually, they also have a section with frequently asked questions which is very handy for prospective customers and makes their website look more professional since it makes it more informative.

The Strawberry Tours website looks completely different. The biggest distinction is that it is more neutrally designed because the company offers various tours with different topics hence their more business-like approach to website design. The website is clearly structured and visitors find all the important information easily; it is visible that it is a professional company. This can also be seen in the color scheme used, which is mainly red – the company color of Strawberry Tours. Also, the font is more business-like and straight rather than matched to the theme of *Harry Potter*. Again, there is a section where questions are answered, which makes it easier for prospective participants of the tour to find their information, especially if they take part in a free tour for the first time. To make it even more clearly laid out, they have added a map and a photo of the meeting point, which makes it easier to find, visually more attractive and it breaks up the text. Another feature they have added are positive reviews of participants. This might convince undecided visitors of the website to choose this specific tour operator.

What sets the tone for the atmosphere of the tour are photos in which one can see people wearing Hogwarts house scarves and carrying wands while taking part in the tour, which might make the experience more magical for the participants. Strawberry Tours also feature photos of the visited sites on their website, which is a unique attribute that makes their website stand out in comparison to the other three. One can name positive and negative points for the visitors of the website regarding the photos: firstly, some of the photos have the real name of the place they picture attached, others the name of the place it represents or inspired in the wizarding world. This irregular classification might be confusing for some people – when the real name is stated, one might wonder about the connection to the wizarding world, but when it says the name of the wizarding world, one might miss the connection to the real place in London. However, most people probably recognize photos of places from the chronicle better than a list with names of places which appear in the series due to the visual familiarity from the films. Even though this idea is not ideally executed – one might rather state the name of the place and its connection to the Harry Potter universe to make everything clear for everyone – it adds visual interest and attractiveness to the website and provides information about which sites the tour visits in detail.

The website for the *Harry Potter* tour by Free Tours by Foot looks a bit more unprofessional than the other three websites. This is partly due to the lay-out which is very text heavy and the section about the free tour of film locations has only two photos: one is a photo of *The Making of Harry Potter* (the Warner Bros. Studio Tour) in which a woman rides a broomstick in front of a red London double-decker bus. This is a bit unclear since it has little to do with the walking tour itself, because the Warner Bros. Studios are not visited. The second photo is of the meeting place, where someone added a star and the words “Meet Your Guide Here” in a simple looking way. On top of the website,

there is a video, which however does not add very much to the narrative. The narrator reads almost the same text it says in the description of the tour itself out loud. The images of the tour add a little more atmosphere and magic to this tour operator's website, but that is just a small comfort. The amount of additional information is next to nothing. The colors which are used on the website are mainly orange with some blue elements. This choice seems more random than with the other three tours where the colors have a meaning or origin such as the Hogwarts houses or the company name (red for Strawberry Tours and red, blue and white for the Union Jack and Brit Movie Tours). A detail which might appeal to many Harry Potter fans, is the extensive list of sights visited during the tour. This list includes not only the names of places but also their connection to the *Harry Potter* universe and in which films the places appear. This might attract hardcore *Harry Potter* fans who are looking for detailed descriptions as well as prospective participants who like to know beforehand what the itinerary includes.

On the fourth website by Brit Movie Tours, there is also a video, which in comparison adds a whole lot to the written information on the website. In addition to giving an impression of the atmosphere during the tour, there is plenty of further information, especially since the written text on the website is rather vague and mainly tries to sell the tour to prospective participants rather than to provide hard facts and information. One can find the most important information (about time, place, price, etc.) in a little box on the right side which ensures that the website has a clear lay-out and conveys a structured image. They also provide reviews by earlier participants on their website, which seems to be handy for those who are interested in booking. However, it is not quite clear to which tours these reviews refer to because the company offers several kinds of tours. The reviews thus only give a general overview of the company, but not of the *Harry Potter* tour specifically. Apart from that, the website has little attention to detail and is quite basic and clean. The colors on this website are strictly kept to red, blue, white and black, which are except for black, the colors of the Union Jack. The color choices tie in with the company name and focus on the heritage and location of the tours they offer. The font is straight and business-like and fits in with the clean visuals of the website.

### **Offers and promises**

Tour for Muggles prides themselves with being unique because they visit "exclusives only we go to" and they are very secretive about the places they visit during the tour. However, Brit Movie Tours visits at least two out of the four places Tour for Muggles mention on their website and both of the other tours visit three out of the four. There are only a certain amount of Harry Potter sites that can be visited in London, so their marketing angle to advertise their sites as unique is not completely

truthful. They furthermore mention that they are an “award winning Harry Potter Tour” as the first thing on their website and they mention it two more times. Additionally, they try to set themselves apart from other tour operators by saying “we’re the only company that just gives Harry Potter tours, because we love Harry Potter!” With this and the mentioning of the awards, they try to focus on their authenticity and qualification to offer the tour – as true fans and experts themselves and out of passion for the subject, they try to convey the picture that they have the biggest authority to offer a *Harry Potter* tour.

The ‘free tour’ aspect is the biggest focus and selling point for Strawberry Tours. The participants are not legally bound to pay for the tour, but the pressure of the other participants paying at the end can make oneself feel obliged to pay as well due to peer pressure, which is probably the idea behind the concept. Strawberry Tours tries to attract “hardcore Harry Potter fans”, as they state themselves, by promising to take a stroll down Diagon Alley, one of the most beloved places in the world of the *Harry Potter series*, and by advertising the most unique merchandise within the wizard’s world.

