

The Factors that Influence the Consumption & Creation of Fanfiction

Evelyn Rogers

Abstract

This study examined how outside factors influence fanfiction content creation and consumption. A brief history on the background of fanfiction and a literature review are provided. A group of about 500 fanfiction readers and authors were surveyed and around 150 were interviewed. In this study, those who read fanfiction are influenced by factors of ethnicity, age, sexuality, gender and others. The results discussed the meaning of each influencing factor and what such influences could mean for entertainment and media. It was concluded that influencing factors such as ethnicity, age, sexuality, gender, and trauma were important in the search for stories to read; pre-existing interest being the biggest influencer followed by ethnicity and others. Ultimately, the personal preference of the fan holds the most influence in the search for content.

Introduction

Fanfiction is a transformative work. Chiefly a story written as a continuation or alternate version of a pre-existing work (ex. Film, Television, Literature, etc...) When accessing scholarship on the history and influences of fanfiction it was found that the majority of research conducted was academic in nature. To fill this gap, this study asked: "How do outside factors influence the consumption and creation of fanfiction content?"

"Faramir scoffed and placed the horn at his hip. "Thank you brother, I-" But he was cut off by a firm embrace from his sibling. Slowly he wrapped his arms about Boromir. "I cannot promise not to come to harm, but I swear by our lost king that I will return to our kingdom."

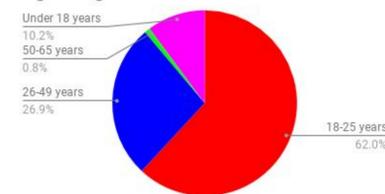
-I Tadi Hanar by fishydwarrows,

adapted from *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R Tolkien

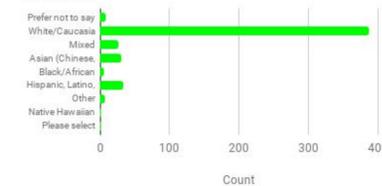
Methods and Materials

- General Survey:
 - 12 sections with 23 questions total.
 - There were 501 recorded responses.
 - Writer Specific Survey:
 - 3 sections with 17 questions total.
 - There were 62 recorded responses
- Reader Specific Survey:
 - 3 sections with 17 questions total.
 - There were 82 recorded responses
- 9 questions with 62 recorded responses
 - Writer Specific Interview:
 - Reader Specific Interview:
 - 9 questions with 82 recorded responses

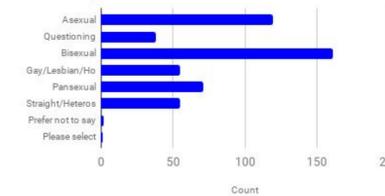
Age Range



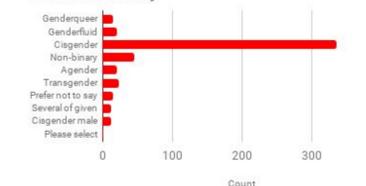
Ethnicity



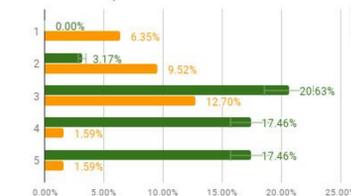
Sexuality



Gender Identity



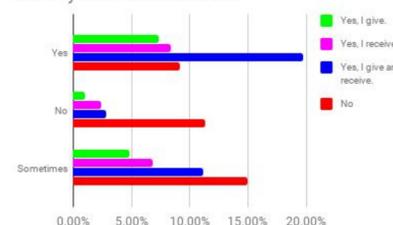
Trauma & Impact - Writers



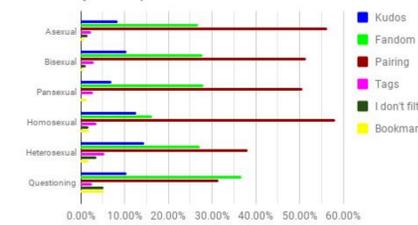
Trauma & Impact - Readers



Activity to Recommendation



Sexuality to Frequent Filter



Interviews

1. The search for reading content remained tied to the filtering system of the archive and personal preference of the reader
2. Most read/wrote for fandoms they were "active" in
3. Filtering systems on fanfiction archives helped readers, but not writers
4. Filtering systems were easy to navigate and use
5. The majority of respondents wrote that they used fanfiction as an "escape" or "safe-space"

Discussion

Fanfiction is a medium created out of love for source-material, and it is this love that keeps drawing fans back to the content they create and consume. The majority of those who had high activity in fandom communities, had a higher chance of giving out and receiving fanfiction recommendations. Therefore, fans are circulating the content they love, even if the participation in fan activities they are doing is small. Through the use of filters, fans can also choose what to read and know whether the story will perhaps trigger a traumatic response. Without the help of a filtration system, a fan would definitely have trouble finding the stories they were searching for. Therefore, the easier accessible archives online are crucial in the search for fanfiction. Those who create fanfiction of the ages 18-25 are also fans with the most free time. Fans who are still in school or have stable careers are allowed the space they need in which to write about the stories they enjoy.

Conclusions

Factors like age, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, and trauma sit at the heart of the influencers of fanfiction creation and consumption. The world experience of an author will almost always come into play in the creation of a story. Therefore, it is important to always examine any kind of literature in such context. The use of filtering systems in fanfiction archives remains a crucial part of the fanfiction process. As evidenced by the results of the General and Writer/Reader surveys, the filtering of fanfiction allows for a greater ease in which to read a provided story. The influence of filtration remains also a great factor in the reading process of fans, as without it, stories would be harder to find and harder to distribute. However, the most effective influencing factor in the reading and writing of fanfiction is pre-existing interest. Without the initial interest in canon content, fans would have no reason to create and consume stories. Fan content is made from the enjoyment and interest in content. Therefore, fan content will always be generated as long as there are stories to be told.

Contact

Evelyn Rogers
AP Research:
Humanities

References

1. ABRAHAMSON, M. B. (2013). J. R. R. TOLKIEN, FANFICTION, AND "THE FREEDOM OF THE READER". *Mythlore*, 32(1), 53-72.
2. Booth, Paul J. "Fandom: The Classroom of the Future." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, Transformative Works and Cultures Archive, 2015, journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/650.
3. Davis, Katie. "More Than Peer Production: Fanfiction Communities as Sites of Distributed Mentoring." *Academia.edu*, www.academia.edu/33295514/More_Than_Peer_Production_Fanfiction_Communities_as_Sites_of_Distributed_Mentoring.
4. Fanfiction Terminology. www.angelfire.com/falcon/moonbeam/terms.html.
5. Finn, K. M., & McCall, J. (2016). Exit, pursued by a fan: Shakespeare, Fandom, and the Lure of the Alternate Universe. *Critical Survey*, 28(2), 27-38. doi:10.3167/cs.2016.280204
6. Herzog, Alexandra. "We, the Fans": Power in the Democratic Archive of Fanfiction." *Publications server Der Universität Regensburg*, 17 Feb. 2016, epub.uni-regensburg.de/33265/.
7. Jamson, Anne Elizabeth, and Lev Grossman. *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking over the World*. Smart Pop, 2013.
8. Millott, J., & Reid, C. (2000). *Publishers Optimists About Spread of Technology*. *Publishers Weekly*, 247(1), 19.
9. Schwartz, Barry, et al. "The Paradox of Choice." By Barry Schwartz, www.goodreads.com/book/show/10639.The_Paradox_of_Choice.
10. Stutsman, Staci. "Blogging and Books: Communal Authorship in a Contemporary Context." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/413.