İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY

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HOW DOES FANDOM END?

FROM IMMERSION TO DISSOLUTION

EX-FANS & UNFANS
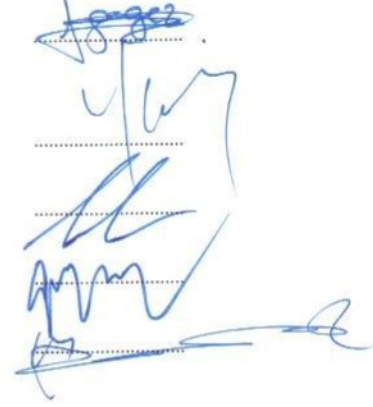
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How Does Fandom End? From Immersion to Dissolution: Ex-fans and Unfans

Hayranlık Nasıl Sona Erer? Tutulmadan Çözülmeye: Ex-fanlar ve Unfanlar

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Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

1) hayran(lar)

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4) hayranlığın sonu

5) eski hayran(lar)

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

1) fan(s) (persons)

2) fandom

3) dissolution of fandom

4) end of fandom

5) ex-fan(s)

PREFACE

This research is the result of my curiosity about immersion in texts. The fact that some texts become immersive for some people at a certain time in their lives has always fascinated me. Even more fascinating has been how and why people came our of immersion after having been immersed for a period of time. This knowledge would be empowering. The research phase was the most exciting phase of this study for me. I had the opportunity to be invited into people's minds and a part of their lives. This has been a priviledge and an unforgettable experience.

My ongoing learning during this study has been further facilitated by a handful of people who have offered me guidance and support throughout this special time in my life. First and foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation advisor Assoc. Prof. E. Eser Gegez for her unwavering support and belief in me. She is an exemplary human being in every way and it has been a priveledge to share my journey with her. I would also like to thank Assoc. Prof. Erkan Saka and Prof. Yonca Aslanbay for being there for me whenever I needed them. Mesut Çevik, Murat Gamsız, Ceyda Doğan Karaş, Ela Cengiz and Ecem Öztürk have offered their support in the recruitment of the research participants. It means a lot to me and I am forever grateful. I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the ex-fans who have accepted to participate in my research and shared their inner worlds with me. It has been one of the most valuable experiences in my life. Last but not least, my daughter has been extremely patient and understanding during my studies. She is and always will be my inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the end of fandom and propose a wider scope of study in fan studies, not only during the fandom phase, but also during and after the dissolution phase. Dissolution phase of fandom is explored in an attempt to construct a better understanding of the phenomenon of fandom. The process of becoming an ex-fan is analyzed and a model pertaining to the process of dissolution is proposed. Findings are based on a qualitative research of face-to-face interviews with thirty self-reporting ex-fans of media-texts and star-texts. Ex-fans' narratives about their experiences of fandom are utilized to formulate a better comprehension of the phenomenon of fandom in whole. First, the experience of fandom is analyzed in its totality by depicting a model about the phases of fandom. Five phases of fandom are proposed in this model. These are: fandom formation, fandom, pre-dissolution, dissolution and post-dissolution phases of fandom. Next, the process of becoming an ex-fan is deciphered through an investigation of the three related phases, namely: pre-dissolution phase, dissolution phase and post-dissolution phases of fandom. Triggers of dissolution are introduced and their impact and degrees of impact are presented, respectively. Then, the three domains of dissolution are analyzed, following an investigation of the feelings of dissolution. Finally, the process of dissolution is proposed as a model that consists of three distinct processes. This study offers a closer inspection of the end of fandom, thus enabling a complete understanding of the experience of fandom.

Keywords

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı hayranlıktan çıkış fazını analiz etmek suretiyle hayranlık kavramı ile ilgili daha geniş bir bakış açısı önermek. Hayranlık fenomeni ile ilgili daha bütünsel bir kavrayışı mümkün kılmak amacıyla hayranlığın bitişi analiz ediliyor. Eski hayran kavramı incelenerek, hayranlıktan çıkış süreci ve dinamikleri ile ilgili de bir model sunuluyor. Bu çalışmadaki bulgular otuz eski hayran ile yapılan yüz-yüze görüşmeleri kapsayan bir kalitatif araştırmanın sonucudur. Eski hayranların kendi hayranlık deneyimleri ile ilgili anlatımları baz alınarak hayranlık fenomeni ile ilgili daha bütünsel bir kavrayış oluşturulmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu süreci formüle ederken kanca, çapa ve tetik konseptleri kullanılmıştır. Öncelikle, hayranlık fazlarına ilişkin bir model ile hayranlık deneyiminin tamamı analiz edilmektedir. Bu modelde hayranlığın beş fazı önerilmektedir. Bunlar: hayranlık oluşumu, hayranlık, hayranlıktan çıkış öncesi, hayranlıktan çıkış ve hayranlıktan çıkış sonrası fazlarıdır. Daha sonra, ilgili üç faza odaklanarak – ki bunlar; hayranlıktan çıkış öncesi, hayranlıktan çıkış ve hayranlıktan çıkış sonrası fazlarıdır - eski hayran olma süreci çözümlenmektedir. Hayranlıktan çıkış tetikleri sekiz farklı tetikleyici olarak sunulmaktadır. Bu tetiklerin etkileri ve etki dereceleri sırasıyla analiz edilmektedir. Akabinde, hayranlıktan çıkışın üç alanı ve hayranlıktan çıkışın duyguları incelenmektedir. Son olarak, hayranlıktan çıkış sürecine dair bir model üç farklı süreç olarak sunulmaktadır. Bu araştırma, hayranlığın sonuna odaklanarak, hayranlık deneyiminin tamamına ilişkin bir kavrayış önermektedir. Aynı zamanda, eski hayranların deneyimlerine ve eski hayranlık olgusuna ışık tutmaktadır. Bu sayede, bu çalışma hayranlıktan çıkış ile ilgili daha fazla araştırma yapılmasını teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler

Hayran(lar), hayranlık, eski hayran(lar), fan(s), ex-fan(s), unfan(s), hayranlığın bitişi, hayranlıktan çıkış, hayranlığın sonu.

INTRODUCTION

Fan culture possesses an astounding livelihood and as such harbours a significant representation of popular culture. Emotional attachment of fans to their objects of fandom gets channeled into fan activities such as fan art creation, community involvement and textual engagement, meanwhile reshaping the production processes of industrial texts. Fans enjoy a triumphant status at the top of the consumption/production hierarchy and have moved from the periphery of culture to a most central position over the last thirty years. High-levels of textual literacy, intensity of involvement within fandom textuality and affinity to creation/production processes turn fans into sought-after research subjects. The relationship of fans with their objects of fandom is extremely dynamic and pulsates with popular culture. A deeper understanding of fans and fan culture is critical in deciphering the current media landscape, saturated with an ongoing influx of texts, constantly shaping and reshaping popular culture.

Technological advances within the last decades - that have led to an increase in the number of screens - have changed the dynamics of everyday lives. Number of texts that a standard individual is exposed to within a given day is unparalleled in history of mankind and is growing exponentially. This surge of texts has also been altering the ways in which individuals consume and engage with texts. Fans - being the most textually literate audiences – demonstrate the intricate nuances of textual consumption in the most comprehensive manner. 'Objects of fandom as text' refers to the totality of textual narratives about and around the object of fandom. High degrees of involvement with texts make fans ideal subjects for a study of textuality and popular culture. When fans are invested in an object of fandom, a process of textuality begins. In this process, fans build a relationship with their primary text – meaning, their object of fandom – and sustain relationships with ancillary[1] texts that abound, either supporting or opposing to their object of fandom.

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[1] Texts surrounding and supporting the primary text.

This intricate web of textual relationships form the textual ecosystem of fans at any given moment.

The degree of textual involvement is primary in designating a fan. An object of fandom as text serves as a dimension of immersion for the fan over a period of time. The word 'immersion' is to be utilized specifically in an attempt to signify the textual plunge a fan takes in the object of fandom as text. The object of fandom becomes a distinct dimension - other than that of everyday life - in which the fan gets immersed in. This immersion - in the object of fandom as text and fandom textuality - becomes a dimension in which the fan invests her energies, time and money. The immersion phase that designates fandom has a beginning and an end that is often fuzzy but at times abrupt in nature. The falling into the object of fandom as text, the immersion in that specific dimension of textuality and the falling out form the dynamics of fandom.

The aim of this thesis is to shed light into the less researched phase of fandom that is the falling out; the dissolution phase. The research is focused on the dynamics of the dissolution phase and the reasons behind it. If the falling into immersion within the object of fandom as text constitutes a 'fan', the falling out of immersion from the object of fandom as text constitutes an 'ex-fan'. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of fandom, it would prove beneficial to investigate the totality of fandom experience, including ex-fandom. The fact that the ex-fan is someone who has been immersed in the object of fandom for a period of time distinguishes an ex-fan from a standard audience. Affinity with the particular fandom textuality, presence of once-harbored emotions, selective perception and nostalgia are among the factors that set an ex-fan apart.

The hooks that pull a potential fan into fandom and the triggers that push the fan out are within the scope of the research so as to formulate a complete understaning of the experience of fandom. Even though the factors that keep the fan immersed in the object of fandom demonstrate similarities, those that drive the fan out seem to differ, sometimes in unexpected ways. There seems to be a 'tipping

point'[2] where the fan is dissatisfied enough to disassociate with the object of fandom as text). Not only does this tipping point vary from individual to individual but is contextually subject to change and is therefore difficult to pinpoint. Factors that push a fan into ex-fandom may be related to age, lifestyle changes, unexpected outbreak of scandalous news, boredom, group dynamics, identity threats and influential people. Some of these factors come together to form a trigger that in turn causes the fan to start questioning the object of fandom whereby this doubting starts the falling out process. The dynamics of dissolution may also differ: some being gradual, while others being abrupt. A closer look at the dissolution phase of fandom through the eyes of ex-fans is essential for deciphering fandom and textuality.

This thesis is based on the question 'Why does fandom end?' and investigates the reasons, the dynamics and the process of falling out of fandom. The triggers that push a fan out of immersion in the object of fandom and their juxtaposition with the hooks that pulled the fan into immersion in the first place are analyzed in an attempt to understand dissolution from the object of fandom as text. The thesis is based on a qualitative research of face-to-face interviews with 30 self-reporting ex-fans. Interviewed ex-fans had objects of fandom in three main categories; namely music, film/television series and computer games. Face-to-face interviews covered questions regarding the whole experience of fandom; the falling in, the immersion and the falling out, with an emphasis on the dissolution phase. This thesis seeks to understand the end of fandom and in so doing aims to complete the circle relating to fan immersion in textuality.

Points of Departure

The research area covered in this thesis is about the end of fandom. However, the reasons, dynamics and processes that lead to dissolution of fandom can not be complete without first understanding the start of fandom and the immersion in the

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[2] The phrase *'the tipping point'* is influenced by the book of Malcolm Gladwell bearing the same name. In this thesis, however, the term is utilized to indicate a certain point where dissatisfaction with the object of fandom spills into dissolution of fandom. So, here, it indicates a turning point in a personal experience, rather than an epidemic.

object of fandom. This necessity to look at the whole picture in order to understand a specific part of the picture better, resulted in the inclusion of literature on fandom, as well as textuality. The objective was to provide a solid background on fandom and textuality first and from that understanding move on to the exploration of the dissolution of fandom. An understanding of textuality is imperative because of its direct linkage to immersion. The thesis seeks to offer a more complete account of fandom; including the start, the immersion and the end with an emphasis on the dissolution of fandom.

There were also instances during the research when an individual fan made repeated references to her fandom even though she was never actively engaged in the fandom, but rather a *'personal fan'*, going through the experience of being a fan on her own. The elements of passionate identification that fandom harbors make it more than a mere pastime and weaves it into the identity of the individual. Duffett calls this *personal fandom:* the fannish identity and experience of an individual person (Duffett, 2013, p. 24). This is why, *'fans'* and *'fandom'* are words that have been utilized throughout the thesis contextually. It would prove beneficial to take the whole into consideration so as to understand the text as is, rather than taking the words at their face value.

Hooks into Fandom

Although the focal point of this thesis is the end of fandom and how fans fall out of fandom, it was necessary to initiate the interviews with the start of fandom and the hooks[3] that led to immersion in the object of fandom, before directing the Respondents to the dissolution phase of fandom. This enabled a smooth flow of narrative both conceptually and chronologically. It also allowed the researcher to see a complete picture of *the experience of being a fan*. The questions that were utilized to initiate the interviews were therefore those regarding the start of fandom and the hooks that led to immersion in the object of fandom. The

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[3] A *'hook'* in this study is any factor that serves to catch, hold or pull a potential fan into fandom. The definition is influenced by the literal definition of the word in Merriam Webster dictionary online.

responses to these questions are also included in the thesis because of the valuable information they contain about the totality of the phenomenon of being a fan.

Hooks are related to the fans' interests and likes. When the fan finds a correspondence between her personal interests and likes and an attribute of the object of fandom, she gets hooked into the textuality of fandom. The first hook initiates curiosity to search about the object of fandom and gather more information. Thus, the first hook leads the potential fan into fandom textuality. Once, the potential fan starts to move within texts, she gets exposed to more hooks and becomes immersed within her object of fandom. The hooks may be direct or indirect; with *'direct hooks'*, the text itself carries certain connotations that resonate with the fan, perhaps nostalgic elements or those that activate the imagination. In the case of *'indirect hooks'*, the text itself becomes amplified with external factors, such as a fan community, word-of-mouth or synchronicity with another event at any given moment. The hooks that the research participants mentioned also served as a reference point in making meaning out of triggers that led them out of fandom.

Research Purpose & Main Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to shed light upon the end of fandom. The study seeks to understand the reasons, the dynamics and the processes related to the dissolution phase. This is especially significant because of the changing textual environment due to technological advances, including transmedia, virtual reality and augmented reality (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011). These new textualities open new pathways to immersion and fandom serves as an applicable concept to investigate the falling into and the falling out of immersion. It is significant as it offers the potential to direct one's attention more mindfully. Applying both a cultural studies and communication studies perspective, this thesis aims to:

provide a deeper understanding of the increasingly complex relationship between fans and their texts, namely objects of fandom, with a particular focus on how fandom ends and why fans fall out of immersion into dissolution phase.

The research is based on qualitative analysis. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with self-reporting ex-fans. Main questions that the research seeks to explore are:

A. Why does fandom end?

This question is utilized during face-to-face interviews with ex-fans to gain a better understanding of the reasons why fandom ends. The Respondents were facilitated to detail the internal and external factors that could have acted as triggers to initiate the process of falling out of fandom. This question investigates the reasons and the triggers behind the dissolution phase of fandom.

B. How does fandom end?

This question is utilized to further investigate the end of fandom through facilitating detailed narratives of the dynamics and the processes of the falling out. The duration, as well as the nature of the process are among the targeted findings.

Working Definitions

A list of definitions are provided below in order to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the concepts included. These words are employed frequently within this thesis.

Fan: A 'fan' is defined in extent in the related section named 'Definition of Fandom'. Within this study, the word 'fan' is utilized to indicate anyone who self-reports as a fan, regardless of the fannish activities she performs. An individual could be a *personal fan* (Duffett, 2013) or part of a fandom community. Nevertheless, within this thesis, the word fan is used to indicate anyone who self-reports as a fan.

Ex-fan: An 'ex-fan' is someone who used to identify as a fan but is not longer a fan.

Personal fan: A self-reporting fan who experiences fandom individually, on her own, without engaging with other fans or becoming part of a fandom community.

Fandom: 'Fandom' is usually indicative of a community of fans interested in the same object of fandom. However, within this thesis, the word fandom is used both 1) to indicate the community-related meaning mentioned above, or 2) to indicate

the state of being a fan. The way in which the word is used depends on the context of the sentence and is to be determined by the reader.

Text: This thesis refers to a 'text' as any content that an individual may come across in everyday life. (Content may be two-dimensional or three-dimensional.)[4] A text is any content that is to be consumed, read, engaged with or immersed in.

Star-text: A star-text refers to a living object of fandom; a celebrity.

Object of fandom: An object of fandom is a person or a media product that has a fan following.

Immersion: Immersion is indicative of being totally consumed in a text.

Falling out/Dissolution/End: These three words are used interchangably within the thesis to indicate the last phase of fandom.

Participants/Respondents: These two words are used interchangably to indicate interviewees of the research.

Ex-Fandom: From Immersion to Dissolution

This thesis is based on a qualitative research about ex-fandom. The findings of the research shed light to the reasons, the dynamics and the processes pertaining to the end of fandom. The complete cycle of fandom is to be comprehended fully through a more detailed inspection of the dissolution phase. The reasons that turn a fan into an ex-fan and the way in which the process of becoming an ex-fan unfolds are topics that are explored within the study. A potential fan first gets interested in a text, then upon closer inspection gets fascinated with it and this fascination leads to an immersion within the object of fandom as text. The immersion phase (the fandom phase) demonstrates its own dynamics and then, the fan reaches a tipping point of dissatisfaction where she falls out and becomes an ex-fan. The concept of ex-fandom includes pre-fandom, fandom and post-fandom (post-dissolution)

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[4] With the technological advances in Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, textuality is not only two-dimensional (2D), but also three-dimensional (3D). The 3D aspect of textuality is to be more prevalent in near future.

phases and this inclusion necessitates a totality of assessment pertaining to the phenomenon of fandom.

Concepts Related to Ex-Fandom

The findings of the qualitative research illuminate the concepts related to ex-fandom. A preliminary understanding of fans, fandom and fan culture is necessary to cultivate a deeper comprehension of ex-fandom. One must understand the beginning, if one is to understand the end. A brief history of fame and fandom is included to serve as a reference point to the current media landscape and audiences. Fandom and fame are intertwined and interrelated so both concepts are contained within the history of fandom. Various definitions of fandom are exemplified and detailed to demonstrate the unfixed nature of the phenomenon.

Textuality and its current increasingly 'fluid' nature is another concept to be explored if one is to trace immersion (Womack, 2007). Primary texts, ancillary texts, the ecosystem of fandom textuality including paratexts, intertextuality and transmedia are within the scope of this study. Textuality is the dimension fans get hooked in, immersed and triggered to fall out. As such, textuality is the dimension where the experience of fandom manifests. The ways in which one becomes pulled into a particular text – namely, an object of fandom - and the dynamics that lead to immersion within the text are explored in detail within this study.

Textuality

When talking about *immersion,* an understanding of textuality serves to complete the circle. These are the early stages of a dramatic shift in 'cyber-existence'; a major shift like the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional, between the merely interactive and the fully immersive (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011). This shift is sure to directly impact textuality. Textuality and what it entails in contemporary media culture is significant in deciphering how audiences get hooked in and how they remain immersed within texts. The

phenomenon of fandom has facilitated an opening of texts. Texts have become open, living and pulsating with the engagement of fans. This tendency of fans to enagage with texts have changed the previously held notion of a closed text of the print culture and the open text of the manuscript culture (Bruns, 1980, p. 113). The multitude of texts and the exposure rate that is unparalleled in human history serve both to pull audiences in and to push them out. While the increasing number and the variety of texts serve to pull audiences in, they also make it easier to move from text to text, thus weakening attachment to one particular text. The dynamics of *intertextuality* seem to have a direct effect on fandom, as demonstrated in research findings. This link between intertextuality and fandom also necessitates the inclusion of contemporary textual concepts such as *transmedia, convergence* and *participatory culture* within the theoretical framework (Jenkins, 2006, 2009, 2011). These concepts serve to illuminate fandom textuality and aid in a better comprehension of the concept of immersion.

Methodological Approach: Phenomenological Research

The focus of this thesis is the end of fandom; the reasons and the dynamics behind the end of fandom and the process of dissolution. The dissolution phase of fandom is a relatively under-researched area and as such remains open to exploration. A qualitative research method of phenomenological research is the preferred method of research. Face-to-face interviews were utilized to investigate the phenomenon of *ex-fandom*. Face-to-face interviews enable the researcher to understand personal experiences without the necessity of having predetermined criteria about the subject of study. The method allows the researcher to remain open to flowing and unfolding data, meanwhile witnessing *authentic data emergence.* This was the primary reason for the decision to conduct face-to-face interviews as the research method of this study. Although face-to-face interviews are logistically rigorous, they provide a valuable gateway into the lives and experiences of individuals.

Disposition

The thesis begins with an introductory chapter presenting the research area, purpose, associated questions, working definitions, theoretical and methodological approaches and the empirical phenomenon of ex-fandom. Chapter 2 comprises the theoretical framework and provides the concepts pertaining to the area of research. These concepts are fandom, textuality and popular culture. A thorough understanding of the three concepts is imperative so as to weave an understanding of the phenomenon of ex-fandom. Fandom is the source that ex-fandom stems from. This linkage makes it imperative to include literature about the history of fandom and definitions of fandom so as to present the foundation. Next, textuality is its current nature is explored in an attempt to build a gateway to the concept of immersion. Chapter 3 desribes the methodological approach of the research which is qualitative research based on face-to-face interviews. In this chapter, the reasons that make the preferred method the most suitable for the inquiry into ex-fandom are presented. In Chapter 4, research participants are introduced and their narratives are explored. Findings of recurring themes related to the totality of fandom experience are revealed. Chapter 5 consists of the results of the study and proposes a conceptual analysis of the experience of fandom dissolution. The thesis ends with a conclusive synthesis and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 1
FANDOM, TEXTUALITY & ITS CULTURAL ECONOMY

The phenomenon of fandom is directly linked to ex-fandom. This intertwined nature necessitates a foundational understanding of fandom to recognize the dynamics and processes that lead to dissolution of fandom. Thus, this chapter starts with the *history of fandom* - meanwhile tracing the footprints of fame - and moves on to attempting to *define fandom* to further demonstrate the elusive nature of fandom. The chapter continues with *textuality* and how fans interact with texts. Textuality is significant as it constitutes the base of immersion in the object of fandom. Lastly, the cultural economy of fandom is revisited in an attempt to demonstrate the centrality of the phenomenon in popular culture. Visual culture and visual textuality are also explored as they are closely linked and influential in fandom.

1.1.   HISTORY OF FANDOM

Fandom is a complex, multidimensional, sociocultural phenomenon related to mass culture. Changes in the media landscape and the ripple effects of these changes to everyday experiences contribute to the conditions that enable fandom. To follow the traces of fandom in history, it is imperative to follow the traces of fame. Historical developments that led to fame have shaped fandom as a sociocultural phenomenon. 'An object of fame' has become 'an object of fandom'. This transition necessitates an understanding of not only fandom, but also fame throughout history.

The origins of the term 'fan' date back to late seventeenth-century England. It was used as an abbreviation for 'fanatic' which is a religious term. The root of the term signifies being invested in a specific object with emotional intensity. It was another hundred years before the term gained acceptance in common usage in the United States by journalists to refer to the passionate baseball spectators

(Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 122). In time, the term was utilized to indicate dedicated audiences of film and music industries.

It is estimated that an average person in medieval times came in contact with a hundred people over the course of an entire lifetime (Braudy, 1986, p. 27). This has changed dramatically within the last century, especially as a result of globalization and the technological developments such as television and the internet. The pool of people to be reached with an object of fame is directly proportional with the pool of fans that are likely to accumulate around that object of fandom. What is not visible or is unheard of, can not be an object of fame or fandom. Thus, 'reach' is an important component of fame and is also one of the determinants of fandom. Consequently, as more people become within reach, the prospect of fame finds its means to fandom. As the possibility of reaching more people with a specific storyline increased, so did the possibility of that storyline to resonate with some people and gather a certain following, namely fans.

1.1.1. Fame in History & Ceasar's Self-Naming

In his comprehensive book *Frenzy of Renown*, Leo Braudy traces fame back to its roots (1986). In ancient times, the desire for fame was a matter of immortality by leaving a mark and continue to be remembered over time. The promise of immortality served as a gateway to transcend beyond time and place. Looking back at history, fame can be traced to Greece in the fifth and the fourth centuries B.C. These were the times when the oral epics of the Iliad and the Odyssey were put into writing. The fifth century was significant due to the rise of drama and philosophy which gave way to the imagery of heroes and their stories[5]. These depictions of heroes, along with the related storytelling resulted in culturally mediating the meaning of heroism (Braudy, p. 30). As the meaning of heroism began to be mediated, the interplay between the created storyline and the *'imagination'* of the people commenced. This interplay between a created storyline and imagination of

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[5] Images and storytelling would then formulate the narratives to constitute the textuality of fame and fandom.

the people would pave the way to the formation of the sociocultural phenomenon called fame and fandom that feeds it (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

The shift from oral to written form has also been determinative in the formation of fame and fandom. Thus, *'form'* of the narrative seems to be a determinant in the sociocultural formation and development of fame and fandom. As storytelling morphed into various forms – pictoral, oral and written – in time, audiences had more cues to bring together and feed into the fertile soil of the imagination (Campbell, 1987, p. 239). In history, Braudy points to Ceasar to be the first to put his war memoirs in written form as a narrative. He realized that to rule men, it was imperative to rule their minds - as well as their bodies - through storytelling and the stimulation of imagination. His act of *'self-naming'*[6] by creating an international narrative about himself was an attempt to leave his legacy beyond time. If Ceasar was the first to create a narrative for himself and stimulate the imagination of his fellow men with his image as an object of fame, Augustus was the one who paved the way for the phenomenon of professional literary man[7] (Braudy, p. 118). These professionals had the job of writing and also had an ideology to get their writing to as many people as possible. They declaimed their books to audiences for a fee with the goal of appealing to rich listeners who would later pay to get their work copied by a slave. This was the means to get their narratives circulated to as many people as possible.[8] This indicates *'narrative agencies'* as another determinant to *reach masses* and keep the narrative in circulation. These people – professionals or artists – have the gift and the purpose to bring storylines to life in intriguing styles so as to reach as many people as possible. They become *the 'carrying vessels'* of storylines and sometimes also the *'bearers'* of stories themselves. Thus, their gifts, combined with their interest in a specific object of fascination became the grounds for the fruitition of multiple narratives to spark the imagination of the readers.

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[6] This could also be referred to as the first *'branding'* in history.
[7] Professional literary men – with their narratives - would in time play a critical role in the creation of fame and fandom.
[8] In time, *'reach'* would become another critical factor in the creation of fame and fandom.

If the fourth and fifth centuries marked the start of self-naming and carrying the narratives to the masses, the sixth century marked the shift in imagery with the *rise of icons and icococlasm*. 'By the sixth century the cult of images had brought about a situation in the Eastern empire wherein the images themselves were being worshipped. (Braudy, p. 201) The storytelling that helped mediate meanings culturally was now being supported by the imagery to stimulate imagination. The combination of storytelling and images was the gateway to reach the minds of people in more elaborate ways. As the tools of storytelling proliferated, the *'hold of the story'* on people strengthened. The narrative was being formed not only verbally, but also visually. Its appeal to the senses intensified its appeal to the imagination.

1.1.2. Seeds of Fandom: Invention of Printing

Renaissance in the fourteenth century Italy witnessed two novel phenomena: 1) the invention of printing[9] and 2) the relationship of artist and writer to ruler and patron. Invention of printing allowed books to reach beyond the confinements of logistics and circulate to masses. Anthropologist Benedict Anderson (1991) described the 'imagined communities' that were created by the nineteenth-century print capitalism of newspapers and publishing so as to make the readers of a specific newspaper feel like they shared something in common. Rulers and patrons commissioned artists and writers as 'narrative agencies' to ensure that their legacy surpassed time through tools of immortality such as writing, painting and sculpting; 'written and visual depictions of greatness' (Braudy, p. 265). Meanwhile, as the dominance of religious imagery in art started to weaken with portrait painting, the individual face gained significance. Printing allowed the individual face to become 'a medium of more cultural exchange' (Braudy, p. 266). It was by sixteenth century that images and everyday life merged. Braudy points

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[9] According to UNESCO, there were more than 2.2 million books published globally in 2011. The sixteenth-century reformer Erasmus (1466-1536) was believed to have been the last European to have read all available printed books. (Mirzoeff, 2016, p. 17)

out to this as: 'The competition of images we blindly associate with the present had already by the sixteenth century begun in earnest' (Braudy, p. 268). The individual face was being depicted in the midst of life. Photography, film and television further accentuated its cultural significance. The rise of the individual face as a medium of cultural exchange enabled the intersection of faces with stories. The process of fame as a mechanism to bring an ordinary person to spotlight had begun.

The increasing importance of theater in the seventeenth century marks another milestone in the history of fame. The plays of Willliam Shakespeare (1564-1616) gathered a significant following. 'Once there is fame on earth, there is a potentially capricious audience to go along with it' (Braudy, p. 220). As his plays gained acclaim, more people frequented them and as more people frequented them, even more people were reached through word of mouth and other channels of communication. The elevated stage and the acting provided opportune grounds for the formation of fame, for playwrights as well as actors. Seeds of 'stardom'[10] were being sown.

The eighteenth century marks the beginning of an international European fame culture with the expansion of the power of media. Monarchies and aristocracies were no longer singular in cultural authority as various groups started to utilize the powers of media. 'The greater immediacy of eighteenth-century *publicity* – the rapid diffusion of books and pamphlets, portraits and caricatures – plays a material role in introducing the famous to the fan, perhaps a more appropriate word here than audience' (Braudy, p. 380). Publicity enabled various narratives to find their ways to the audience as narratives got circulated to amplify the 'reach'. Publicity was serving fame and its mechanism similiar to 'narrative agencies', through the creation and the dissemination of strategic narratives.

George Eastman's *camera* in 1888 was another turning point in documenting private life. It was around the same time – the middle of the nineteenth century – that the term *'celebrity'* started to be uttered to indicate famous individuals (Duffett, 2013, p. 301). Late nineteenth century reinforced the

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[10] *'Star-texts'* will be utilized in the remainder of the paper to refer to textuality of stardom.

mechanism of fame with technological advances such as Thomas Edison's phonography in 1878, perforated celluloid giving way to cinema in 1889 and airwave broadcasting dating back as early as 1906 that laid the foundations for electronic media industries. (Duffett, p. 312) Electronic media industries enabled reach to a broader audience base. 'There would be no fame if there were no fans, and there would be no fans if there were no media, whether print or electronic' (Ferris & Harris, 2011, p. 13). Media channels are crucial in the formation of an object of fame and the accumulation of fandom. When Carl Laemmle Snr, the head of Independent moving Picture Company, publicized the names of his actors due to public demand in 1910, the star system was born (Duffett, p. 7). As media industry flourished, audiences were adopting to the changes in media channels - as well as the ways in which narratives were being served - at a greater rate.

1.1.3. Adoption of Broadband Services

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, adoption of broadband services by the masses pointed to major shifts in communications technology that had historical significance. As the audiences became more and more experienced with the use of various media channels, television and internet became aligned in a way to enable fans to engage about film and television content *in real time* (Duffett, p. 462). Engagement in real time meant more emotional intensity - and more emotional investment - as the immediacy of the engagement strengthened the bond between the audiences and media content. Real time engagement enlivened the reach to bring audiences together over a specific media content and start influencing each other through communities. Community formation became pivotal in real time engagements and served to bring fans together. Identification with online fandom communities initiated a wider and deeper breadth of engagement among fans due to the obliteration of consequences related to time and place.

The introduction of the VCR (video cassette recorder) format in 1972 followed by its mass adoption, enabled viewers to an archive of previous films and television content. VCR allowed film and television fans to see their favorite

content in the comfort of their homes and enabled making of copies to create their own content and share them with their community (Jenkins, 1992, p. 71). VCR was decisively prominent in stimulating the creativity of fans and facilitated their merger with media content. Fans could reach their favorite media content at will, ruminate on it so as to reshape it in their own ways and share it. Not only was this pivotal in fans becoming creative agents, but also signified their claim to make media content their own by reshaping it. As satellite and cable TV spread throughout Europe, fans gained access to foreign content (Duffett, p. 436). This expansion in the breadth of content across borders was the beginning of *transnational fandom*[11]. Foreign content and access to foreign fandoms added a deeper cultural dimension to fandom, weaving even more colors into its fabric.

Another turning point in the history of fandom was *transmedia* storytelling. Henry Jenkins's (2011) comprehensive definition of the process is:

> "Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get *dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels* for the purpose of creating *a unified and co-ordinated entertainment experience*. Ideally, each medium makes it own *unique contribution* to the unfolding of the story."

As Jenkins (2008) pointed out, when The Blair Witch Project was released in 1999, it proved to be an international success with the experimenting of transmedia storytelling. That same year, Matrix utilized transmedia storytelling to engage fans through various media channels. Both cases were manifestations of fandom as a shared social experience. As fans consumed and created content related to a specific narrative in different media channels, they became more engaged and their engagement brought more life to the storylines themselves. This interaction of fans with the narrative is central in textuality and its remifications to fan culture.

As fans gained access to other fans, they found communities they belonged in. As technological advancements and media industry strategies allowed more fan engagement with media content, time spent with a specific media content increased,

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[11] Border-crossing fandom.

along with the amount of emotional investment in that particular content - with other fans in the community. With the serialization of television, audiences have gotten accustomed to returning to the same media content and following a sequence in the storyline. Broadcasters shifted from 'appointment television' to 'engagement television' to take advantage by making their franchises available first as broadcast events and second as box-sets of recordings available for apprenticeship. (Duffett, p. 468) The popularity of video uploading sites like YouTube after 2005 enabled audiences to access a gigantic archive of user-generated and user-uploaded content. Access to digital archives has fostered an ongoing nostalgia culture that led to the rediscovery of past content and resulted in past content to reenter circulation. This trend also brought different generations together in sharing of cultural interests (Reynolds, 2011). Access to obscure cultural forms allowed these forms to reenter cultural domain, meanwhile enabling a conversation between generations. 'Video sites have facilitated fandom for independent, lost and obscure cultural phenomenon that might formerly have gone undiscovered' (Duffett, p. 491). Digging up of archives resulted in resurfacing of old cultural artifacts and enriched cultural domain with the possibility of juxtaposing old and new, thereby creating new interpretations.

The breakthrough of the phenomenon of fandom was mostly due to a canonical book by Henry Jenkins, a self-identified aca-fan[12] himself. In 1992, Henry Jenkins wrote a book called *Textual Poachers* that challenged existing, mainly negative stereotypes about fans and represented fans as curious, media-literate, productive and creative people. Fans were brought from the margins of the media industry into the spotlight. What might once have been seen as 'rogue readers' were now Kevin Robertson's 'inspirational consumers' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 257). This was the onset of fandom to be perceived as an active, creative, media-literate, rebellious community. In the current media landscape, there is a narrowing gap between fans and the rest of the media audience. Fans being the most engaged audiences continue to keep the pulse of popular culture.

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[12] An 'aca-fan' refers to an academic who is also a fan.

1.2. DEFINING FANDOM

Defining fandom is not easy because it is a process that is not to be reified. When subjected to analysis, the phenomenon of fandom remains elusive. It is alive, transforming in an ongoing manner, in line with technological developments and cultural practices. This elusive quality of fandom makes it even more interesting due to its pulsating quality. Pop culture, media, technology, lifestyle and communications come together in this melting pot of performance and an identity. There have been multiple claims for the definition of a 'fan' by academics. According to Mark Duffett (2013, p. 18) a *'fan'* is a person with a relatively deep, positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous, usually expressed through a recognition of style of creativity. She is also a person driven to explore and participate in fannish practices. He emphasizes *emotional involvement* and *creativity* expressed through participation in *fannish practices*. Daniel Cavicchi emphasizes the functional side of fandom: 'It might be useful to think about the work rather than the worth of fandom, what it does, not what it is, for various people in particular historical and social moments' (Cavicchi, 1998, p. 9). A definition of fandom as a sociocultural practice expressed by each individual through a functional operation shifts the emphasis to what fandom does culturally and creatively, rather than attempting to pin it down in a concrete form.

Matt Hills also points to the elusive quality of fandom when he claimed that fandom is not just one site or 'thing' (Hills, 2002, p. 7). Star Wars fandom researcher Will Brooker (Brooker, 2002, p. 32) has stated that there is no such thing as a typical group of fans and Jenkins (2006, p. 24) stated that different fandoms are associated with different kinds of discourse. This means that the label *'fan'* can have multiple meanings depending on context: it is used both descriptively and prescriptively to refer to diverse individuals and groups, including fanatics, spectators, groupies, enthusiasts, celebrity stalkers, collectors, consumers, members of subcultures, and entire audiences, and depending on the context, to refer to complex relationships involving affinity, enthusiasm, identification, desire, obsession, possession, neurosis, hysteria, consumerism, political resistance, or a

combination (Cavicchi, 1998, p. 36). It is impossible to conceptualize a single fandom because fandoms of a specific television program have different dynamics than those focused on books and movies or those that are centered around face-to-face meetings or hard-copy fan fiction magazines or even online fandoms (Hellekson & Busse, 2006, p. 6).

The models of fandom suggested by academics also differ. Harrington and Bielby (1995) suggest a four-part model of fandom. Their model depicts fandom as a mode of reception, shared practice of interpretation, an 'art world' of cultural activities and an 'alternative social community' (p. 96). Jenkins (1992) suggests that fandom incorporates at least five levels of activity: a particular mode of reception, a set of critical interpretive practices, a base for consumer activism, a form of cultural production and an alternative social community (p. 277-280). These models serve to construct a more complete understanding of fandom, in spite of its elusive nature. The dynamics of fandoms vary in accordance to the objects of fandom which in turn makes fandom a process not easily pinned down. Rather than trying to generalize fandom, Duffett (2013, p. 19) suggests exploring fan theory as a template, rather a yardstick against which to measure *interest in a specific object of fandom or in specific contexts*. He states that at times fandom is viewed as an umbrella term for various potentials such as fascination, celebrity following, group behavior and elated declarations of conviction. Fandom is not to be confused with its various components for that is to reduce fandom of what it actually is.

1.2.1. Fans & Consumption: Cultural Interest

Consumption is another aspect that needs to be tackled in an attempt to understand fandom. The word itself indicates a commercial transaction or a process in an economic sense. In a cultural sense, however, 'to consume' is to examine a particular product in a meaningful way. Fans resemble ideal consumers of brands: they snap up the latest thing, buy extra merchandise, participate in promotions, join in official fan clubs and build collections (Cavicchi, 1998). In their consumption, fans are dedicated, timely and unwavering. They are target consumers as well as

niche markets that represent the residue of a culture initially facilitated by mass marketing (Hills, 2002, p. 45). Their emotional involvement and dedication to their object of fandom results in the realization of the 80-20 rule of economics. The 80-20 rule says that 20 per cent of the audience (namely, fans) create 80 per cent of the profits (Jenkins, 2008, p. 72). Thus, fans demonstrate the *qualities of a niche market* yet also act as *mega consumers* of their object of fandom. They are no longer viewed as eccentric irritants, but rather loyal consumers to be created (Hills, 2002, p. 36). The dynamics of consumption behind fandom has much to do with this shift in perception towards fans. 'Given that fandom at its core remains a form of spectatorship, fan places are places of consumption' (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 53).

This aspect of fans as consumers is also juxtaposed by fans being creative agents, crafting many activities for free. They also like things for free and they are always more than mere consumers because their transactions are pursued with a *cultural interest* (Duffett, 2013, p. 21). This *cultural emphasis* of fandom is determinative in setting it apart from being a phenomenon related to consumption and consumerism. Rather, it is a cultural process woven into consumption that transforms and reshapes consumption practices according to context. Creativity associated with fandom enriches the consumption process as well as redefining it. Free giving, sharing, forming communities and disseminating object of fandom related information are all culturally transformed consumption practices. This 'free' loving aspect of fandom is - in a way - a check point to resist consumption related practices when necessary. It reinforces the resistance implied by fan culture. They are always already consumers – just like everybody – but they necessarily have more roles than that (Hills, 2002, p. 27). Fans are more than mere consumers since they have especially strong emotional attachments to their objects of fandom and they use this attachment to create relationships with both their objects and with each other (Ferris & Harris, 2011, p. 13). Their emotional attachment hosts the *possibility of relationship building* and this possibility spills over to fan communities. Apart from this, they can be distinguished by *their impeccable knowledge of their text* and their expertise about it, as well as any associated material (Brooker, 2002; Gray 2010). This aspect renders them much more knowledgeable and informed than

consumers. They know their objects of fandom inside out to an extent where they are able to produce their own content about their object of fandom by poaching (Jenkins, 1992). This quality adds vitality to the phenomenon of fandom and reshapes culture by remaining in constant negotiation with it. Fans are networkers, collectors, tourists, archivists, curators, producers and more (Duffett, 2013, p. 21). This richness and elusiveness makes fandom impossible to pin down and reify.

1.2.2. Fans & Creativity: Negotiating a Labor of Love

Fandom is also defined through creativity. This creativity is predominantly what fans make of texts – namely, objects of fandom – poaching them in Jenkins' (1992) term. A valuable attribute of fandom is how fans engage with the texts, whether it is a film, a song, a person or a book. Fans *revisit texts* and make them their own by editing, reworking, rewriting or whatever feels appropriate to weave a tighter connection with the text to enhance its subjective meaning. Many texts allow their audiences to enter particular realms of *imagination* and fans often role-play (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 46). Imagination plays an integral part in the making of a fan and becoming more immersed in a singular text. In the internet age, businesses rely on fans' social interactions, exchanges and amateur production for the creation of content that attracts audiences (Duffett, 2013, p. 22). By their creative labor of love, fans produce content in numerous ways. This aspect of fan culture is mainly non-commercial – although there are some fans that make money with their creative work. If they produce or promote media culture, it is often based on a not-for-profit process (Duffett, 2013, p. 23). They engage with the texts and rework the texts not because they expect commercial gains but solely because those *texts are meaningful* to them. For many fans, this non-commercial nature of fan culture is one of its key attributes, because they are engaged in *a labor of love* (Jenkins, 2008, p. 180).

Yet another aspect of fandom is fan as an *'agency'*. Agency is the ability of individual people to act and behave in ways that make a difference to wider society. Fans act in agency when they are motivated to guide others to experience their favorite texts, not for commercial gain but as labor of love. They act as agencies in

the dissemination of texts and their negotiations of these texts ripples through popular culture, transforming it one ripple at a time. Fans are cultural mediators, negotiators and amplifiers. They mediate meanings, negotiate borders and amplify reach. Thus, negotiation is at the heart of fandom: fans negotiate meanings of texts and they negotiate their identity. Their identity merges into and out of their object of fandom, depending on the timeline of their fandom.

1.2.3. Identification as a Fan: To Be or Not To Be

Identification is a significant determinant in formation of fandom. In spite of the emotional aspect of fandom, Cornel Sandvoss (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 6) has argued that it would be a poor definition of fandom if it is centered around *emotional intensity*. The reason for this is because fans do not always self-report or self-classify based on their emotional intensity. Meanwhile, some dedicated fans may fail to self-identify simply because they do not display the required intensity of commitment for fandom (Hills, 2002). The fact that emotional intensity is difficult to measure makes it a questionable criterion to gauge fandom by. Various forms of fandom differ in displays of emotion. Some genre-based and collecting-oriented forms of fandom are associated with an initial peak of emotion that tends to transform into more intellectual and 'cooler' forms of passion. There are floating audience members who lack dedication but still self-identify as fans and there are emotionally engaged consumers who can avoid the label (Duffett, 2013, p. 25). Duffett suggests this is why it may prove beneficial to consider identifying as one of the central personal and cultural processes of fandom. According to him, at some initial point the fan has to deeply connect with, be fascinated by and even better love – the object of fandom.