The focus lies again on the aspect of a ‘free tour’ with Free Tours by Foot. They apply the same system as Strawberry Tours and it seems to be their strongest offer since their website is not very compelling in comparison to the other three. They promise expert guides, which makes them sound professional. The other three tours specify their passion for the subject and that the guides are true fans themselves. One needs to decide for oneself which seems better in this case – a professional tour guide or a tour with guides who are passionate about the subject. Some might feel the tour would be more authentic and less commodified in the latter case since there is a difference between simply business and passion.

The video on the website of Brit Movie Tours promises a fun tour which, quite surprisingly for a bus tour, takes place outside walking for the majority of the clip. The guide in the video also distinguishes himself as a true *Harry Potter* fan, which puts this tour in the same category as the Strawberry Tours and Tour for Muggles one – the passion of the guide for the topic is important. The tour is furthermore described as special because it does not only visit *Harry Potter* locations, but also London landmarks; it thus seems to be a combination of culture, history and the fantastic universe of *Harry Potter* according to the website.

The promises and offers the different tour operators make are mainly similar – the companies advertise their price or the lack thereof as well as the passion of the guides for the topic of *Harry Potter*. Especially the latter part appears to be important in the case of a media related tour. It seems like the participants, who are mostly *Harry Potter* fans themselves, might rather accept the

information from a tour guide who is a fan as well, because that makes them more authentic and increases their credibility.

### **Authenticity and impression**

The tour by Tour for Muggles seems to be the most authentic tour out of the four discussed ones. The company conveys the image that they have the biggest authority out of the four tour operators to offer a *Harry Potter* tour because they present themselves as true fans of the series, which consequently makes them experts in the subject matter. The company only provides one tour and have even designed the website completely in the spirit of *Harry Potter*, because they care so much and such big fans – or at least that is their marketing angle. Even though for them it is just as good a business as for the other tour operators, the company manages to come across as genuine and authentic because they have found their niche market. Their website design and choice of words as described in the ‘website’ section of this chapter as well as their focus on a single kind of tour communicate a positive image to the visitors of the website.

All other three tour operators offer various kinds of tours, which is why their websites have less attention to detail. This means that in comparison to the first one, the website by Strawberry Tours might be visually less appealing to *Harry Potter* fans who are looking for a magical and authentic tour. However, the photos do communicate a nice vibe due to the use of props such as Hogwarts scarves, cloaks, and wands. The participants, who are a group of diverse looking people from different age ranges in the pictures, look like they have a good time and the tour guides seem to be enthusiastic which gives a positive impression of the tour. The price point or rather the possibility to take part in a free tour probably makes it more appealing to many (especially in a city like London which is already expensive in comparison to some others). Furthermore, the company mentions “unique and one-of-a-kind Potter related merchandise that you won’t find anywhere in the *Harry Potter* world”, which makes it more commodified on the one hand, but might also appeal to tourists who are looking for nice souvenirs on the other hand. In combination with being a free tour, it does not seem that the focus lies too heavily on the sales aspect.

The imagery and the layout of the website might not make the tour by Free Tours by Foot the most appealing one to *Harry Potter* fans in general. Especially the high amount of text may be a reason for prospective participants to prefer another website on which the information is demonstrated in a more clearly structured and attractive way. What is special though are the detailed descriptions and explanations of the visited sites, which show the company’s attention to detail and indicate a high-quality tour. Again, this is a free tour, which immediately gives the impression that the guides do it for fun rather than for money. Even though this is not entirely true, the impression of authenticity goes hand in hand with the concept of a free tour. Furthermore, the

company offers the option of a free self-guided tour with all the information available on their website. This might appeal to detail-oriented *Harry Potter* fans who are looking for certain locations and information and want to explore the sites within their own time frame.

The last website by Brit Movie Tours conveys the most commodified impression. To some extent, this has something to do with the fact that this is not a walking tour, but that the participants take a coach. It is mentioned that one can buy *Harry Potter* merchandise by the end of the tour in the official Warner Bros. store, which makes sales a main focus of the tour rather than providing a (magical) experience for the participants. The fact that this tour is by far the most expensive tour out of the four (which is partly caused by the costs for the coach), supports this impression as well. Additionally, this is the only tour visiting Platform 9¾, which they describe as a photo opportunity. They thus arrive with a group of tourists at the station, everyone who wants to has their photo taken with the famous trolley and then they leave again – an image of mass tourism.

Authenticity is an important aspect in offering tours as already mentioned in ‘offers and promises’. Even though this is a business for all four of the tour operators and none of them do it purely because of passion, there are differences in the impression of authenticity. Tourists often want something authentic, which can be seen in the reviews of the tours.<sup>95</sup> In this case, authentic means an enthusiastic tour guide who ideally is a fan as well and lots of new insider information, even for those who are already hardcore *Harry Potter* fans.

