

Goth Fans: “Coming Home” To Leipzig

Understanding Commodification and Identity at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen



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Abstract

This research aims to understand how goth fans experience the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) within a world with growing control of the tourist industry and pressure of the mainstream. The WGT is the world's largest goth festival and attracts around twenty thousand visitors each year. To be able to understand how commodification processes influence the WGT experience of goth fans, a qualitative research method is used. This research is based on 11 in-depth interviews and nine chat conversations with goth fans who have visit WGT. It is argued that due to various processes and changes in today' society, place may become more or less important for the goth community. For most of the respondents, the WGT is viewed as an importance place to come together. On the other hand, the WGT could also be relocated because the social aspect of the WGT seems to be most important for the goth fans. Relating to commodification, the concept of Carnival is used to explain the changes at the WGT which influence the experience by goth fans. However, WGT helps to keep alive what matters to goth fans, to be able to socialize, express identity, listen to music and have fun.

Table of Content

Abstract.....	2
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Being Goth in today's society	6
2.1 Understanding the goth subculture as a concept	7
2.2 Control of the Tourist Industry	11
2.3 Meaningful Experiences.....	14
2.4 Conceptual Model	15
3. Methodology	17
3.1 Case Study.....	18
3.2 Data Collection.....	18
3.2.1 Participant Recruitment	19
3.2.2 Reflection on Data Collection	20
3.3 Data Analysis	21
3.3.1 Coding Scheme.....	23
3.4 Ethical Considerations.....	24
3.5 Insider or Outsider Debate	25
4. Analysis.....	26
4.1 Goth Fans: Expressing the Goth Identity.....	26
4.2 Coming Home	29
4.3 Carnival.....	34
5. Conclusion.....	39
6. Reflection.....	41
7. References.....	42
Appendix A: Informed Consent.....	47
Appendix B: Interview Guide	48

1. Introduction

Every year, the streets of Leipzig are overrun with people dressed in goth fashion. Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) is the world's largest goth festival and takes place during the Whitsuntide weekend. In 2020, the festival was planned from May 29th until June 1st (Maier, 2020). However, the festival was cancelled due to COVID-19.

From its beginnings, WGT has been more than a music festival. The first WGT was organized in 1992 by two goths who wanted to create a meeting for people who enjoy 'dark' music and culture (Hodkinson, 2002). The first WGT featured eight bands and attracted around two thousand visitors. Today, WGT is one of the most significant events for goths worldwide. Around twenty thousand people visit Leipzig during the festival (Hoffert-Karas, 2019). The visitors at the WGT can go to the city's museums. There are tours on the cemeteries. There are theatre and opera performances. The church is open, and films are playing. There are art exhibitions, readings and lectures (Hoffert-Karas, 2019). These events are organized during the WGT for goths from all over the world.

According to Hodkinson (2002), attending goth events makes it possible for goths to discuss goth with other goths and to develop friendships with goths all over the world. However, the commodification of alternative cultures is a concern across subcultures (Spracklen, 2009). Festivals tend to change through commodification and commercialization processes (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018). As explained by Kaul (2007), the control of the tourist industry could influence the experience at the WGT by goth fans. Moreover, society is changing, and tension is visible between the individual and collective identities (Bennet, 1999).

Bennet (1999) does not pay particular attention to the spatial dimension when discussing subcultural groups. In this research, the importance of place is essential in the discussion regarding identities. Because identities are contested, it becomes harder to link identities to specific places (Sokolove et al. 2002). On the other hand, Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) explain the importance of place for social groups with the concept of fandom. However, the amount of empirical research that has been carried out exploring and supporting the role of place and commodification processes from the tourists perspective remains somewhat limited. Therefore, this research presents a qualitative research approach, exploring how commodification processes influence the WGT experience of goth fans and in which ways place is important for goth fans to express their goth identity.