According to soap fandom researchers Cheryl Harrington and Denise Bielby (1995), a fan self-identifying as a fan is a significant aspect: 'we believe that this conceptualization of fan as doer obscures an important dimension of fanship, the acceptance and maintenance of a fan identity. One can do fan activity without being a fan, and vice versa. Fanship is not merely about activity; it involves parallel

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processes of activity and identity' (L. C. Harrington & Bielby, p. 86-87). Thus, being a fan requires not only participation in fannish activities, but also the adoption of a particular fan identity.

1.2.4. Practice: Revisiting the Text

The practice of fandom in fannish activities is a criterion in the formation of fandom. Even though the *repeated returning to a text* is significant in the practice of fandom, it may not be as essential in one's claim on fandom as long as one self-reports as a fan after coming in contact with the specific text. This demonstrates that even though fans tend to return to their favorite texts, it is not always the case. In fact, the initial stages of fandom are inarguably the period when the fan in the making or rather the becoming-fan is exposed to a specific text once and is fascinated with it to an extent where that specific text becomes part of her textual field. The fascination with a particular text may get activated and last long enough to turn into fandom. These hooks may vary in accordance to the object of fandom; transmedia may be at play, the fan may stumble upon a fan community and feel belonging or just be merely mesmerized with the text itself because of the connotations it carries for the individual fan at that time.

Fandom requires engagement in activities related to the object of fandom. When a fan is engaged in a text, the engagement becomes more than a standard viewing experience. The fan returns to the text over and over as required to make meaning of it in a way to incorporate it into her own textual field. Cornel Sandvoss depicts fandom as the 'regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text' (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 8). This emotional involvement in the consumption and even reception of the text is the differentiating factor from a standard audience. The *emotional component serves to claim the text* and even rework it. Similarly, Henry Jenkins has stated that television fandom does not mean merely watching a series, but rather becoming interested enough to *make a regular commitment* to watching it (Jenkins, 1992, p. 56). Making a regular commitment indicates a relationship establishment with the text. It is not any text, it is a particular

text that is of special interest to the fan so much so that the fan is willing to commit receiving and consuming it on a regular basis. This familiarity with the text results in the fan becoming expertly knowledgeable about the text.

1.2.5. Community & Performance: All for One

Yet another main determinative characteristic of fandom is the ability to transform personal engagement into social engagement, turn spectatorial viewership into participatory culture. Viewing a regular program is not sufficient to make someone a fan, rather the fan transforms that viewing experience into some sort of *cultural activity*. This cultural activity may be sharing her feelings and thoughts about the particular content with her friends, reworking the content and disseminating it through social media channels, joining a fandom community. In such cultural activity, fandom becomes social (Jenkins, 2006). This social aspect of fandom – when exercised – becomes the link to fandom communities and performance. Matt Hills stated that the communal aspect of fandom is where and how fan identities get legitimated as *authentic 'expressions' of community commitment* (Hills, 2002, xii). The fandom communities become the sites for the rite of passage into full identification with a particular fandom.

However significant and fruitful the social aspect of fandom may be, there is also the possibility of fans who choose not to translate their consumption of their favorite texts into shared communication. There is the possibility of fans who do not exercise the social aspect of fandom, but rather engage in their object of fandom in singularity. When examining the social aspect of fandom, performance becomes part of the equation. Fandom is often adopted publically and once adopted may flourish as part of a performance. Performance is a complex term. It implies repeated doing and theatrical artificiality to a degree of self-consciousness with an outcome of measurable success or failure (Duffett, 2013, p. 27). Performance dimension of fandom may be referred to Ervin Goffman (1959-1990) who defined it broadly as human behavior that functions to create an emotional reaction in another person. Goffman suggests that the world is a stage and that regardless of

conscious intent, everyone is performing all the time (Duffett, p. 28). This reciprocity in the definition of performance ties identity to the perception and acknowledgement of the other party. The performer is to arouse an emotional reaction in another person. This point is ratified by Sandvoss who also states that fans can be seen as performers only when their identities are acknowledged by others (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 45). Such performative definitions of fandom have a tendency to view fandom as primarily a social activity, an activity in public life. Performances therefore assist in the formation of each fan's sense of socially-situated self (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 47). It serves as a reference point against which to situate oneself.

Matt Hills has also drawn attention to how performative and self-declarative behavior is always political for the fans. He states that fandom as an identity when self-declared is always performative. It becomes an identity which is (dis-)claimed and which engages in performance. Thus, fandom may never be a neutral expression. Both its status and its performance shift across cultural sites (Hills, 2002, xi-xii). Each individual either adopts or disowns her status depending on the immediate social context. Fandom being a socially recognized role or label, those people who harbor the intensity of identification described as fandom may choose to align themselves publicly as a fan or not (Duffett, 2013, p. 29). Even though the internet has rendered the social aspect of fandom more prominent, isolated, personal fandom has always been as much a possibility as social fandom.

1.2.6. Indeterminate Definitions

As an extended analysis of definitions demonstrates, the term 'fan' does not have a precise and conclusive definition. When social fandom is juxtaposed against personal fandom, the five levels of activity laid out by Jenkins (1992) take on different manifestations. A particular mode of reception may be more open to influence in terms of social fandom because of the possibility of negative stereotyping or the contagiousness of positive associations. Whereas in personal fandom, the mode of reception is more of an inner dialogue and left unexposed to

interaction with other fans. A set of critical interpretive practices is subject to similar dynamics in that; the social aspect of fandom may enrich interpretation whereas in personal fandom, interpretation remains relatively subjective and uninfluenced by others. A form of cultural production is valid regardless of the fact that it gets shared and disseminated socially or not. A fan can engage in cultural production even if it is not readily shared and made public. It is dormant, yet carries cultural significance nevertheless. An alternative social community seems to be a choice not necessarily exercised by all fans. Inclusion in a fandom related social community is more of a personal choice and does not change the essence of fandom. These activities relate to the outer expression of fandom, the performative aspect, rather than the inner expression which is most likely to be determinative in the initial stages of fandom, as well as the end of fandom. Being performative, these activities are also more susceptible to change in line with cultural context. The inner dynamics of fandom are harder to pin down or reify as they are harder to quantify and measure. A focus on the individual rather than the object of fandom also harbors the risk of individualizing each person's fandom.

These social activities related to fandom carry the potential of transformation as new technologies emerge and transform the way in which people engage with texts and interact with each other. As Cavicchi stated, 'definition of fandom lies not in any terse phrase or single image but rather in the tension between all of these relationships at any given moment. That is why fandom is so difficult to grasp' (Cavicchi, 1998, p. 107). Hills (2002) points out to how words like 'fan' and 'cult' form part of a social struggle over meaning. (p. xi) The fact that the phenomenon of fandom is woven into everyday life and popoular culture makes it pulsating and alive, thus not to be reified to a single conclusive definition.

1.3. FANS & POPULAR CULTURE

Just as it is challenging to define fandom, so it is to define popular culture. Raymond Williams (1983) identified four common uses of the term 'popular': 1) that which is liked by many people, 2) that which is considered to be inferior or

unworthy[13], 3) work that deliberately seeks to be favored by people, and 4) forms of culture that are produced by people for people. Traditional distinctions between high culture and popular culture are getting blurred due to technological advances and democratization of knowledge. John Fiske (1989) defines culture making as a social process; 'all meanings of self, of social relations, all the discourses and texts that play such important cultural roles can circulate only in relationship to the social system' (p. 1). John Fiske (1992) draws parallels between fans and Bourdieu's (1984) 'autodidacts' who are the self-taught and who utilize their self-acquired knowledge to substitiute for the perceived gap regarding their official cultural capital. Fiske further designates fandom as an intensification of popular culture.

Fan culture consists of commercial commodities of the cultural industries such as texts, star-texts and performances. What is concerning is abbout contemporary popular culture is that 'it matters so much to its fans' (Grossberg, 1992,p. 59). Fans are closely watched by culture industries who have commerical interests in fan culture, not only due to their consumption but also their feedback on market trends and preferences. The constant struggle between fans and the culture industries keep redefining products of the industry in line with the tastes of fans. 'What makes something popular is its popularity; it is, in other words, a matter of taste' (Grossberg, 1992, p. 51). One of the main diferences between official culture and fan culture is the *singularity and the multiplicity of authorship*. Official culture likes to attribute texts to particular individuals or artists with due reverence. This positioning places readers in a subordinate relationship. In contrast, popular culture consists of texts that are industrially produced and as such open to participation and reworking. This totally contradicts with a completed art object in official culture. The dominant habitus - with its reverence of official culture - denigrates the production and reception of popular culture. The fact that industrially produced texts harbor producerly characteristics - to strategically stimulate popular productivity and participation - goes unrealized and even misunderstood. The systematic denial of official cultural capital to people, brought capitalist industries

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[13] See also 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom' in the section bearing the same name.

closer to the culture of the people. Capitalist industries have come to realize that people choose to turn some of the industrially produced commodities into popular culture and reject many more. As such, fans' discrimination and selectiveness serves the formation of popular culture. The cultural capital they produce is not only highly visible, but also highly developed.

1.3.1. Visual Culture: Visual Textuality

The rise of visual culture and its consequent infiltration into everyday lives has had an altering effect on the way people see the world. In his book *How to See The World*, Nicholas Mirzoeff (2016) details the way a surplus of images has been changing everyday life. A widely-accepted definition of visual culture in the 1990s was that it was 'a history of images' (Bryson, Holly, & Moxey, 1994). Today, as the number of images that people are exposed to skyrockets, this proliferation of visuality alters the way individuals see and the way they assign meanings to what they see. Consequently, it can be stated that visual culture is directly related to textuality. The constituent parts of visual culture are not determined by medium, but rather by the interaction between viewer and viewed, namely, the *'visual event'* (Mirzoeff, 1999, 13). This interaction and the multitude of dynamics that affect it form *visual textuality*. The meanings attributed in a visual event are contingent and can only be deciphered in their historical context. Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which consumers seek information, meaning, or pleasure in an interface with visual technology (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 3). The everyday experience of the visual is prioritized through visual culture.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger was among the first to remark these developments regarding visuality. He argued that 'a world picture…does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture…The world picture does not change from an earlier medival one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age' (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 129-130). This statement reveals the modern tendency to visualize existence and make sense of the world through

visuality. W.J.T. Mitchell's (1994) *'picture theory'* is also developed further by the visual culture. He argued that some aspects of Western philosophy and science have adopted more of a pictorial, rather than textual, outlook of the world. This claim is a compelling challenge to the notion of the world as a written text. Mitchell argued that picture theory emerges from 'the realization that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and the visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality' (1994, p. 16). As a result of the tendency to visualize existence, the world-as-a-text has been replaced by the world-as-a-picture (Mirzoeff, 1999). In this statement, pure visuality is not implied. Rather, any pursuit to define culture in solely linguistic terms is prone to be disrupted and challenged by the visual.

The 'network society' was a term coined by Manuel Castells (1996) to define the way of social life that takes its form from electronic information networks. The Internet was first created by the US military to enable the exchange of messages should there be a nuclear war (Abbate, 1999). In 2013, the average American was estimated to spend more time online than in front of the television (Mirzoeff, 2016, p. 145). In 2015, 45 percent of the global population had some sort of access to the Internet. This is up 806 percent since 2000. Google estimates 5 billion people on the Internet by the end of the decade. This makes the internet the first universal medium. The Internet is the first medium that is truly collective, a media commons.

Primary manifestation of network society is through visual culture in everyday life. The surplus of images that has been infiltrating everyday lives commenced in the nineteenth century. The historian Jean-Louis Comolli (1980) famously described the nineteenth century as a *'frenzy of the visible'* due to the invention of photography, film and X-ray. Thus, the nineteenth century was also when visual media were democratized and no longer belonging to the elite and the priviledged. Currently, Americans alone take more photographs every two minutes than were made in the entire nineteenth century. With all the photographs and the

videos that have become our way to see the world, the emerging global society is visual. In his famous essay '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*', the German ciritic Walter Benjamin (1936) argued that theoretically, the idea of the unique image was destroyed by photography because of the possibility of making and distributing identical and infinite copies of any photograph. This idea is now more pronounced than ever because of digital media and the rate at which images are created, recreated and shared. The British art historian John Berger created a television series and an accompanying book for the BBC named *Ways of Seeing* where Berger (1973) defined the image as 'a sight which has been recreated or reproduced.' The *'image'* assigns a visible form to time. The instant becomes part of the past, belonging to past time, as soon as the shutter closes. This relationship between image and time also harbors influences in fan culture.

In 2013, '*selfie*' was announced to be the Word of the Year by the Oxford English Dictionary and was defined as 'a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website.' The selfie is significant because it exemplifies how what used to be pertaining only to the elite has become a global visual culture. The selfie is also significant because it expands and develops the long history of the self-portrait.[14] When a good-quality camera was placed on the iPhone 4 in 2010, the selfie soared. This single technological development had immense consequences in the way people related to images and enabled everyone with such a device to explore becoming a creative agent. According to Mirzoeff, the selfie is a new form of digital conversation that is predominantly visual (2016, p. 63). In terms of content, two kinds of selfie can be specified: 1) a performance for the particular person's digital circle, and 2) selfie as digital conversation. The first kind of selfie is instrumental in fame related practices. Selfie as a performance - combined with access to social media channels - democratized the creation of star-text by enabling individuals to have claims to fame by their own efforts. The second kind of selfie is invaluable in

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[14] See related section in 'History of Fandom'.

establishing and maintaining digital conversations with a community. People assemble a world of pieces, assuming that what is seen is both coherent and equivalent to reality (Mirzoeff, 2016, p. 9).

Roland Barthes (1981) called the ability of photography to summon unexpected and unintended meaning the *punctum*, which he opposed to the obvious and the generally available meanings of the *stadium*. This is what the viewer brings to the image regardless of the intent of the photographer and exists totally at the level of the connotation rather than denotation. For most fans, the object of fandom in photographs is the punctum. Interestingly, the stadium and the punctum overlap in photographs of the object of fandom. The viewer scans the image of the object of fandom and checks it against a mental archive of remembered references with a personal attraction to particular aspects of the image that is derived from whimsy, desire and memory (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 240).

1.3.2. The Cultural Economy of Fandom

In *The Cultural Economy of Fandom,* Fiske (1992) analyzes fandom's position within popular culture and proposes three main characteristics of fandom: Discrimination & Distinction, Productivity & Participation and Capital Accumulation. According to Fiske, fandom is a common feature of popular culture in industrial societies. There is a process of selection that is typical to fandom from a repertoire of mass-produced and mass-distributed texts and reworking these favored texts into a popular culture that bears similarities as well as differences from the culture of more 'normal' audiences. The dominant value system typically denigrates those cultural norms that fandom welcomes such as pop music, Hollywood stars, romance novels, comics and cult films. Therefore, fandom becomes associated with subordinated groups of people by any combination of gender, age and race. All popular audiences engage in semiotic productivity[15] but what sets fans apart is how they transform this semiotic productivity into textual

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[15] Fiske describes *'semiotic productivity'* as the making of meanings related to social identity and social experience utilizing the semiotic resources of cultural commodity and is characteristic to popular culture.

productivity[16] and put it into circulation among people of similar interests that form the fan community. Fiske calls this fan culture that employs its own systems of production and distribution, a *'shadow cultural economy'*. The shadow attribute corresponds to its position outside of the cultural industries, while harboring similarities with them.

Bourdieu's previous work (1984) has been greatly influential in fan studies. Fiske also refers to Bourdieu's work as the foundation of his proposed 'shadow cultural economy' of fan culture. Bourdieu described culture as an economy that distributes its resources unequally, thereby distinguishing between the proviledged and the deprived. This cultural system promotes certain cultural norms and reinforces them through formal education system and institutions such as art galleries, concert halls and museums. This formalized reinforcement constitute a *'high'* culture that gets legitimated socially, as well as institutionally. Fiske calls this the *'official culture'* and juxtaposes it against *popular culture*. While popular culture is not socially legitimated, nor institutionally supported, it does not distinguish between those who possess it and those who do not, in the way official culture does.

Bourdieu (1984) elaborates the ways in which cultural tastes and economic status correlate within social space. In his model, he offers a two-dimensional map of society which consists of two axis; the vertical or north-south corresponding to the amount of economic and cultural capital, while the horizontal or east-west corresponds to the type of economic and cultural capital. The left or western side of the map includes those higher in cultural capital than economic capital. The right or eastern side of the map includes those who are higher in economic capital than cultural capital. At the top are those who possess both cultural and economic capital and at the bottom of the map are those who are deprived of both, whom he calls *'the proletaritat'*. Both economic and cultural capital can be inherited or acquired. Acquired cultural capital is disseminated by formal education system and directly

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[16] 'Fiske describes *'textual productivity'* as the more closely related to the artistic productions validated by the official culture. Fans produce and circulate texts within their communities crafted of high production qualities like the official culture.

promotes the knowledge and appreciation of certain canonical texts in literature, art, film and music. Inherited cultural capital can be traced in lifestyle through symbols such as fashion, decorative materials, social manners and preferences regarding everyday lifestyle choices. He also proposes the concept of the *habitus* which corresponds to the notion of a habitat, the habitants and the dynamics of inhabiting it. It constitutes of the position within the social space, along with the habituated ways of living and thinking that go with it.

Building upon Bourdieu's model, Fiske (1989) adds class, gender and age as axes of subordination with an emphasis on forms of cultural capital produced outside and often against official cultural capital, by subordinate social formations, namely *'popular cultural capital'*. He designates fans as active producers and users of such capital, forging a form of popular culture. The dynamics of fan culture offer to be a major source of self-esteem among fan community through fan knowledge and appreciation. In spite of the fact that fandom may be typical of the socially and culturally deprived, there are many fans who are determined in accumulating official cultural capital, yet wish to differentiate from the habitus of the official cultural capital through opposition. The advantages of such disposition in popular cultural capital are the pleasures and esteem of one's invovement in a community. As such, Fiske likens fans to Bourdieu's 'autodidacts' who are the self-taught and who utilize their self-acquired knowledge to substitiute for the perceived gap regarding their official cultural capital. Fiske further defines fandom as an intensification of popular culture and proposes three headings as the main characters of fandom: Discrimination and Distinction, Productivity and Participation and Capital Accumulation.

1.3.2.1. Discrimination & Distinction

Fans discriminate between what is within their fandom and what is not. This discrimination can also be traced in distinctions between fan community and others. This social sphere is strictly marked and both sides patrol the difference; while regular audiences emphasize their non-fandom, fans try to embody those

characteristics of a true fan. Textual and social discrimination is an ongoing process within fan culture and its outer boundaries. Bourdieu (1984) argued that subordinate culture is functional and must serve a purpose, be *for* something. There is evidence in fan research to indicate that fans indeed gain certain social attributes as a result of their fandom, such as *self-confidence* and *self-empowerment* that their association with fandom provides. Radway (1984) argued that the woman romance fans were better able to assert themselves in partiarchal marriages as a result of their reading. Such fan discrimination encompasses selection of texts and star-texts that offer fans opportunities to make functional meanings of their social identities and social experiences. Yet another form of fan discrimination relates more to the aesthetic discrimination of official culture and determines tendencies towards particular artists and texts, even ranking them in a hierarchy. This form of fan discrimination serves to canonize some texts within fan culture while excluding others. Fiske (1992) states that fans incline towards *authenticity of texts* as a criterion of discrimination. They discriminate authenticity of texts and rank authentic texts higher, even exclude those that lose their authenticity.

1.3.2.2 Productivity & Participation

Fiske (1992) claims that 'popular culture is produced by the people out of the products of the cultural industries: it must be understood, therefore, in terms of productivity, not of reception' (p. 37). He proposes to categorize fan production in three categories that occur at the interface between the industrially-produced cultural commodity and the everyday life of fans: semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity and textual productivity. *Semiotic productivity* consists of the making of meanings related to social identity and social experience utilizing the semiotic resources of cultural commodity and is characteristic to popular culture. *Enunciative productivity* encompasses the sharing of made meanings through speech, within a face-to-face or oral culture, thus claiming a public form. While semiotic productivity has inner dynamics affecting personal sphere and resonating as empowered social behavior, enunciative productivity has outer dynamics,

affecting social sphere as fan talk. Enunciation is the use of a semiotic system and as such encompasses ways of constructing a social identity that helps to assert one's inclusion in a particular fan community, such as styling of hair and preference of clothes. Enunciative productivity is significant in putting made meanings into social circulation, however it can solely occur within immediate social relationships. *Textual productivity* is the more closely related to the artistic productions validated by the official culture. Fans produce and circulate texts within their communities crafted of high production qualities like the official culture. The difference is not of competence, but of economics. Fans do not produce texts for monetary purposes. They are also not distributed on a mass-scale. Fan culture makes no attempt to circulate its texts outside of its fan community. Fiske (1992) coins these texts as *'narrowcast'*, not broadcast. (p. 39) These fans gain prestige within their community but are not particularly looking to earn money for their creative work. It actually becomes a matter of distrust within the community to make a profit.

Fans are extremely participatory, particularly within social communities that share similar interests. Fiske (1992) points out that fan production extends beyond production of new texts to 1) the construction of the original text by trying to participate in the production (Tulloch & Moran, 1986) and 2) the distribution (D'Acci, 1994) of the texts. They become part of the performance by getting closer to their object of fandom. This is also similar to Bourdieau's (1984) characterization of the subordinate habitus: the proletarian habitus refuses to leave distance with the text and refuses to distance the text from everyday life. This proximity to text and the object of fandom becomes a significant factor in *immersion* in the text. To be truly immersed in a text, a fan needs to become one with the text, leaving no distance. This proximity leads to the feeling that fans in fact possess their object of fandom which interestingly contradicts with the fascination and reverence fans feel for their object of fandom. Still, the deference that is present within the high culture - towards the text and the artist - typically lacks within fandom. Fans' desire to participate begins at the moment of reception and in fan culture, this moment becomes the moment of production. Interestingly, fans not only participate in the

original industrial text but also expand and rework it which change the meaning of *the primary text* and in so doing, produce their own cultural capital.

1.3.2.3. Fan Criticism as Cultural Production

In terms of cultural production and participation, fans have been the most active community long before the phenomenology of fandom was formally recognized. In this respect, various forms of cultural production and cultural exchange in fan culture constitute fertile grounds for positive interpretations, as well as negative ones. The different types of fans such as sports fans, science fiction fans, music fans and media fans all engage in at least five levels of activity. Among these activities is one that states 'fandom involves a particular set of critical and interpretive practices' (Jenkins, 1992, p. 284). Criticism and interpretation of cultural artifacts have been a canonical activity for media fans in particular. Fans know their common texts inside out. They possess expertise in terms of knowledge of common media texts like no other. As such, Jenkins rightfully stated that organized fandom is 'an institution of 'theory and criticism' (Jenkins, 1992, p. 88). Fans evaluate and debate common texts within their communities and by doing so, they demonstrate fan cultural competencies among their peers.

Critical and interpretive practices being so vital to fan activites that shape fan culture, theory formation and evaluation is an ongoing process within fan subcultures. Jenkins demonstrates (1992) how this vital activity challenges Certeau's (1988) 'scriptural economy', where theory and criticism are specialized activities reserved solely for the educated elite and the priviledged members of the society. This elitistic suggestion is demystified by fan culture through the systematic building and sharing of knowledge within their community and in turn, feeds Bernard Sharatt's (1980) suggestion that popular expertise mirrors the knowledge production of the scholars. The particularities of fan vocabulary pertaining to certain texts are extremely elaborate. Popular culture is a playground for fans; they keep meta-texts in circulation long after the producers decide to end

their immediate visibility, by appropriating meanings, creating fan content such as fan fiction, slash and filk.

These forms of cultural production and cultural exchange constitute a significant aspect of fan culture. By theorizing and criticising, fans add value to the cultural formation of knowledge. Jenkins draws similarities with Pierre Levy's (1997) 'knowledge space' and demonstrates how the numerous ways of cultural exchange within the fan communities add up to a richer, more diverse and informal knowledge space. Even though, fan criticism is a vital aspect of fan culture, it is imperative to make a clear distinction between constructive criticism and destructive criticism. Constructive criticism aims to better the common text in question through participation in the related knowledge space, whereas destructive criticism is mean and unproductive in its nature and conduct.

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish between fans and anti-fans[17]. It seems likely that while fans utilize criticism as a tool in the betterment process of the meta-text and this is only one of the activities that they engage in the domain of fan culture, anti-fans identify themselves as first and foremost by being against the common text(s). This positioning of the anti-fan as an opposition agency may become an interfering factor in the enhancement of the knowledge space. By focusing on the negative and holding an oppositional position, anti-fans hold the risk of overlooking the positive interpretations of a common text that may serve to further enhance the related knowledge space.

1.3.2.4. Capital Accumulation

Fiske (1992) points out to contradictory relationship of similarities and differences between fan cultural capital and official cultural capital. They both reside in the knowledge and appreciation of texts, performers and events. However, fans' objects of fandom are a part of popular culture and are excluded from official cultural capital. *Knowledge accumulation* is crucial in both. Industrial texts are

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[17] See a detailed discussion on anti-fans in related section with the name:'Anti-Fans and Non-Fans'.

commercially designed and distributed so that fans have access to information about the object of fandom. Access to and possession of such fan knowledge becomes determinative in distinguishing fan communities and serves as social distinction. Accumulation of knowledge is a source of power and gives prestige to the bearer of the most knowledge. Fan cultural knowledge is utilized to improve fan participation and reinforce fans' power over the primary text. As Fiske (1992) states, textual knowledge is used for different purposes in the dominant and popular habitus. It serves to discriminate in the dominant habitus and to participate in the popular habitus (p. 43). Knowledge about the object of fandom is used to enhance appreciation of the text. This knowledge serves to enhance fan's power in the popular habitus because the non-fan has no access to this kind of knowledge about the text.

Collection of objects is applicable to both popular and official cultural capital but harbors significant differences. Fans collect in quantity and not necessarily in economic quality. Fan collections are inclusive, unlike high culture collections that are based on exclusivity. It is the extent of the collection of mass-produced fan objects that becomes the bearer of value in fan culture. The only exception is the first editions that accumulate more economic value - as well as convertibility - with age and rarity.

1.4. TEXTS & TEXTUALITY

Sanvoss defines fandom as 'the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text' (2005, p. 8). Thus, 'fans', 'texts' and 'fan texts' are interwoven within the scope of fan culture. Meaning changes. It changes depending on the context it is in. If a distinction is to be made betwen literary texts and fan texts, there would be two predominant differences. The first is the *variety of textual forms* regarding fandom. Fans engage with and incorporate a multitude of textual forms in their creative endeavors: written texts, audio texts, visual texts, audivisual texts and hyper texts. The second is the way in which texts are *formed across media*. Tracing the textuality of fandom is equivalent to tracing the creativity

of fans. What truly distinguishes fans' interest in texts is their interest in what lies behind the visible façade. Hills (2002) makes a distinction between popular texts and popular icons as possible objects of fandom. Popular texts are often authored and controlled by copyright and licence holders, whereas popular icons are not deliberately authored texts. The unique attribute of fan texts is not in the text itself but rather in the object of fandom that gets read as texts by fans. Therefore, objects of fandom become texts to fans ample with meanings far from what may be deciphered by the standard audience. The process of deciphering what lies behind the façade is a primary component of fan textuality. Fans rework signs and symbols associated with a text so as to claim it as their own. Fan textuality constitutes of infinite possibilities for negotiated meanings and interpretations that transced beyond the original text.

The shift in textual boundaries is an attribute of fan culture. Fan textuality reestablishes the boundaries of textuality by annuling those set by the producer and claiming those set by the reader, namely the fan (Sandvoss, 2005). Fans are able to define textual boundaries as a result of technological advances which reshape the relationship of the audiences with the texts. Hypertextuality of the internet, as well as the seriality of television enable and direct audiences to actively reconstruct boundaries of texts. What was once named as textual fields is revisited as a 'field of gravity' to designate a fundamental meaning structure through which all texts are interpreted. This structure of meaning serves as a backdrop that brings forth the meaning within texts. Intertextuality of fan texts is a direct consequence of this field of gravity; as the gravity shifts, so does the epicenter of fan interest, meanwhile forming new intersections with other fan texts within the same gravitational field. Intertextuality is a common characteristic of fan textuality because fans make meanings through reworking texts and bringing pieces together, weaving those pieces in new ways to create new meanings and thus enriching the original texts' palette of meanings, meanwhile reestablishing the boundaries of texts through negotiations.

Drawing on Genette (1997), Jonathan Gray names the single episode of text repatched by fans as 'paratexts' that 'infringes upon the text and invades its

meaning-making process' (2006, p. 36). As fans rework texts the balance between paratexts and urtexts shift so much so that 'we actually consume some texts through paratetxs and supportive intertexts, the text itself becoming expendable' (2006, p. 37). The reworking of fan texts - and intertextuality embedded in their coming to life - constitute the difference between literary texts and mediated texts, namely *fan texts*. Barthes stressed the significance of the reader in comparison to the author and emphasized the potentiality of meaning-making held by the readers. 'A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination' (Barthes, 1977). He stated that the 'birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author' (Barthes, 1977, 147-48). Similarly, Sanvoss defined reading as a dialogue between the reader and the text itself (Sandvoss, 2005).

Fan culture and the new forms of textuality that came to life - as a result of intertextuality inherent in fandom - have shifted the focus of literary theory from the text itself *to the readers and the reading*. Wolfgang Iser (1971, 1978) argued that texts acquired meanings only through being read. He pointed out to textual elements that came alive through their interaction with the reader. He diverted from approaches regarding textuality that gave birth to fan studies in his belief that readers strive inherently to 'normalize' texts when they encounter textual gaps. They do this based on their own knowledge and experience, later described as 'horizon of expectation' by Jauss (1982). Iser also pointed out to a reflexive engagement that carries the potential of bringing forth what had remained hidden (1978, p. 109). Reflexivity of mediated textuality renders the text open.

1.4.1. The Text & The Audience

The relationships between audiences and texts have been subject to drastic changes. 'In contemporary society, everyone becomes an audience all the time' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 68). The perception of media and texts as powerful, audiences as passive receivers have been shifting. Especially since the 1980s, the perception of media as the all-powerful imposer of ideologies has been challenged in theory and research (Gamson, 1994). The conception of the audience

as the passive side within the media communication mechanism is no longer valid. The interactive mediums that were made possible by the technological developments of the Internet have enabled audiences to shift the power balance in their favor. Audiences are constructing their own cultural environment in a constant manner, utilizing the resources that are available to them (Grossberg, 1992, p. 53). The active audience is interfering with the texts, consuming, recreating and reshaping the messages all at once. The decoding/encoding dichotomy is more complex than ever, gaining different meanings for different audiences. Different texts appeal to different audiences with different propensities to engage (Davis, 2013). The relationship between the producers, the texts and the audiences demonstrate varying levels of interpretations in meanings. The controlled environment of the television era for the producers is no longer valid and they are experimenting with both traditional and untraditional texts to gain a better understanding of the new audiences. The endless flow of media messages and the interaction-seeking audiences form a hub of recreated, reshaped texts that have a life of their own.

The notion that meaning is singular and static is no longer valid; there are as many possibilities for meanings as there are audiences and their interpretations. The encoding process of popular texts has made Umberto Eco's (1989) 'open work' a reality. The producers are looking for closure so as to limit the potential meanings of a text for its preferred meanings, whereby forming tension with the audiences who are looking for openness in their negotiations of meanings for a certain text. Texts as open works have become negotiation grounds for audiences and producers. Medium and context affect the meanings of texts immensely and it is not always possible to foresee the domains of meanings a specific text is carried onto by different audiences at different times. For a text to have impact, it has to communicate to the audience in the way in which the audience finds appropriate to incorporate, accommodate, alter or reject media reality (Gamson, 1994). Thus, the focus shifted from the producers to the texts and audiences; at times, audiences being the producers of texts. As mass media lost its dominance to the Internet and its various interactive channels, the fragmentation of media channels has also led to

the uncontrollable fragmentation of texts. Texts are created as medium specific or as medium prone; meaning, in a way so as to hold the integrity of the message independent of the medium. These alternative methods of text production are subject to flows between linked elements; messages are no longer solely encoded by the producers, the audiences have become the decoders as well as the encoders of texts, taking on different roles in a multitude of textual environments.

The audiences in current interactive, visual media environments are active in multiplication of meanings associated with texts. A specific text may gain new meanings and serve different purposes in line with the needs of the audiences depending on the context in which the text is consumed (J. A. Radway, 1984). This contextual characteristic of texts has laid an authentic quality to the text itself; it is almost as if the text is omnipotent and may be reshaped as the audiences see fit. Texts can have different meanings, in different contexts for different people (Grossberg, 1992). This newly found omnipotence is being negotiated between the texts and the audiences. The audiences interfere with the texts, interact, co-create, recreate and even create the texts, depending on the specifics of the medium and the context. In becoming such an integral part of the production mechanism, the audiences at times become the texts themselves; as objects of fame with their own creations (McKee, 2004). This interchangeability of roles between producers, audiences and texts is a result of the multi-faceted channels of communication. The multiplications of texts throughout the various communication vehicles and the constant production of meanings through these texts with and for the audiences blur the lines between the roles and the players. Producers become texts and audiences just like audiences become producers and texts. Texts are the focal point as objects, narratives or people, taking on specific characteristics as they travel in between various mediums and various audiences.

The text as the medium is the feature that surpasses limitations of time and space and enables openness of the work (McLuhan, 1964). Everything in everyday life becomes a toolbox for text creation. Objects, persons and narratives all serve in text construction. Texts travel between mediums as mediums travel between texts. This liquidity enables the irrelevance of time and space, thus resulting in the

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omnipotence of the text for as long as the text is relevant to the cultural context. Constant flow of countless texts through a multitude of communication channels makes relevance and timelessness more important than ever.

1.4.2. The Object of Fame/Fandom as Text

The construction of public individuals or the objects of fame is a systematic production of media and entertainment industries. The object of fame may be a persona or an entertainment/media product. Objects of fame have also been described as a fundamental mechanism in the construction and maintenance of the links between consumer capitalism, democracy and individualism (Marshall, 1997). As the development of the Internet significantly increased the capacity of the audiences to influence the production of texts, it has also changed the dynamics of fame. As objects of fame are 'turned into a demotic strategy of identity formation', the domain of fame extends to almost all areas of everyday life (Graeme, 2004, p. 20). Identity formation around objects of desire is a modern phenomenon that has been the direct result of the rise of advertising and marketing efforts to facilitate consumption. Fame has historically been constructed 'as a result of mass media taking a particular interest in a news story' (David, 2000, p. 19). The production of texts as vehicles of consumption is related to the same mechanism. In order to reach the masses and attract the attention of audiences, objects of fame are constructed and served as texts through various communication channels. The saturation of the communication channels with certain texts is the way to fame. Thus, specific narratives are constructed around objects of fame and these narratives aid in the production of the object of fame; may it be a persona, a show or a book, any product of media/entertainment industries may be subject to this process.

The construction of paratexts and transmedia around the objects of fame carries the systematic production of fame a step further and ensures multiple meeting points of the object of fame with the audiences. Transmedia products appeal to different audiences with different propensities to engage and elicit fanlike

engagement (Davis, 2013). They induce engagement as their core strategy by being present across media. Fanlike engagement and fanlike media consumption behavior is the main goal of media companies in constructing transmedia products. Often, production of texts related to the objects of fame is realized by the more enthusiastic audiences; namely, fans. This binary process of production and consumption is demonstrated through displaying textuality at different levels – creating primary, secondary and tertiary texts. Objects of fame interpreted as mass-mediated texts and fans interpreted as dedicated audience members, fans have been shown as passionate consumers of star-texts and intertexts. Fans demonstrate different levels of engagement with texts. It is important to 'distinguish between different kinds of objects of fame in terms of the media through which they are predominantly produced and in terms of the industry from which they have emerged' (Graeme, 2004, p. 18). The context is important in the ability of the text to appeal to different audiences. The contemporary expansion of the possibilities of fame, along with disconnection of fame from achievement may be linked to cultural influences such as personal freedom and the urge to be unique (Braudy, 1986). Media saturation in a systematic way seems to be the only prerequisite of constructing an object of fame.

An object of fame is inspected as 'a media process that is coordinated by an industry and as a commodity or text which is productively consumed by audiences and fans' (Graeme, 2004, p. 20). This strategically coordinated media process as text is the very construction of fame itself. Objects are attached to fame through the creation of texts to facilitate capitalist consumption. Objects of fame have become part of everyday experiences, constituting a cultural manifestation of ideology of power in disguise. The systematic saturation of media channels with these texts not only serves to keep the objects of fame relevant, but also feeds the mechanism of fame culture. The rise of ordinary people to media prominence may be described as a new form of freedom (Graeme, 2004). The newly heterogeneous commercial media sphere opens up the possibility of fame. The production of texts by audiences may be attempts at becoming a part of the contemporary fame culture. The interplay between texts and audiences carry the potential of surprise in the possibility of

instant dispersion of popular texts. This feature of current media channels blurs the line between the famous and the ordinary, harboring the mostly elusive meeting point of the fans and the famous.

According to cultural studies writer Lawrence Grossberg, (Grossberg, 1992, p. 56) fans have 'a different sensibility' and relationship with the objects of their fandom. Grossberg views the fan relationship as positive, immediate and based on an emotional process of identifying or investing. The emotional process of identifying and investing make the attachment stronger than non-fans. Fans claim that they 'love' their objects of fandom. Fandom requires engagement in activities related to the object of fandom. Duffett (2013) points this out as a frequent and regular process of watching and listening which included engaging with the texts more than once and returning to them in a repeated manner.

1.4.3. Fan Reading

One of the characteristics of fandom to distinguish it from a 'normal' audience member is the *'excessive reading'* that results in the construction and circulation of meaning making in popular culture (Fiske, 1989). The reading of fan texts strives for familiarity and the fulfillment of expectations. The revisiting of texts serves familiarity and the reworking of texts serves the fulfillment of expectations. Fandom as a mode of reading constitutes a particular form of engagement with the text based on the presupposed familiarity. This presupposed familiarity inherent in the readings performed by fandom consequently results in more rigid expectations. This is interesting because the rigidity of expectations imposed by the reader herself also harbors the potential to impede the flow of the reading as previously claimed to facilitate opening.

'Fandom celebrates not exceptional texts but rather *exceptional readings* (though its interpretive practice makes it impossible to maintain a clear or precise distinction between the two)'(Jenkins, 1992, p. 284) Fans bring livelihood and longevity to texts through their readings. They make the texts come alive for them and then share these texts with their community. Fans relate to mass media on a

constant basis and draw upon it as a resource to be utilized in everyday life. In this ongoing relationship, fans remain in a state of flux, changing and adopting in response to cultural conditions. Jenkins (1992) describes fan culture as a subculture that exists in the 'borderlands' between mass culture and everyday life. Its identity and artifacts are constructed from resources borrowed from texts that are already in circulation. Fan culture is a multidimensional phenomenon and is complex in its many forms of participation and varying levels of engagement. Fans pioneered the progression of media reception by audiences; the immediate reception of broadcast gave way to the construction of alternative texts and alternative social identities. Insistency of fans to derive meaning from texts that have been overlooked by others is what deems textuality so central to fandom and fan studies. Its fluid boundries and its elusive nature defies any attempts to reify it. Its geographic dispersement, underground status, and relation to free economy are characteristics that make fan culture impossible to pin down. The texts come to life within specific fan communities, circulating anonymously, existing in active dialogue and opening in textual possibilities. Pleasures in fannish interpretation, combined with fans as active producers and manipulators of meanings furnish fandom with the dynamic nature that is able to adopt to historical conditions that affect cultural environments.

Fan culture treats popular texts as if they harbor the same degree of significance as canonical texts and in so doing, fosters popular texts by assigning them alternative meanings through fan reading. This constitutes practices such as elaborate deciphering, close examination and repeated, prolonged reading that enable fans to engage in active dialogue with texts. Its object choices, the degree of its intensity and the type of reading skills it employs provide uniqueness to the ways in which fans approach texts. The aesthetic distance suggested by Bourdieu (1984) is rejected by enthusiastically embracing favored disposable texts of mass culture. Institutional authority and expertise do not apply to domains of fandom, rather fans claim their own right to form interpretations, manipulate meanings and construct new cultural artifacts. When fans become unsatisfied with popular texts, they start to explore the unrealized possibilities within the texts. This very effort turns them into active participants in the construction of textual meanings. Through active

participation, fans cease to be simply an audience but rather active producers and manipulators of meanings. Nevertheless, fans' relationship to the text vascillate between the coveted text ripe with possibilities and the producer's regulated text. They are always painfully aware that they do not hold ownership to the original texts and that someone else holds the power to set the fate of the characters in ways that may contradict with fans' interests.

This ongoing struggle for possession of the text and thereby control over its meanings is characterized by de Certeau's (1988) 'poaching' analogy. He speaks of a *'scriptual economy'* whereby the efforts of institutionally sanctioned interpreters are about restraining the 'multiple voices' of popular orality and regulate the production and circulation of meanings by textual poachers. Textual poaching is a rebellion against formal education which encourages authorial reading and discourages any deviation form what the author originally meant within the text. De Certeau's notion of 'poaching' is not a theory of 'misreading', but rather of appropriation (Jenkins, 1992, p. 33). His model offers freedom about the nature of textual meaning and with this freedom, competing and contradictory interpretations become valid. In this aspect, fandom serves as a channel for the silenced and marginalized oppositional voices. Fans pioneer the mining, refining and reworking the texts of a vast media culture for alternative uses.

In audience studies, fans set themselves distinctively apart with their disposition from a *'commodity audience'* – a narrowly elected segment of the TV audience which can be sold to national networks and advertisers. The commodity audience reflects neither mass taste nor the taste of an intellectual elite, rather serves as numbers to run ratings by (Meehan, 1990). With their textual poaching and creativity in reworking texts, fans assign their own proximity to their favored texts. Some argue that fans' efforts to protect favorite aspects of texts clash with the producer's creative freedom. They constantly negotiate their autonomy and their ownership of the text with the culture industries. Fans have created 'an impresisve body of 'fan art' – visual, literary and musical – which extends the boundaries of the primary text in directions that could not have been forseen by the producers. The conflicting interests of producers and consumers, authors and readers is ever

present as indicated by de Certeau's term 'poaching' (1988). Producers' attempts to regulate the production and circulation of popular meanings are constantly challenged by fans who struggle with meanings imposed upon them.

De Certeau also offers the notion of 'nomads', indicating that fans move from textual territory to textual territory, not necessarily claiming a permanent ownership of property, but rather appropriating new texts and making new cultural artifacts. Janice Radway supported this notion and asserted that audiences were 'free-floating' agents who 'fashion narratives, stories, objects and practices from myriad bits and pieces of prior cultural productions' (1988, p. 363). Fans enjoy making intertextual connections across a vast media culture. They read textually and intertextually while creating juxtapositions between texts and cultural artifacts. Through these juxtapositions, they draw into the primary text's orbit various cultural artifacts from a multitude of historical contexts. Fans differ in their relationship with texts in that, while some are exclusively commited to a single object of fandom, others utilize individual favored texts as a point of entry into the broader fan community that links them to an intertextual network of popular texts - consisting of a multitude of programs, books, comics, films and songs. An extended period of involvement within fandom gives way to bouncing from one favored text to another, fueling further their cultural interests and relationship to popular textuality. As such, fan reading is a social process that forges individual interpretations and meanings through ongoing conversation with other readers. These conversations expand the experience of the text and carry it to territories beyond its initial consumption.