### Target group and ideology

*Tour for Muggles* targets people who have a medium budget to spend on vacation or day trips or have saved up for the occasion. For a single person, the impact on the budget would probably not be too significant, but thinking about a couple who pays together or a family with children, £14 for adults and £12 for children under twelve years old can get expensive quickly for some. However, the price seems low comparing it to *The Making of Harry Potter* tour at the Warner Bros. Studios for example, where a ticket costs £43 at the moment<sup>96</sup>, but it seems quite high checking it against the offer of free tours. The target audience are *Harry Potter* fans who already know a lot about the young wizard’s world but would like to attain an extensive amount of knowledge about the topic and thus think this tour is worth their money and time.

The concept of a free tour is inclusive, the website of Strawberry Tours states that the participants can pay “depending on [their] enjoyment and possibilities”, which means they can

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<sup>95</sup> Tripadvisor. ‘Strawberry Tours: Harry potter Tour’.

<sup>96</sup> WB Studio Tour – The Making of Harry Potter. ‘Tickets please’.

choose themselves how much they can or want to pay and nobody is excluded based on their income or social status. However, it is not really a free tour, because the pressure to pay will eventually be dominant for most participants. Regardless, targeted is everyone who has an interest in *Harry Potter* and wants to learn more about it, nobody is excluded beforehand based on their budget.

Free Tours by Foot has the same concept as Strawberry Tours. They say on their website that it is a “name-your-own-price tour [...] for anyone’s budget.” Again, the focus lies on not excluding anyone by the price point. Anyone with an interest in *Harry Potter* belongs into the category of their target audience.

The last tour by Brit Movie Tours is the most expensive one out of the four with £28 for adults and £21 for children under sixteen (which is partly rooted in the fact that it is not a walking but a bus tour). This means that it is aimed at people with a lot to spend and for whom *Harry Potter* is so important that paying this amount of money seems worth it. Older or less able participants who are not able to walk long distances might also be more prone to take a bus tour than a walking tour (but the tour is not wheelchair accessible).

Regarding the target audience and ideological connotations, it is noticeable that two out of the four tours are free of charge and explicitly address everyone as their customers on their website. This probably results in a more diverse group of participants. The other two tours do not specifically exclude anyone, but due to a higher price point, people with a lower income are almost automatically at a disadvantage. However, the main target group for all the tours are middle class Westerners who are on vacation, this is even stated in the mail by Free Tours by Foot (appendix 2).

### Experience of space

Tour for Muggles does almost not reference experiencing space in any way. The only time they refer to the space of the tour is in this sentence: “explore the Harry Potter movie locations in London, uncover the places that inspired JK Rowling.” If the participants have the possibility to experience a place or several places of imagination during this tour depends on the places visited as well as on the tour guide, because this sentence can be interpreted in various different ways. The company does not promote the possibility to imagine and experience space, which can mean they do not consider it important or not a strong enough asset to use it in their marketing.

Out of the four, Strawberry Tours has the most lively text regarding the experience of space within their tour. They refer to experiencing the space of *Harry Potter* and Joanne K. Rowling quite a lot: “Visit J.K. Rowling’s favourite streets in London”, “learn about the locations which inspired J.K. Rowling’s magical world of Harry Potter” or “We will take a stroll down Diagon Alley” are just a few



examples of many. This probably attracts many customers since it implies an emotional connection with either the characters, the actors, or the author. All in all, this text is the most informative one – the other websites have either only a very small body of text and many little phrases scattered on their website or a less informative body of text. This makes this the most promising and appealing one for potential customers concerning the attractiveness for experience tourists.

Since it is a film location tour, the focus of the tour by Free Tours by Foot lies very much on the importance of London as a home for film locations for the eight *Harry Potter* films. Even more specifically, they focus on scenes shot on location and thus the authenticity of those filming locations. For the participating *Harry Potter* fans, this is very important, since it establishes a physical connection to the actors and characters who have been to the same places as the tourists, maybe even doing the exact thing they are doing, which gives the experience a performative aspect. One can for example “walk through the Underground barriers Harry and Arthur Weasley traveled through on their visit to London” or “stand on the bridge blown up by Death Eaters”. This tour is thus not about sites such as Platform 9¾, but rather about on-locations which are authentic and have favorably been used as film locations for the film series. The way in which they describe the sites makes them possible places of imagination, because of their close connection to the series. They furthermore show images in the video on their website, which picture the actors in the film at the location they are right now, which invites the participants to recreate the shot in a performative way of experiencing media tourism.

Brit Movie Tours also provides a tour that has again a performative part, because they encourage their participants to dress up as any character in the series. Performativity plays into the idea of experiences. They also mention the inspirations for places a few times, which offer a lot of room for imagination, which means they are very suitable as lieux d’imagination.

Reijnders’ lieux d’imagination can be interpreted as physical locations where the symbolic distinction between reality and imagination is constructed.<sup>97</sup> Due to the symbiosis between those two, Reijnders describes tourists in his *Dracula* case study as coming closer to the story and making a connection. The same feelings may be the case with *Harry Potter* tourism. This can be contradictory: Reijnders concludes that a general part of media tourism is the desire to de-mystify the fictive world and get to know everything about it. However, the desire for mystery stays alive as well, which is why this phenomenon can also be used to “re-enchant our modern world.”<sup>98</sup>

This can be seen in the tours which have been described in this chapter. The tours are mainly guided by people who are *Harry Potter* fans themselves and therefore have a passion for the subject.