In this research, the aim is to understand how goth fans experience the WGT within a world with growing control of the tourist industry and pressure of the mainstream. This is done by looking at the experience of commodification processes by goth fans and how the geographical location might be of importance for the experience and identity construction of goth fans at the WGT.

To answer the research question, the case study of the WGT, together with interviews with various goths fans, was used. While most studies on festival experience are based on commercialization and commodification based on control of the tourist industry, this research focusses on place as an important aspect for the WGT experience and the control of the dominant society as an aspect of commodification.

2. Being Goth in today's society

The opportunity to express the goth identity at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen is an important reason for goths all over the world to visit Leipzig (Hodkinson, 2002). At the WGT, goth fans come together to enjoy the musical, social and commercial aspects of the festival and to see the city of Leipzig. The WGT was initially organised for people who identify as goth (Hodkinson, 2002). However, opinions and perceptions regarding goth differ between individuals (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018). The literature questions the idea of one collective identity by being part of a subculture (Bennet, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Straw, 1991). Here, tension arises between collective and individual identity, influencing the experience at the WGT for goths fans. Moreover, there is a general discussion about identity being more collective or individual (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Straw, 1991).

Furthermore, festivals link to tourism. A festival can serve as a solution for image problems (Quinn, 2005). However, these festivals are often not place-dependent and have similar and homogenised experiences compared to other festivals (Waite, 2008). Secondly, a festival can have a specific focus, attracting visitors who are interested in particular art forms (Van Aalst and Van Melik, 2011). For example, goths attending a goth festival. All thirty thousand people who visit Leipzig during the WGT are tourists consuming art, culture or entertainment (Van Aalst and Van Melik, 2011). The role of tourism and the control of the tourist industry creates a discussion regarding commodification and authenticity, which may influence the experience at the WGT. Here again, tension is visible between commodification influencing experiences and the authentic experience.

Lastly, the importance of place is under discussion. The number of goths and the number of goth places is declining. However, goth is still thriving in Europe, especially in France and Germany (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2019). According to Hodkinson (2002), attending goth events makes it possible for goths to discuss goth with other goths and to develop friendships with goths all over the world. Here, the WGT might be still an important place for the goth identity.

On the other hand, goth might be placeless. The arrival of the internet made it possible for the goths to spread around the world. Goth spread from its original country, the United Kingdom in the eighties, to Europe and North America (Hodkinson, 2002). Goth was able to survive the nineties partly due to the rise of the internet and social media. Goths were using the internet to escape from the attention of mainstream media and were able to get back control by having their own rules and boundaries (Hodkinson, 2002). The internet allows goths to construct a sense of community and an identity as goths, while free from the controls and constraints of the culture industry. (Adorno, 1991). Through the internet, collective identity and group solidarity are recognised, defined and maintained outside daily life (Hannam and Halewood, 2008). In sum,

various processes influence the importance of place, which has consequences for the experience at the WGT by goth fans.

2.1 Understanding the goth subculture as a concept

To be able to interpret the role of the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) for the visitors of WGT who identify themselves as goth, there needs to be some understanding about subcultures. The understanding of the goth subculture, its meaning and how it manifests in place differs between individuals and academics (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018). Goth, as seen as a culture or a subculture, is a problematic concept (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018). Multiple meanings are giving to what goth is and how to act when being part of the goth subculture. Therefore, goth is contested because the meaning given to goths can, for example, vary between people who identify as goths (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018).

The concept of subculture relates to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). According to the CCCS, subcultures are inherently dissenting, often class-based, and response to hegemonic conservative forces (Malbon, 1999). Dowd and Dowd (2003) explain that subcultures are usually thought of as groups that are part of the dominant culture. However, these groups distinguish themselves from mainstream culture by beliefs, values, behaviour, symbols, activities and often by style and music (Gracyk, 2016). Dowd and Dowd (2003) define the ideal subculture as a group whose members regularly interact with each other, who share a prevailing world-view and are unwilling to adjust to the dominant culture. However, Bennet (1999) questioned about subcultures being created to resist structural changes in society. Bennet (1999) argued that post-war consumerism offered young people the opportunity to escape from traditional class-based identities and construct new forms of identity. Moreover, the CCCS paid much attention to class as a factor in understanding individual and collective identity, according to Bennet (1999).