1.4.4. Anti-Fans, Non-Fans & Differing Textual Fields

The concepts of anti-fan and non-fan are significant because they pertain to fandom and may serve to better understand the concept of ex-fandom. In his article *New Audiences, New Textualities,* Jonathan Gray (2003) analyzes the broad variety of interactions that occur between texts and audiences. He suggests that anti-fan and non-fan engagements with texts harbor overlooked dynamics that could further

enrich media research. He details how these engagaments differ in their proximity to texts and textuality shifts in accordance to viewer engagement levels.

The varying degrees of viewing and textuality harbors new territories of exploration in contemporary media textuality. Gray (2003) offers a model of textuality based on positioning the text as an atom. Similar to atoms that collide and intermingle on a continuous basis, texts are intertwined and in motion by dense networks of intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1986; Bennett & Woollacott, 1987). This analogy clarifies how it is not possible to regard any text as truly independent or stable. He emphasizes how the meanings and associations within a text are open to shifts in time, as the text comes into being through the viewer, according to the viewer's particular 'mattering maps' (Grossberg, 1992). Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998, p. 124) suggested that fans were nomadic in how they moved across and between texts and read intertextually. Gray claims that rather than nomads, fans are like tourists, because they always relate their findings back to the textual nucleus. The very center of the text is where the 'close reader' is positioned, remaining within the range of the supposed meanings imposed by the text itself, refraining from the text's outlying regions and interactions with other texts. On the outlying regions of the text, however, lies the reoccurring interpretation as one reads, constantly changing the meaning of the text for the reader.

Gray's focus on television textuality may very well be superimposed onto current media landsape with seriality having become a norm rather than an exception in films, books and texts in general. It's extremely difficult to think of a text that stands alone in its singularity anymore. The media landscape has become flooded with texts and they all intermingle and collide with one another in some way. Gray's elaboration of television textuality and the effects of the weeks between episodes that 'open up a text, allowing all manner of intruders and intertexts to inflect our textual gestalt, to pull us as readers away from the work and to set us in motion' (2003, p. 69) may be applied to the media contemporary media landscape. Even the fact that the internet and social media have anabled audiences to roam around gathering bits and pieces of information about each and every single text is evidence to prove the general tendency towards *opening in textuality*. As

Gray points out, fans play a significant role in this opening because of their active disposition to look 'outside' the nucleus of the text, to intruders and intertexts in their attempt to negotiate various readings of the text. The vast spectrum of involvement with the text harbors potentially underdeveloped understandings related to textuality.

Gray proposes to study the negatively charged *anti-fans* to gain a better understanding of varying textualities. Anti-fans are described to be 'the realm not necessarily of those who are against fandom per se, but of those who strongly dislike a given text or genre, considering it inane, stupid, morally bankrupt and/or aesthetic drivel' (2003, p. 70). Unlike fans who demonstrate varying levels of involvement with a text, anti-fans are bothered, insulted or assaulted by the presence of a text. Often, it is not the text itself that causes such uncomfort but rather its implications to the anti-fan. This dislike may at times be reason enough to form social groups around this shared negative opinion about a particular text, namely 'hatesites'. Gray's insight regarding *anti-fans' 'distant' reading* is significant because it uncovers how merely constructing an image of the text may lead to reacting to and against it. He states 'clearly anti-fans construct an image of the text – and, what is more, an image they feel is accurate – sufficiently enough that they can react to and against it' (2003, p. 71). This negative prospensity towards a text without having really read or viewed the text is an indication 'that people engage in distant reading, responding to texts that have not been viewed, and more importantly if we can track exactly how the anti-fan's text or text stand-in has been pieced together…' (2003, p. 71). The findings could illuminate how a text can take on some form of meaning in anti-fans' lives even though they've only engaged in distant reading.

Gerard Ganette's (1997) work on 'paratexts' is conspicuous. Paratexts are those semi-textual fragments - such as the cover, preface, review, typeface and afterword of a book – that surround and position the work. Paratexts are not truly independent of the work but they affect how a text is interpreted substantially. Ganette describes paratexts as providing 'an airlock that helps the reader pass without too much respiratory difficulty from one world to the other' (1997, p. 408).

He points out that a text cannot exist without a paratext, however paratexts can exist without texts and hence can create texts. As such, Gray associates the relationship anti-fans have with texts as solely paratextual, based only on 'reading' the text at its 'airlock' outskirts - like media talk and overheard conversations about the particular text. Thus, the knowledge of the anti-fan comes from outside her own reading or viewing, but rather from her overhearing. Paratextual assemblage then serves to position the individual in regards to a particular text. The conscious and unconscious gathering of bits and pieces that make up the paratextual assemblage forms the basis of one's position related to a particular text. Gray also points out to the nature of affective involvement and how dislike towards a text may be as strong of an emotion and reaction as like. He also mentions that there are always expectations behind dislike that include what a text is supposed to be like, whether it is worthy of time and energy, what kind of morality and aesthetics texts should adopt and what is expected of the general media tendencies. He proposes expectations, values and quality as notions that inflect anti-fans' dislike and disapproval of texts. An investigation of textuality in this manner can shed light to what becomes attached to a text – 'ancillary' and 'secondary' – whether paratext, intertext or context.

Gray defines *non-fans* as 'those viewers or readers who do view or read a text, but not with any intense involvement' (2003, p. 74). Unlike the discipline that is required of a fan, a non-fan is more open and nebulous in its likelihood of flowing in and out of various texts and viewing positions. Similar to anti-fans, non-fans experience texts at their outskirts, mostly through paratexts. 'Even many 'fans' are lax fans, watching when they can rather than when they must, loving a text but watching it only occasionally, perhaps even at times out of a sense of duty, and hence blurring the boundary between non-fan and fan. Non-fans watch because they want to, and so their 'charge' is still positive, but they share some of the anti-fan's lack of familiarity, and hence share the electron's hectic pace around the nucleus/text' (2003, p. 74). Non-fans' relationship with texts without intense involvement and anti-fans' distant reading serve as templates to ex-fans and textuality.

Initial experiences lead to practices and forms of self-identifying and ultimately mean one defines oneself as a fan (Duffett, 2013, p. 26). Their initial identifications with fandom do not necessarily commence as an immediate result of these shared experiences with a fandom community. It is possible and highly likely for someone to become a fan in singularity and remain unengaged in social activity. In fact, each individual's fandom can begin as a personal experience, at times even private. Duffett (2013, p. 28) also points out to fans who are less visible at any particular moment or in different contexts, namely the *'hidden fans'*. There are personal fans, hidden fans, those fans who choose not to come out, namely the *'closet fans'*. As Duffett explains, these fans pursue their passions and interests in private and even in secret, depending on the object of their fandom. Their object of fandom may be considered taboo such as porn or 'uncool' such as Star Trek or somehow seen by others as being inappropriate for their particular gender or peer group, such as sex symbols of the same sex, girl bands, boybands or soap stars. Alternatively, they may simply be concerned about the label 'fan' itself and evade the label all together. Another possibility of closet fandom is the personal characteristics of fans themselves. Fans may be just quiet: unsociable, anti-social or just quiet. They may even be disappointed or ex-communicated with the like-minded fans. These dynamics may result in a more private, more personalized practice of fandom, more of an inner dialogue than a social experience.

The social dimension of fandom is contextual. The same individual may choose to engage in social fandom activities or remain in privacy, depending on the context. This contextual quality regarding the performance of fandom is signified particularly due to the variety of texts in current media landscape. Although academic accounts have tended to emphasize singular fandoms, the reality of the current media landscape is much more varied. An individual may visit various textual terrains with daily life and harbor varying emotional intensities in relation to these texts. This transformation in the experiencing of textuality directly effects fandom and its practices. Duffett states that fans actually engage with various texts at the same time which renders their interest not as singular as has been depicted in academic accounts historically (2013, p. 29). This point is supported by Hills who

also states that rock fans may very well be doctor Who fans, rather than belonging to singular fandoms (Hills, 2002, p. 86). As media landscape flourishes, so do practices of fandom. The multiplicity of media channels and texts echo inevitably in the multiplicity of fandom.

For Nick Couldry (2000, p. 73), each individual has a 'textual field' of multiple fan interests. As they pursue their object of fandom, their interests can multiply and become diversified. Matt Hills (2005, p. 814) introduced the concept of 'cyclical fandom' where fans get into new objects of fandom and scenes which they exhaust over time, making it necessary to move on to further new textualities and objects of fandom. Hills (2002) also has discussed 'inter-fandom', pointing out to how particular fan cultures can negatively stereotype others. This, in turn, leads members of their communities away from certain objects and potentially towards other objects. Thus, fans are susceptible to influence - perhaps more so than ordinary people - due to their emotional involvement in their fan cultures. Movement through textual fields may or may not be influenced by others. In personal fandom, the possibility of navigating within textual fields may be more individualistic, whereas in fandom communities, fans may be subject to influence and be led to certain textual fields.

This by no means eliminates the possibility of fans who are dedicated to one specific media. Karen Hellekson (Hellekson & Busse, 2006) utilized the term 'monofannish' to describe her dedication to one specific media product. In contrast, her co-editor Kristina Busse describes herself as a 'fannish butterfly', indicating the multiplicity of her textual fields. The singular dedication to an object of fandom harbors the potential of a fuller devotion, whereas multiple interests may facilitate practicing more numerous aspects of fandom as performance, mainly because of the variety of texts one engages with. This tendency may harbor characteristics that pertain to a specialist versus a generalist. Alternatively, a particular fan may fluctuate in her choice of textual palette, leaning towards singular fandom at a given moment, and multiple fandoms at another, depending on the context.

1.5. SUMMARY & CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this chapter was to lay the foundation for the concept of ex-fandom to emerge. History of fame and fandom demonstrated the significance of texts, narrative agensts and technological developments in the formation of both concepts that are so closely interrelated. The various definitions of fandom and multiplicity of its touch points clarified the elusive nature of fandom. Identification, fannish practices, community and performance were laid out as attributes of fandom. Next, texts and textuality were explored in an attempt to understand the dynamics of immersion. Fan production and fan reading were also exemplified to demonstrate the extent of cultural interest and creativity of fans. Lastly, cultural economy of fandom was explored to develop a framework of how fan culture is situated in popular culture, in opposition to official culture. Knowledge accumulation and colleciton of objects were demosntrated to be linked to capital accumulation of fandom. A section on visual culture and visual textuality detailed the saturation of images in the current media landscape. Lastly, the concepts of non-fan and anti-fan were visited in order to gain perspective that may serve in the formulation of the concept of ex-fandom.

With major technological advancements around the corner to become a part of everyday lives, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, artifical intelligence and three-dimensional modeling, the terrain of textuality is to expand considerably. These advancements are to affect personal interactions and community dynamics in unforseeable ways. As a result of the democratization of knowledge and access to cyber knowledge space, the dominance of popular culture is likely to increase, disseminating the attributes and practices pertaining to fans and fan culture further to the masses.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

Methodological approach for this particular study has been determined to be qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research methods are about the human condition. They seek to delve deep into human experience and personal narratives to gather data as the data unfolds during research. Qualitative research methods are preferred especially regarding research topics that are based on social phenomenon. "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality.... They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). Social construction of meanings is best deciphered through qualitative research methods due to the phenomenological nature of the method. There are no predetermined criteria regarding the data. The researcher discovers data as the research unfolds. Qualitative inquiry offers representations of the world which are primarily linguistic. This is in contrast to quantitative inquiry where representations of the world are symbolized numerically. The narrative quality of qualitative research bases it on the dynamics of everyday life, thus popular culture and sociology. The personal experiences of research participants are based on subjective interpretations and dependent on context. The main research question of this study, 'How does fandom end?' best fits phenomenological research. 'A *phenomenological study* describes the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon' (Creswell, 2013, p. 57). The common experiences of the research participants as they experienced dissolution of fandom were the focus of the research. This type of approach to investigation leaves room for the researcher to discover data that may surface from diving into human experiences. The data unfolds and the researcher makes sense of the data.

2.1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to explore the reasons and the dynamics behind the *'dissolution phase'* of fandom. When an individual becomes a fan, she gets invested in the object of fandom with her time, energy and money. The object of fandom gradually becomes a dimension of immersion; a distinct area in which the fan gets immersed. The fan starts to devote a considerable time and energy towards the object of fandom over a period of time. This period of immersion varies in intensity as well as length. Fans also come out of fandom. This phase of dissolution, the 'unbecoming' of a fan is the subject of this research. The hooks that pull an individual into fandom, the gradual immersion in the object of fandom and the triggers that push a fan out of immersion, namely the dissolution of fandom are areas of interest that this research attempts to shed light on with a specific emphasis on the dissolution phase. The triggers that sever the relationship between the fan and the object of fandom, the dynamics of the dissolution phase, the process of dissolution and the aftermath of fandom, namely ex-fandom are researched in order to gain a deeper understanding about the reasons that pertain to the end of fandom. The findings of the resarch may illuminate a less-researched area of study, namely the end of fandom, thus enabling a more thorough comprehension of fandom as a popular culture phenomenon.

2.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative inquiry serves the aim of this research best because of the exploratory nature of the subject matter. The end of fandom and the dynamics related to dissolution of fandom may best be investigated by 'exploring people's life histories and everyday behavior' (Silverman, 2016, p. 11). There were no predetermined criteria regarding the research topic and this led to the need for the research design to be *phenomenological* and exploratory in nature. The intended outcome was to discover the reasons and the dynamics behind the end of fandom, namely the phenomenon of *ex-fandom*. This methodological approach is the

appropriate strategy because the possibility of multiple reasons that may trigger the dissolution of fandom and contextual dynamics that may play a role in the process are to be investigated through the narration of personal experiences by self-reporting ex-fans.

Phenomenological research was the preferred method of investigation because the intention of the study was to understand the end of fandom through the experiences of self-reporting ex-fans in an attempt to uncover a pattern that described the process leading to the phenomenon of ex-fandom. 'The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence' (Creswell, 2013, p. 58). First, the phenomenon of ex-fandom was identified. The researcher then collected data from ex-fans who have experienced the phenomenon of 'the dissolution of fandom' with the aim of developing a composite description[18] pertaining to the essence of the experience for all ex-fans.

2.2.1. Procedure for Conducting Phenomenological Research

Psychologist Moustakas's (1994) approach was utilized in conducting the phenomenological research of this study. The main procedural steps were:

- The researcher determined if the best examination of the research problem was possible through the utilization of a phenomenological approach. The research question was best suited fort his approach because it was significant to comprehend several individual's common or shared experiences of coming out of fandom.
- The phenomenon of interest of study was identified to be 'dissolution of fandom'.
- The researcher recognized and specified the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology through an understanding of objective reality and individual experiences.

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[18] This description is to consist of 'what' the research participants experienced and 'how' they experienced it.

- Data were collected from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, namely 30 ex-fans who have experienced dissolution of fandom.

- The participants were asked two broad, general questions: 1) *Why does fandom end?* that sought to find out what the individual has experienced and *2) How does fandom end?* that sought to find out the contexts or situations that have influenced or affected the experiences related to the phenomenon. Other open-ended questions were also asked to gain a better understanding of the individual experiences regarding the phenomenon.

- *Phenomenological data analysis* was conducted. Building on the data gathered from the research questions, the researcher went through the data and highlighted 'significant statements', sentences or quotes that enabled an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 61). Moustakas (1994) calls this step of the procedure *horizontalization*. Following the horizontalization of data, clusters of meaning were developed, whereby the significant statements led to themes.

- These significant statements and themes were then utilized to write 1) a *textural desription*[19], explaining what the participants experienced, and 2) a *structural description*[20], explaining the context or setting that influenced how the phenomenon was experienced by the research participants.

- The structural and textural descriptions were analyzed further to write a composite description that presented the 'essence' of the phenomenon. This is called the *essential, invariant sturucture (or essence)*[21]and focuses on the shared experiences of the participants, uncovering an underlying structure.

These procedures were utilized to collect and make meaning of data that led to the conclusion of the phenomenological research.

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[19] See the chapter 'Findings'.
[20] See the chapter 'Discussion'.
[21] See the chapter 'Discussion'.

2.3. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The main problem regarding research design was access to ex-fans. The fact that the research topic was about *'an ending'* made the recruitment of research participants less likely. This was the reason why the preferred strategy to recruit ex-fans was through open calls, rather than a targeted search. The fact that the phenomenon of interest pertains to *an experience of the past* made it difficult to target a specific source. Thus, the appropriate strategy was determined to make open calls through media channels with large followers.

Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that researchers interview 5-25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Given that the objects of fandom for the participants in this study were diverse, and that only one interview per participant was collected, 30 interviews were conducted with self-reporting ex-fans. Decisions for interview selection were based primarily on the availability of the potential interviewees. At the end of the interview process, 27 interviews were found useful to be included in the research. However, all 30 interviews have been accounted for in an attempt to provide guidance to further research.

2.3.1. Participant Characteristics

The recruitment procedures yielded interested self-reporting ex-fans, and 30 interviews were conducted and used for data analysis. Seven of the participants were recruited as a result of snowballing, five were recruited from the university network, four were recruited as a result of the tweet, two were recruited through the call in Teknoseyir and 12 were recruited as a result of the Facebook call by the cosplayer. Seven participants were referred by other participants via the snowballing recruitment technique. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 43 years old (M = 26.6 years; Median = 25 years). Regarding cultural background, all participants self-identified themselves as Turkish. One participant identified himself as having a mixed cultural background; Bulgarian Turkish.

2.3.2. Recruitment

Recruitment of research participants was atypical because of the specific topic of the research. The criteria for the sample was to be ex-fans and this positioned the individuals in a past status, making it difficult to trace them. Ex-fans are *no longer* fans of their object of fandom so it is not possible to trace them through typical channels of fandom such as fan forums. The data pertaining to them resides in the past and this necessitated a different strategy for their recruitment. There had to be an open call in (1) a channel with a large following (2) an active channel where participants engage with the content actively. Participants in this study were drawn from four primary channels:

1) Editorial piece published in a top technology site
2) Post in one of the top technology sites by founding editor-in-chief
3) Personal tweet by founding editor-in-chief of Teknoseyir
4) Post in the top university alumni network Facebook page
5) Post in personal Facebook page of popular female cosplayer

All of the preferred channels had the common characteristic of reach to a large base of followers. This was imperative to cast a wide net with the open call so as to reach potential ex-fans. First, an editorial piece on ex-fandom was written by the researcher and published by the editor-in-chief of the top technology site in Turkey, namely Donanim Haber. The content was first approved by the board of dissertation advisors and then by the editor-in-chief of the site. This editorial piece was about fandom and ex-fandom and ended with an open call for the readers of this particular technology site to comment under the piece if they were ex-fans. This was the most formal of all recruitment efforts and produced no tangible outcomes. After a couple readers commented below the editorial in a cynical tone, the integrity of the call was compromised. This recruitment attempt was the most formal yet the least supervised and thus got compromised rather quickly. (see Appendix A)

The second channel to be utilized was another top technology site in Turkey, namely Teknoseyir. The difference was in the format of the call. The founding editor-in-chief of the site suggested that he post an open call to his readers,

describing the research topic, under his own name. Teknoseyir is different from Donanim Haber in format. While Donanim Haber is a standard online publication on technology with digital content and a separate forum, Teknoseyir has the format of a social media site where readers are able to follow the flow of content and actively engage with each other through their own posts. The post generated some responses from people who were interested to participate in the research. The researcher created an account on the site to be able to contact the respondents and contacted each respondent to organize a face-to-face interview. The founding editor-in-chief of Teknoseyir also tweeted about the research, including the mail address of the researcher.

The third channel was the personal Facebook page of one of the top female cosplayers in Turkey. This Facebook post generated the most responses and the majority of the participants were recruited through this channel. The researcher followed up on those who left comments under the related post - saying they were interested in participating in the research - through Messenger. Some of the respondents of this call were too quick to engage with the post, not with the intention of really participating in the research, but more to be part of the 'action'. The potential participants were asked to consider participating if the following criteria were met:

- if they were ex-fans
- if their age was above 18,
- if their object of fandom belonged to one of the three previously determined areas; music, films/series, computer games,
- their fandom ended not because of obligation (such as the death of a musician or the end of a television series) but because of personal choice.

The fourth channel was an open call posted in a university alumni network Facebook page by a research assistant. This post was also fruitful in the recruitment of research participants since the members of the network were all active university students. Some of the respondents to this post contacted the researcher through e-mail and others were contacted by the researcher through Messenger. The last

channel of recruitment was that of snowballing. The researcher and the interviewees reached out to people to recruit potential ex-fans into the research.

2.4. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Data collection for this study was through the qualitative research method of face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews were found to be the most suitable method to decipher participant experiences related to dissolution of fandom. This method was preferred because the objective of the research was 'to identify individual perceptions, beliefs, feelings and experiences' of ex-fans (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). (Table 2.1) There were no predetermined criteria regarding the end of fandom and it was necessary to find ex-fans who could describe their own experiences in detail so as to generate topic-specific data.

Table 2.1 Characteristics of Face-to-face Interview Qualitative Method

	Face-to-face interviews
Objective	To identify individual perceptions, beliefs, feelings and experiences
Research instrument	Interview guide
Advantages	Gain face-to-face information
	Identify personal experiences
	Useful for sensitive issues
	Identify context of participants' lives
Disadvantages	No interaction or feedback from others
	Individual perceptions only
	Multiple interviews needed to identify range of issues

Source: (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 53)

Such interviews parallel fandom theory. Previous research on fandom has also utilized the method of in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of fandom phenomenon. Qualitative methods are constructivist in nature and as such the researcher sought to uncover the *essence* of the phenomenon to assist in future research about ex-fandom. There were advantages and disadvantages of utilizing face-to-face interviews were to 'gain face-to-face information, identify personal experiences, identify context of participants' lives' during the fandom phase (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 53). The method also enabled participants to bring up sensitive issues that may not be explored in any other method of inquiry. The fact that face-to-face interviews focus solely on individual perceptions may be seen as a disadvantage but in fact offered valuable nuances of data that could only be accessed through face-to-face interviews. There was a necessity to conduct multiple interviews – 30 interviews with 30 self-reporing ex-fans - to identify the range of issues involved with the end of fandom (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 53). The exploration of individual experiences and the opening of new data paths through narration of the participants proved face-to-face interviews to be a valuable method for this research.

Research instrument was an interview guide prepared in advance by the researcher and approved by the dissertation advisor. (Appendix 1) A semi-structured interview guide was the data collection tool that served as a guideline to facilitate 'a conversation with a purpose' (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 109). It was important to establish rapport with the participants so as to elicit their individual stories. Data collection through face-to-face interviewing involved (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 109):

- using a semi-structured *interview guide* to prompt data collection,
- establishing *rapport* (a trust relationship) between the interviewer and the interviewee,
- asking questions in an *open, empathic* way,
- motivating the interviewee to tell their story by *probing*.

The semi-structured interview guide was prepared by the researcher in line with the relevant literature. Semi-structured format was utilized so as to provide a basic

guideline to the flow of the interview by directing the interaction, meanwhile maintain flexibility for the evolving data.

Table 2.2 Type of Interview and Dimensions

Type	Setting	Role of Interviewer	Question Format	Purpose
field, formal	preset, but in field	somewhat directive	semistructured	phenomeological

Source: (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 55)

During data collection, it was important to remain aware of the possible errors that may evolve from three sources: (a) respondent behavior, as when the respondent gives a 'socially desirable' response to please the interviewer or omits relevant information to hide something from the interviewer; (b) the type of questionnaire or the wording of questions; and (c) an interviewer with flawed questioning techniques, or who changes the wording of the interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a). When such potentialities emerged during the interviews, *cyclical interviewing* was utilized in an attempt to return to the relevant topic or check the data with previous narratives. Cyclical interviewing was performed within the same interviews by means of moving back and forth within the narration to check the validity of the data or the explore the data further. Thus, there were times during the interviews when data collection 'proceeded like a spiral' (Hennink et al., 2011, 111). The spiral process was initiated when a key issue within the narrative was identified and the need to explore the issue further surfaced.

All data collection was realized in the field, in preset locations in line with the participants' preferences. The interviewer was directive in the interaction but remained flexible with questions to elicit further participation from the interviewees. All of the interviews took place over a two-month period in Istanbul

(March 2018 and April 2018). The interview times varied between 20-60 minutes according to the characteristics of the interviewees, the degree of investment in their object of fandom and the degree of their intellectual analysis of the specific experience.

2.5.   RESEARCH FLOW & INTERVIEWING SEQUENCE

The qualitative research based on face-to-face interviews had a standard flow and an interviewing sequence to sustain structure (Wengraf, 2001, p. 72). The research initiated with the design of an *interview guide*. The guide included *guidelines* for conducting the interviews and *questions* to serve as a template during the semi-structured interview process. The guide was approved by the Ethics Board and a *Consent Form* (Appendix 3) was provided to be signed by research participants. Recruitment was realized through four of the five channels that were utilized.[22] The establishment of contact with the potential participants was bilateral, sometimes it was the participants and sometimes it was the researcher to establish the inital contact. Initial contacts were established through e-mails, Messenger or direct messaging within the related technology site. After the initial contact was established, the predetermined criteria were checked to validate that there indeed was a fit.[23] If the selection criteria were met, brief information about the research and the steps of the interview were provided. Next, potential participants were invited for an interview. The locations were preset and in line with the preferences of the participants to ensure that they felt comfortable in a setting familiar to them so as to facilitate their engagement. Thus, research setting was sometimes 'closed' or 'private' and sometimes 'open' or 'public', depending on the preference of the participants (Silverman, 2000, p. 198). The interviews were conducted in cafes, offices or university study areas.

On the day of the interviews, logistics were usually further coordinated through the use of mobile phone numbers or direct messaging applications such as

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[22] The details of the recruitment process are described in the section with the same title: 'Recruitment'.
[23] The predetermined criteria are listed in the 'Recruitment' section.

Messenger and WhatsApp. Upon meeting, it was important to establish rapport to make the participant feel less anxious (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 109). There was usually 5-10 minutes of conversation to facilitate rapport. The researcher was mindful about 'establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, assuring confidentiality and not being judgemental' as some important elements of building rapport (Silverman, 1997, p. 106). The participant was then provided by information regarding the flow of the interview in line with the interview guide and was asked to sign the Consent Form. Demographic information was gathered before the onset of interview questions. The interviews were audio recorded on the researcher's personal mobile phone and uploaded to a related cloud account afterwards. Field notes were kept so as to pinpoint observations. At times, after the interview ended, the conversation continued and led to further valuable information about the research. At such times, the audio recording was resumed with the consent of the interviewee and the related information was asked to be repeated to be recorded on tape. At the end of the interviews, the interviewees were invited to ask questions if they needed clarification about the process or the conversation and thanked for their participation in the research. Contact information of all participants was collected previous to the interview and they were informed that they could be contacted again if there was need for further clarification regarding the interviews.

2.6.   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was performed by going over the audio recorded data and the field notes multiple times. The demographic information forms were also used to form a table containg the relevant demographic data of research participants. According to Boyatzis (1998, p. 119) the four stages in developing the ability to use thematic analysis are:

1. Sensing *themes* – that is, recognizing the codable moment
2. Doing it *reliably* – that is, recognizing the codable moment and encoding it consistently

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3. Developing *codes*

4. *Interpreting the information and themes in the context of a theory or conceptual framework* – that is, contributing to the development of knowledge

Data analysis was performed by the identification of certain patterns and themes within the interview data that could point to the dynamics and processes of the experience of fandom. Recurring patterns and themes were indentified and then a common meaning pertaining to the experiences was derived. Data analysis consists of three linked subprocesses (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014): data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model
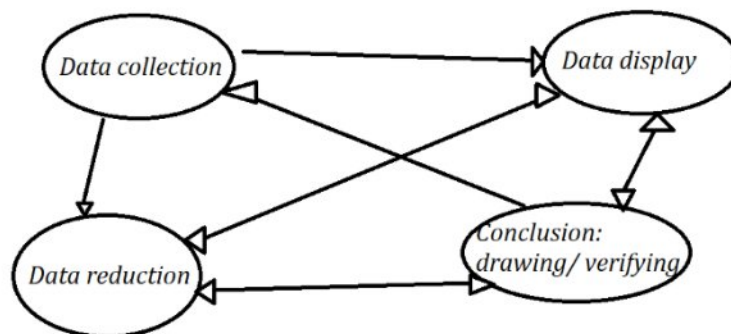
Source: (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 181)

These processes occur before, during and after data collection as final product is approached and completed. *Data reduction* is the process of reducing the potential universe of data in line with the researcher's conceptual framework and research questions. This consists of data selection and condensation. Data display is the process of organizing and compressing the body of information to enable conclusion drawing. *Conclusion drawing and verification* is the process whereby the researcher interprets the data by drawing meaning from displayed data. This

process includes a multiple subprocesses such as noting of patterns and themes, clustering and checking results with respondents (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a). The researcher utilized these subprocesses to formulate a conclusion about the data gathered in the research. Data analysis of 30 face-to-face face-to-face interviews was performed through transcribing the audio files, listening to the interviews in a repeated manner and going over the fieldnotes. The coding of the data, as well as pattern and theme development was systematically based on the recurring themes in the data. The three stages of analysis detailed above were followed to draw a conclusion.

2.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Even though all of the interviewees declared no opposition to their names being used in the research, anonymity is to be maintained in an attempt to protect the respondents. The body of data collected includes some very personal information and some strong judgements about third parties. Thus, it was the decision of the researcher from the start not to include any names and keep the research participants anonymous. This is to be secured through safe-keeping of the research related data. Noone other than the researcher and the institution is to have access to the names of the participants and the data is to be analysed and written in a mindful manner not to jeopardize the participants in any way. The participants of the research are included in the study with respondent numbers, such as *Respondent no.x*. It was a predetermined criteron not to include anyone below the age of 18, as such participation would have required the approvals of care-givers. The ethical principal of *informed consent* was collected from all research participants both orally and in written form prior to the interviews.

2.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Silverman (2016) offers some valuable insight into the concepts of validity and reliability in a qualitative research. The claims of a research study is not valid - in

other words, truthful - if:

1. Only a few exemplary instances are reported.
2. The criteria or grounds for including certain instances and not others are not provided.
3. The original form of the materials is unavailable.

Reliability is 'the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions' (Silverman, 2016, p. 188). For the reliability of a research to be calculated, it is imperative for the researcher to document her procedure and demonstrate that the categories have been utilized in a consistent manner. The accuracy of the findings and interpretation were cross checked through third-party checking.

2.9.   POTENTIAL RESEARCH BIAS

The researcher's own history of fandom could potentially influence identification with the participants and result in over-identifying with participant experiences. The researcher identified four biases prior to analysis. These biases included: a belief that majority of people would eventually come out of fandom; a belief that fandom had an age propensity; a belief that coming out of fandom can be growth promoting and a belief that immersion in an object of fandom was about timing and was affected by the dynamics of lifestyle at the time of the fandom. The identification of biases was an effort to remain mindful about the potential influence of the researcher's biases on the data analysis process.

2.10.   LIMITATIONS & DELIMITATIONS

Limitations, restrictions or constraints that may affect the dissertation outcomes are mostly time and location based. A similar sample size across different objects of fandom may have proved fruitful in understanding the phenomenon of ex-fandom more fully. Ex-fans of not only music, films/series and computer games

but also book series, comics, sports and celebrities would provide valuable data regarding the end of fandom. Another limitation regarding the research was the elapsed time between the actual experiences and the related narratives. The phenomenon of ex-fandom indicates a past experience. Thus, the narratives related to the past experience are based on past memories. Memories may be subject to favorable selection by the narrator and this margin of error is present in all narratives as detailed by research participants.

The main delimitation regarding the research was the multiplicity of objects of fandom. The research had to be limited to three main areas of fandom: music, films/television series and computer games so as to simplify the recruitment process. Further research as to how and why fandom ends in all varieties of fandom would prove valuable in fan culture studies.

2.11. SUMMARY & CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis is based on a qualitative research that aims to explore the phenomenon of ex-fandom. A phenomenological study utilizing face-to-face interviews was conducted with 30 self-reporting ex-fans from three different areas of fandom, namely, music, television series/films and computer games. The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted through the utilization of open-ended questions. Phenomenological data analysis was conducted to derive textural and structural descriptions, and finally a conclusive essence regarding the phenomenon of ex-fandom.

The interviews were utterly interesting due to the emotional investment of the participants in their objects of fandom. The fact that the experience of ex-fandom is situated in the past necessitated the recalling of memories, some much older than others. The narratives of the research participants were only limited to their own analytical interest in the end of their fandom. Those participants who had the propensity and the willingness to stay curious about their personal experiences had more to share. This has been an enriching experience for the researcher.

CHAPTER 3
FINDINGS

This section includes detailed information on each face-to-face interview. Each section starts with the participant's demographic information and continues with their narratives regarding their personal experiences of fandom and ex-fandom. To maintain anonymity, participants are assigned numbers: 'R' stands for 'Respondent' and is followed by a numerical value. The flow of the interviews is in line with the actual interview sequence. The sequence of the interviews were random; the availability of the participants determined the flow.

3.1.   EX-FANS' NARRATIVES OF FANDOM

For this research, 30 face-to-face interviews were conducted with self-reporting ex-fans. Among these ex-fans; there were 16 music, 7 computer games, 5 film/television series, 1 book series and 1 race ex-fans. Therefore, the research consisted of 16 ex-fans of star-texts and 14 ex-fans of media-texts. Even though there were similarities in their experiences of fandom, there were also some differences. These similarities and differences were related to each individual as well as whether or not their object of fandom was a media-text or a star-text. The depth and the scope of the narratives differed in accordance to the intensity of the experiences and the personal attributes of the ex-fans.

All of the ex-fans – with the exception of those of film/television series - indicated that the experience of fandom had been a major event that defined a specific period in their lives. Among the thirty ex-fans, those of film/television series demonstrated the least emotional attachment and mentioned 'cyclical fandom'[24] tendencies. They were more inclined to move between television series. The recurring themes that surfaced were more homogenous for the ex-fans of media-texts. This was in direct contrast with those of star-texts because of the

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[24] For more information, please see Hills, 2005.

variety and intensity of feelings that manifested in experiences of fandom pertaining to a living person. All of the 30 narratives have been included although two of them were outside of the predetermined criteria so as to provide a complete account of the research, including these inconsistencies. Some of the ex-fans expressed that they had only a single experience of fandom and never had a similar experience again after that specific time.

3.1.1. Respondent 1: Film Producer

R1 identified as a 28-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed female. She was recruited as a result of snowballing. Her fandom lasted between 2005 and 2013. Her fandom started at around the same time with her interest in cinema. When she became interested in films, she already knew of this film producer because of his name in film industry as smart and funny. He was a filmmaker she had to learn about. Her fandom started by watching a film that this film producer had made. She started with a specific movie based on her friends' recommendation and was immediately hooked. She liked his style so much that she wanted to complete his previous filmography and she did so in five months. She started to follow his upcoming films by means of foreign sources such as IMDB. When his films came to Turkey, she would be the first to go and see them. She was engaged in fannish activities such as writing about his films in a popular dictionary and cinema forums. After she watched a movie, she wrote an analysis in the forums.

She came to the interview with a book she was reading that was written by this film producer. It was a gift from a friend. This was interesting because she claimed not to be a fan anymore. She said: 'My friend actually knows that I no longer like him so I don't know why she bought it'[25]. She was a fan enjoying his films, writing about his films in forums, following news about him and making sure that she saw his every movie. Then, in 2013, when his film called was nominated for Academy Awards, a scandal broke; one of his stepdaughters made allegations

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[25] This was an interesting comment because later in the interview, she said she told everyone that she was no longer a fan of the film producer.

of sexual assault. When R1 came across this in Twitter, she read it and was very upset. She wanted to find out more about it and she researched further. She was convinced that the allegations were truthful. This caused her to reevaluate the filmmaker and she immediately stopped all her association with him and his films. She deliberately chose not to go to his movies anymore, she stopped following his upcoming movies. Even in festivals, she was avoiding his movies. She has very strong opinions and feelings about this incident: 'Maybe it is about his private life but from my political perspective, it is something that I find extremely wrong and I believe that it is an incident that should be deemed wrong by everybody and because I stand against this completely, I'm now against this film producer and his movies. I find it disturbing that he is still being pampered in Hollywood when all others who have been accused as such have been punished. This results in my feeling extra antipathy towards him.' The allegations were an abrupt breaking point for her.

She stated 'I'm involved with the Women's Movement and I define myself as a feminist.' She was outraged and wrote some negative comments about him in the very forums she used to write about his movies. 'I wrote negative things about him in the dictionary. I had to get the sadness and anger out of my system. For a week, I wrote negative comments and followed what was being said about him.' Looking back, she notes that she was very upset about the incident.'I came across the letter in Twitter. I was very upset. I wondered what people thought about her. I researched her further. When I saw that it was all positive about her, I was convinced and made my decision. But I was really very, very upset. He was someone I was a fan of in terms of his art and his intelligence. The fact that he did that really upset me.' Upon further inspection, R1 stated that, prior to the incident, she had been disappointed with his work for a while. She talked about her expectations not being met by his late work and feeling disappointed. 'If you are a fan, you form an expectation. There is a man you are a fan of. He has a style and you expect him to continue that style and even surpass that. When that starts to go down, your fandom starts to fluctuate. For me, all of his movies after a specific one was an era of my fandom to fluctuate. I still was writing in forums and still following his movies because I still had an expectation about him. Every time I got

disappointed, I would go back to that specific movie and watch it so as to pull this film producer in my head to a level.' She stated that the fact that her expectations were getting lower meant that her fandom was also lessening. When the incident happened, it was a very abrupt end to her fandom. She saw this as her way of taking a stand. She said that she was punishing him by not going to his movies. However, it was not always easy. 'When I see a film by this film producer among the list of films in independent film festivals, I do wonder what the film is like. Because he has a filmography that you know the background of and you want to know how this will go and witness that evolution. I do get curious a lot but I stop myself from going to his movies and instead try to satisfy myself by reading the short comments about his movie. By the way, normally, I never read those comments about movies. I disrupt my ritual of not reading comments before going to movies so as to stop myself from going to that film producer's movie. I do this without relating it with fandom, but rather with my interest in cinematography.'

3.1.2. Respondent 2: Music Band

R2 identified as a 28-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post in Teknoseyir. His fandom started when he listened to their song, and really got hooked when he came across the backstage footage of that song on the group's official site. In these videos, the female lead singer of the band was giving gifts to street kids and dancing on the streets. He describes his feelings toward the lead singer of the band as 'love'. He said 'When I saw those videos, I fell in love.'[26] He became active on the band's TR forum fan site. They were sharing information about the vocalist, other group members, similar music groups, translations of their lyrics and guitar chords. He said it was important to be active on the fan forum because it was about group dynamics and there was rivalry among group members. He stressed the importance of being active on the site: 'We were active on the forum site to show who loved

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[26] He stated that the lead singer was actually his first love.

the lead singer more, who knew more about the music band. We researched the lead singer and found her childhood photos. Your popularity in the group increases and you get rewarded because of your being a fan. This in turn becomes a dynamic that feeds itself.' The inclusion in a community of other fans was acting as a leverage that fed their fandom[27]. He talked about how the band was started by the lead singer and her boyfriend at the time who was also the guitarist of the group. When they broke up, he left the group. The group had lost its original status. The lead singer found a new guitarist and continued with her music. He said even though the group was not what it used to be, they were still fans. 'We continued being a fan because our loyalty was really towards the lad singer.'

When she released a new single, they were all happy because they thought that she was getting back into her element. He stated that he used to spend 3-4 hours a day, but by that time he was visiting the forum once a week. The interaction in the forum was beginning to decrease. People started to disintegrate. New comments were not as often anymore. Then they started to hear scandalous news about her relationship with her manager and that she got sexually assalated by him. This was a breaking point for all of them. He stated his strong emotions as: 'The holy position that we placed Emily in our eyes necessitated her not to get involved in such incidents. She was like a member of our family, a friend, because we were hearing her voice every day, seeing her face every day. When such news came, we got turned off. Then our love turned into hate or disgust. Then we stopped listening to her. I tore her posters.' He mentioned how they had been disappointed with her new album when they listened to it. They were expecting hits but the hits did not come.

That was also the time he was getting prepared to go to university. 'It was not that important to me to be leaving her because she had already gone by diminishing her value. Because she had gone by diminishing her value, after a certain point, it was an easier break.' He was going to university, he tore her posters, he started to wear her t-shirt as a daily piece of clothing[28] and at a point he realized that he had not taken her music with him. His taste in music had also started

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[27] Community involvement seems to serve as an anchor in fandom.
[28] Before the incident, the t-shirt was special and could not be treated as a daily piece of clothing.

to change. The scandalous news had changed his perception of her. 'After the scandalous news, she had lost her value as a person for me. Musically, there was still value but she had lost her value as a person. She used to be pure for me and now she was the bad woman. She was not the woman I fell in love with.' He also talked about the feeling of loss following these negative news. 'You really feel like you've lost something. My reaction was to get her out of my life. This was the reflection of my anger at the time, getting her posters and music out of my life.'

Group dynamics were also at play during the falling out phase. Following the scandalous news about the lead singer, there was negativity in the forum. 'Our group had lost it previous power. Some people made fun of her and they were right to do so. When you can't defend someone you love, it has an effect on you.' This was the beginning of the end for the community. 'The group of friends that I was constantly in communication with, we all left. We had dialogues that indicated disappointment such as 'We did not deserve this'. Then without saying good-bye, we just disintegrated.' This indicates a feeling of betrayal. The group was together because of the music band and when their reason to be in the forum was no longer there, there was no reason for them to stay either. 'The music band was the common denominator that brought us together. We used to come together offline, take photos, talk about the music band. When the group was no longer there, we disintegrated.' When talking about the end of his fandom, he got emotional. He said 'I felt like I've lost something when I thought about it now.' He thinks that it was almost a compulsory end to their fandom because of what had happened. 'It seems to me like it was not our decision to end our fandom, but rather the music band's effect. The group changed. The music changed. There was a feeling the group made me feel. That feeling got lost. We still loved the group but that feeling was missing. When the sensational news came, there was nothing to hold on to.' He said that he went back to their official site to check it out once, after 9/11 attacks and saw that there were no comments regarding the group, only about the attack. There was nobody that he knew from his fandom so he stayed for 5 minutes and left, never went back in again. Recently, another music band's vocalist committed suicide. When he heard the news, he felt nostalgia and listened to the music band again but

it did not give him the same pleasure it did before. He said it was almost forced. He mentioned that he still does research about her once a year to see what she is up to. 'I found out that she made an album. I listened to all songs once. I forced myself to like the songs but I did not. It did not give me the same taste. This was about a year ago.' About his ongoing curiosity, he said 'Once a year, I still do a search about her. What happened? Is she still alive? I'm not talking to her but I want to know that she is still there.' So, even though he still feels hurt by her, he wants to know about her.

3.1.3. Respondent 3: Arabesque Singer

R3 identified as a 29-year-old, Turkish, single, middle school graduate, employed male. He was recruited as a result of snowballing. He was a fan of a Turkish arabesque singer[29]. He said he was a fan because of his albums and his personality. He was a fan for 5-6 years very intensely. He was listening to his music half of the day, he used to go to his concerts, he was curious about his life. He used to research him. He was a personal fan. He lived it privately. His fandom ended during his military service. When he went to military at the age of 20 for 2 years, he could not listen to him as much because of his duty. Still, he was listening to him, just not as much as he would have liked to. The songs were all very melancholic and there were issues regarding his ex-girl friend at the time. He was listening to the songs that reminded him of her and he felt intense feelings.