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<sup>97</sup> Reijnders, S. ‘Stalking the Count – Dracula, Fandom and Tourism’: 235.

<sup>98</sup> Idem: 235.

The interplay of fandom, fantasy and emotional connection to the series with the wish to learn more and de-mystify it by acquiring behind-the-scenes knowledge seems to be the main part of all the tours. In addition to just visiting *Harry Potter* related sites, the tour guides share their expert knowledge of the young wizard's world, which has the effect Reijnders explains – on the one hand, it makes the series less magical seeing and hearing about how sets have been created for example, but on the other hand, the emotional connection grows stronger while visiting places the actors have been shooting the films at or the characters have been spending times in the books.

## 5. Analysis III: Back to Hogwarts

### The site

This chapter discusses one particular *Harry Potter* site, maybe the most famous and most visited one in London. It concerns the trolley at Platform 9¾ and the Harry Potter Shop at Platform 9¾ in King's Cross Station – a two-in-one so to speak. Firstly, the website has been analyzed, then the offers and the authenticity. Again, the target group has been discussed as well as the adaption to a new medium. Souvenirs and photos in combination with the lieux d'imagination build the biggest part of this chapter. The luggage trolley, which is mounted to a brick wall with above it a sign saying Platform 9¾, is an iconic image representing the *Harry Potter* series. It refers to the way in which young wizards and witches go to Hogwarts in the books and films. The Hogwarts Express leaves on Platform 9¾ every year, but obviously, this is a secret platform muggles must not know about. This is why the students need to cross a magic brick wall with their trolleys to get to the secret platform. The site is mainly promoted and used as a photo opportunity. The Harry Potter Shop is a merchandise shop with clothing, wands, prints, cuddly toys, books, toys, replicas and props, souvenirs and much more in the name of *Harry Potter* located next to the trolley photo opportunity. Many objects are available in the different house colors and -designs as well.

The shop and the trolley together exist since 2012 in this way at the station. Before that, there has been another trolley installed at King's Cross Station in 1999. It has been located near platform eight, which is an open platform with no required ticket. The luggage trolley back then has looked a bit different than it does today: the old one can be described as a regular trolley as the ones that are still used in the train station now, the new one looks more like the one Harry uses in the films with a trunk and a cage for his owl Hedwig on it. The attention to make this site more detailed has thus increased quite a bit.<sup>99</sup>

### Website

The website of the shop and the trolley photo opportunity are one and the same and it is very much on brand. The symbol next to the shopping cart is a cauldron (as they sometimes use in the wizarding world for their shopping instead of a bag or a basket) and next to the login there is a wizard's hat. The color palette is also very coherent with browns, reds, gold and other warm colors which are the colors of the Hogwarts Express as well as Gryffindor, Harry's house in Hogwarts. The photos of the merchandise set the tone for the website: everything is *Harry Potter* themed because that is the only topic of the website. The backgrounds are also thematically fitting. Additionally, there are some

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<sup>99</sup> Wyatt, D. 'Harry Potter shop to open on platform 9¾'.

photos of the trolley photo opportunity, which are shot in action. One sees the queue of people waiting their turn in the background and a boy at the trolley with a Gryffindor scarf being photographed. This already prepares prospective visitors for the high possibility of a long queue and it gives an impression of the atmosphere. There are also a few photos of famous people who have visited the trolley: Eddie Redmayne and Jude Law (Newt Scamander and Albus Dumbledore in the Fantastic Beast film series), Charles, Prince of Wales and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall as well as Warwick Davis who plays Professor Flitwick and the goblin Griphook in the Harry Potter films. In a video in which they show the viewer around the photo opportunity with the trolley and around the shop, they promote their products as well as giving the impression that they are an exclusive shop with personal advice for every customer even though it becomes clear from reviews and personal experience that it is always very crowded there.<sup>100</sup> The font they use for the website is Georgia, a squilly but straight font which fits perfectly with the wizard theme. The words *Harry Potter* are written in the same font that has been used on the book and film covers. The words that are chosen on the website are very clearly focused on selling. They are trying to make their products stand out by pointing out their unique elements and exclusiveness. Most of it are advertisements such as discounts and special offers: “personalized gift”, “exclusive collection” and “safe £10” can be read a few times. The information about the trolley is quite far down on the website, probably because it is free when the photos are not sold, which is not mandatory. It just says “visit our exciting photo opportunity”.

### Offers and promises

They advertise the site as a must do for *Harry Potter* enthusiasts by calling it the “ultimate experience for Harry Potter fans”. The focal point is definitely on the shop and all their exclusive and special offers. They describe the store as beautifully themed and try to sell their products by making them rare: “many of the products are exclusive and unavailable anywhere else”. And they also say that they have an extensive selection of products in the shop. The trolley is advertised as a photo opportunity – the focal point is thus not put on the experience, but mainly on gaining the cultural capital of a photo at this very spot.<sup>101</sup> The photos are taken by a professional photographer with a chosen house scarf and wand or other props, which probably makes it more authentic for many, but also more performative and posed for others.

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<sup>100</sup> TripAdvisor. ‘Harry Potter Shop at Platform 9¾’.

<sup>101</sup> Bordieu. ‘The Forms of Capital’: 246 ff.