Various authors of popular music and youth have critique regarding the CCCS (Bennet, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Straw, 1991). The dissatisfaction was mostly on the use of the concept subculture. According to the CCCS, subcultures are subgroups of society, a culture within a culture. Bennett (1999) argues that this definition is an overestimation of the coherence and stability of youth groups. Also, Straw (1991) states the difficulty in defining a subculture as a coherent social group. Subcultures can have similarities among each other. At the same time, members of a specific subculture can have shifting behaviour patterns. For example, they are becoming more or less committed to a subculture over the years. According to Straw (1991), there is very little evidence to advocate that even the most committed groups are in any way as coherent or fixed as the concept of subculture implies. Hodkinson (2002) agrees with Bennett (1999) and Straw (1991) that the concept of subculture should not consist of fixed groups. Hodkinson (2002)

mentions that individuals in subcultural groups differ in terms of commitment, continuity and distinctiveness. In sum, there is a range of disagreements regarding the use of the obsolete concept of subcultures.

Since the CCCS conceptualizes subcultures as inherently dissenting, various authors have tried to use different concepts to describe the subculture phenomenon (Bennet, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Maffesoli, 1996). Bennet (1999) rethinks the relationship between youth, style and musical taste with the term "Tribe" which is directed from Maffesoli (1996). Maffesoli (1996) discusses the concept of "Tribe", referring to someone's state of mind. This state of mind is expressed through appearance—for example, goths expressing their identity through dark fashion in this research. The concept "Tribe" focusses attention on the temporary and fluid character of modern collective identity (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Within the "Tribe", individual identity is reconstructed according to the collective identity. The "Tribe" oppose themselves from the Other who have other characteristics than the group; this improves the collective identity (Maffesoli, 1996). Moreover, the concept of a "Tribe" suggests a greater emphasis on collective identity over individual identity. Therefore, the concept of a "Tribe" is in contrast with the rigid, class-based structures related to subcultures.

Bennett (1999) uses the related concept of lifestyles. Lifestyle meaning that certain commodities and patterns of consumptions are part of personal expression. Bennet (1999) criticized the overestimation of the boundedness and continuity of collective identities. For example, the way that music fits in the theory of Bennett about lifestyles (1999). Taste in music, comparable to other lifestyle preferences, is loose and enables free choices. Nevertheless, the statement that people like different music genres does not sustain the concept of "Tribe", which according to Bennet (1999) means that taste and identity is dependent on the impulses of individuals. For the goths, they differ from each other by style, and music preference and some people are staying longer in the subculture than others (Hodkinson, 2002). These differences in music preference relate to the notion of individual identity being more important than the collective identity what rules out goth being a "Tribe".

Bennet (1999) does not pay particular attention to the spatial dimension of subcultures, while it could be an essential addition to understanding identity and the subculture phenomenon. Another concept trying to replace the subculture in popular music studies is the concept "Scene". The concept of "scene" is developed in studies more influenced by cultural studies and cultural geography (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). A "Scene" is generally associated with a geographical location (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Sokolove et al. (2002) give the example of a French identity located in France. However, as identities are contested and to a greater extent, understood as multiple and constructed, it becomes harder to link identities to specific places. For instance, Jewish identities challenge the notion that cultures are fixed in place. The meaning of a place might change over

time and is no more stable than identity itself (Massey, 1994). Therefore, places are elements, but also products of identity.