One day, after he found about her girlfriend's new relationship with his friend, he punched and broket he mirror. When his commanding general heard this, he called him in for a converstaion. He asked him why he was always in a depressed mood and when he found out about what he was listening to, he told him to stop listening to him. He said 'It is different when a general gives you advise. He sees that you're harming yourself. With his advise, I collected myself.' It was a logical decision on his part, reinforced by his general in command. He said 'It was like an

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[29] This particular singer was known for his extremely depressing songs and had a very strong fan base. He is no longer alive.

addiction. I was listening to him even when I was walking on the street. You see that when you're alone, that person harms you.' He stopped listening to him completely within a year. There were days when he did not listen to him at all. His opinion of him has not changed. He said 'It was a decision I made because the music was harming me. Initially, you feel missing in your soul and body. Then, you get used to it.' He said he still knows all his songs by heart and sometimes he mumbles them but he stopped listening to him constantly. He said 'I realized that I was really pulling myself down. I could not go forward when I was listening to him. I was thinking 'I wish I could go home and listen to his songs.' Looking back in retrospect, he believes that the events in his life were probably the reason why he was listening to those songs.

3.1.4. Respondent 4: Rapper

R4 identified as a 26-year-old, Turkish, single, graduate degree student, unemployed male. He was recruited through Teknoseyir. He was a fan of a rapper. His fandom started with his album of 2006, when he was around 12 years old. He overheard a song from this album and wondered who it was and started listening to him day and night. He also started to follow all the entries about him in a dictionary. The reasons why he became a fan had to do with the lyrics of his album. His album was critical of politics. He would include anectodes from movies in his songs. He started listening to his songs day and night. When he was in high school, most of his friends were listening to his album. He was a very devoted fan between the years 2006 and 2011.

In 2010, he released a new album but in this album his style had changed completely[30]. He had started to lean towards religion and lost his protest, amateur style. He was almost preaching and his target audience had changed. Meanwhile, he came across some interviews of him and his wife who was also a rapper and those interviews were very discriminatory. In 2008 and 2009, he came across his

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[30] This is why he said he was embaressed about his object of fandom before we started the interview.

interviews but continued listening to him because he was interested in his music. Still, those interviews made him question this change in his style. He remembers 'I wondered 'How can a person change like this?' He completely changed the audience he was targeting.' He read interviews where their responses disturbed him. 'His wife said: 'Why do people do yoga? They should pray.' Then she made a video clip where she was wearing a super mini skirt. He thought it is contradictory. 'I do not like hypocrytical people. This is why I do not listen to him anymore.' He completely stopped listening to him after that album. If he came across his old music somewhere, he would mumble the lyrics but that was about it. He never listened to him again.

He feels nostalgia about the period when he made good music and says 'I wish he had continued like that; like 2002 to 2006 era.' He says that he also started to listen to a different kind of music after 2010-2011 period. His own taste in music changed. Sometimes, he comes across the rapper's music on YouTube because of his previous preferances in the system, but he quickly checks it out and shuts it. Once in 2013-2014, he got curious when he saw news about his new EP and listened to it only to discover that his style had changed completely to arabesque, to fantasy music. Then, he quit following him completely. He said 'If he were to make a great album, I could perhaps listen to him for the sake of his old songs but I would not be a fan.' When asked about what he thinks in retrospective he responded 'When you are a fan, you think that the great work will keep coming but it does not happen that way and this creates disappointment.' The concept of 'disappointment' was a strong theme underlying his falling out of fandom. His expectations were not being met and there was a very radical change in his object of fandom that he could not relate to.

3.1.5. Respondent 5: Computer Game

R5 identified as a 23-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed female. She was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. She was a fan of a computer game. She started to play because of her boyfriend in college

when she was 18-19 years old. It was a role-playing, multi-player game. After she graduated from university, she gave herself a year as a break and then for another year she could not find a job. During those two years she played for 12-13 hours a day, every day. She said 'That was the only thing in my life. It was like I erased everything else in my life. I think that it was my way of escaping from reality. It was a way of distraction for me.' University was great for her. She was an honor student throughout. She fell into a vacuum after graduation from university. She believes that was the reason why she got hooked into this game. At the time, she had closed herself in and she needed something like that.

She got extremely socialized due to this game. She got to know a lot of people and they watched Star Wars movies with some of them. The social aspect of the game was perceived as an advantage. She said 'I met people I could not have met in real life. I met someone who was transgender. I met a lot of people than I could not have met normally.' She also improved her English a lot because of the game. She had become someone very popular within the game because she was giving all her time to the game; 12-13 hours a day. She said 'It was like a disease.' and a while later she said 'It was like a drug. I constantly wanted to play.' There was also an ego satisfaction involved. The more characters she created, the better she felt. Role-playing part was very appealing. She had 18 different characters but she kept going back to her main character. She remembers thinking 'I can't do anything but my character here is saving the world. When I played the game, I was mostly my main character.' She remembers the game being like a get-away from her failure to get a job at the time.'When I was out with my family, the conversation ended up on my being unemployed so I was looking forward to go back to playing.'

At the end of two years, there came a point when even people she was playing with were telling her to get herself together, that she was wasting her life. Meanwhile, she had started to do translations for a company. That company made a full-time job offer and she wanted to give it a try. The game required money. She did not want to keep asking her father for money. It was about that time that she started to question how she was spending her time. She said 'I realized that I was harming my family, my friends, my boyfriend. I said to myself 'enough'. I had been

cut off from the world for long enough.' When she thinks back to seven months ago when she decided to stop playing she says 'I had felt guilty at times but I did not stop playing. I had to take strategic steps to get myself away from the game, like doing gardening, getting together with my friends.'[31] She realized she had spent a lot of money on the game and that she gained a lot of weight during those two years of game playing. She says 'When I questioned all of this, I asked myself 'What are you doing? I was thinking I had to do something.' She started to gradually decrease the time she spent playing the game.

It took her about three months to get cut off from the game. She purchased one last game for three months and said to herself when that was finished, she would not purchase membership again. She said 'I had a lot of game money and I distributed it among my friends. I gave away all my belongings in the game so that I could not come back again. They were shocked. They did not think I could do it.' She deleted the game from her computer. She said 'I'm proud of myself.' When she thinks about the time she spent playing the game she said 'I gained this awareness that I should not become so attached to anything again. I will never get so attached to one thing again. I regret having spent my two years that way. I could have spent it better.' Regarding the falling out phase, she said 'It had become a routine. It was very difficult to get it out of my life. After one or two weeks, I took down my bulletin board[32]. I did not clean everything at once. I did it gradually. There was an emptiness after I stopped playing so I filled it with many other things.' Even though she stopped playing competely and abruptly seven months ago, she admits that she is still curious. She still gets mails because she is in the mailing list to see what they've changed in the game. She has stopped playing completely because she does not want to remember those times again. She said 'I do not play anymore but I could play again. But if I do, I will probably remember that bad phase so I choose to stay away. I want to play but I'm worried that it I start to play again I will not be able stop so I cannot get close again.' She admitted that she plays other

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[31] She had to break the routine.
[32] She had posted tactics and strategies about the game on her bulletin board.

computer games at times and that she is still a Star Wars fan-girl. She said 'Still, I'm not cut off from the Star Wars universe but I have normalized.'

3.1.6. Respondent 6: Pop-Singer/Actress

R6 identified as a 21-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, part-time employed female. She was recruited through the post on the university alumni page. She was a fan of a pop-singer/actress. Her fandom started when she came across her Disney series on television. She was a personal fan for a couple of months, then she started searching the internet and found some fan forums. She became a member in some fan forums because there was not a close friend at school that she could talk to about her fandom. She said 'I remember the feeling of having to talk about it.' This need to talk about her object of fandom led her to become active in fan forums. She said 'When I got into the internet environment, my fandom grew. When I started to share it with others, it took on a different form.' She had become a member in a lot of forums but she spent most of her time in that pop-singer's Fan Club. For her account name, she used her own name and took on the last name of the pop-singer. She remembers getting recognition in forums with her nick name; 'After a while, my nick name had started to be known in other forums as well. It had become like a brand name.'

Initially, she was just checking the workings of forums. Slowly, she started to have friends in the forums and started to contact them in other forums. They had also started to see each other offline as well[33]. She spent 8 hours a day in the summers in the forum. She claimed to have been very active between the ages of 12 and 14. She was writing, sharing, researching in other sources. She was also using Photoshop; they were creating Fan Art and having these works compete against each other. Some of her friends had become experts in Photoshop because they wanted to produce better fan art. Her fandom also helped improve her English a lot because she used to read about her object of fandom in foreign sources all the

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[33] Two of them became good friends in real life.

time.

There was a matter of ownership in the forums. She was a fan and she owned her fandom. 'I had really claimed ownership of my own fandom.' She said that there was a hierarchy in the forums. 'You were somehow being measured for the degree of your fandom. I remember feeling that. Your accounts somehow gave that away. This was probably something that motivated me. So, I was sharing information all the time. There were ranks in the forum. So, I was constantly posting to go higher in rank. There was a forum that I liked the most and I was a moderator there. I was trying to become a super moderator. I was very angry not to have become a super moderator. So, I said 'We're going to a new site' and I started a new forum.' After she and her friends left the forum and she started a new one of her own, both of the forums lost traction and that was the beginning of the end.

She mentioned the importance of community in the evolution of her fandom: 'If the degree of my fandom was 4-5 when I was a personal fan, when I joined the fan community it became 8. That environment enabled me to be more engaged; different groups, different celebrities. Maybe if I was on my own, I would get bored after a while.' The fan forums had their own dynamics and relationships. There were 5-10 people who were her friends and two of them were very close friends that to this day they still see each other. Looking back, she remembered that there were some problems regarding her family at that time and her fandom was providing her a break from these problems: 'It was saving me from reality.' 'We were also economically going through a difficult time. If I could go out, perhaps my attention would have been distracted. That also played a part in my fandom.' At around the same time, some scandalous news broke about the pop-singer and she felt disappointed.

She started high school. Her social circle changed. With age, there was a general breaking off. She started to fall out gradually within the first year of high school. The activeness of the forum had declined considerably so she could not find anyone to talk to. She was following the pop-singer on her own but the hours she spent in forums dropped drastically. When there were some scandalous news about the pop-singer, there were also negative comments about her. People were getting

angry, saying 'Why did she do this?' So she started not to mention her being a fan in social circles. She was also very happy in her social circle in high school. She said 'When I heard about the scandalous news I talked about it with an older fan from the forum. I said that I heard some negative news about the pop-singer and I did not know what to think about them. She said that she did not care about such news because they were not a problem from her point of view, morally. However, I could not see it that way. It was a big deal for me. There were some sexual behaviors of her and they pushed me away. I did not want to show my fandom visibly, I did not want to say that I was her fan anymore.' Towards the end of high school, the pop-singer had changed so much that her fandom started to decrease in intensity. There was an incident she recalled that had made her feel ashamed about her object of fandom. 'I remember having her poster in my locker in the first year of high school. One day, a very popular boy saw the poster and told me 'She is a disgusting person. Don't you see what she does?' And I felt ashamed to have had her poster. I believe that such incidents must have had an affect.' Eventually, she fell out of fandom. Now, after all these years, she started to like her again. 'Now I like her. I like seeing her. But back then, I had fallen out after hearing those scandalous news. Now, I'm following her on Instagram like I'm following a friend. I do not identify as a fan anymore. I still like to follow popular culture. Now, it is like a hobby. It's something that gives me pleasure and I live it on my own.'

In retrospect, when she thinks about her fandom years and compares it with the current environment, she notices some differences[34]. 'Back then, being a fan required utilizing your own resources. It was more effort-based. Now, there are filters. Also, now fan clubs are open to public on Instagram and social media which makes the community more dynamic. Now, fans are more exposed to their objects of fandom. Maybe this higher exposure may have changed the nature of fandom. I had to wait for the series to air on television. Before, it was based on imagination more. You only had a poster of your object of fandom and the rest was up to your imagination. Whereas nowadays, you get new bits of information on a daily basis.'

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[34] Her sister is a fan and she observes her and makes comparisons with herself.

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3.1.7. Respondent 7: Computer Game

R7 identified as a 23-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, employed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He was a fan of a computer game. He first started playing the game in 2008 or 2009 during the summer. His older brother used to play this game and one day he gave his account to him. His friends were also playing that game. After he started, he thought it was fun. 'At the beginning, I did not understand the game very well. I had to ask someone. It took a while for me to get hooked into the game completely, probably within the first 6 months I was hooked. We had to study the characters in the game and discuss them with our friends.' They had a guild. A member of their guild was going to get married to his fiancé so they first had the wedding within the game. They all dressed our characters, they went to an island, drank, used drugs. He met a lot of people in the game. He continued talking to some of those people in real life. There were some people they got together offline. There were people who came to visit from foreign countries.

The game membership cost 14-15 Euros a month. At times, he could not play because he did not have the money. There was a period of a year in between when he wanted to take a break. Later, he went back and continued to play. 'In 2017, I stopped playing and did not renew my membership.' He grew up while he was playing that computer game[35]. He was around 12 or 13 when he first started to play. He used to wait in line in front of the internet café so that he could play. He watched videos, he discussed strategies with his friends, he read manuals to get better at the game. About his feeling in retrospect he said 'I do not feel regret for the thousands of hours I spent playing the game. I learned a lot, I made lots of friends. I believe that it might have kept me from other bad habits. It protected me in a way.' About his falling out of fandom, he said 'It was an environment I grew in. We used to say 'You don't quit that computer game. You take a break.' Now I say, that's not true. When you quit, you quit.'

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[35] There was a strong sense of nostalgia in his attachment to the computer game.

He explained the reasons why he stayed hooked in the game for so long as 'It is not a game that you reach a point and stop. There is always progression within the game. You're constantly striving for something. Also, it is very important to become a team. You need to come together with your team mates and you need to apply your strategies in a perfect way to reach your goal. The game had your teammates and you did not want to keep them waiting. The universe in the game was visually satisfying.' When the game's movie came out last year, he went to see it with some of his teammates. 'We went to see it as a crowded group. We prepared flags and went in the mall with our flags.'

He also mentioned how the monthly fee enabled him to be entertained for a whole month, instead of having to go out and spend more money. 'When you play that computer game, you pay the monthly fee and get entertained for a whole month. I did not have a lot of money to spend outside. I did not know what to do when I went to cafes. I did not know how to dress in stylish ways. When you cannot fit in with other people, what else is there to do?[36] Play computer games, read books. It was also entertaining.' During the summer, he would spend his whole days playing the game. 'When I went to internet café in the summer to play, I would go in as soon as it opened and leave when it got closed, almost for 10-12 hours. At home, it took however long it took. I would only sleep and play for 14-16 hours a day.' He thought that once you got into playing computer games, it got harder to get out. 'As you play more and more with computers, you start to have less and less common points with other people. There were always problems at home. They got separated at around the time I started to play.'

Before the falling out, he had started to feel frustrated with some of the changes that were being made in the game. 'I took a break for one and a half year. This was around 2-3 years ago. Some of my friends had quit. I did not like the changes. They were getting further from the style I liked. I did not like how content was changing. It started to be like other games. It got easier, it required more time.' After that period, he got back to playing but things had changed further. 'New

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[36] He later pointed out that people who were into computer games were people who had no real friends.

editions required you to keep collecting new items, it required you to spend a lot of time, I did not have the same teammates. Sometimes there are quarrels. Group dynamics get affected. Some people have better skills. Some people have varying interest rates. It is not easy to set up a good guild. There has to be leader in a guild to motivate, direct and get people to make up after quarrels.' He also got more and more frustrated with the changes that were being made within the game. When his friends told him about some upcoming changes or he read news about upgrades, he would think: 'I'm sure they did something really bad again.' Then, he stopped playing.

He said there were a number of reasons why he stopped playing: 'I started to work. I got busy at school. So, you cannot spend as much time. You start not being able to do well in the game. I was already dissatisfied with where the game was headed. There is a huge difference between when we first started to play and now. It's been over a year that I stopped playing. I deleted it on my computer, too.' After he quit, he still hoped to find a way back in. It was not easy to get into established guids. 'Time, team are all factors. I would sometimes go in and look around for someone to talk to. When I could not find anyone I knew, I stopped going in. I had already stopped following the news for a while anyways. We even said among friends 'We're ex-computer gamers.'' Looking back, he said he was in a different position in life now than he was back then. 'I'm not in a position to put aside so much time for something. I do not get that excited about anything. I'm distracted by other things.'

He also started to question media products and their production processes: 'I've started to analyze production processes in a more suspicious way. I do not want to be a part of propaganda. I might have been a target to such subliminal propaganda. These thoughts also keep me away from media environments where I could be subject to this. I want to control what I'm known with.' He thinks that there are some similarities among people who play a lot of computer games: 'People who play a lot of computer games are people with common points. We have some common characteristics. Lack of real friendship is very effective. I also think it is

'unnecessary' to be a fan of something. I don't want to be part of such a political agenda or propaganda. I did not have this awareness in the past.'

3.1.8. Respondent 8: Pop-Singer

R8 identified as a 33-year-old, Turkish, married, university graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He was a fan of a Turkish pop singer[37]. When he was 17 years old, he would go to their summer house with his family. One night, when he was walking on the beach, there was a man playing the guitar and singing with 30-35 people gathered around him, listening. This was the first time he ever heard the songs. He found out that he was a singer who had just released an album. He loved the songs and his voice which was like velvet. They ended up talking within the next couple of days and exchanged numbers. He bought the album and started to listen to songs all the time. Then, his second album was released. He loved that album, too. The he went on to college. After he graduated from university, he started to work in a big advertising agency. They had to produce a jingle for a TV commercial. When they were brainstorming about who could write a jingle, he thought about the singer and suggested him. He called him and told him about the project, inviting him to the agency for a meeting.

Meanwhile, he really identified with all the lyrics that the singer wrote; about his friends, about relationships. He said 'It felt almost like I had written them myself.' When he was telling his stories, he made references to his songs. When he was playing the guitar himself, he did not put the guitar down unless he played a couple of the singer's songs. He went to his concerts. They hung out together backstage. They drank together. He was a real fan and it had been 7-8 years since he first became a fan. At around that time, the singer's third album had been released. 'There is nobody who writes and sings like him.' He was sharing his videos and his lyrics on social media constantly. His ringer[38] was one of his songs.

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[37] He then had a personal friendly relationship with him.
[38] His ringer on his mobile phone.

On the day of the meeting, the singer came to the agency and acted in a very snobbish manner. He had seen him a year ago last. He said 'He was acting very strange. He was not like that on stage. I could not recognize him.' They told him about the client and the jingle project. The singer started to talk, saying they had to talk about the price of the project first and that he does not normally work with brands. Then, he started to snap his fingers on the table and said 'Come on, let's make the jingle then. Just tell me what you want.' The director looked at R8 and gestured him to get the singer out. The singer was still snapping his fingers. The director slammed his hand on the table and said 'This is enough. Get him out of here.' and left the meeting room. They were left alone in the meeting room and had an argument about the way he acted. The singer left in rage. When the singer left, he thought to himself 'This man is not the man who felt those feelings and wrote about those feelings. Such a man cannot have experienced those loves and those disappointments. The two does not come together.' He started to doubt the singer. He was not able to see the singer in the same way again after that incident. He said 'Those songs do not tell you anything anymore because you do not identify with the singer anymore.' He never went to his concerts again. He never bought his albums again. 'If they give me his ticket free, I would not go to his concert again.' 'When you start to see the person for who he really is, you may end up getting away from their art.' He was so furious at him that he tried to make his friends hate him by telling them what he had done. About his current status, he said 'Every now and then, when I play the guitar with my friends, I may play a song by him but that is about it.'

3.1.9. Respondent 9: Computer Game

R9 identified as a 35-year-old, Turkish, single, university drop-out, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post in Teknoseyir. He was a fan of a computer game. A friend uploaded the game to his computer one day. He started to play and within a year he realized that he had become hooked because of the graphics and the atmosphere in the game. Then, he realized that he was very

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good at playing the game. He was becoming more and more asocial in real life. He started to get invitations, formed a team and made a network in the game. He was playing for 8-10 hours a day. Then, the game started to become very popular globally. He started to participate in tournaments and won some monetary and product awards. He made a couple of friends that remained his real life friends.

He was 25 years old when he first started to play this game. He was a university student and was having a hard time at school. He leaned towards the game and left school after the second year. He got hooked into the game. For three years, he was very involved with the game, participating in tournaments. At the end of three years, the game got into repetition. There were new games. He realized that he was postponing some things in his life. The subject of the game had changed and he did not like the new version. The old version that he liked was about the past and had some nostalgic qualities to it that he found very interesting[39]. The new version was about modern times and that did not interest him as much. He noticed things that he did not feel interested in the new version of the game and the popularity of the game started to decrease. The company was consumed with the new version so they started to overlook some bugs or wrongdoings in the old version of the game. There were no tournaments being held for the older version anymore. The people he was playing with had moved to other games.

The falling out happened gradually. He started to spend only 2 hours playing the game. It was a first person shooter type of game. He liked this type of game and he could not find a similar game that had nostalgic qualities like the older version. He was highly interested in computer games and graphic design. His hobbies changed. He got into photography and realized that he got more pleasure out of it: 'Now I have these in my life and the reason I got away from computer games is that compared to computer games, these felt better to me. I also had a better social circle.' One day, he deleted the game from his computer because he wanted to protect himself from going back to playing and he sold his computer. When he got a new computer and checked out computer games, he saw that they were about

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[39] He is interested in nostalgic cars and artifacts.

modern times and did not interest him. He said 'I think I let that process take too long. I must have protected myself from virtual environment.' He had negative feelings about his experience and expressed this as 'I get angry at myself thinking why I did it. I let it take too long.' When asked what he did after he stopped playing to replace his old habit, he said 'When I stopped playing the game, I started to watch television series but you get hooked so I don't watch series anymore. Instead, I read books.' Regarding his reasons to fall out of fandom he said: 'I was disappointed with the producers. Age also becomes a factor. Age difference makes it harder to go back to that environment with that age group.'

3.1.10. Respondent 10: Singer/Actor

R10 identified as a 28-year-old, Turkish, single, high school graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post in Teknoseyir. He was a fan of a singer/actor. When he started high school, the singer released a song that became popular. He also starred in a television series. 'I identified with his songs and when he was talking in the television series, it was as if I was talking with my girlfriend.' He used to go to internet cafes just to listen to the songs and watch parts of the series. He admired his elite and gentleman style and he identified with him. He was always different from his environment. 'I purchased a CD for the first time in my life. I brought it to class and listened to it constantly. I used to listen to it fifty times a day. In every moment of my life, I was listening to him. He was in most parts of my life.'

He was really immersed in his fandom but his object of fandom was not suitable for the environment he lived, nor for his social circle[40]. 'My environment had prejudices. They were people who had thoughts like 'If you're not like us, we'll point out fingers at you.' They listened to an arabesque singer and I listened to my object of fandom but when I came together with them, I used to listen to that arabesque singer with them as if I was also a fan but I did not really want to.' He

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[40] His object of fandom had a completely different style than the mentioned arabesque singer. They were almost opposites in how they looked and the kind of music they made.

talked about the social pressure he had to endure because of his fandom: 'I'm trying to talk about the pressure in society. They would sing that arabesque singer's songs loudly but I could not sing my singer's songs like that. If I did, I'm sure that they would make fun of me. I used to purchase the CD and hide it so that nobody would see it.' He believes that the society he lived in was not suitable for his choice in his object of fandom. He felt pressured to hide his fandom. He also felt abandoned when the singer stopped making new music and did not appear in television series anymore. 'I think that fandom stays with you for the duration of the works that your object of fandom produces and the time he remains in your eye-sight. If you're a fan, you expect that person to keep doing his work and stay in your eye-sight because there are a lot of alternatives. When he disappears, you end up forgetting about him. I'm a fan but it is over. He's not there anymore.'

During his fandom, he found a lot of emotional support in his object of fandom. Just watching him in television series would provide him with the responses he needed to cope with his own problems. 'When I had a problem at home and he would have a similar problem in the series and resolved it, I psychologically felt like I had also resolved it in my family or my relationship.' He said that he was a fan for three years and it was much more than a standard fandom. 'In my environment, it is not good to be such a fan of someone who is the same gender as you. It can be misunderstood or made fun of. Especially if that person is young and handsome, you always become scrutinized.' Slowly, his fandom got oppressed. Another factor was the age group in his concerts. 'When I went to his concerts, everybody was 12-14 years old kids and I was 16[41]. So you look like a piece of dust in milk. I used to hear people make fun of me, saying things like 'Look at him, he's a big man and came to this concert. It was like water making a hole in stone. In time, these factors made a hole in my fandom. When you hear comments like 'Kids like that guy. What are you doing liking him? You're a big guy.' from everyone you talk to about your fandom, it starts to get to you. Society oppressed

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[41] The singer made a partnership with Disney which eventually hurt his career because he became identified with Disney and lost most of his older fan base.

my fandom in a way. Forced me. I could not listen to his songs among my friends. I was perceived as feminine, emotional or elite and was mocked.'

He remembered once when his friends found an album of his object of fandom in his drawer: 'When I got caught[42]… When my friends opened my drawer and saw his CD, they used to make fun of me and I would lie saying that it was not mine but my sister's. I could never say it was mine. So, instead of being ashamed, I chose to give up on my fandom. And when he does not keep himself current and produce new work, your fandom gets weakened. It was a gradual process.' When he thinks about his object of fandom, he still harbors positive opinions. 'He was like a member of my family or my friend, I always defended him.' He also believes that your object of fandom is responsible for staying current. 'When he stops making television series or new music, you think that he got out of your life. Then, after a year or so, my fandom ended. Then, I became like the others with societal pressure. I started to go to places they went to and listened to singers that they listened to. So, I was leaning towards foreign series and music. One day, I just thought, 'I was listening to the singer, what happened to this guy?'

He felt abandoned by his object of fandom. 'He left me. This is another dimension. We could not get any news about him. There were a lot of other alternatives. You search for him and you cannot find him. So your fandom gets oppressed.' When he saw what the singer is like now, he thought that he had also changed. He thad ried to adapt to the changing environment. 'When I listen to his old songs now, he reminds me of what I lived back then. But it does not hurt me like it did back then. He still reminds me of that person, but not in a bitter way, in a softer way.' Regarding his experience of being a fan, he said 'I hung the word 'fandom' on my object of fandom's shoulder and it stayed with him. Now, there are people I follow but I'm not a fan. Back then, there was something that grabbed you. I don't have that enthusiasm anymore.' He never felt that kind of fandom toward anybody else again.

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[42] First, he said that 'he got caught' and then rephrased his sentence.

3.1.11. Respondent 11: Computer Game

R11 identified as a 37-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He was a fan of a computer game. He first started to play because of a friend. His friend asked him to do beta tests of a game that was going to come out in 2006. He was around 25-26 years old. He started on the Korean server until 2008. He was also getting paid for the beta testing he was doing in Korean server. After three years, he started to do beta testing for the European server. Graphics in the game and the realness of the characters were the factors that got him hooked in the game. He played until 2014-2015. In the game, you can do things that you are not able to do in real life; you could be pirates[43] or you could be merchants. Whatever you could not do in real life, you could do in the game. He was immersed in the game for almost 24 hours a day.

Friendships he made in the game were the most important factor that got him hooked. The friends he had were from all over the world. They were 90 people in the game together. Then they all left Archage together and now they moved on to another game all together. He had also just had surgery on his knee and could not go out. This was another factor that led him to start playing the game. He was playing with 52 accounts at the same time. When pay-to-win started to dominate game playing, the environment started to change. This was the start of his frustration with the game. Pay-to-win was followed by quarrels and insults within the game. When the game went on to the European server, another company purchased the game. The new company did not care about the real players. They were more concerned with the payers. He kept submitting tickets for complaints but there were times when he had to wait for 6 months to get a response. Last 3-4 years before his falling out was filled with problems.

He mentioned how the behaviors of the players directly affect the

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[43] When he mentioned that he also liked animes, he briefly talked about one of the animes he liked that was about pirates. So, he seems to have a general liking towards pirates. He had also mentioned role playing as pirates in his object of fandom.

environment. He said 'Turkish players, especially the new generation is very argumentative; they insult other players, they swear to each other so all of these negative behaviors damaged the environment. Also, there was corruption within the game; they were selling characters, accounts and game money to make personal money.' The computer game had around 7 million players on the Korean server. When it was on European server the population was up to 14 million. All of these corrupt behaviors drove the real players away. He said: 'If I'm playing a game, first I want to get pleasure out of it and then I look at the company; whether they respond to tickets within a week.' Regarding what he thought the advantages of playing the game were, he said it was the people he met and the improvement of his English. He expressed the positive sides of the game: 'In Archage, my attachment was for my friends and the environment.' Playing online games also improved his written English.

One day, he complained about a player and got banned. He expressed his frustration as: 'They banned my account for no reason. The reason was because I complained about a player; he was using tricks in the game. When I complained about him, they banned my account, along with everyone in my league.' As a consequence, he left the game: 'When I got banned for no reason, I stopped playing the game. It was unfair.' When asked if he would get so immersed in a game again, he said: 'I don't think it would be like this computer game. I have three dogs at home. I'm also working. I do not spend as much time playing games anymore.' Regarding the disadvantages of having been a fan of the game for so long, he said: 'Now I have more balance in my life. I put aside time for my dogs, my friends. It's not like it used to be when I was playing Archage. After you get the taste of it and you're satisfied, after a while the time you spend in the game starts to decrease.' 'I have friends who did not sleep for a week so that they could play the game.' He also likes animes and FRP[44] activities. His life has always been about computer games. He used to work in an internet café. At one point, he had his own FRP café but then he had to shut it down. 'The reason for me to spend time in a game is to

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[44] FRP: fantasy role playing.

make new friends and get rid of my boredom.'

3.1.12. Respondent 12: Television Series

R12 identified as a 27-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He was a fan of a television series. He used to be a fan 10-12 years ago. He was around 15 years old when he was first exposed to the series and it continued until he was 20. He first came across it on television. He watched every episode 3-4 times and he even watched the same episode twice within the same day. He used to discuss the episode with his friends on Facebook. He loved the series, he watched it a lot and he also talked about it extensively. He was defending it. He got hooked within a couple of months. It usually takes more than one episode to get really immersed in a series. That is when you get acquainted with the characters. After he watched most of the series, he started to lose interest because there was not much that was new. He might not have watched it for a couple of months. When the series ended, his fandom was stabilized.

A couple years later, when he became more politically aware, most of the series that he watched started to bother him. The behaviors of the characters, the topics in the series started to bother him. Regarding this, he said: 'There is a character whom I used to like a lot in the past. He might be the most disturbing character for me now because he is sexist, homophobic, he is very selfish, he wants everything to take place around him. When something does not suit him, he complains. Back then, I did not even pay attention to these. I started to notice after a point.' 'He is still one of the main characters. He is still served as a character we are expected to identify with. There is still laugh track[45] after the things he says. Things like this started to bother me.' 'Another character that I liked a lot, his father announces that he is a trans-gender woman at an older age. The character does not

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[45] According to Merriam Webster online dictionary, laugh track is a recorded laughter that accompanies dialogue or action (as of a television program).

except this. For the rest of the series, he never accepts this and he treats him like a man with a problem. It did not bother me back then, but now these things bother me more. Especially, the fact that these are served with laughter tracks is what really bothers me. Of course, there can be characters with bad behaviors. There are such people in life, so why not make stories about them. But it bothers me that these are served as positive behaviors and are laughed about.'

He continued his comments about the series as: 'It is a series that overlooks and hides problems in society. It serves a rose-glassed reality. Characters live in New York. It is one of the most crowded and expensive cities in the world. All the characters are white, good-looking, heterosexual. We hardly see different characteristics even in supporting characters, but it is New York. It is not a town in Texas. Besides this, most characters do not even have real jobs but they live in huge apartments in the middle of the city. It is almost like 'let's give them the modernity and cosmopolitan characteristic of New York but not the problems.' I did not even notice these in the past but now I'm aware of them.' He expressed the main factor that disturbs him as: 'I think that unhealthy behaviors are served as if they are right and funny and sometimes it bothers me.'

His perceptions started to change when he started university. He explained these as: 'I started to have conversations with people. I started to read more about society and the media in university. I discovered a site called 'Media Tropes'. That also changed my perspective on society and media.' When I was first watching this television series, I was watching television and did not really have as much access to the internet. We had fewer alternatives so we accepted more.' 'When we consume media, we take pleasure in consuming and also in talking about it with my friends afterwards. I love talking with people about media products.'

He also thought that age was a factor in his fandom: 'I think that age is also a factor in fandom. When a person is younger, he is less critical about things.' He also mentioned how timing matters in one's perception and reception of a media product: 'I watched a film during a time that I was in a bad relationship. The film was about a bad relationship so I cried when I watched it. Normally, it is a bad movie and it would not affect me. It coincided with the similar events in my life

and this caused me to be affected.' He also mentioned how media products serve as sign posts in time: 'I tend to remember the songs, movies that coincide with a person or an event in my life more.' Sometimes the characters in a movie or television series have similarities with your friends and when you equal that character with that person, you remember it more.' Even though he is not a fan of the television series anymore, he still reads about it if he comes across a piece of information about it. 'If there is an article about that television series, I would still check it out even though I do not like it anymore. However, if there are points that are not fair, I would defend it just because of my own belief system.'' He emphasized how the utilization of laugh tracks bother him. He said: 'I'm especially disturbed by laugh tracks. I believe that laugh tracks are very problematic in trying to convince people that something is funny when it is not. Also, when laugh track follows a behavior in a series, it is directing the perception as if it is positive. It makes me think that the series approves of this.'

3.1.13. Respondent 13: Computer Game &Music Band

R13 identified as a 34-year-old, Turkish, married, university graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post in Teknoseyir. He was a fan of a computer game during his high school years. The graphics and scenario were ahead of their time. The game also had multi player modes and they used to get together with friends in internet cafes and play. Then, a second mode was added on the game. The computer game was about science fiction and the second mode was about terrorists and anti-terrorists. The second mode pulled a larger audience to the game. Regarding his immersion in the game, he said: 'We were constantly playing the game between the ages of 15-18 with my friends. I spent a lot of time at internet cafes to play these games; maybe the price of one or two computers in total. We did not have a computer at home so I would go to internet cafes to chat. That is when I got exposed to computer games and started to play. I was playing around 20 hours a week when there was school.'

He expressed how important community was in game playing. 'Community was a factor.' He liked play-and-go kind of games more. The computer game was out when he started university. He looked for the CD for days. Even though, it was the object of his fandom for a number of years, he moved on to another game at a point. He said: 'It was the game I played the most in university; thousands of hours. Steam platform enabled playing with certain friends. We then became friends offline with some of them. When there was a much better multi-player platform, I left.' He expressed the reasons as: 'We were much closer with the friends who played this other game. Our team really liked each other and got along very well so after a while, the second mode of that game had fallen down to 5% from 100% in terms of the hours we played. We had each other's phone numbers, we used to invite each other to games. Still, to this day, some friends invite me to play.'

He also mentioned that work life is a factor in the time you can spend playing. He expressed the reasons he plays computer games as: 'For me, playing computer games means getting away from real life. Also, I was always interested in science fiction so I feel satisfied when I'm present in a universe filled with science fiction items even if it is virtual.' 'I don't want my imagination to go dormant. I don't want to lose my childish and youthful feelings either. So, I have a childish side to me. I don't want to grow up completely. Because when I grow up, I think that I'll be unhappy. So, I want that part of me not to die.' He also mentioned how it was much harder to access computer games before. He said: 'We used to try and access the games. It was harder for us to get the games, so they were more valuable for us. Now, they are easily accessible.'

R13 was also interested in music and he was a fan of a music band. He wanted to talk about his music fandom as well. When he was in high school, all his friends were listening to arabesque music but he was listening to foreign music. He learned English at an early age so he liked listening to foreign music. He used to enjoy following the lyrics and listening to music simultaneously. He was exposed to music channels on television when he was staying over at his uncle's place. He used to buy teen music magazines. Regarding his fandom, he said: 'That music

band is very different for me. I liked her a lot[46]. She was one of the women I was in love with during my teen years; it was her[47], a Turkish female singer and another foreign singer. I remember having watched their song and the gothic style of the video appealed to me. I was feeling very lonely in Istanbul at the time. I was the new kid in school. It was a lonely period of my life.' When he got immersed in the music band – especially, the lead singer - as his object of fandom, 'I tried to find their other songs when I was in internet cafes. I downloaded their lyrics. I listened to all of their albums. We used to get the music band's albums copied. I followed them for a very long time. They came to Turkey in 2002 and we went to their concert with a friend of mine who also liked them a lot.' He also added how he influenced his friends due to his fandom: 'I made a lot of my friends like the music band by sharing their music with my them.' Regarding his fannish activities, he said: 'I was following fan sites, reading the posts. I was downloading their photos.'

Regarding his flowing out of fandom, he said: 'I was probably involved in other interests when I broke off. It was probably around the time when I had my girlfriend and my close friend and was more interested in films and computer games. I probably did not notice that I was getting away. There were other things that entertained me so I got distant and the intensity lessened.' He was also listening to a boy-band back then. 'It was because we saw them close to us during teenage years.' He also mentioned how he did not like it when his objects of fandom change their style: 'I think that I follow groups that do not change their style for a longer time. I think that I stop following groups that change their style.' He was going through a lifestyle change: 'In high school, music was more part of our lives. After I got my computer and had more free time, I probably leaned towards movies and computer games.'

Regarding his flowing out of fandom, he said: 'When you start to spend less time and energy in media products because of work and other external factors, the intense desire you feel for those media products decreases. I never thought I could get away from computer games or some media products but it happened. It's

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[46] He mentioned the lead singer of the music bad.
[47] The lead singer of the music band.

like when people are addicted to sugar and chocolate; they reduce their intake and their addiction decreases. Sometimes, when you have to get away completely for a while because of external factors, you cannot approach that content with the same desire after a while. Your desire neutralizes. Your desire becomes a distant desire. You cannot desire it as much.' He also questioned whether it would be possible to have that kind of immersion in a media product again. He said: 'If we were to make a Lord of the Rings marathon with my friend again, we would. However, to spend 12 hours for the marathon, I would think twice. Maybe I could, but I would not want to. I the past, I would not think twice. In fact, there were many times I did it. Now, it seems like a distant dream.' He expressed the feeling of nostalgia that comes with age as: 'I think you take on a more mature outlook. This is a cruel reality of life. You lose the child in you. You cannot stay the way you were in your youth.'

3.1.14. Respondent 14: Turkish Pop

R14 identified as a 21-year-old, Turkish, single, two-year college graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He was a fan of Turkish pop music[48]. He was around 12 years old when he first became of fan. He listened to Turkish pop for 5-6 years. He used to listen for 2-3 hours a day. Then, he came across rap music on television. He got curious and researched it. He uploaded some rap music. This was when he realized that there were other kinds of music. He does not listen to Turkish pop anymore. He said: 'I hate it.' 'I also got sick of it because it is the same thing all the time.' 'People around me keep listening to the same things all the time.' It was important for him when he got exposed to other kinds of music because of a friend. He said: 'When you see different things, your eyes open. You realize there are alternatives.' He also started to understand the lyrics because he started to learn English. At around the same time, his style changed from action movies to science fiction. The reason behind all this change was change of his environment. He explained this as: 'My environment changed a

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[48] R14 could not specify a single object of fandom, but rather claimed to have been a fan of Turkish pop in general.

lot. I changed three schools in high school. A friend of mine changed everything for me completely. He was listening to heavy metal. He shared his playlist with me. I started to listen to it and I liked it more and more as I listened to it. I think I can still explore new things. New friends and internet became factors in this. Now, I can do research.' He mentioned how different he was from his environment because of his preferences. He said: 'People tell me that I'm very different.'

Researcher's note: R14 was not a fruitful interview. Even though we had communicated beforehand regarding the project and he had confirmed that he was an ex-fan of music, he was very vague on the day of the interview. He seemed to have wanted to be part of the cosplayer circle by joining the call made by the cosplayer. Nevertheless, the interview is included in the research to demonstrate the 'margin of error' and shed further light on the dynamics of the face-to-face interview process by being a negative example.

3.1.15. Respondent 15: Rapper

R15 identified as a 20-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post in the top university alumni Facebook network page. He was a fan of the rap singer[49]. He was about 12 when he came across the rapper. His fandom lasted until he was in the first or second year of high school. By then, he had already been introduced to Turkish rap. At that time, he had a religious background and had adopted a religious view. This was one of the factors that appealed to him about his object of fandom. The rapper also used to perform shows during his songs and he got hooked by the shows. He started to follow every single detail in his life. Within a year, his fandom gradually intensified. He was listening to him all the time whenever he had time. He could follow him with the videos on the internet.

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[49] Before we started the interview, R15 also said he was embarresed about his object of fandom, just like R4 who also had the same object of fandom.

In rap, there was a community, anarchist in nature. When he felt that he belonged in that community, he also engaged in amateur graffiti drawing. There would be serious arguments among the rap community. He would get involved in arguments and defend his object of fandom blindly. He said: 'It's difficult to talk about it. It's embarrassing.' He was active on his fan forum. He would also write in other forums, becoming a part of whatever discussion there was about the rapper. The reason why he fell out of fandom was because his opinions about religion changed completely. He lost his faith. When he started to see things from a different perspective, he lost his interest. First, he fell out of his fandom but became a fan of Turkish rap in general. He was trying to listen to all the new rappers. He turned towards the community. A well-known saying in that environment was: 'Be a fan-boy to rap, not to a rapper.' So, he leaned towards Turkish rap. He would listen to the rapper only when he came across his songs. He also witnessed some of his arguments in social media and thought they were nonsense. When he saw all these, he fell out.

His faith was damaged when he was in high school second grade. He found a book called 'The Societal Roots of Religion' when he was looking through books in a bookstore. When he read the book, he started to question religion because he realized that the arguments in the book were based in logical foundations. He said: 'In religion, if you have a question mark, it starts to affect everything. For two years, this was an internal and personal process. I kept reading books. Then, when I came to university in Istanbul and saw other people spend so much money for unnecessary things, I thought there was no justice or compassion of God.' He met a friend and they started to discuss their thoughts. They intensified their readings about religion and continued their research. At the end of his second year in university, he thought 'OK, God is dead for me.' His change of faith was an internal process for him. He expressed this as: 'When my mind wanted to solve that, my mind kept thinking about it. It was an internal process.'

Regarding how his change in faith affected his perception of his object of fandom, he said: 'What really got on my nerves was how he used religion as a tool. He would reply to arguments with prayers from the holy book.' 'Before, I liked

seeing religion in his songs. But then, when I started to think logically, I started to realize that he was using religion for his advantage, I got furious.' He also had a negative experience about his object of fandom. He detailed this experience as: 'I wrote a comment to him on Twitter and he blocked me. It was a very simple criticism about one of his songs. It was very funny that he saw it and blocked me. It was very childish. I did not deal with him again.' When asked if he still listened to his songs, he responded: 'I still listen to Turkish rap in general. Sometimes, I may still listen to him when his songs come up. It is more like nostalgia.' Regarding his feelings toward his object of fandom, he said: 'Towards him, I'm negative. This is the truth.' His taste in music has also changed. He said: 'I'm listening to rock music more. I stopped listening to him gradually. Now, I rarely listen to him.' He also experienced a strong sense of belonging when he was immersed in rap. He said: 'The feeling of belonging to a community is very dominant. People want to feel safe. If you have an idea but it cannot be categorized within a definition, then you're left alone. If a person feels this feeling of belonging, then the person gets really attached.'