### Authenticity and impression

This site is very ambiguous: on the one hand, it is very commodified; it is a merchandise shop with only things on offer which are not necessities and it has literally the purpose of selling things to the visitors. This is not about providing an experience or letting visitors connect with the series on a new level. The photo opportunity is even more ambiguous – the photographs are taken by a professional photographer and can be bought for around £15. This is however not mandatory, one can also decide to not buy the photos or to come before or after hours to take picture oneself or even take one's own photo when the professional photographer is there as well. It is, however, an experience being in the same station Harry steps into the wizarding world every year to go to Hogwarts and re-enact his entrance to Platform 9¾. In the shop and at the photo opportunity, everything is designed with a lot of attention to detail. Many of the products on offer are unique, but fit very well in the wizarding world of the films (however, they are relatively high priced in comparison to other *Harry Potter* merchandise<sup>102</sup>, which again plays into commodification).

### Target group and ideology

This is a bit harder to say than with the tours because there they explicitly state that they do not want to discriminate or exclude anyone. It is rather a question of interpretation here – having your photo professionally taken at the photo opportunity and buying it afterward or buying some more objects at the shop is not something many can afford. However, going to the photo opportunity while it is closed and taking your own picture anyone can do for free. Just visiting the shop without buying anything is again something anyone can do and it also provides a similar experience. The difference, in this case, is that one does not have a souvenir or physical memory to take home.

### Adaption to new medium

Both, the shop and the photo opportunity, are mainly inspired by the films. However, this can be hard to differentiate since the films are based on the books. Many people, however, associate the visuals from the films with the *Harry Potter* series and this can be seen here in the design of the shop and the objects that are sold. They do not sell the exact same design of scarves that the characters wear in the films, for example. This is curious, because the shop is affiliated with Warner Bros., so this is an official *Harry Potter* merchandise shop and the shop at the Warner Bros. Studios seems to sell the same design. The design the shop at Platform 9¾ sells is slightly different from the one in the Studios. They furthermore have a second one, which is their exclusive one, and it is very different

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<sup>102</sup> Amazon. 'Harry Potter Gryffindor Patch Knit Scarf': \$21.50, Harry Potter Shop. 'Gryffindor Scarf': \$25.46 & Website The Harry Potter Shop at Platform 9¾. 'Gryffindor Scarf': £33.

from the ones in the films.

The entrance to Platform 9¾ looks quite similar to the one in the film except for two major differences: in the film, there is no sign saying Platform 9¾ on the brick wall since this would defeat the whole purpose of it being the secret entrance to a secret platform. And in the film the wall is much more narrow since the wall builds the base of an arch which is located on a platform. The tourism site is not located on a real platform anymore, probably because of the popularity of the site, but it is located in the general area of the train station everyone can enter.

Highlighted in the shop and at the photo opportunity are mainly things which are described very visually and detailed in the books and which have thus been adapted to the screen and became iconic images representative for the *Harry Potter* series. Good examples are the clothes in the different house colors and cuddly toy versions of Hedwig, Harry's owl, or Dobby, the house elf. The house elf has been described by Joanne K. Rowling as follows: "The little creature on the bed had large, bat-like ears and bulging green eyes the size of tennis balls."<sup>103</sup> Something else are the personalized Hogwarts acceptance letters, which play a big role in the first book and film and are probably something many *Harry Potter* fans would have wished to find in the mailbox when they turned eleven years old. These things are highlighted since they are easily connectable to the *Harry Potter* series even for non-experts, because of the distinctive graphic style of the *Harry Potter* world.

### Souvenirs and photos as carriers of memory

In the previous chapter, I have put the focus mainly on the lieux d'imagination as Reijnders has used them himself in his book. However, what one could claim with the chosen topic of this chapter is that lieux d'imagination do not have to be places at all. One might rather propose an expansion of the concept and suggest that they can come in different forms such as souvenirs and photos. One might see them thus as portable materializations of places of imagination – objets d'imagination or objects of imagination.

A lot has been already written about the materialization of souvenirs and the role of photos within tourism. The conclusions have often been connected to some form of cultural capital in one way or another<sup>104</sup> as mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation. The link with lieux d'imagination has not been made before even though it seems like the next step forward in Reijnders' theory. He focuses very much on the experiences the tourists have themselves on site, but he does not talk about their experiences after the visit. This is the moment when the photos and or souvenirs come into play. In the case of Platform 9¾, one can even go as far as not calling the place

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<sup>103</sup> Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*: 12.

<sup>104</sup> Bordieu. 'The Forms of Capital': 246 ff.

itself a lieu d'imagination, because it is marketed and used purely as a photo opportunity. However, the use of those photos after the visit could be connected to the use that lieux d'imagination have for tourists. Reijnders describes the use of lieux d'imagination as locations that help the visitors to create a symbolic distinction between their imagination and reality.<sup>105</sup> These images of imagination and reality are partly based on images consumed via (popular) culture and social media. As mentioned earlier, Urry and Larsen claim that tourists are constantly looking for images during their travels they are already familiar with.<sup>106</sup> This urge can be met even more accurately with the help of media tourism. One can literally follow the footsteps of one's favorite characters or authors which leads to a re-enactment of the narrative accompanied by additional information.<sup>107</sup> Due to social media, there are now platforms other than personal photo albums to share those memories with others – this includes one's own photos as well as the posts by others who have visited the same site – and thus to interact with the site afterward. This might be a way to stay more connected with the memories and imagination connected to a certain location.

The step from places of imagination to objects of imagination is even more logical, because it combines Reijnders' theory on another level with Nora's lieux de mémoire, the theory Reijnders bases his book on. Nora's notion focuses on remembering<sup>108</sup> and its connection with materiality – which souvenirs and photos are an illustration of. The important part here, as with the lieux d'imagination, is the emotional connection.<sup>109</sup> The memories which are invested into the souvenirs and photos, can also be connected to a certain place, which makes the intangible notions of imagining as well as remembering more tangible. As Morgan and Pritchard explain it, souvenirs (and this can as well be applied to photos) can "have the power not merely to act as symbols of our past experiences but to evoke and animate memories which inform our present self."<sup>110</sup> They even describe the effect of a lieu d'imagination, but they do not name it that way. In their context it is related to souvenirs: "There is no perception of place and landscape without memory, and souvenirs are totems that evoke memories and experience of tourism places."<sup>111</sup> A souvenir and a photo likewise can be seen as a physical memory, which can also evoke certain emotions or thus imaginations connected to a certain place or site. They can be part of the imaginative experience at home, helping people to immerse in a certain media world, which tourists usually need the help of a lieu d'imagination for. They can also be a spatial connection to someone's fandom. Souvenirs and photographs can thus fulfill two purposes at once: they can help the tourists to remember their trip

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<sup>105</sup> Reijnders. *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*: 28.

<sup>106</sup> Urry & Larsen. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*: 179.

<sup>107</sup> Reijnders. *Plaatsen van Verbeelding*: 41.

<sup>108</sup> Nora. 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire': 13.

<sup>109</sup> Munteán, Plate & Smelik. *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*: 15.

<sup>110</sup> Morgan & Pritchard. 'On Souvenirs and Metonymy': 41.

<sup>111</sup> Idem: 41.

or the visit of a certain sight as well as to help them immersing themselves in a fictive world. Objets d'imagination thus are not only based on Nora's lieux de mémoire as Reijnders' lieux d'imagination are, but they combine both concepts.

Photos have a similar effect as souvenirs, but there are a few differences. First of all, photos are often either taken by the tourist him- or herself or have the tourist him- or herself in it. This makes it an even more personal memory. Urry also emphasizes the importance of a physical co-presence of the tourist and a place.<sup>112</sup> This can also help to immerse oneself in a certain fictitious world as one can see oneself standing at Platform 9¾ with the luggage trolley going to Hogwarts, for example. Reijnders also stresses the importance of being physical present at a lieu d'imagination or in this case to have been present in the past and having a physical memory of the site. A personal photo also carries a lot of weight in terms of cultural capital.<sup>113</sup> This means that within a certain community, in this case existing of *Harry Potter* fans, a personal photo at the photo opportunity or even a souvenir from the souvenir shop carry a certain weight and status which adds to the importance of such an artefact to the owner as well. This has little to do with economical value, because a photo of a tourist at the photo opportunity really only means something to the person oneself. However, there is a certain kind of prestige involved within the community. Social media again plays an important role here, because it can influence the choice of subject which the tourists take photos of, Urry and Larsen explain in their *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. The decisionmaking process of tourists is "largely preformed by and with existing mediascapes"<sup>114</sup>, which means that tourists are influenced by images portrayed in media that feel familiar. Tourists thus take the same pictures they already know from media portrayals themselves to take home and remember their trip by. In the case of Platform 9¾, this means standing in a queue, choosing a house scarf and wand and eventually get one's picture taken – probably in one of the poses one has been before online.

### Experience of space

There are only two references on the website about experiencing space. The first one is quite a general one about where the site is located: "The Harry Potter Shop is found in King's Cross Station, London; the station young wizards and witches travel through in order to board the Hogwarts Express, ready to take the journey to Hogwarts." The second one is a bit more aimed at tourists who want to experience the space of Harry and his friends: "Have you ever wanted to have a go at running at the wall to get on to Platform 9¾, just like Harry Potter does in the film series? Well now you can, with our trolley photo opportunity." However, one might expect more enthralling phrases

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<sup>112</sup> Larsen. *Geographies of Communication*: 246.

<sup>113</sup> Bordieu. 'The Forms of Capital': 246 ff.

<sup>114</sup> Urry & Larsen. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*: 179.



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to excite prospective viewers and satisfy their wish for experience tourism. This shows also that the site is mainly based on the films.

## 6. Conclusion: All was well

Before concluding my research, I want to mention that the topic discussed in this dissertation is one close to my heart. I remember that my mum has read the first *Harry Potter* book to me and my brother because we could not read on our own yet. I have been so intrigued by the story about the young wizard that I have picked up the books myself as soon as I could read. Since then, the books have always been a hideaway and the characters, always a few years older than me when reading the books for the first time, have become as much role models and friends as fictional characters can be to a child. The same characters still accompany me in my adult life: I must have read the series about eight times by now and seen the films even more often, every time experiencing familiar feelings as well as seeing new nuances in the story. A few years ago, I have started visiting places connected to Harry Potter and Joanne K. Rowling myself – completely unaware of the phenomenon of media tourism or the academic field of tourism. So far, I have visited London, Exeter, Oxford, Edinburgh and the Scottish highlands and met many like-minded people there. Thinking about this phenomenon extensively during my master's programme Tourism and Culture got me eventually interested in the topic on an academic level.