Researcher's note: The interview with R16 was especially interesting because he had also experienced falling out of religion. So, the concept of 'immersion in a content' was already present in his life with his faith in religion. It was thought-provoking to have interviewed an individual who had been so immersed in a content and then ended his immersion through his own volition.

3.1.16. Respondent 16: Heavy Metal Band

R16 identified as a 21-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post in the top university alumni Facebook network page. He was a fan of a heavy metal band. He was about 11 when he started to listen to heavy metal and this continued until he was around 15. His friend came over one day and told him that he had discovered some bands. He made him listen to four or five bands that day. Then, R16 started to replay two of

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the songs that he liked in his head continuously. 'In a couple of weeks, I was listening to their videos and searching for their concerts all the time. My mother asked me what I was doing and who these people were. I guess that was when I realized I was a fan. Then, within the first month, my friend and I went out to purchase their t-shirts.' He was listening to them constantly, wearing their t-shirts and going to their concerts. It was summer and his fandom grew in a couple of months. He was listening to their music for 3-4 hours a day. He and his friend would meet to watch their videos and concerts for hours.

He had gone to England over the summer. He searched and finally found the heavy metal band's extra size poster which he could not find in Turkey. 'It was nonsense. I was in a very difficult position. I kept it for two weeks there. Then, I tried really hard to bring it to Turkey. It was a big deal bringing it back to Turkey. It is still on the wall of my room for the sake of those times but it just reminds me of the past now.' He was going through some difficult times at the time of his immersion. He said: 'That very same year, my parents got divorced. It may have affected my leaning towards that kind of music.' He wanted to wear the same black, band t-shirts all the time. Regarding this, he said: 'Afterwards, when my music style changed, I started to like white a lot as if I was trying to make up for something.' He was performing fannish activities as well: 'I started three groups on Facebook; fan groups. Then, they went up to around 500 people. I would prepare collage videos and post them on the page. After a while, it became harder to prepare fan art and I stopped. The pages were probably active for 1-1,5 years.' There were some changes that affected him during the course of his fandom: 'When I was still a fan, one of the band members died. One morning, my mother came with a newspaper clipping, saying one of the men I was a fan of had died. I hanged that clipping next to my poster. I would look at it. Right now, talking about this gives me goose bumps. Back then, it was difficult for me. So, the band got shaken. They went on a tour in memory of that band member one last time and came to Istanbul as well. I went to the concert and after that, it did not go the same.'

With all the changes going on in his life and with the group, he started to experiment with his father's taste in music: 'Afterwards, I started to listen to what

my father was listening. I started to lean towards classic rock. One day, a friend of my father heard that I was listening to heavy metal and told me how they used to listen to this kind of music as well when they were young, but there came a point when they wanted to know about the origin of this music and started to listen to a more classic style. I thought about what he said for a couple of days and got angry at him. But then I got curious and started to listen to the music my father was playing at home[50].' He said: 'I liked guitar solos in classic rock a lot. I searched for 'best guitar solos of all time' on the internet. I started to listen to that list. I was mesmerized by the 50-60 songs in that list of 100 songs. This led me to listen to heavy metal less and less. In general, my music style had shifted to classic rock.'

Meanwhile, he had started high school and his friend went to a different school than him. He detailed how immersed he was in his object of fandom at one point: 'I used to know every single detail about the heavy metal band's 9 members and their families. I had to do research about all this in foreign resources. I was spending a lot of time doing research. This improved my English tremendously. I got curious about their lives and learned about how Americans and Finnish people lived. I believe that my fandom had such positive contributions to my life.' He used to wear barbed wristbands. When he was going on to high school, he wanted to take the wristbands off because it was a new environment and he did not want to be known like that. He thought 'Let me take these wristbands off. I don't want to give the wrong impression. I don't want people to stay away from me. So, I can say that it was with the effort to keep in line with society.' It was not long before he also gave up on his black band t-shirts: 'I also started to realize the smell of sweat that had become a problem because of wearing the same band t-shirts every day. So I went out to get new t-shirts that were also black but not of the band. They had skulls on them, etc. When I took those band t-shirts off and went on to wear other t-shirts, it was like the tip pf the string causing it all to become unstitched. It was like that. My family started to bring me t-shirts of different colors. When I felt the comfort of wearing white in the summer, the phase had ended.'

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[50] He was being exposed to classic rock at his house because of his father at the time.

3.1.17. Respondent 17: Music Band

R17 identified as a 24-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post in the top university alumni Facebook network page. He was a fan of a music band. He explained how his fandom started as: 'It started when I was around 13-14 years old. I was listening to music, searching for new music. That is when I came across the music band on YouTube. I was hooked because of the female lead singer's voice, their Gothic style, the use of piano in their songs. I also liked that the music band had zero objectification. If they did not make videos, it was almost like they would not show their bodies. This was also something I liked a lot. Their lyrics had meaning. They were very high in quality.' Quickly, he became immersed in his object of fandom: 'Within a couple of days, I became immersed in the group. It was also very trendy at that time. Its being trendy enables you to follow them.' He was very active in fannish activities: 'I started to listen to all of their songs. I researched them so as to learn everything about them. All of my time was consumed with the music band. There was also a fan forum where I spent a lot of time. There was maybe 1-2 people who spent as much time as me on the forum. I never met them in real life. We would just talk in the forum. There was also an internet radio of that forum site. I started to prepare a program on that radio.' He felt like he had to change his age to appear older in the fan community: 'I was 13 at the time and I wanted to make myself look older so I made up my age to be 16. They all thought that I was 16. Nobody understood how old I actually was. I wanted to appear older so that I could be taken seriously among the others.'

He was really into music and he knew a lot about music so this served as an advantage in his life. 'When you're at that age and you have an attribute that is different than the others, it is always an advantage. People gather around you.' Regarding the performative side of fandom, he said: 'When I was a fan, I only grew my hair longer and I was wearing its necklace and wristband.' After 2009, one of the members left the group. They could not release an album for a while. They did not go on concerts. This made it harder for him to follow them and stay immersed.

He expressed this as: 'So I had nothing I could use to spend my time with all day. There was nothing to follow. I always continued to love them. I still do. But being a fan was no longer the case. In 2011, they came to Turkey, we went running to their concert. I had to pay tribute to the past.' He described the intensity of his fandom as: 'The effort to be with the people who loved her, the effort to appear older for her, the effort to try to spend a lot of time with her, the effort to do research about her.'

Even though he is no longer a fan, he is still interested to find out about them: 'If I see news about the music band, I would still not pass without reading it. I still like their music a lot. They made a new album last year but unfortunately it was horrible. I really hated the album. But still I harbor love for the past. It is not possible for me not to get goose bumps when a specific song by them plays even though it has been ten years.' Regarding the feeling of nostalgia, he said: 'Even after my fandom, I still visited their official site every couple of years and looked through. Still, if I heard their music, I would listen; if there were news about the group, I would read them but I would not spend time especially for her. I probably would not even go to their concert if they came here.' He thought that age was a factor in his flowing out of fandom. He said: 'Age is definitely a factor.' Regarding fan forums, he said: 'There were very long conversations. These long conversations were appealing because of the depth of the discussions. The material you have is gossip-related so they are shallow, they may not be real but since you talk about these all day there, most of it is your own production; theories, probabilities. You talk day and night about these probabilities.' He also mentioned how he thought it was important that the band was not liked by everybody: 'Not everyone liked the music band. So, it must have affected me that it was different[51].' He said the lead singer was his first love. Then, he really fell in love in real life. He said: 'After that, I fell in love. Emily was like that, too. It was not very different than love when you think about it. You really sit and spend time all day. You enjoy listening to her.'

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[51] This was a positive factor. He did not want the music band to be a band that everybody liked. He wanted to be different.

His family was moving a lot at the time. He had to change schools often, in different cities. 'I moved around a lot around those ages. It was a time when I had left all my friends back. I felt very lonely when I came to Istanbul. It was around the time when I moved again, this time to Hatay. It was a transitional time in my life. We had internet at home. I had a lot of free time.' When asked about his feelings regarding the scandalous news about Emily, he said: 'To be negative is probably about the personality of the person. I mean, what can a music band do to make you hate them? I can't think of anything. You must be extremely sensitive, then you would get heart-broken with the smallest incident[52].' He expressed how he felt when he heard that she had gotten married: 'I was upset when she got married.' He also had some observations about girls' fandom and boys' fandom. He said: 'Girls tend to be different in their attachment. Their attachment is much shorter but thinner. They get closer but their attachment snaps easier. They seem to move from band to band in their fandom.' He also shared a memory about how his fandom was a point of commonality with other people: 'When I started high school, there was a classmate who drew the symbol of my music band on the side of his desk. I remember building attachment with him right away. We became friends immediately.'

3.1.18. Respondent 18: Television Series

R18 identified as a 23-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He was a fan of a television series. The series was an adaptation of the comic book character within DC Comics universe. He compared the character in the series with the character in the comic book, and the similar character within Marvel universe. The scenario and the flow of the series was weak and repetitive, so after a while, he started to get bored. He is a fan of the comic book character who is very fast[53]. He

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[52] This comment was critical in how different it was from the experience of R2 who had the same object of fandom.

[53] He is really a fan of Superman. This character is a character that exists within the same universe with Superman.

likes the personality of that character. He also thinks that the comic book character resembles himself because he is always late just like himself.

He thinks that the scenarists of the series started to follow classical script structures and repeat themselves. 'First season included the introduction of the character. It was about exploring the environment. Due to my fandom for the comic book character, I thought it was very exciting when I first started watching it. During the second season, the character continued to improve himself. I was wondering how much more he could improve himself because I was curious about how he would be at the very top of his ability. However, that process of improvement never ended. It started to become repetitive.' So, he started to get frustrated with the production team. He also thought there were discrepancies between the depicted character in the television series and the original character in the comic books. 'There was another factor that bothered me. When he moves super-fast, he is supposed to see everything else in slow motion. This is how it is in the comic book. He's not supposed to utilize any effort about this. However, in the television series, he is depicted as if he is trying very hard instead of being effortless. He sees everything around him in blur. This does not make sense. They probably interpreted it this way to utilize a lot of special effects.' 'He is also depicted as someone who is clumsy in television series, he runs into a corner when he is turning. It is almost as if he cannot control his super power. This is very absurd. These are factors that pushed me away from the series.' Because of all these factors, he stopped watching the television series completely after the second season.

Another television series was being aired on television. He came across a couple episodes and after the first two episodes he became a fan. He started a Facebook fan page and created Fan Art. He continued until his page got hacked. He started to watch the television series around the third season of the Modern Series. He completed the Modern Series and then moved on to watch the Classic Series. 'I turned into someone who was following everything the production crew did during the publication of my Facebook fan page. I became a hard-core fan during the administration of my Facebook page. I had around 1200 followers. There was one more page that was bigger that had 1500 followers. Then, there were others that

were much smaller, with 300-500 followers. I probably would have around 50.000 followers now if I had not been hacked because the page that was ahead of me now has 80.000 followers. When the television series had its 50th anniversary in 2013, the traffic exploded.' He detailed what had happened about his Facebook fan page: 'There are about 7-8 people who helped the television series become popular in Turkey. Some of them have Facebook fan pages, some web sites and some blogs. I was writing in one of these web sites. When I decided to stop writing, the administrator of that site hacked my Facebook fan page and deleted it as a response.'

They started to organize offline events in 2012. 'We were 15 people in the first event. I can say that my best friends are people I met during those events.' He also wrote a 300-page science fiction book about the television series. He must have read and revised the book ten times as the series continued. He has not published his book to this day. He thought that it would not be taken seriously because it was not his own story. 'After I completed the book, I did not want to publish it. I still have it. It was a book I wanted to publish. But the television series is a story that is already available and I wrote a book on this originsl story. So, if I publish it, I would not be taken seriously. If I publish something that is not entirely my own production, I thought about the people who would say something about my authorship so I changed my mind about publishing it. I preferred to be known as someone who had a book with my own fiction. After I come to a point where I'm known for a book that I wrote, maybe I can publish my book about the television series as well.'

He goes to an art school and is very talented. He said: 'I also draw. I've been drawing since middle school. When I was in a high school for the arts, I was making drawings about the television series on a constant basis. It was also a practice for me. I wanted to draw something that I liked and the series became something that cemented my drawings. When my drawings started to gain attention on the television series Facebook fan page, I started a page with my own name with _art at the end of it. It was a page where I would only share my drawings and my own art. Here, I shared mostly about the television series. People who normally would

not like my art about other stuff started to like my fan page because of my television series drawings. Then, I started to be known as the televisions series artist. When I started to meet people who recognized me as 'The Television Series Artist' it started to bother me. I did not want to have gained fame through the television series. I wanted to gain recognition because of my own drawings.' He did not want to be associated with the television series to that degree. 'First, I said I would not draw about the television series. Then, I stopped drawing all together and my hand started to stiffen. After a while, I got my style back but that transitional time was difficult.'

He also had to draw a line between his television series community: 'I also started to get away from that friend community. I tried not to be involved in events about the television series. That was about the time I stopped writing on the web site. I did not want that identity to stick to me. After I gave up on writing on that web site, I started to move away from the television series. After a while, I would only watch new episodes. Then, when a new episode came out, I started to postpone watching it.' He started to fall out of fandom gradually: 'I did not want to spend time. I wanted to spend time for my own work. I also wanted to be able to use it as an excuse or a shelter to decline offers regarding working for the television series. I've been watching it after it was aired. There was a time when it came to a point that I did not even remember the series. People stopped inviting me to events. Most of that community got scattered.' Regarding his falling out of fandom, he said: 'With the last episode, I became a standard audience. I still like it, I'm still a fan. I preferred to stay away because I want to be known for my own art. I did not want it to stick on me. Maybe it would hurt me in the future when I wanted to showcase my work. Being remembered with my work of the television series would perhaps be disrespectful to my own art.'

Researcher's note: R18 was a hard-core fan of the television series for a long time and then he fell out. He said he was still a fan but he was in no way immersed as he was at one point during his fandom. This is why, this part of the interview was also included. Although R18 claims to be a fan, the nature of his fandom changed dramatically and this is valuable for the purposes of this research.

3.1.19. Respondent 19: Computer Game

R19 identified as a 37-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post in Teknoseyir. He used to be a fan of a computer game. He played for 2-3 years. He discovered the game when he was doing his military service, around the age of 22. He was introduced to the game by a friend at military. The computer game was entertaining. He saw it as a get away from the reality of life. He could realize things he could not do in real life. There were tasks that he had to accomplish. It was a community. There were clans within the game. A friend had invited him into a clan. It had almost become a parallel universe.

After the military, he started working. When he was working, he would come home after work and play for hours, sleep only for a couple of hours and go to work. In time, this routine started to be very tiring. There were also a couple of older players in his clan who quit because of their home lives. It was not easy to stop playing. First, he stopped coming in the game as much. He was a member and for a whole year he tried to quit. There were people in the game whom he knew personally in real life and when they invited him to play, he would go and play. So, during that year he struggled to stop playing. He went on to other games, he created a new character and tried to play with only that character. When the other people also stopped playing, one day he deleted the game from his computer. He had deleted the game but he continued to purchase the new packages, in case he wanted to play again. For a whole year, he was still a member. Then, he ended his membership but continued to purchase new packages. Finally, he ended his membership and stopped purchasing new packages. About the end of his fandom, he said: 'Now, I've given my life different directions, so I gave up on that addiction completely.'

The fact that he was in military when he first got introduced to the game might have played a part in his getting hooked. 'My conditions were not very bad but at the end I was in a place I did not want to be and it allowed me to get away from the sense of reality. That is why it is a fantastic world. It enabled me to live in

a different imaginary world. That was why I got immersed. The reason for me to stay immersed for a long time was the community. I was not the person I was in life, but someone with that character, those abilities, my efforts. It had also created an alternative world for me. That is why it could immerse me. My community; when that community got scattered, then I gradually quit. Then, I realized that it was an addiction and that I had to stop. Otherwise, you cannot realize it. I believe that it the reason why you get immersed. It becomes a part of your life.' At some point, he realized that it was harmig him. 'I realized it when it started to affect my work life. I did not realize it. Some people told me.'

He still plays games at times but he is more careful not to get caught up. He said: 'I still play games but simple things; mobile games. I limit myself. I try not to get too caught up. At the end of the day, games should be an entertainment. They should not disrupt the flow of life or they should not immerse me in another world.' 'You create such a world that you want to be there with those people all the time. In a way, the game stops being a tool and starts to be a goal. It becomes your new life. You want to live that life.' Regarding his immersion in the game, he commented: 'You get sick of getting satisfaction from the game. Sometimes, it becomes burdensome but you endure. You have to be there. The time comes. You have to go to the dungeon. You have tasks and responsibilities. You have to fulfill them. Actually, it stops being entertaining and becomes life. Then, you cannot realize. Like life. In life, are we aware? There are things we are not satisfied with but we get caught up. You don't realize it. It just happens.'

He stopped when he decided that he needed to gain control of his life again. He talked about that period as: 'I started to see a shrink. I was unhappy with life. I was bored. Nothing gave me satisfaction. I did not have a goal in life. That game was giving me purpose somehow. My life in real life was meaningless to me. Then, I realized that I needed help. I've been going to the shrink for 1,5-2 years. So, I quit that too. I don't have such a need anymore. I don't need to get away from life, go to another virtual life. Because I've resolved the problems in my life and I'm happier. Normal life is more sufficient. I don't need a virtual reality. That's why I'm no longer in online games.' As to how he stopped completely, he said: 'I had

reset my computer. I had set up Windows again. And I did not install the game again. It gave me a reason.'

Regarding his thoughts on his immersion at one point, he said: 'I lost time. I still have friends from that community. My puzzle-solving abilities improved because you had to solve some puzzles to complete some tasks.' When he was playing, he had started to be frustrated with the game. He said: 'The game does not satisfy you anymore. New packages completely destroyed the old world, looking for something new. The search for a change should not be to demolish the old. We did not want the old to become obsolete. You had to do a lot of side tasks to complete even the simplest task. I spent my hours to come to a certain level. Then, somebody comes and pays a certain amount and comes to your level. That person is inexperienced. Things like this drew old players like us away. We could not get the reward for our effort anymore.' Looking back at his experience, he said: 'For me, to erase that completely from my life was to erase my attachment to the past. It is not good to be attached to the past. That was something from the past. It had to go so it went. If you remain attached to the past, you cannot start new things. It was pulling me to the past and I did not think well of that past. I had no need for it, so I quit.'

3.1.20. Respondent 20: Formula I

R20 identified as a 21-year-old, Turkish, single, yüksek okul graduate, employed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He used to be a fan of Formula I. He got interested in Formula I because of his father. The races were being aired on television. He was also a fan of Schumacher. He researched about brands' technologies, engine technologies, tire types, fuel types, etc. His friends were also watching the races. He was spending a lot of time to do research and gather information about the races. He would go onto the official site and follow all the news about the races. He was a fan for 5-6 years. The time he spent about his object of fandom fluctuated based on the dynamics in his life such as school. He was writing comments in the forum of Formula I's official site. The reason for

his falling out was because Formula I company left Turkey. This decision frustrated him and within a couple of months he lost interest. He thinks that Formula I lost its past glamor. He learned how to do research because of his fandom. He also learned how to be cool-headed because of Formula I and the reactions of drivers in the race. Regarding his falling out of fandom, he said: 'They changed the attractions within the race. The pit-stop rules changed. The race became less interesting.' After Formula I, he moved on to computer games.

Researcher's note: R20 was not a fruitful interview. Even though we had communicated beforehand regarding the project and he had confirmed that he was an ex-fan of a number of objects of fandom, he was very vague on the day of the interview. He seemed to have wanted to be part of the cosplayer circle by joining the call made by the cosplayer. Nevertheless, the interview is included in the research to demonstrate the 'margin of error' and shed further light on the dynamics of the face-to-face interview process by being a negative example.

3.1.21. Respondent 21: Singer

R21 identified as a 43-year-old, Turkish, single, master degree graduate, unemployed female. She was recruited as a result of snowballing. She used to be a fan of a rock singer. She was about 25 years old when she first became a fan. She liked him because she thought he was someone who was doing something new for rock music. She was an Anatolian rock band[54] fan before. He also sang Anatolian rock. He appeared to be an alternative to her previous object of fandom. His songs were leaning more towards popular music but his lyrics were meaningful. This is why she became a fan and started to listen to him on a constant basis. She first came across his music on the radio. Her friends also liked him. She once purchased a ticket to his concert but could not go. She also purchased his albums. As to why she

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[54] Her object of fandom then was a Turkish rock band who used to make music of Anatolian rock. The group is no longer together.

was fascinated buy him, she said: 'I thought that he combined rock music and emotionality. This was why.'

At the start of her fandom, she had just changed her job. 'It was as if we had a common point with our fandom with my friends.' She and her friends would talk about their object of fandom. 'We used to share everything through word of mouth.' Her fandom lasted 4-5 years. When she was asked to talk about the end of her fandom, she said: 'I was more of a fan initially, then it started to decrease.' 'He could not produce a lot. He started to repeat himself. His music and his lyrics were not different any more. There was also negative news about him in the media; regarding him being a crook and being in debt related to gambling. This also pushed me away. So, I stopped listening to him gradually, within three months. It was like what he wrote and how he lived did not coincide. He could not have written such emotional lyrics and live such an underground, mafia related life. I thought he was hypocritical. Then, he got arrested. So, I believed the allegations were true.'

Regarding what she liked about him, she said: 'I thought that he was a humanist. I always thought that he had a universal love concept.' At some point, he stopped making new music: 'You can't be a fan of someone who does not produce; if he keeps doing the same things.' She was also exploring new music: 'New bands started to interest me more. But I was not a fan. I might have thought 'Would they repeat themselves too?' 'I would probably listen to him if he had produced something great when he was in prison.' After the falling out, she never ever listened to him again or saw any news about him. A while back, she read news about him doing social work and remembered she used to be a fan. 'It ended completely, I guess. I erased him.' She thinks that it must have had to do with age. 'I'm sure it had to do with age too. If I was a teenager, I might not have cared about the negative news. Maybe I would still listen to him. My fandom ended because I did not approve something about his personality and his values.'

3.1.22. Respondent 22: Book Series

R22 identified as a 19-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed female. She was recruited through the post of the cosplayer[55]. She used to be a fan of the book series.[56] It was a series that constituted of 4 books. The series had a movie that came out in 2006. She first got affected by the movie. It was a fantastic fiction about dragons and their cavalries. She was about 8 years old. She got fascinated. Two years later, she found out about the book. She ran to the book store and purchased it immediately and devoured the book of 600 pages in a day or two. Then, she purchased the second book which was 800 pages and devoured that also in a day or two. There was some time between the second book and the third book. That and the fourth book were also purchased and she read them in a couple of days, too.

Regarding what fascinated her about the book series, she said: 'Dragons are magical creatures and this world does not have magic. This was what made that universe fascinating.' 'The book had an alphabet on its back cover. I used to study this alphabet and make use of that alphabet when I was trying to create a universe on my own.' 'It also interested me when I found out that the author had been writing the book since university years. I saw it as something valuable.' 'Fantastic universe fascinates me because it is not something from our world and day.' Her immersion in the series ended after a while: 'When I was introduced with the other book series, I decided that this series was not as good.' In the book series that was my object of fandom, the stories revolved around the main character but in this other book series, every book had a different main character and she had information about the formation of the universe. You could go all the way back, then you could go forward. One book was about a continent and the other was about another continent. Your area for research was wider. She said: 'I realized that there was not only my book series in that category.' 'I liked reading fantastic books so I started to search for other books in that category. I started to find different and better books. Then,

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[55] She is also a cosplayer now.
[56] She loves reading books. She has been an avid reader since her childhood.

my book series got old and forgotten. I still have the books on my bookshelf. I had donated all my books at one point, but I could not bring myself to give these away. They are still important for me. But I'm no longer reading them or not a fan-girl anymore. They are just on my bookshelf as a nice souvenir.'

Her fandom lasted for 4-5 years. It was like an entrance point to reading and research. She used to spend 3-4 hours about the book series and its movie a day. But the time she spent got less as she got older. 'I'm thankful that my book series showed me more alternatives and carried me forward. It was a good start.' She watched the movie and read the books more than once. She would also go back to the books and reread certain parts. She read the third book of the book series and then started to read the other book series. She then finished all seven books of the other book series and went back to read the fourth and final book of her book series that was the object of her fandom. When she had something to compare the book series with, something had shifted. She said: 'When I was reading the fourth book, I realized that it was missing. I was disappointed with the ending. The other book series was more satisfying in 100 pages in comparison to 600 pages of my book series's book.'Comparing the two book series, she said: 'I fell out of fandom from my primary book series. I gave up on it. But I still have respect for the other book series, even though I'm not a hard core fan anymore. I still like it a lot. When I meet someone randomly I talk about it, but its intensity lessened. But it is in a special place for me.'

She is an active cosplayer. 'Cosplay is my hobby. It is something I create with my own hand craft. This is why, things that I can make on my own interest me more. When I started cosplay I discovered very good characters, universes, books. Then I learned that people go to events and participate in competitions. This is how I started cosplay.' 'Cosplay enabled me to become more social. I can see my cosplayer friends become more and more outgoing.' 'It also encouraged me a lot that my mother supported and became a part of my cosplay. 'I won four awards about this. Fandom is very active in cosplay and they are all intertwined. When you wear costumes of Narnia, for example, your fandom becomes different. It evolves.' Regarding her cosplay community, she said: 'There is a small community in

Turkey. Everybody knows each other in events. It is not part of an organization.' Regarding end of fandom, she commented: 'It may not be as interesting anymore. Or when you spend a lot of time on it, like a puzzle, when all the pieces find their positions, it is finished. When you finish a puzzle, you don't do it again or add something. It is finished.'

She also plays computer games. 'A computer game stopped being interesting after two years of playing. I like strategic games more. Its quality and year of make was not sufficient. It was a pixel game and 2D. Now, there are more developed games in terms of effects. We were playing it all day with my cousin. My computer was not sufficient for the game load. It was a technical problem. Meanwhile, I discovered another computer game and started to play. It seemed to be a better game. There were also technical difficulties like the game not being sold anymore, not being downloaded. The computers were not advanced enough for the game and the game got frozen a lot. It was a foundational game for us. It had to do with the producing company. It did not get developed. It became cult.' Regading fandom, she said: 'Fandom enabled me to use my imagination more. It helped me read a lot of books. It provided a larger perspective. It motivates people to talk about something you like.'

3.1.23. Respondent 23: Television Series

R23 identified as a 20-year-old, Turkish-Bulgarian, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He used to be a fan of the television series Arrow. He loves to watch television series. He also loves comic books and fantastic universes. His father was a collector of comic books so he started to read them in his childhood and has been reading them ever since. He likes to imagine. He also likes fantastic things. In 2012, the television series of his favorite comic book character was announced. He knew that character from comic books. He had just started high school. Every Wednesday, his reason to come home was to watch the series. At the end of the first season, the series had gained a huge success. The television series became really popular because of

media. For two seasons, the series continued really well. At the end of second season, the producers decided to include another similar character in the series. Then, they started to shape the episodes in line with social media comments of the audience. They started to lose their connection to the origin. His favorite comic book character was a very funny, humorous character in comic books. In the series, they turned him into a very serious character. He got frustrated with all the changes being made by the producers. 'I started to watch the episodes by skipping. I would check the rating on IMDB, if it was below 8, I would not watch that episode.' He stopped watching Flash in the middle of second season also. Again, they had changed the character in the series and it was not what it was originally in comic books. The effects had also started to diminish in quality.

He thought there were better alternatives. 'I said when there are so many high quality series out, there is no need to waste time with these.' After the fifth season, he wanted to give my favorite character another chance. He watched the whole season like he watched the first season. The producers had probably taken into consideration the complaints. With the sixth season, they had gone back to the old banality. He did not want to continue watching it. He stopped watching both series. 'After you start watching quality series, certain standards get established in you.' He said: 'Attractiveness of the characters is also a factor. In Flash, the characters were unattractive. This also led me to stop watching the series, even before I stopped watching the television series.' When he compared the two television series, he said: 'In one, there were vigilante scenes. I like these scenes. In the other, all the action scenes were effects. This did not appeal to me as much.' He follows Reddit, IMDB and some forums. He only writes in one forum, DonanimHaber[57], about the television series that he is still a fan of. He said that unpredictability becomes an important factor in getting you hooked. He likes plot twists and Easter eggs[58] in television series.

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[57] Donanimhaber.com is the number one forum site in Turkey.
[58] Easter egg is a reference to something in the background.

3.1.24. Respondent 24: Music Band

R24 identified as a 23-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, employed female. She was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. She used to be a fan of a music band, especially the female vocalist of the band. She was 20 years old when her brother sent her a song, saying she would like it. She watched the video clip and found it nonsense at first. However, she thought she had to give it a chance because of her brother and she listened to it a couple more times and started to like it. She liked the energy of the woman and her voice. She then told her brother 'Yes, this song is just for me. You know me better than myself.' Then, she started to research the group and found out that they were a couple. 'I started to really like her. Every song was of a special value to me. I was memorizing the songs and listening to them all the time. I was watching their live concerts. I was watching their interviews and checking out her mimics. Everything was hooking me in. I was a real fan. It was very different.'

I was in college back then. I was listening to them whenever I was not in class. When we did karaoke with friends, I used to do karaoke with their songs. My fandom lasted 1-1,5 years.' 'I used to listen to them at work too. One day, my account was on and one of my friends also listened to the song. Then, the song started to become popular at work. I realized that it also attracted other people.' She wanted to know everything about her object of fandom: 'I would look at her style a lot. I would pay attention to everything about her. I thought that her energy and style resembled me and this attracted me a lot.' Eventually, she flowed out of fandom. She said: 'I think that I got fed up. I was listening to them so much and they were not making new music.' She got extremely immersed for 4-5 months. 'The music band was my first and most visible fandom.' 'I had to see her mimicry, her movements. I was integrated with her. I had internalized her.' There were also some changes about her object of fandom: 'They got married and had children.

Regarding the dissolution of her fandom, she said: 'I cannot find the taste I used to find in their music.' 'When you discover something for the first time, that first feeling of discovery is different. You get very happy, you get immersed but

then it becomes settled and ordinary.' 'I had really listened to them a lot. I felt like I reached saturation. I even felt estranged. I had consumed all songs, all albums and I was like 'Let me cool down a bit.' So I started to listen to different music. For a while, I did not listen to them at all. I would come across their songs and think of how I used to be a fan. Then, my fandom ended completely.'

Still, she looks her up every now and then. She said: 'She used to be my idol. Now, it's not the same. I look at her child and think 'how cute'.' She also mentioned how immersed she was with the band at one point as: 'The 'me' back then and the 'them', we had become integrated but now it is like two different objects.' 'Now I think that they were not that perfect.' There were also some things that disappointed her about the band. She said: 'When I learned the meaning of their group name, I was a little upset. It turned out to be the initials of the couple. It was very shallow. I was expecting something deeper. It could have been something with a story. That was also a disappointment.' 'As I did research, as I learned more about them, they became normalized. So they were normal people. They were not all that.' Looking back on her fandom, she said: 'Maybe as I learned more about them, my curiosity got less. The material at hand gets consumed. First, there is an element of mystery. You want to find out about them. Then, as you do research and find out about them, the mystery is gone. There comes a point of saturation.'

It was also a factor that she could not share her fandom with anybody else: 'I also had such a thought 'They are this good. But why are they not popular?' I was also wondering that. It was something that could not belong to popular culture. Because nowadays, when there is something good, everybody gathers around it.' 'I might have seen it as an inconsistency.' 'The fact that I could not share the music I liked with people. They did not really like it when I turned it on. Maybe that was the reason. I could not share it with anyone. I could not turn it on anywhere. I was only listening to it on my own. I could not listen to it anywhere because I thought they would not like it.' She said: 'We don't really like popular things. We want it to be special to us. But we also want to share what we like because it is human nature to share. That may also have led to the end of my fandom.' After her fandom

ended, she stopped listening to music for some time. 'I might not have listened to music for a while after that. I was fed up.'

About her experience of fandom, she said: 'Being a fan is very emotional. I liked her voice, I liked her energy, I liked her style; especially her style in that very first clip with the short hair. I used to get very affected when I watched her live performances. I was really a fan. But I never had an addiction like cigarettes or fanaticism. I never understood any of that. But afterwards, I came to the point where I was like 'yes, it is possible.' Regarding, how her fandom was a personal one, she said: 'I lived it on my own. I had made my friends listen to their songs but they did not like them.' Looking back on her fandom, she said: 'Now I say to myself: 'how did I love her so much? How did I become such a fan? Why did I get so hooked?' Maybe the fact that my brother sent it to me might have played a part in my becoming a fan. First, I did not like it. Then, I listened to it a couple more times. I tried to understand it. Then, I got hooked.' 'Now, I can't be so hooked to anything.' 'Even the pronunciation of the music band's name was a matter of curiosity for me.' 'Curiosity and mystery, these pulled me. As I did not find information, I wanted do search more.' It was not only listening to them, I was trying to understand their lyrics like trying to solve a puzzle, doing karaoke, researching them.'

She was also going through a phase in her own life. She expressed this as: 'It might also have been because I was in a period in my life when I was very open to everything. It was a period when I did not understand fanaticism but I was thinking that if I went to a soccer game, it would be all right. I started climbing, doing sports, camping, all during that same period. I slowly started to understand these things. The first year of university was very difficult so I could not try anything. But afterwards, I started to have more time to try new things and my social circle got larger.' Right now, there is a series called and a character in that series that her friends think resembles her. She is also rebelious, she rides a motorcycle just like herself. She recently saw that character and remembered the female lead singer of the music band.

3.1.25. Respondent 25: Singer

R25 identified as a 27-year-old, Turkish, married, PhD student, employed female. She was recruited as a result of snowballing. She used to be a fan of a Turkish singer. When she was in primary school and middle school, her family would listen to her songs at home. She liked her style, she found her very natural. She did not put on a lot of makeup or die her hair. She could do a clip with her dog on the beach. She had shared a personal photograph of her family in one of her clips, sharing her private life. She also likened her voice to her own voice, she was a soprano too. She would write about her for school homework, she would do research on the internet, try to go to her concerts. She also read fan forums and followed them so as to learn more about her. She said: 'She had an official page where she used to talk about herself. This intensifies your fandom.' She was curious to find out more about her. She could sing her songs easily and her tone of voice resembled her. She said: 'I liked her hair. My hair was curly like her hair. She did not change her hair. She used it as it was. She was simple and natural.'

He fandom lasted until 2004-2005 when she was in high school, around 5 years. In middle school, she had her own room, she could listen to her music more and do research on the internet on her own so she got more immersed. She stopped listening to her after her object of fandom changed her style when she got together with a new boyfriend. She changed her hair, she started to make hard rock kind of music because of her new boyfriend. 'Back then, I felt like she lost her natural style. She does not change her hair anymore or color it.[59]' 'I stopped being a fan for almost ten years. Nowadays, I see that she is returning to her roots after she got married to somebody else.' When her object of fandom changed her style, she did not like it. She said: 'I stopped buying her albums. Her new songs did not reflect her anymore. I used to hear her songs on the radio and did not like her style and did not want to listen to her anymore. I do not like rock music so I left her.' 'I could not listen to her music anymore. I was saying to myself 'This person is not that person'. I did

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[59] She was referring to the singer's current status, at the present.

not hate her but I was not a fan. It was like not seeing one of your family members. She is there but it is better if I don't see her. When you are a fan, you see your object of person as one of your relatives.' As she progressed in high school, she started to get distracted. She said: 'During high school, I did not do research about her or follow her anymore. But I came across news about her and when I did, I read the news.' She was also disappointed in the fact that she was not using her voice like she used to do. She said: 'She stopped reflecting her soprano voice to her songs.'

After a decade of 'dormant[60]' fandom, she became a fan again. She explained this as: 'When her album in 2016 was released, it was like her earlier albums so I downloaded it and am listening to it.' 'Now I'm a fan again, but not as much as I used to be. But if I was asked about my favorite singer, I would still say it is her.' 'Now, I don't have that kind of free time anymore. I can't do research about her.' 'I'm not as enthusiastic or immersed as I was in middle school. I don't have the time either. It has to do with time and enthusiasm.' When asked why she got so immersed in her object of fandom, she said: 'Resemblance to yourself and loneliness might have been reasons. I was the only child at home. I was happy when I went to choir to sing and when I listened to her. My fandom used to lessen my loneliness.' 'She was young, like an older sister. She could be someone close. I was surprised to find out about her age when I went to her concert. She was older than I thought. She looked younger due to her petit size. That might also have been why I liked her.'

She thought similarity was a factor because 'You're not scared. You internalize her because you're not scared. If it is someone strange, you may be afraid to do research. But with her; her voice is similar, her music is similar, my family does not get angry at her, so I could easily become a fan without any opposition.' 'The environment I was in shaped my fandom. They would not allow me to listen to heavy metal, for instance. It was also important that she was a woman, like an older sister. Like someone I could share my loneliness with.' Once

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[60] '*Dormant fandom*' is when a fan grows apart from her object of fandom because of a change in style related to the object of fandom. If the object of fandom reverts back to her original style, the fandom gets reactivated.

she wrote to her fan forum. She wanted to meet her. 'Even if I wanted to become a singer, my family would not allow it, I know this. So maybe if I met her, I could say 'I also want to be a singer.' When they did not allow me to be a singer, I wanted to at least be a music teacher but they did not let me. They wanted me to be an attorney. My goal was to become a music teacher or a kindergarten teacher. I wish I could be a singer or go on to opera. In Turkey, they force occupations on you.' 'Maybe *getting away from my dreams* was also a factor in falling out of my fandom.' Fandom eliminates loneliness because the lyrics may respond to you at that instant. It is like there is somebody home. It is almost like the lyrics respond to you about the events in your life. They coincide.'

3.1.26. Respondent 26: Actor & Television Series

R26 identified as a 21-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited through the post of the cosplayer. He used to be a fan of an actor. When he was younger, his sense of humor and his physical manners in his movies appealed to him. He was around 15 years old when he was a fan. He first came across a movie of him on television and he liked his tone of voice, his physical mimicry and his jokes. He was able to take on many different roles. He watched all his movies even though they got very low scores. He was a fan, so he watched all of his movies repeatedly. He was following news about him. He was a fan for 3-4 years. He started to watch his movies in chronological order. 'I think that the year 2000 had a profound effect on people's lives. Some actors stayed in the 90's. Some made their way through. Unfortunately, the actor got crushed under the year 2000.' 'He started to repeat himself and make less and less movies. He could not improve himself.' 'It is like having the same food heated again and again and served as a meal. It gets boring after a while. Then you get sick of it and start leaning towards other alternatives.' 'Unfortunately, I'm not a fan

anymore. I wish I was but I'm not.' 'Still, I watch his movies when they come out. Everybody deserves a second chance. But so far, no improvements.'[61]

Regarding his fandom, he said: 'Everybody has certain criteria; while eating, choosing a partner, watching series. If the person fits these criteria, he feels close to that person. He can also build a bridge with that person, trying to build resemblance. I think that this is how fandom forms usually. There are also fanatic fandoms. The reason for these is to view those people as being above your criteria. I don't find that healthy. When you're a fan, you follow their new movies or new productions, you have a general idea about their life. This to me is what fandom is like. However, when you're a fanatic, you start following who they broke up with, their eye color, their hair color. It is to the degree of sickness. I don't find that healthy.' 'While you improve and keep improving, your object of fandom keeps improving too. If he cannot improve, if he cannot keep up with you, he deserves to stay in the past.' 'Online, multi-player computer games do this best nowadays. This has been happening since 2009. They keep renewing themselves. They stay relevant. They keep people's attention alive. But with music groups or artists, they see novelty as a risk. If you don't renew yourself, you become forgotten after a while.'

There was also a television series that he was also a fan of. He came across the series on television. He found it interesting and started to watch it. He was hooked because he already liked science. He was feeling the void of something about science. He also discovered science-fiction as a genre through the television series. Imagination was an important factor. He had found something about himself.' 'Finally, I could find something that was similar to me.' In time, he got frustrated with the changes in the series. He said: 'Main author changed in the fifth season. This is normally a big problem. In the seventh season, a supporting character came into play. This supporting actor became very dominant within the episodes. The main character changed, yet the supporting character did not. Also, some topics were covered very poorly. For instance, homosexuality was portrayed

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[61] R26 seems to have the same tendency towards his object of ex-fandom. It may be 'dormant fandom'.

as an uncommon condition. Normally, the main character cannot change gender. The new author also demolished this taboo. You have to get people used to the idea. You have to build a foundation. You have to add this in the scenario in a logical way.'

He said he was not a fan anymore because: 'I'm not a fan right now because I don't watch it with that kind of enthusiasm. There are not people around me with whom I can share my enthusiasm.' He said: 'I will give it another chance. Because the main writer and main character changed. But if it still cannot give me anything, if it messes up again, I will have to quit.' Regarding fandom, he said: 'Masses increase fandom for sure. Mass psychology determines everything.' He still had hope about the actor. He said: 'We're human. We're unpredictable. For instance, another actor is a comedian. Yet, he stars in serious roles and does a great job. Another example is this other actor. He turned his life around with Marvel in ten years, from the bottom to the top. This is why, I remain hopeful and I believe in giving second chances.'

He said he is a huge fan of Charles Darwin. He's always loved science. He read a lot of books about him and his life. 'People should accept that things can change at any minute. People who are involved in science knows this. Majority of people think that there is this piece of information and this is valid forever. World is changing, people are changing, our outlook changes.' He said: 'First you become a fan, then you feel curious. There's usually mystery and you try to solve that mystery.' 'First fandom, then curiosity. But most of all, charm.' Regading being a fan of an actor he said: 'Generally, there are much less fans of actors. I mean, they would not fit in the main stream. Because every actor changes with every role, with their performance. So to be a fan of an actor is a bit problematic.' 'For instance, I like an actor from Turkey. You can *trust* this actor. You can become a fan because this actor has proved himself. We know a bit about his private life. He is not involved in scandals. He is doing his job well. He has a decent life. These are my criteria.' Regarding the importance of trust in fandom, he said: 'This other actor is an example of the trust issue. He went through such an incident. I was a fan. I was following his television series. But when the news broke, it was a scandal. It was

all finished. Because the incident was very critical. It broke my trust; when your trust is broken, everything else is secondary. Everybody has red lines. My red line is children. When the allegations were about child abuse, I ended my fandom. It was sudden and changed everything in that industry.'

He also thought the media was critical in shaping fandom. He said: 'Media is our eyes and ears. If you lead the media in a direction, masses also turn to that direction. There used to be a boy band, also this pop-singer, everybody listened to them. Mainstream media pointed to them. Are they very good? No. Are they very handsome? No. There are better ones. But our eyes and ears have not been turned towards the others. They are in the dark. We were directed to turn towards these individuals. We saw them, so their fanaticism increased. The media gave them a certain power so they can get their wants met. For instance, about the pop-singer, his behavior used to be really disgraceful. He would spit on his own fans from the balcony. If a normal person spits on you, it is reason for a fight. But when he spat, it was only covered in the media as 'He is being naughty again.''

3.1.27. Respondent 27: Rock-Singer

R27 identified as a 26-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed female. She was recruited as a result of snowballing. She used to be a fan of a singer. She first came across a clip on television. Her older sister did not like the song and changed the station. But she was really fascinated by the couple of scenes she saw in the music video. Then, she tried to find that singer and that video. 'There was a woman who had a microphone in her hand and screamed freely. At that time, it had sparked my interest that a woman was singing like that. She had a strong voice.' She was 12-13 ages old. She purchased the album and started to listen to all of her songs. After she purchased her album, there was a very long time she spent listening to that album. She was the only artist she listened to most at that time.

She was the first woman figure as a rock singer that she had discovered. 'What really hooked me in was the lyrics of the songs that she wrote, the way she

sang and that strong music she made. There was also this distinction; she was singing about her feelings, her strength, her love freely. That music was not popular. She was not well-known or loved in my circle back then. But for me she was doing something amazing. I remember how I strengthened myself listening to her and when I felt bad, I found the strength to get up again by listening to her. Actually, she affected me a lot with her music during that period. That's why I started to establish a strong attachment to her. Then, I learned about her life story; that she had lost most of her family in the 1999 earthquake, but that she persevered and never gave up on her battle in life. When I saw these, I realized that her lyrics were based on something real. She was really writing about her own feelings. So, to me it felt like she was saying something real.' She did research about her. She wanted to find out about her life. She was curious about the realness of her lyrics on an emotional level. She wondered what kind of a person she was, how she sang in concerts, how she communicated with people. Factors like these were important for her. 'I was not a fan of her songs. I was a fan of her because she wrote all those songs. Also, she was never a sensational person. This was probably as important as the work she did. Because there was a bond that I built with her songs and in actuality, the bond that I felt with her songs enabled me to build a bond with her too. And I wondered whom I built that bond with. For me, her personality was also very important in the fandom I felt for her.'

Her parents had just got divorced. All of her songs were empowering for her. 'I might have made a connection that way. Yes, there are bad things happening outside but I won't give in and I can get stronger. She had a lot of songs about getting strong through pain. So, internally I might have made a connection that way. Because she was something that gave me strength.' Externally, social circle was a factor. She said: 'At that time, my older sisters' friends and my friends were very different. My older sister was in her teenage years and she did not really want me in her social circle because of my age or because she found me 'anti' and thought I could not fit in. She did not like the singer. We're very different people in terms of personality. I used to think that she had a male filter in her eyes so she only saw people and incidents through these male filters. So, when the singer made these

songs that stressed women's power it did not appeal to her. The singer was a clear expression of our difference with my older sister. This is also why I hung on to her. The singer was something that proved my position and the truth of my position.'

She would release albums every 2-3 years. Then, she would go on tours. 'When she released an album, I would buy it and listen to it non-stop for the first six months, memorizing every word and every rhythm.' This continued until 2007. After that, the gap between her albums got longer to one album every 5 years. 'In high school, I was listening to all of her albums intensely and going to all of her concerts in Istanbul. In university, I guess she released only one album and I listened to it.' She was also actively expressing her fandom. She said: 'When I started to use the internet, I was clearly expressing my fandom on social accounts and forums.' However, she did not want to become part of a fan community. She said: 'There were a lot of people who were hard-core fans so they had fan clubs. They still do. There was a fan club. They were older than me at the time. I was younger. I never thought of becoming a part of that group. Maybe I would not even if I was the same age. I knew what they were doing. They organized events, they went to concerts together. I was aware of their presence. I was following them but I did not consider becoming included. For me, the singer was at a more personal point. She was in a more personal place for me; not at a point where I could talk with a community, but rather I wanted her to be something special to me.' 'I might not have found it logical to be in a group that calls itself the singer's fans. I might have thought 'What will all these people do together whose only common point is the singer?' I might also have wanted my fandom to be mine. I remember competing my fandom against my friends. There were friends who also liked her and we would go to concerts together. I always wanted to feel like I was the most hard-core fan. It was like 'I know all of her songs best. Nobody can love her like I do. So, I might not have wanted to meet fans who were more extreme so that in my mind, I could have the first place.'

She thinks that new releases may be important to keep fandom active. She said: 'When there was a new release, it was a big deal to fill up a whole week. If her new album would come out in July and the announcement was made in March,

that year the most important thing for me was for July to come.' 'When she started to leave bigger gaps within albums, it was actually something sad for me because my frequency of feeling that enthusiasm and excitement decreased.' She mentioned how after a while, an information network forms regarding the object of fandom. Her friends knew that she was a fan so when they heard news, they told her. 'I remember having been called with the news 'Did you hear she was releasing a new album?' I remember having been called with that kind of enthusiasm.' 'My notification period was maximum one week. If there were news somewhere, I would know about it in a week at the most.'

When she moved on through the stages of life, her relationship with the songs also changed. 'There was definitely a difference in how frequently I listened to her. When I was around 12-14, I was listening to her all the time. I was not listening to anything else during that time. In high school, this may have flexed. That was a period when I was discovering new singers through my friends. In high school, I started to listen to another singer a lot and I became a fan but it cannot ever be compared to my singer in terms of my fandom. The moments when my singer was screaming were very precious to me because it was like an inner explosion.' 'I felt like I had as much information about her as one of her friends.'

Looking back on her experience of fandom, she said: 'Since it is an ex-fandom, I can perhaps define it with the emotional attachment I built with her. At the point of the end of my fandom, this was what I felt towards the singer: 'She betrayed me. She betrayed my feelings. She betrayed the music she made. And I just found out about this.' So, this was a huge blow for me. This was how I defined it 'betrayal'. To define somebody who makes music in such a way may show the emotional bond I made. The reason for my intense fandom may have been the fact that I established a very strong bond with her. Initially, I might have thought how similar things we lived or how our lives resembled each other. The impact of her songs on me was very significant. I really owe a lot to the singer because I remember how she picked me up at times when I felt very weak or bad. Of course, this has no bearing to the singer after she makes that music but her music continues to impact me. And this space, the space where I connect with her music may not

even be something she can reach, intervene or control but still at the end of my fandom, I felt as if she had done something to break it. The reason of my fandom was actually the love and connection I had for her in relation to her music.'

Her fandom helped her get through the difficult times in her life. She said: 'I needed to hear her music when I was feeling bad. She was a factor that could comfort me or heal me at such times. So, when I was unhappy, I would put on my headphones, and that would be like a meditation to me and when I took them off, I would start over. So when I was feeling bad, she would have such an impact on me. Somebody who has such an impact on my life or somebody that I had positioned as such created a huge fandom. Physically, she does not touch me in any way, we have not met or come face to face, but she has a power that impacts my life positively. I'm not sure if it was like this because I was a fan or if I was a fan because it was like this. It may be a difficult question to answer. But I remember a very short while after I started listening to her music, I felt stronger.'

When, we started to talk about the falling out, she got very emotional and upset. After college, her fandom continued in a very strong way. It was not as intense as before because she was not making as many albums anymore, thus she was not listening to her as much. However, she still went to all her concerts and she would still be very happy when she heard about the release of a new album. But for her fandom to end definitlely, just happened within the last year. Up until a year ago, she was still defining herself as a fan. She detailed the incident that led to the end of her fandom. She said: 'One day, a friend of mine sent me an article. The article was about the cartelization music industry in Turkey in relationship to the singer. It was an anonymous article and it was about how the music industry in Turkey was dominated by some artists and producers. Before I read that article, I knew that the singer had a long-term romantic relationship with a music producer. Basically, the article claimed that in Turkey, however huge the control of another older singer in the music industry is, so is the control of the singer in that industry. First, I started to laugh. I thought they were trying to shade her. But as I kept reading, it talked about some other artists who used to make music at the same time with the singer but who suddenly disappeared. When I finished the article, I had

learned that as a result of her relationship with that producer, she had pushed a lot of people out of the industry. She used to be the older controlling singer's old vocalist so I already knew that she had a close relationship with her. The message was that 'She is not who you think you are. She harmed a lot of artists. She pushed them out of the industry. She is very much within the corrupt dynamics of the industry.' My fandom was not so simple that it would end as soon as I read that article. I told my friend that it had no legitimate source. Then, she started to send me loads of material in chronological order. This other singer was someone who was making music about freedom and made more independent music. Yet another singer was more political. But for me, they could not be compared to my singer. My friend sent me some songs from these artists as well. There was one song in particular that we used to wonder among friends who it was referring to with all its rage. When you put that article with that song, you could really see who it was written for. That friend of mine tried to prove to me that the allegations were true. That day, all the things I read in 3-4 hours really disappointed me because the claim was something completely outside of my values and my political position: your object of fandom is actually somebody who worked with solely capitalist methods, made business just to make money and betrayed sisterhood. It was telling me this: 'All the songs that empowered you and that you found deep meanings in were lies. They were made to be sold.'

She got very emotional talking about her experience. She said: 'She had healed something about my childhood and that thing that was healed by her was still in me even though it did not have the same impact. I felt like it was betrayed because my strong belief about the realness of her feelings and what I had found in her was in reality a lie. Because somebody like that cannot have made something with her real feelings. That is how much she had harmed the connection. It was a betrayal.' 'I was really very sad. I spent a long time questioning her, myself and my love for her. There was somebody who had lied to me and I had built this enormous thing over that lie and now I learned that it was a lie. It was very emotional.'

She did not believe the allegations right away. For a week, she read other sources, wanting the allegations to be false. She tried to look into the relationship

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she had with her producer again. She hoped to find a statement falsifying the claims. When asked if she had fallen out of fandom right away, she responded: 'My fandom ended abruptly, I just did not believe the allegations right away.' 'If she said- or one day says - 'Yes, I did something like this but I am very sorry. The circumstances at the time had forced me to behave that way.' then maybe I can forgive her. But of course, it is another thing to start listening to her again or to be a fan again. 'But I know that she will never apologize. This hope is useless.' When asked why such a statetent would be impoartant, she said: 'If it was true and if she makes such an apology, it will not exactly be a betrayal, because there is a huge difference between believing what she did was right and thinking that it was a mistake. Then, I can still believe the realness of her songs.' So, an apology or a statement would enable her to forgive within herself what she defined as a betrayal. She further detailed her falling out: 'After a week of investigation, I made my decision. It was not something you could ask around or ask her to find out. You had to reason and decide for yourself. The moment I was absolutely convinced that the allegations were indeed true, I went home and threw away everything about her; all of her CDs, her concert recordings, everything.' 'Before that week and even during that week, I was still a fan. But after I made my decision, I was not a fan anymore. If somebody asked me about her at that moment, I was not a fan at all. I don't like her at all. A couple of times, when I was out, her songs started to play in the venue I was in and I felt extremely uncomfortable.' The first three months after she threw out all her albums, she was full of rage. She could not even stand to hear her songs. When asked if her friends knew about her decision, she said: 'I told people I was close with. My position does not agree with being a fan of such a person so people close to me should know that I am no longer a fan.'

She stopped following her on Twitter and Spotify. She does not listen to her. The singer released a new album a month ago. She knew that a new album would be released he got curious about the album and the kind of songs she had made. She looked at the names of a couple of songs and after she played a couple of the songs for a couple of seconds, she turned them off. She still has not listened to the new album to this day. She has not even read anything about her new album.

She saw the news in a couple of sources but she did not read them. 'I don't wonder what she says anymore. It's not like I'm curious but I don't want to read. I'm really not curious.' 'I did however look to see if she had a concert and whether she will come to my university for concert.' When asked if she would go, she replied no. 'Never. But still I wondered. Because it feels like it is a moment of truth, a confrontation.' 'This is the first time that I have no idea about her songs. I know all her previous songs by heart but I did not listen to a single song in her new album. I don't know any of them. It might be a strange feeling to know nothing about something she does, when she was somebody about whom I knew everything for a long time. I don't know, maybe I'm curious about her new album. It's not like I'm afraid that I would listen and like the album. I'm certain that I will not like it because I will view it through that bad lens. I really don't know why I got curious and looked at her concert dates.'

She admitted that she still likes her old songs. 'At times, I caught myself mumbling her songs and stopped myself.' 'I now know that beneath the song, there is something that is not clean, something that is dirty. And the fact that the song is very good does not change anything. That job is bad. There is negative energy, there is harm done to others.' 'I cannot be part of that harm. I don't want her to gain +1 because of me on Spotify. I don't want to support that injustice to other singers.' 'Even if she made the best song in the world and even if I like the song, I will not listen to it because for me it is bad. It can be great in terms of musical quality, it can have great lyrics, but it is not only a music product for me. It is a work somebody produced and in my eyes, that person who did the producing is not clean.' When asked if she would listen to her again in case she apologizes, she said: 'I don't think so. If I had not started listening to her in middle school, but instead in college, and if her impact was limited to the last five years, maybe I would start to listen again. But she had a very deep impact on me and she cannot make that up. Her apology does not make up for that. Her apology would only tell me that she does not stand behind a conscious malice, that she brings it out, it is a pardon. If she apologizes, I will forgive her within me but I won't support her work. I don't support her, listen to her or go to her concerts. I would only forgive her within. I'm thinking 'Would

it bring back the other two singers?' No. So it would be a very late apology. Somebody once said something like this and I liked it a lot: 'If the singer is Edison, the other singer[62] is Tesla.' 'When I was talking to a friend, she said 'For years, we were unfair to the other two singers. It's true. After this incident, I started to listen to them more. It was like my apology to them.' 'It does not align with the image she portrays at all. If you're a person who knows her or listens to her, you would never think she would do something like that. For instance, I don't think the same holds true for the older controlling singer. Everybody knows her one way or another. She is a music cartel and people know this. They may still continue to listn to her, that is not a problem, but somone who makes music that actually is alternative and that goes hand in hand with rebellion and who gives serious messages with every song she makes - someone like that to do this, is lying. Maybe we can say the older controlling singer did not lie, but this singer did. This is why, people may have changed their minds about her, because she was progressing in a totally contradictory way to this.'

When asked if there were any signs of these during her fandom, she said: 'Yes, I was noticing some things during the phase of fandom but I did not dwell on them. I used to support people who made alternative, independent music back in my high school years. It meant like a contumacy for me, like not giving in to the hegemony of production companies and I supported them. I wanted the singer to do this too. If people who were known by only 10.000 people could reject production companies and go their own way, the singer could do this and she would have initiated a major trend. It would be a very strong impact. I always wanted her to be independent but she was not. That upset me at that time. Also, politically, she was always in the middle. That's why everybody likes her. But the other two singers, they were feminists. We know that. But we did not know if the singer was a feminist. Yes, she may be sensitive about women issues but I don't know if she is a feminist. She had a much bigger power in her hands than anybody who also appealed to me musically but she only used it to sell her own music. Maybe she did

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[62] Referring to the singer's main competition whom she is claimed to have driven out of business.

not want to lose her male fans by making a feminist statement or maybe she did not want to lose people from different views by saying something political; she did business for the market. She was not courageous enough, she was not honest enough. I was thinking about these a little bit before that article but because there was not solid data or because I could find various excuses.

She also mentioned how her fandom helped with her identification. She said: 'During my high school years or my teenage years, listening to her gave me an identity. Perhaps not totally how I defined myself but it was a contribution to that process of identification. There was an abyss between listening to the singer and listening to another singer for example. It was like 'How can someone who listens to the singer be friends with someone who listens to another singer?' They cannot. That was an identity. We could be friends with those who listened to one of the two singers but people who listened to artists that made market business could not take part within us. We even had a basketball team, it consisted only of people who listened to the singer. If there was somebody who did not like her, she would be excluded from the team and she would be left with two choices: she would suggest similar things or she would leave. Socially, it had serious implications. It was like an identity. That incident caused me to abandon that identity, too.'

When asked how falling out of fandom affected her life, she said: 'If this had happened five years ago, it would have a much more serious impact on me. But at this time, I already like hundreds of different artists – even though it is not a fandom of that degree – there is still tons of different artists and different music. I don't only listen to rock, I listen to tens of different music styles and about the music, it is not the personality of somebody that appeals to me, it is just the music itself. For instance, I'm a fan of a foreign singer. She came to Zorlu for a concert last year, and because of that my fandom decreased a little but I did go to Zorlu for that concert. Because there is a huge variety, it did not create a big vacuum to get my singer out of my life.'

Regarding her falling out, she said: 'The biggest factor in my falling out of fandom was her personality not being what I thought it was. If she made a really bad song or an album that everybody disliked, my fandom would not end. I would

think 'It can happen. So, this album is like this. She made seven amazing albums, so what? I'm sure her next album will be great.' I would defend her. It would not affect me that much if she did a bad job, because there is already amazing work she did. Even if that bad job continued, my fandom would not end. I would just listen to her albums less. I would continue listening to her old songs. That also upsets me; not listening to those great songs anymore. Or even if I listen to those songs, not being able to feel what I felt before. Because they really made me feel better, I lost something major. I lost something that was very good to my soul, something that made me stronger. I did not want my fandom to end. So, this is something I'm upset about; having lost a feeling in me.'

When she compared the two instances regarding her objects of fandom, she said: 'The fact that the foreign singer gave a concert in Zorlu. A punk singer who is rebellious to have a concert in a place like Zorlu that is part of the economic system, that was built on top of many demolished buildings, that was very upsetting but I still went to that concert thinking maybe I would not have the chance to listen to her live again. She indirectly supported economic system, it was not a stance of principles. But my singer harmed the other singer directly. She cut them out, she caused their lives to change course so when I listen to the singer, I feel like I become a part of that malice, that harm. With the foreign singer, I went to that concert even though I felt bad about myself because I did not harm anybody, neither did she. But the singer did harm and I regret having been a part of that harm.'

She believes it is important to be vocal about her thoughts on her ex-fandom. She said: 'It is important to wake her fans up who are not aware of this information. There is a principal value there, to progress in life without harming another. She excelled by stepping on somebody and this is against my most basic values. I would warn that fan. I have that sadness. To have been deceived but while I was being deceived, not being able to protect my basic principles. But I don't feel responsible because I did not know. If somebody who knows about this continues to be a fan, I would doubt their basic principles. If a close friend did this, it would be a reason for me to reexamine my relationship. She would be supporting that crime by owning

up to that fandom. If there is something about one of those values or a couple of those values, that feeling does not stay the same, rather becomes the opposite.'

3.1.28. Respondent 28: Singer

R28 identified as a 23-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed female. He was recruited through the post in the top university alumni Facebook network page. She used to be a fan of a male singer. She was 13-14 years old and her cousin was listening to him, so she started listening to him as well. She memorized all the lyrics, she tried to learn everything about him. There was an official fan club forum. She was very active in that forum. She would come home from school and get in the forum right away. She spent all her time until dinner in that forum. She also created fan art in the forum. 'Before his second album was released, one of his songs leaked. I remember how excited I was to listen to that unfinished song. I was exhilarated.' 'There was a band he was playing with before he went solo and became famous. I learned about this and started to listen to them as well. It was hard back then to find those songs. I used to spend a lot of time doing research.' 'I was also interested in the people he was playing with. But when somebody left, I was no longer interested in them. I was interested as long as they remained with the singer.'

She was very active in the official fan club forum. She said: 'I had friends in the forum. I still see some of them to this day in real life. We would get together and go to his concerts. Once we purchased a present and gave it to him. We read in an interview that he always wanted a toy train when he was a child. So, we gathered money and bought him a toy train. We wrote letters and gave them to him.' He was like an older brother. She gained a social circle because of her fandom. When there was news about him that they thought were not true, they would all react and defend him. When asked how she became immersed, she said: 'I did not have a lot of friends back then. What got me hooked in was the fact that I had opened up to a place where there were others who had similar tastes with me. All of a sudden, I had a social circle. I liked his songs. There were also people who liked the same

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things as me. That was probably the reason I stayed in for so long.' 'It was not like love. He was our older brother.' The approval of her family was also a factor in the progression of her fandom. She said: 'My mother also approved of him because he was not in sensational news.'

At the time of her fandom, there were some poblems at home. She said: 'Those times were when I felt very uneasy due to my age and there were problems at home. So, I needed to belong. I felt uncomfortable at home, I did not feel like I belonged at school because I was an overweight child so there was bullying and being left out. I think I found an area where I felt like I belonged.' She also started to learn how to play the guiar because of her fandom: 'I just remembered that I even went to guitar classes for two years to learn to play his songs. After those years, I stopped playing the guitar, too.' She was very active in her fan community. She said: 'I was very active. Maybe I was also feeling responsibility towards the fan club. I used to think that I had to be there for my friends. I was always there when something happened.' 'We would dissect his video clips. We would spend our days deciphering his clips and the scenes in the clips.' 'Once a magazine was giving real-size poster of the singer. I had purchased two of that magazine with all of my allowance. I could not bring myself to put it up. It was just too beautiful. I might still have it at home.' 'I used to buy his albums because I thought 'I have to support him.' Once he had make a duet with another singer, I bought that album just for that one song.'

Her music taste started to change because of her friends at school. People were listening to heavy metal, so she remembered not vocalizing her fandom at school. She would act like she was listening to heavy metal just like the other people at school. I thought 'They may make fun of me because I'm listening to him.' 'I was still listening to him but I did not vocalize it like I used to do.' Afterwards, she did not like the albums he made and she gradually fell out of fandom. 'I had two closest friends my age. They also quit. When the people I was closer with started to scatter, I also left. I was also not as motivated to write pages of content about him.' 'I started high school. It was a new environment. You also think 'I've grown.' I had to define myself with something so that I would fit in. It was very gradual. It

did not happen abruptly.' First, I started to become less active in fan club. Then, I started to listen to him less and not tell anyone about my fandom. Then, one day my fandom ended. It passed somehow. I realized afterwards.' 'I did not listen to him as much. I did not follow him as closely. I would only go in the forum once every three days or so. I started to be left out of the flow as I went in less and less. Slowly, my connection to that forum got weaker. It was not like I did not like him anymore. I just fell out naturally and gradually.' 'Every now and then, I play one of his songs and say 'my beautiful childhood' and laugh. That's all.' Looking back on her fandom, she said: 'Now I think to myself 'Why did I do that?' It was too much. It was extreme. If I watched myself from the outside now I would feel ashamed. 'Why do you cry at his concerts?' I used to tremble and cry in his concerts. He had embraced me and we had a photograph taken. It was like a *divinization*. Now, he is someone I'm not interested in at all.'

She is no longer a fan. She said: 'I don't define myself as a fan anymore but when I'm with my friends, I say 'I was a fan'. 'He was like an exemplary person for us at that time. There was also my mother's approval. No, the singer does not smoke. No, he does not drink. We must have defended him more than he defended himself.' 'I could have spent that period as a lonely child but I had an entertaining time. If I were to meet those people[63] now, I may think they would not understand me. But they are people I like. It has socialized me. I felt like I was a part of something, like I belonged.' 'Usually, when we talk about that phase with my friends, we say 'We've grown up.' They also find it absurd.' She also thinks she could have made better use of her time. She said: 'I could have acquired a different hobby. I could have improved myself.'

3.1.29. Respondent 29: Computer Game

R29 identified as a 19-year-old, Turkish, single, university student, unemployed male. He was recruited as a result of snowballing. He used to be a fan

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[63] She was referring to the people in her fan community.

of a computer game. He saw a promotional on television when he was around 12. He got curious but could only start to play after two years because his computer did not have the technical structure for him to play the game and he did not have enough time at the time. When he had a computer, he found the game. The scenario fascinated him. He did research about the game on the internet. He played the game once and finished. Then, he thought that he did not really understand what it was exactly so he wanted to play it again. This is when he started to read about the game in every single detail. The scenario and the drama affected him. 'After I finished the game for the second time, I got really hooked. I also liked that it was first person shooter so you feel like you're living it. This really affects you.' 'Age was also a factor.' He spent two weeks to research the game. He got really immersed in the game for a month. He spent 10 hours a day for that game.

Regarding his falling out of fandom, he said: 'After a while, you get away from the game. You forget about it. You get distracted by other games.' 'I finished the game. Then, I researched the game on the internet. Looked at the fan pages, read comments. Listened to its music. He downloaded its wallpapers to his computer. Then, I continued listening to its music. I even read its book.' So, he remained engaged in its related media products. He finished the game but he still thought it had artistic value. He tried to follow it for a while but he got bored of the music too. 'I think that I wasted a lot of time.' A man creates a city and his son becomes the reason for his city to get demolished. They kidnap his son and raise him as an agent. The man gets his son to kill him at the end. The scenario affected him because all the efforts the creator of the city gave for his city went to waste, so he got upset. 'I quit liking the game because it was a drama. At the end of the day, it is a game and it should not affect our life. Maybe I was inspired but up to a point.'

He still plays computer games but has not been that immersed in a game again. He said: 'I like games where I can look from the above and give directives; strategy games. I also liked another computer game. I don't play anymore because it has become old. It does not have good visual quality.' He spends 4 hours a day playing computer games. He moves among games. 'I think the reason why

somebody gets hooked into something is their expectation or the goal they want to reach.'

3.1.30. Respondent 30: Music Band

R30 identified as a 39-year-old, Turkish, single, university graduate, unemployed female. She was recruited as a result of snowballing. She used to be a fan of a boy band. It was the 90's. She was around 12-13. The band was very popular at the time. Everybody at school were also fans. She first saw the band on a television program. 'I was in love with one of them. I was a teenager. What can you do?' 'First, I was attracted to their music and their dances as a group. Then, I started to get attracted to one of them. He was my childhood love.' She was so immersed in her object of fandom that she even got into fights over him. She said: 'There was a girl in the other class. She was also a fan of him. We argued once. That was the kind of fan I was.'

She also had friends who were fans of the same band. 'I had another friend who was a fan of another member. My cousin was a fan of yet another member.' 'We would always talk about them during breaks. We would exchange posters.' 'I think I wrote them a letter once but I don't remember well. I must have written it to the States. They never came to Turkey.' 'I listened to their songs all the time. I knew all their songs by heart. I purchased magazines. I gathered information about them, especially him.'

Regarding her flowing out of fandom, she said: 'After the childhood phase passes, your fandom passes too.' Her fandom lasted for about three years. 'I was not as intense a fan as I used to be after a while. I had started to listen to rock music.' 'The band was top for a while then they got scattered. When they got scattered, we left them too.' 'It had to do with age and the fact that my taste in music changed. I started to listen to metal music.' She thought love was the reason for her fandom: 'My reason was love. I was definitely in love.' 'When people around you like something, you also get pulled in with that energy.' 'I still remember all five of the group member's names. He was the rebellious, the macho. That's my type in men.

It was his looks and his style.' 'At some point, you start to have boyfriends so you get away from platonic loves.'

3.2. SUMMARY & CONCLUDING REMARKS

Interviews with ex-fans revealed certain themes and tendencies, not only pertaining to the dissolution of fandom but the whole experience of fandom. According to the narratives of research Respondents, the phenomenon of fandom follows a common sequence. First, the potential fan is exposed to her object of fandom. This happens either randomly or with an external influence such as a friend or a family member. Then, if there is a point of intersection between the object of fandom and the likes and interests of the potential fan at that specific time, fascination takes place. Fascination leads to curiosity and the potential fan starts to do research about her object of fandom. This is the determinative stage when the potential fan becomes a fan or not. If she gets hooked into the textuality of her object of fandom due to a specific hook, her immersion gets initiated. The degree of immersion depends on different factors such as her personal traits, lifestyle at the time of the initiation and the availability of textuality related to her object of fandom. During immersion, the fan may get anchored in her fandom due to factors such as a new-found community and this anchor serves to intensify the experience of fandom. Anchors may not necessarily serve to lengthen the duration of fandom because the fact that the fan becomes open to influence may hinder the duration of her fandom in case of a negative incident or possible changes in the status of her friends. In time, the fan may get triggered to harbor negative feelings toward the object of her fandom. If these triggers reach a tipping point, her fandom dissolves and she becomes an ex-fan.

The narratives demonstrated similarities – as well as differences - across different areas of fandom; namely, music, film or television series and computer games. It was fruitful to conduct the interviews across different areas of fandom because it enabled the identification of both the similarities and the differences between fandoms of star-texts and media-texts. In those cases, where the researcher

had the opportunity to interview different fans of the same object of fandom, the researcher gained more insight regarding the dynamics of fandom – especially those pertaining to the dissolution of fandom – because it was possible to make comparisons between the narratives.

CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

This section includes a synthesis of the findings and a discussion of the core ideas and recurring themes throughout thirty face-to-face interviews. The purpose of the study was to explore the reasons and the dynamics behind the falling out of fandom. In order to comprehend the end of fandom, it was imperative to first investigate the beginning of fandom and the hooks that were instrumental in pulling the potential fans into fandom, thus immersing them in their object of fandom. Then, it was necessary to investigate the phase of immersion and the activities related to fandom so as to understand the factors that were at play pre-dissolution. Finally, the main focus of the study, namely 'the end of fandom' was analyzed in detail. Respondents were also posed questions regarding the post-dissolution phase. This was beneficial in deciphering ex-fans' feelings about being a fan and their objects of fandom after falling out.

4.1.   PHASES OF FANDOM

The discussion chapter consists of five main sections that are also the *'phases of fandom'*. The phases of fandom are:

1   Fandom Formation
2   Fandom
3   Pre-Dissolution
4   Dissolution
5   Post-Dissolution

The chapters other than the one on dissolution are to be covered at the beginning so as to prepare the reader for the main focus of the study: dissolution. After the other four sections are explained, the main section that focuses on dissolution or the end of fandom is included in greater detail. The themes that pertain to each section aids in formulating a complete equation of dissolution. *Fandom formation* is the initiation of fandom. It is the phase when the potential fan is first exposed to the

oebject of fandom. Hooks that pull a potential fan into fandom are also within the domain of this phase. *Fandom* is the actual immersion phase. The evolution, the fluctuations and the degrees of fandom, along with all the activities related to fandom are included in this phase. *Pre-dissolution* phase is a part of the fandom phase and is the last phase before the dissolution. This is when the fan starts to question her fandom and her emotional bond starts to weaken. *Dissolution* phase is the falling out of fandom. This may be abrupt or gradual. The triggers that lead to the end of fandom and the ways in which fandom ends are within the domain of this phase. *Post-dissolution* phase is the residual of ex-fandom. It covers the projections of the falling out.

Main questions that were utilized to decipher the five phases related to fandom were five as listed below. They were supported with additional subquestions whenever the need to investigate further arose within the flow of the interviews, usualy following the emergence of new data :

RQ1. *How did you become a fan?*

This question sought to investigate the inital formation of fandom and the hooks that pulled the potential fan into immersion. Its aim was to investigate the very first exposure to the object of fandom.

RQ2. *What were the dynamics and activities related to your fandom?*

This question sought to investigate the actual phase of fandom; the activities that the fan was involved in, the way fandom was performed and the dynamics that might have instigated the degree of fandom. This section of the interview investigated whether the fandom was personal or community-based. It was also during this section that the degree of fandom was deciphered in an attempt to comprehend the degree of immersion in the object of fandom.

RQ3. *What were the dynamics that might have set the stage for fandom dissolution?*

This question investigated the period and the reasons that led to the end of fandom. Frustrations and disappointments of fans related to their object of fandom were often present before the end of fandom. A fluctuation followed by a decrease in the intensity of immersion were common dynamics that paved the way to the falling out.

RQ4. *How did your fandom end?*

This was the main focus of the research. The Respondents were invited to remember the reasons that led them to fall out of fandom. The triggers that pushed them out of their fandom were listed and detailed. It was also the aim of this question to investigate whether or not there was a single way to fall out of fandom. The Respondents were invited to elaborate on the process of the falling out in an attempt to compare and constrast the ways in which fans become ex-fans.

RQ5. *What was your status post-fandom dissolution?*

This question sought to investigate the feelings of ex-fans after falling out. The Respondents were invited to describe their relationship with their objects of ex-fandom after their fandom ended.

The five main questions were supported with additional questions in line with the flow of information during the interviews. Even though they served as yardsticks to direct the interviews, each interview was unique due to the Respondent and their experience of fandom.

4.1.1. Fandom Formation

Fandom formation is a process of influence. Exposure is a critical component to initiate the process. When the potential fan is exposed to the object of fandom, there is a process whereby she is either influenced by her friends and family, fascinated by a characteristic intrinsic to the object of fandom or intrigued to find out more about the object of fandom not yet having fully related to it. These dynamics may take place simultaneously or mutually exclusively depending on each specific experience.

Exposure

It is of utmost importance for the potential fan to be exposed to the object of fandom in some way. Knowledge that the object of fandom exists is the first gateway to the phenomenon. Exposure takes different forms: object of fandom may be extremely popular and saturate media channels, object of fandom may have already been discovered by a friend or family member and introduced to the

potential fan[64] or it may be a random occurrence of chance that the potential fan comes across the object of fandom. The critical factor is the importance of exposure, regardless of duration of exposure. Some ex-fans have indicated that they were exposed to their object of fandom for a couple of seconds to be fascinated or intrigued enough to get curious.

Timing

There seems to be a timing component to the formation of fandom. The dynamics pertaining to the potential fans' personal life at the time of fandom formation seem to have a direct affect on the process of becoming a fan. Some Respondents indicated that teenage years were fertile for immersion in an object of fandom, meaning there was an *'age'* component to the process. Some Respondents mentioned traumatic or transitional life events happening around the time of fandom formation.

Fascination

A certain degree of fascination or intrigue is a common denominator in fandom formation. There needs to be a characteristic intrinsic to the object of fandom that fascinates or intrigues the potential fan enough to become curious about it. Fascination is the hook that pulls the potential fan into curiosity about the object of fandom which then leads to research. Fascination usually has to do with the fans' unfulfilled wishes about herself and her own life. It is also closely linked to interests, likes, personal tastes and preferances. Fascination also happens when there is the perception of a similarity with the object of fandom.

Mattering Maps

For fandom to be initiated and to form, the areas of interest in the potential fan at the time need to be related to the object of fandom. There seems to be *'intersection points'* between the object of fandom and the mattering maps of the potential fan at time of exposure to facilitate fandom formation. (Kaschak, 2013) These intersection points may be one or many, depending on the timing and the

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[64] Here, it is not necessary that the person who makes the introduction also be a fan. They may be standard audiences who happen to be exposed to the object of fandom and who happen to be experiencing it at time of the introduction.

position of the potential fan at that specific time. Ellyn Kaschak on The Mattering Map:

'I prefer the term mattering to meaning for its ability to encompass and enfold, to embrace meaning and caring, mind and heart, feelings and ideas, because they are not separate not are they related in a linear cause-and-effect sequence. Instead they are inextricably intertwined, each implicated in the others and deeply enfolded in the matrix of human experience….It is, in one sense, a model of meaning-making, of what matters in psychological life.' (2013, p. 439)

She defines it as a 'force field' – an interpersonal gravity. The presence of multiple energetic forces impinging upon any individual at any time may be applicable to textual hooks that pull potential fandoms in when there is an intersection of likes, tastes, interests or desires. Mattering is a potential, a state of probability, until it manifests. This manifestation of mattering at the time of exposure to the object of fandom leads to the experience of fandom.

Hooks

Mattering maps and timing influence the effect of exposure on the potential fan. The effect may be light or heavy depending on the presence of 'hooks' within the object of fandom or its textual universe. An attribute may become a hook to pull the potential fandom into curiosity and this makes the difference between being a by-passer or stepping into fascination that may lead to curiosity and fandom. Impact of hooks differ in accordance with external factors and personal characteristics of potential fans. What may serve as a hook for a potential fan may not serve as a hook for another. In addition, what may serve as a hook at a given time may not serve as a hook at another time.

4.1.2. Fandom

The phase of fandom is initiated with fascination and facilitated by curiosity. There are varying degrees of fandom and a multitude of ways to experience fandom. There was a respondent who came to the interview as a result

of snowballing and upon meeting, announced that she was not a fan[65]. When questioned about her declaration in detail, she did indeed report herself as a fan and turned out to have a book written by her object of fandom in her backbag on that very day which was given to her as a gift by her friend. This is an indication of the grey area surrounding the concept of fandom. There has been so much negativity discharged regarding fans and fandom that identification with the concept becomes problematic at times.

Curiosity

There is always a component of curiosity that leads to fandom. After the potential fan gets fascinated by an attribute of the object of fandom, she becomes curious to find out more and gets propelled to conduct research. The research may at times be about the identity of the object of fandom or their life/product story. Curiosity leads to dig in deeper into the object of fandom and as the potential fan gathers more information – both written and visual – she gets more hooked in to become immersed in fandom.

Mystery

Some of the Respondents mentioned their objects of fandom to carry an element of 'mystery' that further facilitated their immersion in fandom. The component of mystery is significant because it leaves room for imagination to flourish. Mystery also serves as a hook that keeps pulling the fan in, creating the desire to unfold the mystery. It seems to be an important element in creating and sustaining the desire to complete the pieces of the puzzle pertaining to the object of fandom.

Crystallization

To become a fan, the potential fan goes through a process of *'crystallization'*. This term was coined by Stendhal in his literary classic named *'Love'*. (Stendhal, 1957) He was elaborating on falling in love and described in

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[65] This respondent had been recruited through a friend of hers who knew her as a fan. She had also been briefed about the subject of the interview before she accepted to take part in the research. She was reading a book written by her object of fandom that had been given to her as a gift by another friend who also knew of her as a fan. Yet, she still did not feel comfortable enough to proclaim herself as a fan right away upon meeting the interviewer. It may have to do with the particular definition of fandom in her mind or with the fact that her fandom had indeed ended abruptly due to a scandal that broke about her object of fandom.

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great detail how falling in love meant putting in the time in to adorn every single attribute about the object of love in his imagination over and over again. A similar process seems to be at play in falling in fandom; the fan crystallizes the object of fandom to an extent where she gets completely immersed in its textuality. Imagination and leisure time are the two requirements of the process of crystallization. It is through the imagination that object-of-fandom-as-text is adorned and embellished and this process of beautification requires time. The process of crystallization is more relevant to star-texts. Hooks serve the purpose of amplifying interest into fascination in the case of media-texts.

Performance

Fandom is often performative. This characteristic is more pronounced when fandom is exercised within a community. The different ways of performance are subject to the specifics of the fandom. The Respondents who experienced fandom on a personal level performed their fandom in their declarations and their choices that related to their objects of fandom, whereas the Respondents who experienced fandom as part of a community had more visible and pronounced performances regarding their fandom. In each instance, there was always a component of performance that served as a declaration of identity through the object of fandom.

Emotional Bond

Becoming a fan requires an emotional bond formation between the fan and the object of fandom. The emotional bond or attachment becomes the lens through which the fan evaluates everything. The emotional bond is subject to fluctuations during the duration of fandom in line with internal and external factors pertaining to the fan and the object of fandom. The intensity of the emotional bond seems to be more related to the fan herself than the object of fandom. The degree of crystallization seems to have a direct effect on the strength of the emotional bond.

Immersion

Fandom is the immersion in the textuality of the object of fandom. The fan becomes pulled into the object of fandom and all related textuality. This immersion

in the object of fandom may be facilitated through transmedia.[66] The fan moves within texts, intertexts and paratexts, remaining immersed within the related textuality. Various texts in various channels feed into fandom to intensify and sustain the emotional bond the fan builds with her object of fandom. Thus, transmedia becomes a tool in the facilitation of immersion.

Anchors

An *'anchor'* is any factor that serves to keep the fan in *deeper* immersion within her object of fandom. Anchors ground the fan within fandom. An anchor may be a close friend, a fan community that one feels she belongs, a family member who shares the same interest or a specific goal. Anchors may not necessarily serve to lengthen the duration of fandom because the fact that the fan becomes open to influence may at times hinder the duration of her fandom in case of a negative incident or possible changes in the status of her friends and community. Anchors surfaced as family members, friends and fan community.

Primary Object of Fandom and the Others

There were Respondents who were fans that one time and never again became a fan of anything and there were those who fell out of fandom and became fans of other objects of fandom. Fans who had fallen out of fandom often expressed how there was only one time when they got so immersed in an object of fandom. Even though they became fans of other objects of fandom afterward, their fandom did not manifest as intensely as the one specific experience of fandom. The most intense experience of fandom is indicative of a 'primary object of fandom'.

4.1.3. Pre-Dissolution

The interviews revealed some recurring themes that paved the way to the end of fandom. Fans who fall out seem to go through a pre-dissolution phase when some internal or external factors start to affect the emotional bond between the fan

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[66] Transmedia enables the fan to move between texts related to her object of fandom, gathering different bits and pieces of information, meanwhile being entertained in a multitude of ways. A detailed exploration of 'Transmedia' may be found in the section under '*texts and textuality.*

and the object of fandom negatively. Once the 'doubting' is initiated, the fan starts to pick up on previously overlooked details in preparation of the falling out. The pre-dissolution phase seems either to linger and last long until some major incident happens to end fandom or leads right into dissolution.

Expectations

Fans form 'expectations' toward their object of fandom and when these expectations are not met, they get disappointed. This feeling came up very often in the interviews during the pre-dissolution phase of fandom. Fans get disappointed with their object of fandom for different reasons but these reasons overlap within the domain of the fandom. For instance, fans of singers or artists get disappointed when their object of fandom stops to produce new music or they come across an interview where they find a new piece of information that does not correspond with the image in their heads.The feeling of disappointment gets stronger if the negative information feed continues. The increase in disappointment weakens the emotional bond and consequently, fandom itself. Besides disappointment, the feeling of frustration was also dominant among ex-fans. In contrast to disappointment which seems to be more related to people, the feeling of frustration was more evident in fandoms related to media products. Frustration is generally related to production companies or scenarists as a result of unmet expectations. Fans get frustrated regarding unresponded tickets in computer games, unfair rules or release of new editions they dislike, and they get frustrated regarding discrepancies among the characters in television series and their original comic book versions or bad scenarios that bear no resemblence to the original work.

Change in Routine

When there is a change in routine, a weakening of fandom takes place for some fans. A change in routine may pertain to the fan or to the object of fandom but in both instances serves as a factor to sever the emotional bond. Transition from middle school to high school seems to be a sigificant factor that affects fandom in a negative way, primarily due to the change of environment and social circle. Change in group dynamics in fan forums and computer games also plays an important role. As for the object of fandom, a change in group dynamics such as a

band member leaving the group seems to affect fandom negatively. A change in style is also a red-flag in terms of damaging the emotional bond. Some Respondents talked about how unhappy they were when their object of fandom changed into something other than what they were used to; in computer games and in music.

Negative Feelings

It is not human nature to endure negative feelings over extended periods of time. When fans find themselves drenched in negative feelings that they believe are due to their object of fandom and become aware of their condition, they tend to pull away from their object of fandom in an attempt to protect themselves. One Respondent mentioned how his object of fandom caused him to become consumed by melancholy and depression. Another Respondent talked about how he felt ashamed to be a fan of someone who was not approved by his peers. These negative feelings trigger the 'doubting' and starts to eat away at the fandom.

Alternatives

Focus is a major factor in being and staying immersed. When the object of fandom is the only focus of fans' attention and affection, presence of alternatives and exposure to those alternatives creates a break in focus and this subtle shift takes on a ripple effect to spread through the emotional terrain of fandom. Still, the impact of alternatives would be expected to be much bigger considering the current media landscape with endless alternatives to everything. Yet, the Respondents did not express ever being as intense a fan as they had once been to the object of their ex-fandom. One might expect to find more fan experiences over the span of one's life but even though the number of fan associations may have increased as a consequence of the variety of media products, fans seem to harbor a very intense emotional bond towards one object of fandom throughout their lives. They either don't become fans again or become fans but never to the degree of their ex-fandom.