This might be an unconventional place to put this kind of information, but in this concluding chapter I want to make sure once more that the emotional connection of Harry Potter fans with the series can be very strong, which is why this phenomenon definitely does not count as niche tourism, but it is a part of tourism that is already widespread and still becomes increasingly more popular. This is one reason why the research in this field is so relevant. And even though I have shown that there has been plenty of research done on the topics of both media tourism in general and *Harry Potter* tourism in particular, many topics have not been researched to their full extent yet. I hope that my research has added to the discussion in the field and has delivered some useful insights. Topics which one might want to explore further in the context of media tourism are the limitations of lieux d'imagination. In what way does a place need to be connected to the medium to be(come) a place of imagination, does it need to be 'official' or 'confirmed' or do have places that have allegedly a connection with the medium the same use and effect? Another idea for further research might be the distinction between wanted and unwanted visitors caused by a media-related or cultural phenomenon. This could include themes such as dark tourism as well as the host gaze in comparison to the tourist.

In conclusion, I have tried to not only broaden the understanding of why researching a topic like media tourism and specifically a series of books aimed at teenagers, which seems trivial, can be important and tell a lot about today's society, but also to answer the question whether the discussed

*Harry Potter* tourist sites in London can also be considered lieux d'imagination according to Reijnders' definition of the theory. In short, one can conclude that they do belong into the same category as his researched objects. The people who visit those *Harry Potter* tourist sites do so, because they are looking for physical places of reference to their fictive passion. These places are then used for collective imagination, which means that they are the physical and emotional connection for many to immerse themselves in a certain universe, such as the *Harry Potter* series.

However, to be more precise, one might broaden and extend this theory by Reijnders and add souvenirs as well as photos into it. The term places of imagination then does not fit anymore, which is why I have opted for the term objects of imagination. As explained in the fifth chapter, this extension of the used theory, makes it more specific. As a souvenir and a photo can both be seen as a physical memory (of a certain place), they can function as places or thus rather objects of imagination at home. This means that they can also function as a spatial connection to the *Harry Potter* world. As I have already concluded in the fifth chapter, souvenirs and photographs combine Reijnders' and Nora's theories, because they have two functions at one: they help to remember as well as to imagine without being in a particular place. The materializations of lieux d'imagination can thus be used after the trip.

The emotional connection many *Harry Potter* fans feel with London and especially with the discussed tourist sites roots mainly in the description of the places in the books and depiction in the films. Experiencing these places at home by reading or on screen, can build a connection over the years. On the other hand, this connection can be reinforced by visiting those places and experiencing the lieux d'imagination in reality. As Reijnders describes, walking in the fictive footsteps of Harry Potter and his friends, makes this connection even more meaningful to the fans. Many are thus not only looking for images that are already familiar, like Urry suggest, but also the emotions which are connected to those images and places. Even though there is a slight chance that the series could lose its mysterious aspects, at the same time it becomes more magical and familiar by visiting the associated places.

Apart from being a personal and emotional experience which stimulates one's personal imagination, it can also be a communal one. One is usually not the only one visiting the places, which builds a communal feeling. Everyone who is there, has come to experience the same and to build a stronger connection with their favorite wizard. Especially taking a tour with a group of strangers for two hours who all like *Harry Potter* can build a connection. Even though one can almost find every place connected to the series online, a personal recommendation might add some importance to a site one might have not considered otherwise.

Another interesting addition to the objects of imagination is their performative aspect. They do not only help tourists to remember and immerse themselves in their fandom after the trip, but during the trip they help the tourists experiencing the space. By actively taking pictures, re-enacting scenes from the series (Platform 9¾ is just one example for that), the tourists perform media tourism. In addition to materializing their experience to enjoy it again afterward, media tourists often take part in performing tourist practices which make their experience more lively. This can especially be seen regarding the history of *Harry Potter* tourism – due to the high interest in King’s Cross Station and platforms nine and ten and due to tourists performing by staging photos, for example, the physical appearance of the station has been altered in the first place.

During the research I have encountered some problems and limitations. As this is a dissertation for my master’s degree, there have been no funds to go to London and do research on site. This had the consequence of needing to focus on the websites and reviews, as there were little other possibilities to find any information on the sites. Contacting the tour operators and the people in charge of Platform 9¾ has also proven to be difficult, because their answers have been brief and broad. And that just describes the two cases in which they have sent an answer at all, the others have not even replied. Furthermore, it was harder than expected to find the fitting information online and find a fitting method to analyze the extensive amount of data. This has brought me to coding quite late in the process, which has helped to structure the data. What had surprised me positively was the connection between Reijnders’ lieux d’imagination and souvenirs, which I have again only discovered late in the process, but which has given a complete new layer to the dissertation, which I have missed before.

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## 8. Appendix

### 1. Reaching out: email from me to various *Harry Potter* tour providers

To whomever it may concern,

My name is Hannah and I'm a student of the master's programme Tourism and Culture at the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. I'm writing my dissertation about media tourism – more specifically, about Harry Potter tourism in London. My research is about the supply of Harry Potter related tourist sights, the demand of Harry Potter tourists, their experience and reviews. It is also connected to theories about 'places of imagination' to investigate whether we need physical places to imagine something (like places connected to Harry Potter). This inquiry thus concerns your Harry Potter Tour.

I would be very thankful if you could help me out and share information with me. In exchange for some facts and figures, I would obviously be willing to share my research when my thesis is done if you feel like that would be handy for you.

I'm interested in the demographics of your target group: age, gender, social class, ethnicity, nationality, or whatever facts and numbers you could provide about your participants would help me a great deal. Also, I'm interested in how long your offer already exists, how many participants there are yearly/monthly/weekly and about the history of its existence and development. Who came up with the idea, how was it developed and what kind of marketing strategies were applied?

I'm hoping to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

Hannah Berger

**2. Answer: Free Tour by Foot**

Hi Hannah -

Sorry for the delay in this. I will try to give you some answers as I know what it's like trying to get first hand information for school work! I also think it's a great and interesting topic :)

- Our target demographic is simply Harry Potter fans! All ages, ethnicities, etc. People who have a good grasp of English, also, as we primarily run English Tours. We have a Spanish speaking guide we work with and also one French speaker but she only works for private tours as we find there aren't enough French speaking Potter fans coming to London to run the tour on the schedule every week.

- We've been running Harry Potter Tours for almost 5 years now.

- Tours run four times a week and group sizes can be anywhere from 5 people in winter time, to 35 in the summer.

- We market mostly online and in hotels, so most of our visitors are middle class but we do get some backpackers and some wealthier people who want to have a private tour with their own personal guide.

- The man who owns the company has been running tours for well over a decade and he is good at identifying new topics/locations to add tours so the Potter tour was his idea and it was then put together as a collaborative efforts by a few different guides.

I hope that helps you!

Kind Regards,

Margaret

**Manager/Guide - Free Tours By Foot London**

<http://www.freetoursbyfoot.com/london-tours/>

Hannah Berger, s4331125

**3. Answer: Strawberry Tours**

Dear Hannah,

Thank you very much for reaching out to us!

As I understand that the answers to your questions will help to enrichen your dissertation, I am afraid we will not be able to share specific data that we consider confidential. Nevertheless, what I can tell you is that as many other companies, we use the power of the internet to offer our services, our London Tours started in 2013 and our Harry Potter Tour targets groups of all ages and demographics; we have from fanatics to super muggles clients but we manage to integrate them in this unique an magical world, thanks to our well-developed content and our guides passion for the subject.

I hope you conclude your studies with the highest rates and that the knowledge acquired throughout this time, helps you to move forward in your desired path!

Sincerely,

Brenda

Customer Service Manager

Strawberry Tours



4. Table: Analysis of 4 Harry Potter Tours used in Analysis II

	Tour for Muggles	Strawberry Tours	Free Tours by Foot	Brit Movie Tours
<b>Frequency</b>	Twice or more almost every day	Twice every day at 11am & 3.30pm	Monday: 7pm, Wednesday & Friday: 10.30am, Saturday: 2pm	Wednesday – Sunday 2pm (depending on school holidays and time of year)
<b>Duration</b>	Ca. 2,5 hours	Ca. 2,5 hours	Ca. 2 hours	2,5 – 3 hours
<b>Costs</b>	Adults: £14 & children under 12: £12	Free tour (the participants choose themselves how to reward the guide)	Free tour (the participants choose themselves how to reward the guide)	Adults: £28 & children under 16: £21
<b>Concept/ Structure</b>	Walking tour with a tube journey, tube card is required, booking is mandatory, private tours are possible	Walking tour, booking is welcome but not mandatory	Walking tour, booking is welcomed but not mandatory, also available: GPS-enabled audio tour app to use anytime	Tour in an air-conditioned mini coach, booking is mandatory, private tours are possible
<b>Sights</b>	<p><b>Leaky Cauldron</b> <b>Ministry of Magic</b> <b>Diagon Alley</b> <b>Knockturn Alley</b></p> <p>= kept vague &amp; mysterious by only stating the places' names/ functions in the wizard world without referencing the real names</p>	<p><b>Westminster Station</b> <b>Hardys Sweet Shop</b> <b>Diagon Alley</b> <b>Trafalgar Square</b> <b>Craven Street</b> <b>Ministry of Magic</b> <b>Knockturn Alley</b> <b>Vue Cinema</b></p> <p>= photo &amp; name for each sight: some are real life names, others wizard world names, each without referencing their counterpart</p>	<p><b>Westminster Station</b> <b>Downing Street</b> <b>Ministry of Magic</b> <b>Trafalgar Square</b> <b>Diagon Alley</b> <b>Knockturn Alley</b> <b>The Palace Theatre</b> <b>St. Paul's Cathedral</b> <b>Millennium Bridge</b></p> <p>= names of real places with quite elaborate explanations of their connection to <i>Harry Potter</i> for every listed sight</p>	<p><b>King's Cross Station/Platform 9¾</b> <b>Leaky Cauldron</b> <b>Ministry of Magic</b> <b>Gringotts Bank</b></p> <p>= almost no information about the sights that are visited, no spoilers</p>
<b>Focus</b>	Harry Potter-related attractions such as film locations & inspirations for Joanne K. Rowling	Harry Potter-related attractions such as film locations, inspirations for Joanne K. Rowling, shops, events	Films and film locations	Films and film locations