4.1.4. Dissolution

The experience of fandom is extremely immersive. It is also very personal in the way it is experienced and performed by each fan. In spite of the vast body of

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work that has been produced on fans, fan culture and fandom, there is hardly any research that investigates the *end of fandom*. When an incident serves as a trigger to end fandom, neither the process of falling out, nor the feelings associated by the dissolution are singular. The dissolution phase is intertwined with the pre-dissolution and post-dissolution phases. There is often a 'brewing' or 'doubting' period that takes place in pre-dissolution phase that prepares the stage for the falling out. Triggers that lead to dissolution and the way in which dissolution took place in turn lay the groundwork for post-dissolution phase. The variety of feelings, dynamics and reasons that serve as a trigger to end fandom are the main interest of this thesis. One-on-one interviews with thirty ex-fans revealed some triggers, themes and patterns pertaining to the falling out of fandom. This section is about these triggers, themes and patterns and aims to shed light on the process of falling out that marks the end of fandom.

Change of Style

When a fan is immersed in an object of fandom, it is often due to a common denominator in the style of the object of fandom and the interests and likes of the fan. These interests and likes of the fan make up the *mattering maps* and are subject to change in time due to external factors. When there is a change of style in the object of fandom or in the fan, bond that holds fandom intact weakens and breaks. Change of style may be about the object of fandom or the fan herself, but either way signifies the emergence of a mismatch between what used to be a match. This mismatch causes disinterest and leads to melting away of the emotional bond. If the change of style is about the object of fandom, it creates disappointment in the fan because she dislikes it. The fan no longer finds her object of fandom appealing and falls out. Yet another scenario when a change in style results in dissolution of fandom is if the fan gos through a change in her style and tastes and is no longer as interested in her object of fandom. In both instances, fandom dissolves.

Change of Environment

When a fan is subject to a change of environment, it often leads to *a break in routines* that feed the fandom. There is also new influences in the environment and a willingness to fit in. Break in routines causes fannish activities decrease or

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come to a stall. When this break in routines gets linked with new influences in the new environment, the bond of fandom dissolves. Change of environment often causes fans to come out of immersion and once they are out, the circumstances that had initially served to get them hooked do not rematerialize. Routines seem to be an important factor in fandom sustainability. It is through routines that immersion is sustained and when there is a break in routines, it serves as a breather during which fans find the time to analyze their status and may decide to alter it. Change of environment is a recurring theme to serve as a trigger to end of fandom due to this break in routines and the simultaneous exposure to new influences. Once the fan comes out of immersion, she becomes susceptible to external influences that may hinder her fandom.

Change of Community

Fandom is either personal or community-based. When fans become part of a fan community, it is usually a significant factor to amplify the degree of fandom and immersion. Generally, there are a couple of people - who are also fans – with whom the fan becomes close and they serve as '*anchors'* to keep the fan immersed within fandom textuality. The experience becomes a shared experience with its own dynamics. A change in community takes two forms:

1) Related to the close group within fandom
2) Related to the fan group at large

In both cases, bond of fandom weakens and breaks. Community dynamics are determinative in sustainability of fandom over a given time[67]. Fandom community and involvement specifics of the fan within that community determines the duration of fandom. If the close friends that facilitate fannish activities leave fandom for various reasons and the group disintegrates, then the fan herself gradually falls out of fandom. If the fan group at large disintegrates due to factors such as the object of fandom diminishing or the break of scandalous news, then again the fan gradually falls out of fandom, along with her fan community.

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[67] Community dynamics are also among the most significant anchors in fandom.

Visibility

The emotional bond that keeps a fan immersed within the object of fandom is nourished and activated in line with the visibility of the object of fandom. When the object of fandom is visible, textuality becomes more potent and caters the fan with the fuel to keep the fire burning.Visibility has two dimensions:

1) Presence of the object of fandom in media channels

2) Actuality of the works of the object of fandom

Fans need to see their object of fandom in media channels with regular intervals to remain immersed and engaged. They also need to witness release of new work by their object of fandom. New work serves as a catalyzer in fandom because it is a significant part of fandom textuality. Visibility means actuality for fans. They want their object of fandom to remain relevant and actual, to be trendy. If the object of fandom becomes dormant physically or productionally, fans find it harder and harder to remain immersed. Being dormant is a sure sign that fans are losing their grip on fandom textuality.

Exposure to Better Alternatives

This is more related to media products than people as objects of fandom. Media products are more easily substituted with other, often better alternatives when dissatisfaction or frustration arise. Exposure to better alternatives may be:

1) Random

2) Intentional

When exposure is random, the fan is not necessarily considering quitting her engagement with the specific media product but there is often 'brewing' dissatisfaction or frustration. Exposure happens and she moves on to the new alternative, either abruptly or gradually. When exposure is intentional, fan engages in search for a better alternative and when she finds it, moves on to it at once, having already made her decision about quitting her object of fandom.

What is interesting is the countless media products that are available in current media landscape and how little this affects the experience of fandom at its most intense form. All of the respondents mentioned how they did not get as immersed with another alternative again, even though they fell out of fandom with

their primary object of fandom. The other alternatives do not become as immersive as the primary object of fandom.

Self-care

There are instances when the immersion in the object of fandom had the consequence of negative, often unbearable emotions in the fan. When negative emotions emerge and start to show up in the daily life of fans, they get negatively affected in their dealings in life and sometimes get feedback from their social circle that brings the issue to their awareness and calls for their attention. In two of the interviews, respondents mentioned negative emotions as the cause of their falling out of fandom. In both of the instances, negative feelings emerged as a result of their immersion in the object of their fandom and these feelings became so disturbing that they had to end their fandom to 'normalize'[68]. Respondents were exercising self-care by ending their engagement with the related textuality and as such hoped to regain their sense of emotional equilibrium.

Negative Experience

If a fan experiences a negative incident on behalf of her object of fandom, this also serves as a trigger to end fandom. In three of the interviews, the theme of negative experiences came up and in all instances, the specific incident hurt the fan and caused her to view her object of fandom in a different light. When the object of fandom does something to harm the fan, emotional bond that rests on trust gets severed and the fan feels that she has been wronged by her object of fandom. If fans think that the negative incident was intentional on part of their object of fandom, this information distorts fans' opinion about her object of fandom and becomes a trigger to end fandom. The object of fandom becomes *'dethroned'* when engaged in an incident that hurts the fan. Imagination of the fan clashes with the reality of the incident that shatters the image in the mind of the fan. In all three incidents, respondents expressed negative feelings about their object of ex-fandom. They felt that their affection and loyalty were not returned and felt betrayed. The feeling of

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[68] Both respondents mentioned how they had been cut off from their emotional equilibrium and became totally swept by negative emotions that their object of fandom caused in them. They both made a decision not to engage with the related textuality in an attempt to go back to their 'normal' emotional state as an act of self-care.

anger was expressed by two of the repondents as a consequence of the incident. All three incidents led to an abrupt falling out of fandom.

Scandalous News

There was a specific theme that emerged among respondents that had a sudden falling out of fandom. This was the break of unexpected, scandalous news about their object of fandom. When fans first hear about such negative news, they want to find out whether it is true and engage in a detailed search. The search for information is a desire to uncover what really happened and is often paired with the hope of falsifying the allegations. After a comprehensive search, is the fan is convinced that the allegations are in fact true, then a very abrupt falling out takes place that ends the fandom once and for all. The allegations are often very serious and has to do with *'values'* that fans hold dear to them or define themselves by. This particular word came up a number of times during the interviews when fans were expressing how they felt that their values were violated. As soon as the fan makes her decision about the nature of the allegations, she ends the fandom abruptly and *'rejects'* her object of fandom socially. This rejection enables the fan to *'disassociate'* herself from her object of fandom and as such, not get involved in the public *'shame'* that surrounds the object of fandom as a result of the break of scandalous news.

Fans who ended their fandom as a consequence of scandalous news talked about how their trust was violated. One of the respondents described her experince as a 'betrayal'. Sadness and anger were visible in their faces. They got very emotional when talking about their experience. These respondents are also the ones who still harbor intense negative feelings about their objects of ex-fandom. Their respect and appreciation for the work of their object of ex-fandom was evident in their narratives but they had made a absolute decision not to consume the work that was produced by that person ever again, even though it was a struggle within themselves at times.

4.1.5. Post-Dissolution

The phase following the dissolultion is the post-dissolution phase and may be summarized in three categories: negative, neutral and positive. These subsets are direct reflections of the actual ending process and the reasons leading to the end of fandom which has overreaching consequences.

Negative

If the post-dissolution is *negative*, ex-fans harbor destructive feelings such as rage and engage in activities that intend to harm or punish the object of their ex-fandom. The theme of 'punishment' came up more than once with the Respondents who had an abrupt ending. Ex-fans who feel betrayed by their object of ex-fandom harbor negative feelings and consequently engage in behaviors to '*punish'* their object of fandom within their power. These behaviors vary; tearing posters, throwing out all related products, writing critical comments on social channels and forums, announcing the 'truth' about their object of ex-fandom to friends. There is a definite *'rejection'* of the object of ex-fandom and the need to announce this rejection.

Neutral

If the post-dissolution is neutral, there has usually been a gradual ending and the ex-fan has stopped engaging in fannish activities but is not in rejection. Here, the ex-fan has gradually ended her fandom by being disappointed or frustrated, but her feelings have not gone negative, even though she does not necessarily harbor positive feelings anymore. She is at a neutral place and remains open to ex-fandom related products if they happen to cross her path, however does not specifically engage in them like she used to before. There is a definite stop to her engagement with the object of ex-fandom but it does not necessarily harbor rejection, but rather not being interested anymore.

Positive

If the post-dissolution is positive, the ex-fan is fond of the 'memories' related to ex-fandom and harbors sentiments of 'nostalgia'. This is usually the case when the fan grows out of her particular fandom because of age. The end of fandom

is gradual, yet there is not a major negative incident to facilitate the end of fandom. Thus, there are still positive feeling towards the object of ex-fandom but they are no longer 'relevant' to the ex-fan to matter or immerse her. Her mattering maps have changed and she has moved on. Respondents who demonstrated positive post-dissolution status were smiling when they were talking about the past and had positive associations with their ex-fandom.

Selective Attention in Perception in Post-Dissolution Phase

The experience of fandom is very much an experience of textuality and immersion. Fans get hooked in through textuality following a detailed research about the object of their fandom and get immersed within that textuality of fandom. *Fandom textuality* is any content that is directly and indirectly related to the object of fandom. The fan builds her fandom piece by piece, with every new text contributing to the crystallization process. The vastness of the textual ecosystem feeds fandom and enables the sustainability of fandom. During interviews, fans mentioned having 'selective attention' in perception, not only during fandom phase, but also after dissolution, during post-dissolution phase (Strack & Förster, 2009). Even after the end of fandom – regardless of how the falling out takes place – fans pick on texts about their object of ex-fandom, consciously or not.

All the phases that constitute the totality of fandom had to be investigated to gain a better understanding of the end of fandom. It would not be possible to put the dynamics at play into perspective without first understanding the beginning of the process. This is why, although this thesis is focused on the end of fandom, the phases that lead to the end and that surround it had to be of inerest, as well. The recurring themes in the other four phases serve as the foundation that the dissolution phase builds and stands on. It is only within the totality of this phenomenon that one is able to distill the core concepts. The extremely personal nature of the experience enables to trace the projections of childhood or personality traits covered within the fan narratives. The multitude of variations in the experience of fandom is an indication of how exhilirating a phenomana fandom actually is and how it is intertwined within trends and popular culture. Understanding fandom

serves as a gateway to understanding popular culture. It is extremely dynamic and pulsates with whatever happens to be current at that given time.

4.2. BECOMING AN EX-FAN

According to the narratives of ex-fans, the phenomenon of fandom is experienced in a common sequence:

I. In fandom formation phase, the potential fan gets exposed to an object of fame[69] for the first time. This exposure happens in one of two ways: 1) randomly, or 2) as a result of an external influence, such as a friend or a family member. At the time of exposure, if there happens to be a point of intersection between the object of fame and the likes and interests of the potential fan at that specific time, she feels curious to find out more about that object of fame (Kaschak, 2013). Interest leads to curiosity and the potential fan starts to do research about the object of fame. This is the determinative stage when the potential fan becomes a fan or not. If she gets hooked into the textuality of the object of fame due to a specific hook, she gets fascinated.

II. With fascination, crystallization is initiated and she enters fandom phase (Stendhal, 1957). As her fascination in her object of fandom gets more and more 'crystallized', immersion takes place. The crystallization process is mostly related to star-texts. In case of media-texts, hooks serve the purpose of amplifying interest into fascination and initiating immersion. The degree of immersion depends on different factors such as her personal traits, lifestyle at the time of the initiation and the availability of textuality related to her object of fandom. During immersion, the fan may get anchored in her fandom due to factors such as a new-found community and this anchor serves to intensify the experience of fandom. Anchors may not necessarily serve to lengthen the duration of fandom because the fact that the fan

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[69] In fandom formation, there is the potentiality of fandom, not yet the experience of fandom. Thus, exposure is to the 'object of fame'. Then, with fascination and crystallization, her object becomes an 'object of fandom.'

becomes open to influence may hinder the duration of her fandom in case of a negative incident or possible changes in the status of her friends.

III. In time, triggers get activated and cause dissatisfaction in the fan. The fan gets triggered to harbor negative feelings toward the object of her fandom. If these triggers reach a tipping point, her fandom dissolves and she becomes an ex-fan (Gladwell, 1994). Dissolution takes places in two ways: gradually or abruptly. If dissolution takes place over time, it is a gradual dissolution. If it takes place suddenly and at once, it is an abrupt dissolution.

4.3. TRIGGERS OF DISSOLUTION

For an ending to take place, there are always reasons that prepare the stage. There were eight recurring themes that surfaced in the interview data. These themes had in fact prepared the stage for the falling out of fandom and caused the actual dissolution to take place. The fact that these recurring themes all became reasons for the dissolution of fandom, they were in fact acting as *'triggers'* to facilitate the end of fandom. A *trigger* is a facilitating factor that has a direct or indirect impact on the fan to initiate the process or reaction[70] of dissolution of fandom. Triggers cause fans discomfort about their fandom. They are associated with negative feelings and they initiate a negative reaction that weakens the bond between the fan and the object of fandom. There are eight triggers of dissolution that have different impacts on the phase of dissolution. These triggers of dissolution are:

- Change of Style
- Change of Environment
- Change of Community
- Visibility
- Exposure to Better Alternatives
- Self-care

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[70] This definition of a *trigger* has been influenced by the definition in Merriam Webster dictionary.

- Negative Experiences
- Scandalous News

Among the triggers, *change of environment* may also result in a 'change in community'. However, the two have different impacts on the fans. This is why, it is imperative to categorize them separetely. When a fan is subjected to a change in environment, there is often a change in her social circle as a consequence. It is a new community and the bonds of belonging have not yet materialized. The fan tries to fit in and become a part of the new community. This causes a *'pull'* into the new community. Since it is a consequence of the *change of environment* and would not have materialized in singularity, it is categorized under that trigger. *Change of community* as a trigger of dissolution is potent on its own because it refers to a change within the ongoing community. It is a change in group dynamics that the fan is already a part of. Any change in the community that the fan has belonged to during her fandom relates to this trigger because it has a direct impact on the experience of fandom. A *change in community* causes a *'push'* out of the old community, thus serving as a trigger of dissolution.

R16 experienced both triggers of dissolution during his experience of fandom. When he was a fan, he was performing fandom with his friend who had introduced him to his object of fandom in the first place. When they finished middle school and moved on to separate high schools, he gradually fell out of fandom. He describes both triggers being present at the time of his dissolution.

'My friend and I used to do everything together. Then, we went to a different high schools. We fell out of touch. Now, he is somone I see maybe once a year.'

'When I started high school, it was a new environment. I took my barbed wristbands off. I did not want people to stay away from me.'

R28 had a similar experience regarding the dissolution of her fandom. Both triggers were at play and they caused her to gradually fall out of fandom. She had also started high school and entered a new environment.

'I started high school. It was a new environment. I had to define myself with something so that I would fit in. I started to listen to rock music like everybody else at my school.'

Figure 4.1 Phases of Fandom
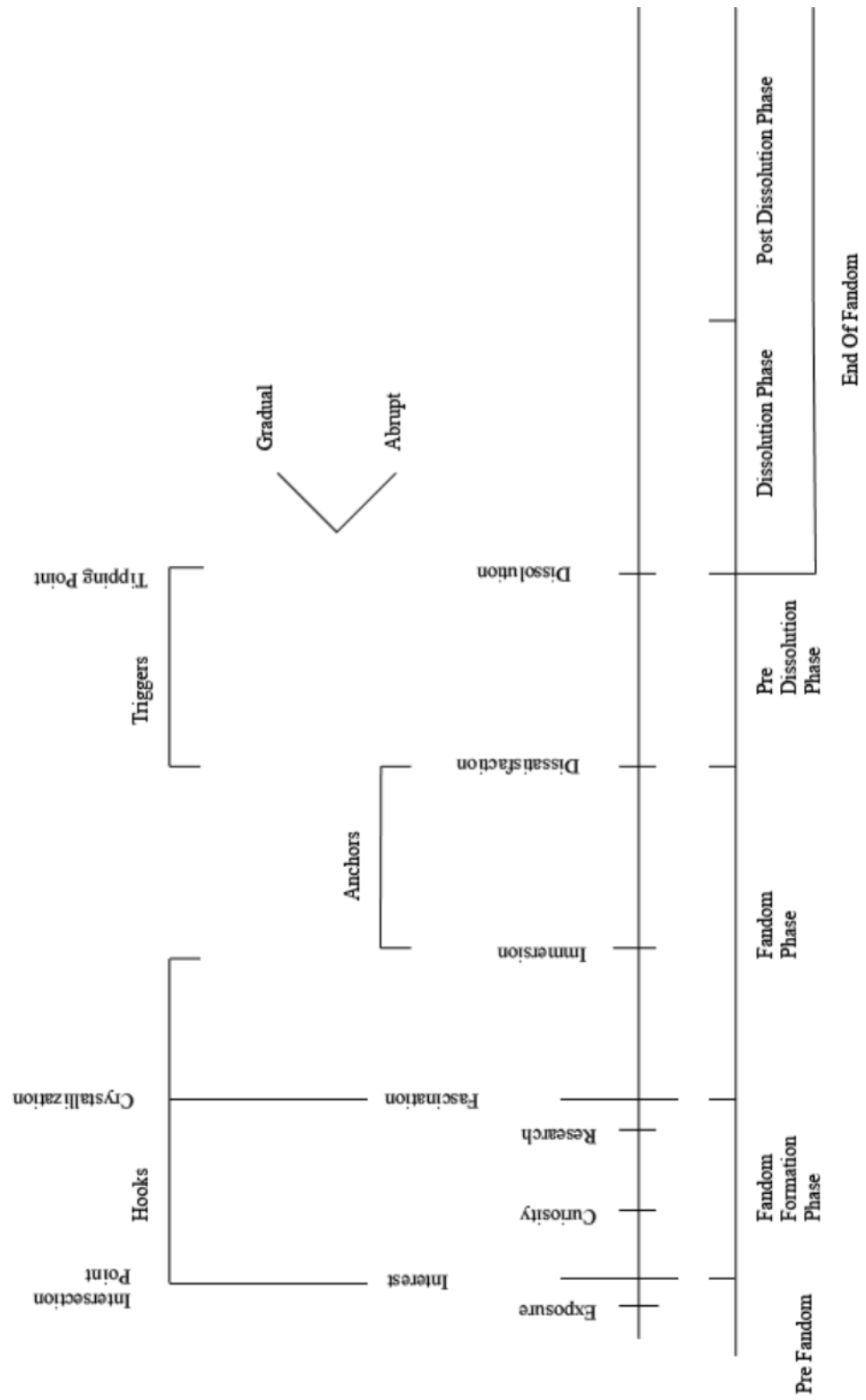
'I had two closest friends my age in the fan club. They also quit.'

There is also a distinction between *self-care* and *negative experience* as triggers of dissolution. Negative experiences that are not intentional by the object of fandom, but rather the manifestation of the actual experience of fandom itself in that particular fan, have been categorized as a separate trigger, under the name of *'self-care'*. This category of trigger is activated by the fan, not the object of fandom. Another person may experience the same object of fandom in a positive way. The fan continues to harbor positive feelings towards the object of fandom after dissolution of fandom as a result of this trigger. *Negative experiences*, on the other hand, are intentional on the part of the object of fandom. The object of fandom hurts or harms the fan intentionally and this always results in negative feelings in the fan. Thus, this distinction is necessary in categorization of the triggers.

Regarding self-care as a trigger of dissolution, R3 decided to gradually end his fandom after his commanding general warned him about his negative emotional status.

'He sees that you're hurting yourself. With his advice, I collected myself.'

R29 stopped playing the game that was the object of his fandom because the scenario was based on a drama and the drama had started to affect his emotional wellbeing negatively.

'It was too much drama. I realized that it started to affect me in a negative way.'

In both cases, ex-fans fell out gradually. R3 stopped listening to the depressing songs as much. R29 stopped playing the game altogether which was abrupt but moved on to other related media products, and continued to engage with them for a while, which makes his falling out of fandom gradual.

Regarding negative experiences as a trigger of dissolution, R8 was the only Respondent who had a personal relationship with his object of fandom. When he was put in a very difficult position by his object of fandom in front of his managers at work, he fell out of fandom abruptly.

'I could not believe he was acting that way in front of my managers and putting me in such a difficult position. I wanted to bring him to his senses.'

He was so outgaged by the experience that, not only did he fall out of fandom abruptly, but he also made sure to tell all his friends about the truth of his object of fandom. He wanted the whole world to know what he had done to him. R15 got blocked by his object of fandom on Twitter because of a simple comment he made about one of his songs.

'It was very funny that he saw it and blocked me. It was very childish.'

These cases demonstrate the difference in how the harm or hurt was inflicted intentionally by the object of fandom. The fact that the act was intentional made it more personal and caused the dissoluyion of fandom in both cases. The trigger served as a primary trigger in R8 and a secondary trigger in R15, and initiated an abrupt falling out in R8 but a gradual one in R15. The examples are provided to demonstrate the nuances within the more complicated triggers of dissolution in an attempt to clarify the distinctions further.

4.3.1. Impact of Triggers: Gradual or Abrupt

Interview Respondents narrated their experiences of falling out in detail. Their narratives demonstrated two distinct ways of falling out depending on the impact of the triggers. Some triggers had a very strong and immediate impact on the fans. Fans who were impacted as such experienced an *'abrupt'* falling out. The end of fandom was definitive and it ended abruptly. Other triggers had not as strong an impact and as a result, the falling out was *'gradual'*. It happened over a period of time and was often the result of a combination of triggers. The gradual falling out had more nuances regarding the experience, whereas the abrupt falling out demonstrated similar intense experiences in ex-fans.

When the falling out is 'abrupt', it is always as a consequence of an unexpected incident. All of the Respondents who fell out of fandom 'abruptly' did so because of an incident they had no way of knowing in advance. Among triggers of dissolution to initiate such an end; *scandalous news* always and *negative experiences* sometimes have this impact. There were three common characteristics

in fan narratives about these specific experiences. These characteristics that pertain to an 'abrupt' falling out are:

- Incident is *unexpected*
- It is closely related to fans' *value* system
- It generates *intense negative emotions*
- It results in the *rejection* of the object of fandom

In all of the cases, the incidents that served as triggers were perceived as a direct violation of fans' *values*. In all four of the cases - three were triggered by scandalous news and one by negative experience – fans felt that the incident was utterly unacceptable and wrong. They all felt that they had been subject to a wrong-doing. All of the fans still harbored *intense negative emotions* about the specific incident and their object of fandom. The scope of their emotions were expressed by powerful words such as: 'betrayal', 'shame', 'sadness', 'rage'. *'Loss of respect'* towards the object of fandom was also evident in the narratives. There is also a very prominent *'rejection'* towards the object of fandom. In all cases, fans made it a point to proclaim that their fandom had ended. They wanted to ensure that there was no longer a connection between them and their object of fandom.

Table 4.1 Impact of Triggers in the Process of Dissolution

Triggers of Dissolution	Impact of Triggers	Degree of Impact
Change of Style	Gradual	Secondary
Change of Environment	Gradual	Secondary
Change of Community	Gradual	Secondary
Visibility	Gradual	Secondary
Exposure to Better Alternatives	Gradual	Secondary
Self-care	Abrupt/Gradual	Primary/Secondary
Negative Experience	Abrupt/Gradual	Primary/Secondary
Scandalous News	Abrupt	Primary

Source: Face-to-face interview data

4.3.2. Degree of Impact: Primary & Secondary Triggers

Interview data revelaed two categories that relate to the way in which these triggers impact fans. According to interview narratives, triggers have different degrees of impact on the process of dissolution. The varying degrees of impact are determined by the domains of dissolution[71], which are the object of fandom, the fan and externall factors. Triggers may serve as *'primary triggers'* or *'secondary triggers'* depending on the specifics of the fan experience. When a trigger serves as a *'primary trigger'*, it is either the only trigger that causes the falling out or visibly the most dominant one. If a trigger does not have strong enough of an impact to case a falling out singularly, but rather in combination with one or more triggers, it is *a 'secondary trigger'*.

Among the eight triggers of dissolution, scandalous news is the only singularly primary trigger because it has big enough of an impact on fans to result in an absolute falling out. Self-care and negative experience are the triggers that may serve both as primary triggers or secondary triggers, depending on the magnitude and the perception of the intentional harm done by the object of fandom. The other five triggers serve as secondary triggers only. In general, these triggers do not create a strong enough impact to be primary triggers singularly.

4.4. DOMAINS OF DISSOLUTION

When a standard audience gets hooked in and becomes a fan, the relationship is one of fascination between the fan and the object of fandom. So, there are two domains that impact the formation of the relationship at the beginning; the object of fandom and the fan.[72] However, sustainability of the relationship is based on three domains as revealed by the interview data. These domains impact the experience of fandom directly so they are *'active'* domains that may result in

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[71] For a detailed explanation, please see the related section with the same name *Domains of Dissolution*.
[72] For tables of domains pertaining to the other four phases of fandom, please refer to Figure 5.1.

the dissolution of fandom. *'Domains of dissolution'*[73] refer to the distinct territories that directly impact the end of fandom. The three 'domains of dissolution' are: the object of fandom, the fan and external factors.

Table 4.2 Triggers' Impact on the Domains of Dissolution

Triggers	Object of Fandom	Fan	External Factors
Change of Style	x	x	
Change of Environment			x
Change of Community			x
Visibility	x		
Exposure to Better Alternatives			x
Self-Care		x	
Negative Experience	x		
Scandalous News	x		
TOTAL	**4**	**2**	**3**

Source: Face-to-face interview data

Changes within these three domains may act as triggers to end fandom. The eight themes of dissolution that serve as triggers are matched with three related domains to reach an understanding of the most influential domain in fandom dissolution and the ranking of all three domains in terms of their impact on dissolution. According to data, object of fandom is the primary domain to impact the experience of fandom into dissolution. External factors serve as the second domain and the fan herself is the least influential among the three domains. This result corresponds to the flow of fandom experience, considering the fan herself would be the least likely to desert fandom on her own, having been hooked in at the first place.

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[73] According to Merriam Webster dictionary, a 'domain' is 'a sphere of knowledge, influence of activity'.

4.4.1 Object of Fandom

In this study, the research was focused on three areas of fandom to simplify the recruitment process. These areas of fandom were; music, television series/films and computer games. Music fans were fans of singers or bands, so they were fans of people. Their object of fandom was a person, a star. Whereas, fans of television series/films and computer games were fans of media products. Their object of fandom was a media product. The relationship of fans to their objects of fandom varied according to this distinction; whether their object of fandom was living or non-living.

According to Respondents' narratives, object of fandom was the most influential among the three domains of dissolution. It was influential to activate these four triggers:

- Change of style
- Visibility
- Negative experience
- Scandalous news

Among the four triggers, *change of style* is the only one that is a two-domain common trigger and may be activated by either the object of fandom or the fan. When it is activated, it often indicates a change in the way in which the fan had been experiencing and perceiving it. This trigger came up in all of the three areas of fandom. Regarding music, R25 mentioned how she could no longer relate to her object of fandom after Sertab Erener started making hard rock with the influence of her boyfriend at the time.

'I do not like rock music so I left her. I could not listen to her music anymore.'

Regarding television series, R23 mentioned how the producers of Arrow started to play with the scenario and distort it to gather more viewership.

'I stopped watching because it had become like soap-operas. If I wanted to watch a soap opera, I would watch 'Dallas'.'

Regarding computer games, R9 mentioned how he lost his interest in the game after they rolled out a new version where the setting was in modern times, whereas he was interested in the last version because its setting was in old times.

'They released a new version and they changed the setting; its setting was in modern times. I did not like it.'[74]

It is evident that a change in the style of the object of fandom has a direct impact on the fandom experience. There seems to be an optimal point where an object of fandom is allowed to make minor changes that would not hinder the relationship with the fan. These minor changes may even serve to keep the fan active and engaged. However, after that optimal point, a change is not welcomed by fans, especially if it is a change in style.

Visibility is the second trigger that is activated by the object of fandom. Fans expect their objects of fandoms to be visible and relevant so that they may sustain their fandom. Visibility of the object of fandom indicates *'a living text'*[75] and keeps the fan immersed in the text[76]. When the object of fandom is trendy, relevant and visible, the fan is provided with the means to further 'crystallize' her object of fandom with each and every piece of new information. This process of crystallization is facilitated with visibility, even though imagination is a significant factor of the process and too much information may indeed hinder the experience of fandom. Again, there needs to be an optimal balance. Hence, in the absence of the object of fandom, it becomes harder for the fan to stay immersed when related textuality weakens. This trigger is more related to *'star-texts'*, namely music stars within the scope of the research. R10 mentioned how disappointed he was, when his object of fandom *'disappeared'*, meaning he was no longer releasing albums or acting in television series, thus not visible in media channels.

'When he disappears, you end up forgetting him.'

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[74] R9 has a special interest in nostalgic times. He was a fan of the first verison of the game because it took place in World War II. He also takes photographs of vintage cars and has turned his hobby into a source of income.

[75] For a detailed explanation of this phenomenon, please refer back to section 1.4 on 'Texts and Textuality'.

[76] Here, text refers to 'the object of fandom as text'.

Visibility regarding media products have to do with the end of a television series or a computer game. When a television series ends after its last season or when a computer game is outdated or gets pulled off the market. R29 explained how after he finished the game BioShock a couple of times, he moved on to its music and film[77] but eventually had to fall out of fandom when he could no longer find media products related to his object of fandom to consume.

'I finished the game. Then, I continued listening to its music. I even read its book.'

The third and fourth triggers that are activated by the object of fandom are the most destructive and have the strongest impact in dissolution of fandom. They are; *scandalous news* and *negative experience* respectively. They both trigger an abrupt falling out. Scandalous news is almost always related to 'values' and the fan experiences this as a violation of trust. During interviews, scandalous news showed up as a trigger only for living objects of fandom but since it also affects its linked media product, similar dynamics would apply, as mentioned by R26. After the scandal broke, he stopped watching the linked television series even though the artist who was involved in the scandal had left.

'Kevin Spacey is an example of the trust issue. He went through such an incident. I was a fan. I was following 'House of Cards'. But when the news broke, it was a scandal. It was all finished.'

When it is about a living object of fandom, scandalous news is the most destructive in terms of the fandom relationship. R1 got extremely emotional when she talked about her experience of scandalous news related to her object of fandom who was a movie director.

'I could not accept it. My fandom ended that very moment.'

R27 used the word 'betrayal' to express her own experience regarding the scandal related to her object of fandom.

'That is how much she had harmed the connection. It was a betrayal.'

When scandalous news break about the object of fandom, it violates trust and distorts the image of the object of fandom. The fan starts to perceive her object of

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[77] This comment indicates the importance of 'transmedia' to keep fans immersed within the textuality of related fandom.

fandom differently – negatively – and this causes dissolution of fandom. Similar dynamics surfaced regarding the fourth trigger, namely *negative experience*. This trigger is activated by the object of fandom when he or she does soomething in real life to harm the fan, either intentionally or unintentionally. The result seems to be the same – falling out of fandom – whether the negative experience is intentional or unintentional on the part of the object of fandom. However, the residue of the experience is not the same. The feelings related to post-dissolution phase are different. When negative experience is intentional, the feelings of the fan become negative towards their object of ex-fandom. When negative experience is unintentional, the feelings of the fan do not change and remain positive.[78] R16 got blocked by his object of fandom on Twitter because of a simple criticism about one of his songs. Regarding this experience, he said:

'It was very childish. I did not deal with him again.'

R9 also had a negative experience directly with his object of fandom that resulted in the abrupt dissolution of his fandom. He was furious. He expressed his anger as:

'If they gave me his tickets for free, I would not go to his concert again.'

Negative experience may also be related to a media product but it is more like dissatisfaction with the product or the related services and not an intentional experience that affected the fan directly. R11 was banned from the computer game that was the object of his fandom and this became a trigger to end his fandom.

'When they banned me unfairly, I gathered all my friends and left. We moved to another game.'

When the negative experince is activated by the object of fandom and is intentional, it becomes a trigger to end fandom. As explained above, these four triggers are all activated by the object of fandom and they all result in the dissolution of fandom.

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[78] This is why, those negative experiences that are not the intentional by the object of fandom, but rather the manifestation of the actual experience of fandom itself in that particular person, they have been categorized as a separate trigger, under the name of *'self-care'* and they are activated by the fan, not the object of fandom. Another person may experience the same object of fandom in a positive way. Thus, this distinction was necessary in categorization of the triggers.

4.4.2. External Factors

External factors seem to serve as triggers strong enough to end fandom only when they come together with other triggers, not singularly. According to Respondents' narratives, external factors were the second influential domain among the three domains of dissolution. External factors were influential to activate these three triggers:

- Change of environment
- Change of community
- Exposure to better alternatives

None of these triggers are activated by the object of fandom or the fan. They are outside factors that happen in the flow of life.[79] Thus, rather than being activated, these factors become initiated and have consequences that impact the experience of fandom. *Change of environment* is a trigger that causes a '*break in routines'* and as such weakens the intensity of the experience of fandom. In some of the interviews, the transition from middle school to high school was revealed as a significant factor in the dissolution of fandom. It was never the single trigger to cause fandom to end, but rather was paired with another trigger to result in the falling out. Both R16 and R28 said they started high school and wanted to fit in with the environment so started to downplay their fandom. R16 was a heavy-metal fan and when he started high school, he took his barbed wristbands off. He thought to himself:

'I do not want to give the wrong impression.'

R28 started high school and wanted to fit in with her new friends who were not fans of her object of fandom. They all listened to rock music so she would not mention her fandom and would only listen to Emre Aydın's songs home. She thought:

'They may make fun of me.'

In both cases, change of environment was not the only trigger that caused the dissolution of fandom but rather one of the triggers. When the environment

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[79] 'Change of environment' may at times be voluntarily activated by the fan herself, but even then it is not the act itself but rather its consequences that affect fandom. This is why, it was more appropriate to be categorized under 'external factors'.

changed, there was a break in routine and they were more susceptible to new inifluences in their new environment, primarily because they wanted to fit in.

Another trigger that results in the dissolution of fandom when initiated is *change of community*.[80] This trigger is especially determinative in the dissolution of fandom because once fandom becomes a community-based experience that is *'performed'* among other fans, group dynamics come into play and fuel the intensity of fandom significantly. The emotional attachment to the object of fandom is supported with the emotional attachment to the community.[81] It is not a *'hook'* but it is definitely an *'anchor'*. So, emotional attachment of the fan is only with the object of fandom during the fandom formation phase.When the fan gets hooked into fandom and discovers a community with whom she shares a common fascination towards her object of fandom, she forms emotional attachment with that community too. This attachment with the fandom community serves as an anchor to keep the fan immersed within fandom textuality with all her friends, some of whom become close friends in time. R28 mentioned how her friends from her fandom community had become her best friends in real life and she still sees them. So, when her friends started to leave the fandom, this impacted her:

'When the people I was closer with started to scatter, I also left the fan club.'
Although, a change in community becomes one of the triggers to end fandom, it was not named as the sole trigger by any of the Respondents. It had to be accompanied by another trigger to become strong enough of a reason to fall out of fandom.

Another trigger that is an external factor is *exposure to better alternatives.* This trigger surfaced in interviews with computer game fans and television series fans. Thus, this trigger seems to be more prevalent in regard to media products. R12 expressed his unwillingness to sustain his fandom if he gets frustrated - with the media product he is a fan of - as:

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[80] Here, the fan's current community is indicated. This is different than the change in community that takes place as a result of change of environment, because here there are existing group dynamics that have been facilitating the experience of fandom.
[81] Music fans talked about a couple of fans within fan forums with whom they had become very close. This is also a very important factor that surfaced in each interview with computer game fans.

'We had fewer alternatives so we accepted more. That has changed.'

However, ex-fans have mentioned not having fostered the same kind of immersion - as they did with their primary object of fandom - again, even if they moved on to another object of fandom.

4.4.3. Fan

According to Respondents' narratives, the fan was the least influential among the three domains of dissolution. It was influential to activate only two of the triggers, one of which is a double-domain trigger[82]:

- Change of style
- Self-care

Among the two triggers, change of style seems to have a gradual impact on the dissolution of fandom, whereas self-care seems to have a more abrupt impact. *Change of style* surfaced during the interviews with music fans. They mentioned how their taste in music changed and this resulted in their falling out of fandom. However, this was never brought up as a single trigger. There were other triggers that had been weakening the bond, and change of style added to the mix to increase impact enough to end fandom. R16 described the change in his music taste as a process that was encouraged by his father and a friend of his father. He was a fan of heavy metal, then he switched to classical rock.

'I started to listen to what my father was listening. After a while, my music style had shifted to classical rock.'

This was not the reason he stopped listening to heavy metal, but rather a soft transition to mark the end of his fandom. The other trigger that is activated by the fan is *self-care*. This trigger surfaced in two interviews, one was with a music fan and the other with a computer game fan. After a while, they both started to get negatively affected by their object of fandom. R3 was a fan of an arabesque singer

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[82] *'Change of style'* is a double-domain trigger and can be activated by either the fan or the object of fandom.

and his songs started to pull him down and get him depressed to an extreme point. This is when he had to end his fandom. He said:

'It was a decision I made because the music was harming me.'

R29 was a fan of a computer game named Bio Shock and its scenario really appealed to him. However, after a while, the drama in the scenario started to upset him to a degree that made him want to end his immersion in the game. He said:

'At the end of the day, it is a game and it should not affect our life.'

In both cases, fans wanted to get back to their state of emotional equilibrium and decided to end their immersion as an act of self-love. In these cases, the negative experiences were not intentional on the part of the object of fandom. It was a direct result of the fans' own personal experiences with the object of fandom.

4.5. FEELINGS OF DISSOLUTION

Being a fan is an emotional experience. The distinctive characteristic that separates a standard audience from a fan is the intensity of fan's emotions toward her object of fandom. Fandom is a positive emotional experience. A fan becomes immersed in fandom textuality because of the positive associations she makes with that textuality. When the experience of fandom starts to generate negative emotions, it is an indication that fandom phase has transformed into pre-dissolution phase. In pre-dissolution phase, there are still more positive emotions than negative emotions associated with the object of fandom. Still, the emergence of negative emotions demonstrates that *'crystallization'*[83] that is prominent in both fandom formation and fandom phases related to star-texts is no longer valid (Stendhal, 1957). For media-texts, hooks serve the purpose of transforming interest into fascination that leads to immersion. It signifies the end of fandom phase and the start of pre-dissolution phase. During pre-dissolution phase negative emotions are not constant. They appear and disappear in accordance to the object of fandom and the *'expectations'* of the fan. Expectations are significant in the experience of fandom because they

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[83] *'Crystallization'* is the process by which a potential fan becomes a fan by embellishing her object of fandom in her imagination. (Stendhal, 1957)

ensure sustainability of the experience. Fandom lasts as long as the expectations of fans are met by the object of fandom.

'Dissatisfaction' is a common theme among fans who are in pre-dissolution phase. Dissatisfaction is an umbrella term that includes *'disappointment'* which is the state mostly associated with star-texts and *'frustration'* which is the state mostly associated with media-texts. They express dissatisfaction regarding their object of fandom occasionally. There is a *'tipping point'*[84] that turns occasional dissatisfaction into negative emotions that pertain to the dissolution of fandom (Gladwell, 1994). This tipping point coincides with a trigger of dissolution that marks the beginning of the phase of dissolution. In this phase, fans' emotions are mostly negative toward the object of fandom and the presence of more negative emotions than positive ones end fandom. When the falling out is *'abrupt'* the emotions are all negative and they extend into the post-dissolution phase. When the falling out is *'gradual'* emotions are not necessarily negative, although there seems to be a general tendency towards more negative emotions than positive ones. Sometimes, emotions are predominantly positive but the fan has come out of immersion and the *'interest'* in the object of fandom has diminished. This is often related to *'the mattering maps'* that are active in fans' life at the time (Kaschak, 2013). When there is a shift in the mattering maps, the fans' interest shift too, thus paving the way to the dissolution of fandom. Due to the difference in feelings harbored during dissolution and post-dissolution phase, such falling out outlies as an exception. Thus, it is to be discussed separately at the end of this section.

According to narratives of the Respondents', there is often one dominant negative emotion that is present in the dissolution of fandom. Negative emotions that accompany dissolution of fandom are:

- Frustration
- Disappointment
- Shame

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[84] *'Tipping point'* is the point where fans' dissatisfaction turns into stronger negative feelings, initiating the pre-dissolution phase.

- Anger

- Sadness

- Disgust

Among the emotions that surfaced pertaining to the dissolution phase, anger, sadness and disgust were all related to an abrupt falling out of fandom as a result of being triggered by scandalous news. These emotions were caused by the object of fandom. Shame, however, was related to a gradual falling out and was caused by other people's perception of the fan's fandom or the fan's object of fandom. It had to do with the environment that the fan lived in and the people he associated with in his everyday life. Frustration and disappointment were more like states that were consequences of repeated dissatisfaction with the object of fandom.

Frustration

According to interview data, frustration seems to be more relevant to fans falling out of fandom when their object of fandom is a media poduct. Frustration is directed to the production company, the scenarist or the actors when there is discrepancy between the expectation of the fan and the media product. Trigger of dissolution that is often present with frustration is *change of style*. This indicates a change in the production after a certain period and signals the absence of those very factors that initially hooked the fan in the object of fandom. Frustration is a by-product of *'dissatisfaction'* with the object of fandom because of unmet expectations.When dissatisfaction ensues unmet expectations in a repeated manner, it turns into frustration and becomes the backdrop emotion of dissolution.

Disappointment

Disappointment is the emotion that surfaced the most during the interviews. This emotion is closely linked to *expectations* of fans and when their expectations are not met, they get disappointed with their object of fandom. Disappointment seems to be more related to living objects of fandom, namely star-texts, rather than non-living ones like media products. There seems to be the perception of repeated failure on the part of the object of fan to produce in line with the expectations of the fan. Respondents expressed their disappointments becoming an issue only after repeated failings of their expetations being met. Trigger of dissolution that is often

present with frustration is *visibility*. The fan expects her object of fandom to be visible in accruence with the constructed image and remain relevant. Thus, if the object of fandom repeatedly disappoints the fan, disappointment builds up and becomes strong of an emotion to serve as the backdrop of a trigger.

Shame

Shame surfaced as an emotion related to dissolution of fandom in two Respondents, R6 and R10. In both cases, it came up as an emotion fostered as a result of other people's comments and perceptions regarding the fan's object of fandom. In the case of R6, there were negative news about her object of fandom in media channels and they started to bother her. One day, one of the popular kids at her school saw the poster of her object of fandom in her closet and made a negative comment about her fandom, questioning how she can like someone like that.

'I felt ashamed to have her poster. I believe that such incidents must have had an affect.'

In the case of R10, the way in which he was perceived by his community because of his fandom affected the very experience of fandom. The negative comments started to get to him and he started questioning his fandom as a result of those comments. He was being bullied and made fun of because of his object of fandom and he felt shame to be in that position. This feeling built up with every snide comment of his friends and people at the concerts. It was strong enough of an emotion to make him question his fandom.

R10 talked about two specific instances when he felt ashamed as a consequence of his fandom[85]. The first incident was when his friends saw the CDs of his object of fandom in his drawer and made fun of him so he had to lie and say that they belonged to his sister.

'When I got caught…I could never say it was mine. So, instead of being ashamed, I chose to give up on my fandom.'

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[85] R10 was a fan of a singer who is a Turkish singer/actor with a baby-face and has a clean, gentleman-like style. His involvement in a Disney project caused a major shift in his fandom towards much younger people and when he could not disassociate himself with Disney, following that specific project, it eventually hurt his career.

There was another incident when he had gone to the singer's concert. The crowd was younger than him and he felt like an outlier. When he overheard people making fun of him, he felt humiliated and ashamed.

'When I went to his concerts, everybody was 12-14 and I was 16. So you look like a piece of dust in milk…Society oppressed my fandom in a way. Forced me out.'

These two specific incidents demonstrate how being accepted in a community plays a role in fandom. He wanted to be out about his fandom but he kept being humiliated in his own social circle for his choice of an object of fandom. The need to be open and vocal about one's fandom surfaced in some interviews. Fans want to claim their objects of fandom and want to take pride in their fandom. When they are unable to do this, they feel disheartened and it impacts their fannish feelings negatively.

Anger

Anger was the common emotion that surfaced during the interviews of all Respondents who had been triggered by scandalous news or who had negative experiences. It did not come up in any other interviews. This indicates a direct relationship with the living object of fandom. When fans get immersed in star-texts and feel wronged by them, anger seems to be the emotion to surface. It is such an intense emotion that it serves as the backdrop of an absolute falling out. The narratives of Respondents who had an absolute falling out were the most intense in terms of feelings. They all got very emotional while talking about the triggering incident and expressed their ways of engaging in *'negative activities'* toward their objects of fandom who - in their opinion - had wronged them. Anger was accompanied by negative activities in each case. They wrote negative comments in forums, talked to their friends negatively about their objects of fandom and made it a point to announce that they were no longer a fan. Their anger caused a total *'rejection'* of their objects of fandom. In each case, it was important to be socially disassociated with their objects of fandom.

R1 expressed her intense emotions and her engagement in negative activities as:

'I wrote negative things about him in the dictionary. I had to get the sadness and the anger out of my system.'

R2 expressed his anger by tearing up his objects of fandom's posters.

'I tore up all of her posters.'

R27 also expressed her anger by getting rid of everything that had to do with her object of fandom:

'I went home and threw away everything about her; all of her CDs, her concert recordings, everything.'

In all three cases, the falling out had been triggered by scandalous news and was abrupt. They felt as if their trust had been broken and they felt angry. There was a disillusionment about their object of fandom; the news disaligned with the idea they had about their objects of fandom. Regarding this, R27 said:

'The biggest factor in my falling out of fandom was her personality not being what I thought it was.'

The scandalous news had revealed new information about her object of fandom and the information was in disalignment with her ideas and her values. This caused anger and the intensity of anger resulted in the dissolution of her fandom, accompanied by negative feelings toward her object of fandom.

Sadness

Sadness was also a feeling that surfaced in relation to scandalous news as trigger of dissolution of fandom. It was mentioned together with anger, the latter being the dominant emotion regarding the experience which served as a trigger, namely learnning about the scandal. Sadness was less related to the experience that caused the falling out, but more related to *'the loss'*. Due to the unexpected nature of scandalous news breaking, fans were not really prepared to cut their cords with their objects of fandom. Nevertheless, they had to, so that they would not be in violation with their own selves. The abrupt nature of the falling out and being 'forced' to end their fandom when they did not really want to caused a feeling of loss, which resulted in sadness.

R1 said:

'But I was really very very sad…The fact that he did that really upset me.'

R2 expressed his sadness and the feeling of loss as:

'I felt like I lost something when I thought about it now.'

R27 expressed her feelings after the break of scandalous news as:

'It was really very sad. I spent a long time questioning her, myself and my
love for her.'

The unexpected nature of the incident and the abruptness of the falling out had caused sadness in all Respondents who had been triggered by scandalous news.

Disgust

This emotion surfaced in one of the interviews that had the trigger of scandalous news. It is more of a specific emotion so it may have to do more with the world view of the particular fan and the lens through which he sees and makes sense of the world. The fact that this emotion surfaced in R2, but not in R17, who both had the same object of fandom is indicative of the personal nature of emotionality and the experience of dissolution. What is more interesting was the fact that scandalous news that had caused R2 to fall out abruptly did not affect R17 at all. It was almost as if they were not even an issue for him. Having witnessed the intensity of R2's emotions and the coolness of R17's reaction when asked about the incident, it is evident that falling out of fandom is a very personal experience and may manifest in different ways in different fans.

R2 expressed the intensity of his emotions as:

'When such news broke, we got turned off. Then, our love turned into hate or
disgust.'

R17 made a relevant comment regarding emotions about falling out of fandom. His comment emphasizes the importance of the fan' own personality traits in the manifestation of the same experience. He said:

'To be negative is probably about the personality of the person. I mean, what can
a music band do to make you hate them? I can't think of antyhing. You must be
extremely sensitive, then you would get heart-broken with the smallest incident.'

In fact, interview data reveals that Respondents' approach to the phenomenon of fandom affects how the trigger manifests in terms of emotions. The value system of each fan seems to be significant in how she perceives incidents and her fandom textuality. It also determines how neutral factors get activated to become 'triggers of dissolution'.

Figure 4.2 Feelings of Dissolution
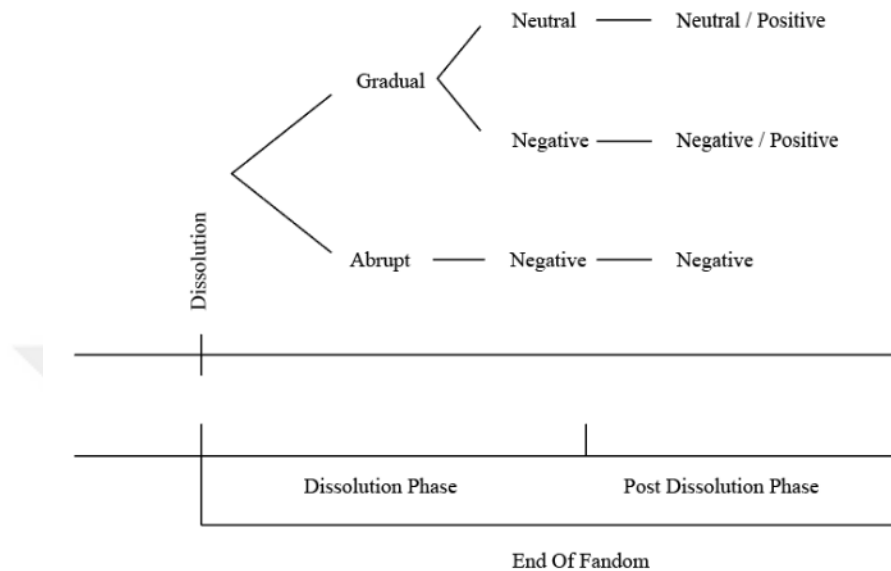
4.6. PROCESS OF FANDOM DISSOLUTION: FROM FAN TO EX-FAN

'End of fandom' includes not only the dissolution phase, but also the post-dissolution phase. Both of the phases affect the experience of fandom. Dissolution phase is when the impact of the trigger is still active and the feelings associated with the activation of the trigger are still very much fresh. It is only in the post-dissolution phase that a researcher is able to trace the true feelings and perceptions of the ex-fan towards her object of ex-fandom and her experience of fandom in general. The 'after-the-fact' nature of post-dissolution phase allows enough time to get liberated from the feelings associated with the trigger and evaluate the experience from a distance. Post-dissolution phase even harbors the possibility of reactivating a dissolved fandom[86]. This probability depends on the feelings of the ex-fan towards her object of ex-fandom during the post-dissolution phase.

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[86] This possibility is to be detailed in the following section: 'Flowing-out of Fandom'.

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Dissolution takes place in two ways: gradually or abruptly. The feelings that triggers cause in the fan determins the course of dissolution.

4.6.1. Flowing-out of Fandom

Interviews revealed that there were three states of emotions after falling out of fandom: negative, neutral and positive. The common state of emotions in dissolution phase is negative. This is mainly due to the fact that the impact of triggers is still fresh and the fan is going through the transitional process of moving from fandom to ex-fandom. However, some of the interviews revealed that there are cases when fans' overall perception of their object of fandom is so positive and their perception of the triggers is not so dramatic that their general state of emotion stays in equilibrium. They experience a state of neutral emotion, rather than intense negative emotions. These cases were 'gradual' dissolution processes whereby secondary triggers came together in the *flow of life* to cause a 'flowing-out' of immersion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Once the fans flow-out of immersion, it indicates a break in routines and allows fans to be open and susceptible to other influences. They get caught in the flow of everyday life and gradually lose interest and willingness to get reimmersed in their object of fandom. Their narratives indicated a *'flowing-out of fandom'*, a rather natural and gradual transition from fandom phase into dissolution phase and finally onto post-dissolution phase. Such flowing out does not necessitate being accompanied by negative emotions, but rather a gradual disinterest in the object of fandom that results in the dissolution of fandom. A common expression of the Respondents with such experiences was:

'I grew out of it. There came a day when I realized that I was no longer a fan of that person/media product.'

In such cases, the feelings associated with the object of fandom remain positive but the intensity diminishes. Fans who had experiences of flowing out of fandom remain neutral during dissolution phase and afterward during post-dissolution phase. When fans flow-out of fandom, their initial interest and eagerness toward

their object of fandom disappear. They stop being invested in their object of fandom and move on to other interests.

'Growing-out of it' was a recurring expression utilized by the Respondents to refer back to their fandom where the associated feelings were neutral (C. L. Harrington, Bielby, & Bardo, 2011; Lee Harrington & Bielby, 2010). In all of the cases, 'external factors' was the only activated domain of dissolution: change of environment, change of community or exposure to better alternativesThere was also an 'age' factor related to some of the flowing-out narratives. Some of the Respondents thought the intenstiy of their fandom also had to do with their age. In all cases, their fandom had started at around the ages of 12 and 13, at the onset of their teenage years. Transition from middle school to high school was also a dominant factor in the flowing-out cases which served as trigger of 'change of environment'. This transition brought about a new environment, a new social circle and the necessity to fit in with different pursuits and preferences. Flowing-out of fandom is the only process of dissolution among the three where there is no 'unfinished business'. The dissolution was gradual and took place in the natural low of life.

4.6.2. Falling-out of Fandom

When the dissolution is gradual, but the feelings associated with the object of fandom are negative, it is a 'falling out of fandom'. This process of dissolution surfaced as the most common one among the three processes. When a fan falls out of fandom, she harbors negative feelings about her object of fandom at the time of dissolution due to her perception of the activated triggers. The perception of activated triggers directly affects the impact of the triggers and the feelings of dissolution. (Strack & Förster, 2009) This is of critical importance, because the perception of triggers of dissolution determines the feelings of dissolution, which in turn determine the process of dissolution. There were two cases that demonstrated this clearly because they shared the same object of fandom, but the impact of the triggers was different for each of them. R2 and R17 had the same

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object of fandom. It was an especially interesting case because the primary of trigger of dissolution, namely 'scandalous news' had gotten activated. However, although this trigger is a 'primary trigger' - which makes it to have strong enough of an impact to result in abrupt dissolution singularly – the respondents' perceptions of the very same trigger were different and this resulted in different processes of dissolution to take place for each respondent.[87]

When a fan falls-out of fandom, her state of emotion during the dissolution phase is negative. There was a case when an ex-fan reverted back to being a fan again, a decade after falling-out of fandom. This was R25 and her dissolution had taken place as a result of the activation of trigger: 'change of style'. Her object of fandom had changed her music style in a way that she could no longer listen to her music and had a feeling of *nostalgia* about her old style. She was disappointed in the music she started to make and the way she looked. She thought that everything she liked about her had changed. She stopped being a fan and listening to her music for a decade. It was after a decade, when her object of fandom got back to making music in her original style that she became a fan again. Her state of emotion had reverted back to 'positive', thus reactivating her fandom. When her object of fandom went back to her original style, her fandom was reactivated, although there was not the state of immersion that was present before. Nevertheless, she started to identify herself as a 'fan' again and started to listen to her music all over again.

She said:

'When her album in 2016 was released, it was like her earlier albums so I downloaded it and am listening to it. Now I am a fan again, but not as much as I used to be.'

This case points to *'dormant fandom'* that resides in post-dissolution phase. *'Dormant fandom'* is when a fan grows apart from her object of fandom because of a change in style related to that object of fandom. When her object of fandom reverts back to her original style, her fandom gets reactivated and she becomes a fan again.

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[87] This case is to be analyzed further in the following section about the third process of dissolution: 'The Unfan'.

4.6.3. The Unfan

The 'unfan' is the least common among the processes of dissolution, yet the most intense. It consists of an 'abrupt' dissolution of fandom that is caused by the activation of the primary trigger: 'scandalous news' and results in a *'rejection'* of the object of fandom. This is the process that leads to an absolute ex-fandom where the possibility of positive association with the object of ex-fandom is non-existent.This is a matter of perception on the part of the fan because the value system of the fan determines how the trigger of dissolution is to be perceived and situated within the scope of one's own system of values. If the trigger is perceived as a violation of one's value system, the impact becomes absolute with the consequence of a total rejection of the object related to the trigger (Douglas, 1966). Mary Douglas explains this concept of dirt as:

'If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. When there is a dirt, there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classificatio of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity' (1966, p. 36-37).

The abrupt ending and the total rejection of the object of ex-fandom seem to be related to the concept of dirt. The ex-fans do not want to be associated with their object of ex-fandom. It is such a violation of their personal value system that they need to reject the object of ex-fandom so as to maintain their own integrity upon perception of dirt. The cases of R1, R2 and R27 demonstrate the 'unfan' as the process of dissolution. In all three cases, the Respondents have vocalized very strong negative feelings about their object of ex-fandom and stated their opinions related to their object of ex-fandom in absolute terms. They all ended their fandom as a result of the activation of the primary trigger of dissolution: 'scandalous news'

Figure 4.3 Process of Fandom Dissolution
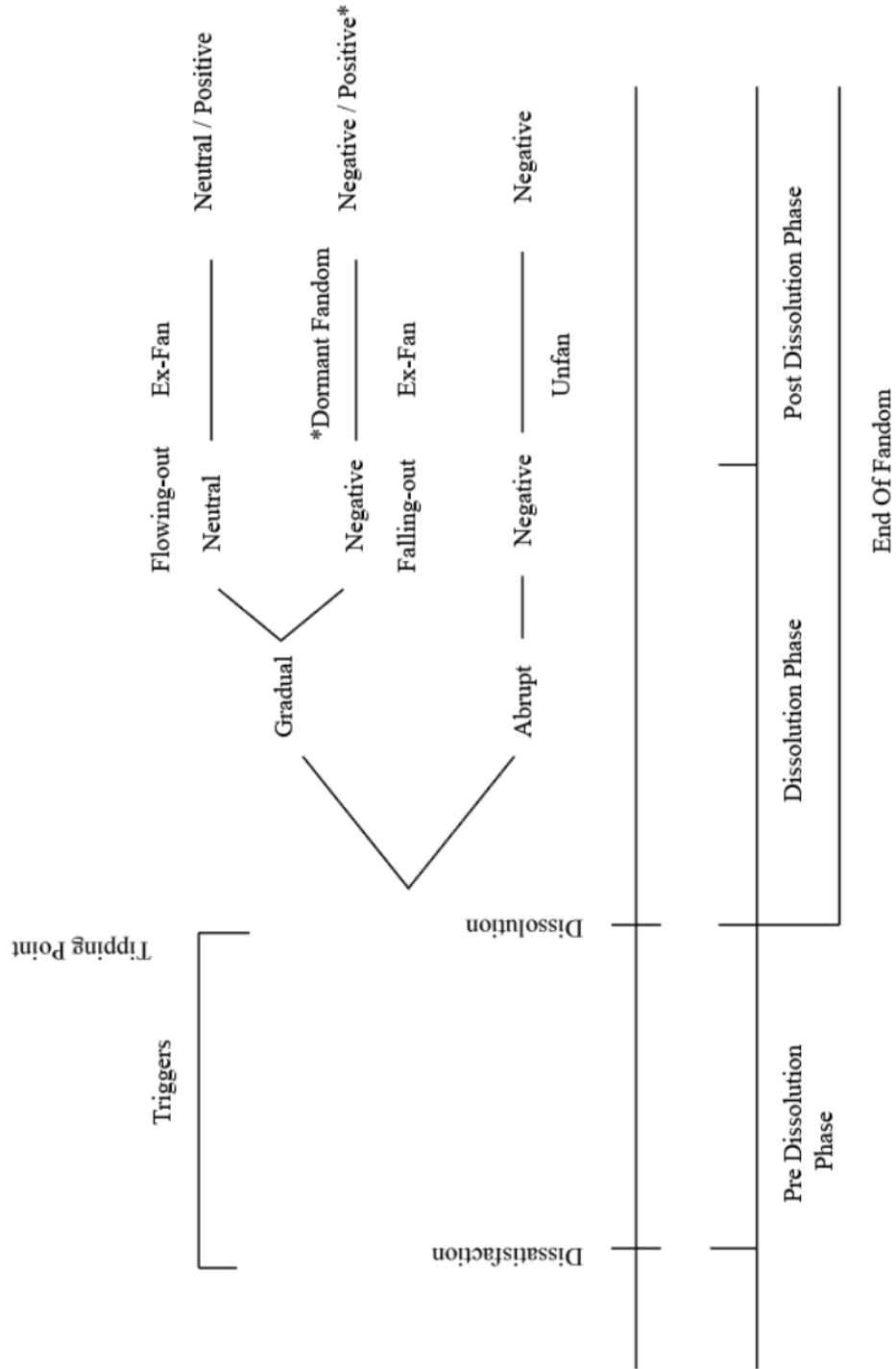
'Maybe it is about his private life but from my political perspective, it is something that I find extremely wrong and I believe that it is an incident that should be deemed wrong by everybody and because I stand against this completely, I'm not against him and his movies.'(R1)

'The holy position that we placed her in our eyes necessitated that her not to get involved in such incidents. When such news broke, we got turned off. Then, our love turned into hate or disgust. I tore her posters.' (R2)

'I was really very sad. I spent a lot of time questioning her, myself and my love for her. There was somebody who had lied to me and I had built this enormous thing over that lie and now I learned that it was a lie. It was very emotional. The moment I was absolutely convinced that the allegations were indeed true, I went home and threw away everything about her. It was a betrayal.' (R27)

'Any culture is a series of related structures which comprise social norms, forms, values, cosmology, the whole of knowledge and through which all experience is mediated' (Douglas, 1966, p. 129). In all three cases, the scandalous news coincided with a 'taboo' within the morals of the Respondents and symbolized 'pollution'. The idea of having an object of fandom who - all of a sudden - symbolized pollution was unbearable for the Respondents and resulted in the total rejection of the object of fandom.

4.7.   SUMMARY & CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter was a modest attempt at proposing a model on the phases of fandom, enabling a closer analysis of the end of fandom. The five phases of fandom were introduced. In addition, adaptations of concepts such as 'crystallization', and 'tipping point' into the fandom knowledge space were proposed. After a closer examination of the totality of the experience of fandom, an analysis of the 'end of fandom' was proposed. The end of fandom consisted of two phases of fandom: the

'dissolution phase' and the 'post-dissolution phase'. The end of fandom was investigated through the proposal of the following concepts: triggers of dissolution, domains of dissolution and feelings of dissolution to finally reach a model of the process of dissolution. Face-to-face interviews with thirty ex-fans revealed data that aided in the formulation of the proposed model about the dissolution of fandom. According to the proposed model, dissolution of fandom takes place in one of three ways: flowing out of fandom, falling out of fandom and the unfan. It is through these processes that a fan becomes an ex-fan and fandom ends.

Research data also revealed the possibility of the activation of fandom after the dissolution of fandom. This points to the necessity of further research in the area of fandom dissolution because of the potential for new data pertaining to the totality of fandom experience. A closer look at the totality of fandom bears a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of fandom. The concept of 'ex-fandom' harbors information about the sequence of the fandom experience, thus offering an in-depth comprehension of possible hooks, anchors and triggers. Further research in these 'facilitators of fandom' that fuel fandom may point to a better understanding of immersion in textuality and the phenomenon of fandom.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the end of fandom. If fandom was emotional immersion in textuality, what were the reasons and dynamics that caused fans to come out of immersion? Thus, the main questions this study sought to answer were:

1) How does fandom end?
2) Why does fandom end?

In order to gain an understanding of the end of fandom, it was necessary to start from the beginning, namely the formation of fandom. Moving from the beginning of the fandom experience, through immersion and onto the end of fandom was not only necessary, but also possible due to the narratives of research participants who were ex-fans. Despite the wealth of knowledge that has been produced by academics on fans and fan culture, the concept of ex-fandom is an under-researched area. Ex-fandom was the interest of this study because latest technological advances turned every piece of - written, visual and audio - information into textual fields with which individuals could engage and get immersed in.

The concept of 'immersion' is about to take a leap due to technological advances such as virtual reality, augmented reality and artifical intelligence that are becoming mainstream (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011). Soon, textualities will be three-dimensional, giving immersion a whole new meaning. Fans being the most active, creative and media literate of audiences, they are the embodiement of the concept of 'immersion' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Objects of fandom constitute their textual fields of immersion and as such, fans are the most active audiences to experience immersion. The soon arrival of immersive textualities in everyday lives necessitated not only an understanding of fan immersion, but also an understanding of the reasons and processes that led to coming out of immersion. This phase of coming out of immersion, namely 'the end of fandom' was the research topic of this study. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the field of fandom and in the identification of the enabling factors that cause fans to come out of immersion in their objects of fandom. The main

contribution of this study is the findings related to the phases of fandom leading to the 'dissolution phase of fandom', onto 'post-dissolution phase'. The study identifies eight triggers of dissolution and analyzes the impact of these triggers in domains of dissolution, namely the object of fandom, external factors and the fan. In addition, the study is a contribution to the process of dissolution and identifies three processes of dissolution that turns a fan into an ex-fan. The three processes of dissolution are: flowing out of fandom, falling out of fandom and the unfan.

Empirical Findings

The research for this study was conducted with ex-fans through face-to-face interviews. The narratives of personal experiences related to the dissolution of fandom demonstrated common themes. These themes aided in the formulation of a model depicting the 'phases of fandom'. The narratives started with the fandom experiences and progressed to the dissolution of fandom. Thus, it was possible to formulate a model depicting the phases of fandom, including the dynamics from the formation of fandom to the dissolution of fandom.

According to the proposed model, there are five phases of fandom. These are:

1) Fandom Formation Phase
2) Fandom Phase
3) Pre-Dissolution Phase
4) Dissolution Phase
5) Post-Dissolution Phase

The phenomenon of fandom is manifested through these five phases. First, in the fandom formation phase, the potential fan gets exposed to an object of fame. If her interest is stimulated because of an intersection point between the object of fame and her particular likes, tastes and interests at that time, she becomes curious to find out more about the object of fame. This curiosity leads the potential fan to do research about her object of fame. It is during this research process that the potential fan becomes a fan or remains a non-fan (Gray, 2003). If the potential fan gets

hooked in through textualities pertaining to her object of fame, she becomes fascinated. Her fascination is a direct result of the presence of hooks within object of fame as text. Her fascination initiates the process of crystallization (Stendhal, 1957) and through that process, she becomes a fan. This is the start of the fandom phase. Her fandom leads her to do 'excessive fan reading' (Fiske, 1989; Jenkins, 1992) about her object of fandom. Her dive into fandom textuality results in immersion in the object of fandom. During fandom phase, immersion is further facilitated with the presence of anchors. Next, pre-dissolution phase is initiated as soon as a trigger gets activated. A trigger is any factor that results in the dissatisfaction of the fan with her object of fandom. Emergence of negative feelings pertaining to the object of fandom is the start of the 'pre-dissolution phase'. When these triggers reach a 'tipping point' (Gladwell, 1994), the dissolution phase starts, resulting in the dissolution of fandom. The feelings of the ex-fan during the dissolution phase and the following post-dissolution phase are the determinants of the status of fandom for that particular fan.

It is during the dissolution phase that a fan becomes an ex-fan. The interview data uncovered eight triggers of dissolution. These triggers are:

- Change of Style
- Change of Environment
- Change of Community
- Visibility
- Exposure to Better Alternatives
- Self-care
- Negative Experiences
- Scandalous News

These triggers get activated in three different domains. These domains of dissolution are: 1) the object of fandom, 2) external factors and 3) the fan. When the triggers of dissolution get activated, the fan starts to feel dissatisfaction about her object of fandom. Dissatisfaction often manifests as 'disappointment' related to star-texts and 'frustration' related to 'media texts'. When her dissatisfaction reaches a 'tipping point', her fandom ends. The 'end of fandom' consists of dissolution

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phase and post-dissolution phase. This is significant because the data related to both phases aided in the formulation of the 'processes of dissolution'. The critical data that clarified the three distinct processes of dissolution was the feelings of post-dissolution phase. This was determinative in identifying three distinct combinations that emerged from 1) impact of triggers and 2) feelings of post-dissolution.

Impact of triggers may be 'gradual' or 'abrupt'. If the impact of triggers is gradual, the dissolution takes place over a period of time. This process is accompanied with either 1) negative feelings of dissolution or 2) neutral feelings of dissolution. If the feelings of dissolution are negative, it is indicative of a dominance of dissatisfaction towards the object of fandom at the time of dissolution. On the other hand, if the feelings are neutral, it is indicative of an equilibrium of positive feelings and dissatisfaction pertaining to the object of fandom. As such, even if dissatisfaction is the overriding feeling at the time of the activation of the trigger, the positive feelings harbored for the object of fandom are enough to establish equilibrium for a neutral state of feelings. If the impact of triggers is abrupt, the dissolution is always accompanied by negative feelings and this process of abrupt dissolution is only facilitated with a primary trigger, namely 'scandalous news'.

These three combinations bring out three processes of dissolution. These processes are:

1) Flowing out of Fandom: gradual impact of triggers & neutral feelings
2) Falling out of Fandom: gradual impact of triggers & negative feelings
3) The Unfan: abrupt impact of primary trigger & negative feelings

'Flowing-out of fandom' is mostly due to life course transitions and the fan gradually flows out of fandom, without harboring negative feelings about her object of fandom. 'Falling out of fandom' is the most common process of dissolution and is caused by the activation of triggers that result in negative feelings towards the object of fandom. *'Dormant fandom'* is a concept related to this process. If the trigger of dissolution was 'change of style' and the feelings of the ex-fan remains negative during the post-dissolution phase, it is 'dormant fandom' and the ex-fan remains to be an ex-fan. On the other hand, if the feelings of the ex-fan become positive again due to a 'reverting back to the original style' of the object of fandom,

then the ex-fan becomes a fan again, with the exception of immersion. 'The Unfan' is the ex-fan whose fandom ends abruptly and with negative feelings due to the activation of a primary trigger – scandalous news – and is accompanied by 'rejection' of the object of fandom.

Theoretical Implications

The study demonstrates the potentiality the dissolution phase of fandom harbors in terms of deciphering different dynamics of the fan experince. The presence of 'dormant fandom' points to other possibilities in fandom dynamics and these dynamics may be buried within the layers of dissolution and post-dissolution. Thus, an analysis of the totality of the fandom experience deserves attention to investigate how the parts affect the whole. Another interesting implication of the research is based on 'multi-perspectivism'. This concept that has been utilized in history in recent was clearly demonstrated in research data among the different responses of two ex-fans who had the same object of fandom yet had totally different perceptions regarding the triggers of dissolution.

Even though both ex-fans reported a very intense emotional attachment to the same object of fandom, their dissolution process was different. They had both utilized the word 'love' yet they had reacted differently to the same primary trigger of disssolution. Even the impact of a primary trigger varied from an ex-fan to another. The perceptions and the value systems of the ex-fans determined the process or dissolution. The 'multi-perspectivism' present in the experience of fandom is an indication of how fertile the phenomenon of fandom is as a field of study.

This study utilized a number of valuable theoretical sources as main avenues of thought to derive meaning from the data. In spite of the fact that the study is focused on the end of fandom, it was necessary to develop an understanding of the complete experience of fandom – from the beginning – in order to situate the dynamics and the processes related to the end of fandom accordingly. In addition, the narratives of the research participants consisted of data pertaining to the period

after the dissolution of fandom. This data necessitated the inclusion of the post-dissolution phase within the phases of fandom, enabling the formulation of the proposed model on the processes of fandom dissolution.

The necessity of having to start the experiences of fandom from the beginning to be able to comprehend the end resulted in being able to draw some parallels from the previous academic and literary texts about the phases of fandom and the progression of fandom from the beginning to the end. In fandom formation phase, Ellyn Kaschak's (1992) theoretical model of the *Mattering Map* constituted the foundation for the intersection points that collided at the time of fandom formation to enable the potential fan to get hooked in to curiosity and a closer look at the textuality of her object of fandom. The concept of 'mattering' seems to be a critical factor at this very junction in the potential fan's life to turn an exposure into an interest, and that interest into curiosity which then turns into fascination and initiates the experience of fandom. Fandom sprous from a 'kaleidoscopic complexity of multiple experiences and perspectives' and becomes the manifestation of a possibility at that time with that particular object of fandom because of the timely intersection of the mattering maps (Kaschak, 2013, p. 436). What matters in the psychological life of the potential fan at the moment of intersection matches the context of the object of fandom. The 'mattering' in the life of the potential fan at that time has to be opportune for such a match to materialize.

Once the interest is evoked leading to curiosity which then requires a deep dive in the object-of-fandom-as-text, the visual, written and audio bits and pieces of information gathered by the potential fan becomes the fertile ground for *'crystallization'* of fandom. This concept of 'crystallization' is based on Stendhal's (1957) novel 'Love' and describes the inticate weaving of the feeling towards the object of affection. The weaving of the feeling requires imagination which in the case of fandom feeds on textuality and leisure time of the fan due to her lifestyle at the time. Stendhal compares the weaving of the feeling intricately, loop by loop to the formation of crystals and precious jewels in mines. The narratives of ex-fans demonstrated presence of these attributes necessary for the crystallization process. Fans dive into textuality that in turn stimulates their imagination and embellishes

the object of fandom. The necessity of leisure time was also evident in the interview data. Fans had the willingness and the time to take the dive into the object-of-fandom-as-text to initiate the engine of imagination. The significance of imagination and day-dreaming lies in their relationship to longing, desire and ultimately consumption, which is in fact 'immersion' in fandom (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Campbell, 1987). It is important to point out that crystallization becomes more pronounced pertaining to star-texts, rather than media texts. Hooks reside in textualities and they get activated through the mattering maps. These hooks initiate the interest in an object of fandom and are prominent in fandom related to media texts.

In the proposed model of the phases of fandom, there is a certain point that triggers reach – the tipping point – that has the consequence of dissolution of fandom. The concept of 'The Tipping Point' is based on the work of Malcolm Gladwell (1994) and indicates that there is a certain point where ideas grow exponentially. He points out to how minute circumstances, particulars, conditions and context make a critical difference for an idea or phenomenon to 'tip'. In fandom, secondary triggers often accumulate to reach a point of saturation – a tipping point – to cause major dissatisfaction in the fan to end her fandom. Once the tipping point is reached, the process of dissolution of fandom may either be gradual or abrupt. The narratives demonstrated common themes pertaining to the dissolution of fandom and the commonalities pointed to two areas of focus: 1) the 'impact of triggers' that assigned whether the dissolution would take place in a gradual or an abrupt manner and 2) the 'feelings of dissolution' that demonstrated the meanings that triggers had within the value system and the perception of the fan. These two areas of influence result in three different processes of dissolution, namely, flowing out of fandom, falling out of fandom and the unfan. According to interview data, flowing out of fandom was more related to a life course perspective. The data demonstrated general patterns of *stability* and *transition* (C. L. Harrington et al., 2011; Lee Harrington & Bielby, 2010). Immersion in an object of fandom requires a stability that enables the fan to perform the habits related to her fandom.

When there is a life event that breaks the habits and stability is compromised, the possibility of dissolution is increased.

The more gradually transitional nature of this specific process of dissolution that encompasses the least negativity of feelings – rather, more of a 'neutralization' – demonstrated similiarities to the concept of *'flow'*, introduced by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). This is why the specific process was influenced by his theory of 'flow'. He descibes 'flow' experiences as 'the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives' (1997, p. 46). Flow tends to occur when there is a clear set of goals and these goals require appropriate responses. These transitional times in the life course of fandom seems to intersect with such a state; the emphasis being on the effortless action due to a clear set of goals, rather than on the best part of their lives. The experience of transition seems to have caused a break in immersion and enabled a flowing experience into the novelty of the clear set of goals ahead. The transitional nature of this process results in a *'neutralization'* of feelings and perceptions about the object of ex-fandom and the experience of fandom.

In contrast, the process of dissolution that is proposed as '*The Unfan'* is an abrupt and unexpected blow to the experience of fandom. This process harbors negative feelings and a 'rejection' of the object of fandom as a direct consequence of the break of scandalous news that the fan perceives to be 'unacceptable' within her own system of values. The extreme and intense nature of this process of dissolution necessitated a closer inspection of the core of the experience. Mary Douglas' (1966) work on the concepts of pollution and taboo proved to be beneficial in deciphering the dynamics behind such abrupt endings. She describes in great detail how dirt is a by-product of a systemic ordering and classification of matter and how this ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements (p. 36). The fact that the trigger of dissolution related to the abrupt and absolute dissolution of fandom is perceived to be 'of dirt' is the basis of the process of dissolution proposed as 'The Unfan'. Douglas points out to how perception directs the selection of only those that is of interest – from all the stimuli falling on the senses – and how the interests are governed by a pattern-making tendency (Bartlett, 1923). In perception,

the discordant cues are rejected. Such as the case in the particular process of dissolution named 'The Unfan'. The ex-fan rejects the object of ex-fandom in an attempt to maintain self coherence within her own system of values. She does this abruptly and in absolution.

The concepts and theories that have been utilized to make sense of the experience of fandom and the end of fandom in particular have enabled the patterns that emerged within the interview data to be grounded in the proposed model. The proposed model is a modest attempt in the comprehension of the phenomenon of fandom and its dissolution phase and is open to improvement by fellow researchers. The theoretical implications are based on the interpretation of the researcher at the time of study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The inclusion of different areas of fandom in the research proved to be fruitful in formulating a more comprehensive model pertaining to the phenomenon of fandom. An understanding of ex-fandom would be incomplete without the contributions of ex-fans belonging to different areas of fandom. It also proved fruitful to step into the territories of their other fandoms – when applicable - with ex-fans who participated in the research. An understanding of the totality of fandom was crucial to devise a model related to the end of fandom.

For future research, it would be interesting to conduct more face-to-face interviews with ex-fans from different areas of fandom, such as comic fans and sports fans. Even though there are different dynamics to each area of fandom, there are also enough similarities across fandoms to shed light on the totality of fandom, including ex-fandom. A broader base of ex-fans across multiple fan interests would enable more narratives pertaining to more objects of fandom. The end of fandom in particular seems to harbor multiple potentialities related to the experience of fandom. The narrative of one specific ex-fan illuminated the concept of 'dormant fandom'. This potentiality is only possible through a multitude of narratives. This

mulitiplicity also enables application of the concept of 'multi-perspectivism' in history.

This concept may best be applied by comparing the narratives of ex-fans with the same object of fandom. This approach allows the researcher to compare differences in dynamics related to immersion levels and the perception of the same trigger by different fans. Thus, it would prove beneficial to do research with fans and ex-fans of the same object of fandom. This is interesting because it carries the potential to demonstrate the nuances of fandom and dissolution of fandom. This approach would enable the researcher to evaluate how perception of the same triggers may manifest themselves in the dissolution of fandom. Yet another area for further research would be regarding hooks, anchors and triggers. These 'facilitators of fandom' harbor the potential to gain a much deeper understanding into the concept of 'immersion'. These areas of research would prove to be valuable for the fandom and ex-fandom 'knowledge space' (Levy, 1997). Further research in immersion levels, including the dissolution phase and the dynamics of ex-fandom would prove to be beneficial in understanding the totality of the phenomenon of fandom.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study was the fact that ex-fandom is a concept of the past. This makes narratives related to ex-fandom to be recalled from the past, based on memory. When the experience is in the past, dependence on memory becomes the primary mode of narratives and this bears the possibility of error. However, it may be too early to gather data at the start of post-dissolution phase either because the feelings related to the experience may cloud the narrative. Thus, an optimal balance is best to seek in terms of the ideal time to research considering the onset of ex-fandom. Another limitation of the study was the random clustering of interview participants in one main age group. Most of the participants were in their twenties and their narratives belonged to teen fandom experiences. A broader base of ex-fans across different age groups and across different fan interests would

prove to be beneficial in investigating the dynamics of immersion and differences in perception that defined the impact of triggers.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding pertaining to the end of fandom. This study contributes to the fandom knowledge space through the proposal of a model depicting the five phases of fandom; the identification of the eight triggers of dissolution; domains of dissolution; feelings of dissolution and the three processes of dissolution; namely; flowing out of fandom, falling out of fandom and the unfan. The concepts of hooks, anchors and triggers are utilized as facilitators of fandom and each serves a significant purpose during the experience of fandom. Tre transition from being a fan to being an ex-fan is the focus of the study and the narratives of ex-fans demonstrate certain patterns in becoming an ex-fan. A closer inspection of the triggers and the process of dissolution may serve to prevent the formation of the dynamics that lead to dissolution. This knowledge my further facilitate immersion in media-texts and star-texts. The study seeks to bring attention to the concept of 'ex-fandom' and in so doing, propose a totality of comprehension related to the phenomenon of fandom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Interviews are to begin with an explanation of the thesis. Written consent of the participants to be audio recorded are to be collected and basic demographic data are to be gathered. The participants are to be invited to ask any questions they might have, before and after the interview. The participants are to be ensured that the information received is to remain anonymous and confidential. The following questions are a template for guiding the interviews. The participants' responses are to point the direction of the interview to best investigate their experience of fandom and the dissolution of their fandom.

Questions:

Are you an ex-fan?

What was your object of fandom?

How did you become a fan of that object of fandom?

What were the dynamics and activities related to your fandom?

Were there any external factors that might have facilitated your fandom?

How would you characterize your relationship with the object of fandom?

What were the dynamics/reasons that might have set the stage for fandom dissolution?

Did your fandom fluctuate during the period of your fandom?

Why did your fandom end?

How did your fandom end?

What were your feelings during the dissolution of your fandom?

What are your feelings towards the object of your ex-fandom?

Looking back, what do you think about your experience of fandom?

Appendix 2: Demographic Information Form

Interviews are to begin with an explanation of the thesis. Written consent of the participants to be audio recorded are to be collected and basic demographic data are to be gathered. The participants are to be invited to ask any questions they might have, before and after the interview. The participants are to be ensured that the information received is to remain anonymous and confidential.

T: …………………………………….... M: ……………….........................

Demographic Information:
Age
Nationality
Marital Status
Education Level
Employment Status

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

This study is designed to gather information about the experience of fandom and the dissolution of fandom. It is based on voluntary consent. Participant may choose to leave the study at any time during the research.

Name, Surname:

Occupation:

Please choose one of below alternatives by marking the related box:

☐   I agree to participate in the research that the researcher is conducting as part of her PhD dissertation thesis in Istanbul Bilgi University, **with the condition that my name, surname and occupation will be kept anonymous.** I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and the information gathered will be used for the mentioned PhD dissertation thesis.

☐   I agree to participate in the research that the researcher is conducting as part of her PhD dissertation thesis in Istanbul Bilgi University, **and give permission for my name, surname and occupation to be published.** I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and the information gathered will be used for the mentioned PhD dissertation thesis.

Researcher: Participant:

Tuğba Yazıcı

Appendix 4: List of Participants

Respondent	Age	Nationality	Marital Status	Education	Employment
R1	28	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R2	28	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R3	29	Turkish	Single	Middle school	Yes
R4	26	Turkish	Single	Masters	No
R5	23	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R6	21	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R7	23	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R8	33	Turkish	Married	University	Yes
R9	35	Turkish	Single	Univ. drop-out	No
R10	28	Turkish	Single	High school	Yes
R11	37	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R12	27	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R13	34	Turkish	Married	University	Yes
R14	21	Turkish	Single	University 2 years	No
R15	20	Turkish	Single	University	No
R16	21	Turkish	Single	University	No
R17	24	Turkish	Single	University	No
R18	23	Turkish	Single	University	No
R19	37	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R20	21	Turkish	Single	University 2 years	Yes
R21	43	Turkish	Single	Masters	Yes
R22	19	Turkish	Single	University	No
R23	20	Turkish	Single	University	No
R24	23	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R25	27	Turkish	Married	PhD student	Yes
R26	21	Turkish	Single	University	No
R27	26	Turkish	Single	University	Yes
R28	23	Turkish	Single	University	No
R29	19	Turkish	Single	University	No
R30	39	Turkish	Single	University	No

ETİK KURUL DEĞERLENDİRME SONUCU/RESULT OF EVALUATION BY THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

(Bu bölüm İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul tarafından doldurulacaktır /This section to be completed by the Committee on Ethics in research on Humans)
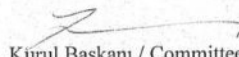
Başvuru Sahibi / Applicant: Tuğba Yazıcı

Proje Başlığı / Project Title: How Does Fandom End? From Engagement to Disengagement
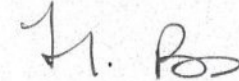
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1.	Herhangi bir değişikliğe gerek yoktur / There is no need for revision	XX
2.	Ret/ Application Rejected	
	Reddin gerekçesi / Reason for Rejection	
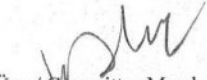
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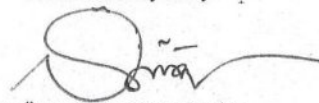
Kurul Başkanı / Committee Chair
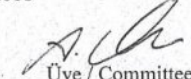
Doç. Dr. Itır Erhart

Üye / Committee Member

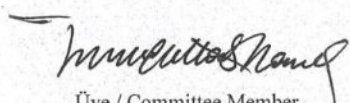Prof. Dr. Hale Bolak

Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Koray Akay

Üye / Committee Member

Doç Dr. Ayhan Özgür Toy

Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Aslı Tunç

Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Turgut Tarhanlı

Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Ali Demirci