However, there are tensions regarding the importance of place in comparison with the mobility of today's society. Identities can be linked to place, but are also viewed as placeless. The socio-historical discourse discussed by Bauman (2001) holds that rooted identities based on the place are replaced by hybrid and flexible forms of identity. During the pre-modern period, identities of individuals were based on place of birth and the family's social position. In the post-modern period, social and economic changes related to globalization changed the construction of identity (Easthope, 2009). The notion arose that identity could never be complete and that identities are fluid in post-modern society. In sum, there was a shift from priorities linked to local communities and shared goals to a focus on individualism and self-enlightenment (Easthope, 2009).

According to Hesmondhalgh (2005), the concept "Genre" could be a basis to understand the relationship between the musical and social aspects of the subculture phenomenon. "Genre" is a concept that has been used in media and cultural studies. Toynbee (2000) argues that music is used to express the collective interest of a group in society. However, music is distributed far beyond its place of origin because of the media and the internet. Therefore, "Genre" is not limited by any social or geographical place, so a "Genre" can hardly be described as a community (Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

Born (2000) agrees with Hesmondhalgh (2005) that music has the power of both constructing new identities and reflecting existing identities. However, it is essential to note that subcultural identities are not merely constructed by music (Born, 2000), which makes it difficult to replace the concept of subculture with "Genre". The concept "Genre" gives some elements that relate to goth—for example, the relation between music and the social and the lack of a geographical boundary. However, a "Genre" suggests the importance of collective identity over the individual identity, which is not necessarily the case in the goth community (Hodkinson, 2002).

Although Hodkinson (2002) argues the relevance of the concept subculture for the goth community, goths are incredibly varied, which makes describing one coherent subculture very difficult (Gracyk, 2016). Harriman and Bontje (2014) recognize that defining something as broad as the goth subculture is nearly impossible, as everyone has their perceptions and opinions. Therefore, using goth subculture as a way to describe the visitors of the WGT would not be appropriate. Dowd and Dowd (2003) argue that groups should be conceptualized as having subcultural characteristics, rather than being positioned as a subculture besides the "regular" group. This conceptualization is necessary because interaction occurs between the two groups from society. Accordingly, Van der Zanden (1995) argues that people can be part of the main culture while at the same time being part of a subcultural group. Moreover, subcultural groups participate more or less in the dominant culture. However, these groups are characterized by a

limited degree of social interaction with people outside their group and have some distance from the cultural centre of the dominant society (Dowd and Dowd, 2003).

For a group in society to remain its subcultural characteristics, effort and caution are required (Dowd and Dowd, 2003). A reason for this can be linked to the difference between a counterculture and a subculture. According to Dowd and Dowd (2003), countercultures challenge the accepted norms and values of the dominant lifestyle and therefore create an alternative lifestyle. A subculture is more passively accepting specific beliefs, values or norms that set them apart from the dominant culture (Kornblum, 1991). Because a subculture is not challenging the dominant society, it fails to provoke. Over time, the dominant culture draws the subculture back towards the centre and reduces the distinctive characteristics of the subculture. Therefore, the effort of the group members is needed to keep existing as a subculture. Time is destructive, and the dominant culture exercises a strong homogenizing force on all members of society (Dowd and Dowd, 2003).

Although goths could be explained as a group with subcultural characteristics, it does not explain who is visiting Leipzig during the WGT. Moreover, "Tribe", "Scene" and "Genre" are not entirely describing the goths who go to the WGT. Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) explain the importance of place for social groups with the concept of fandom. Sandvoss (2005) suggests that objects of fandom relate to who people are, what they like and whom individuals think they are—for example, being a fan of a goth band. People identify who they are by objects of fandom. The object and the community around this object make up part of someone's life.

Similarly, geographical locations associated with the object of fandom can create a powerful emotional experience. Beeton (2016) makes a connection with a traditional pilgrimage, going to a place with an emotional connection. Here, a physical location provides tangible, enduring stability to something that would otherwise potentially be disposable (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2019). In this research, the Wave-Gotik-Treffen is the pilgrimage that most goths make every year.

According to Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019), most studies on place and fandom focus on single experiences. Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) discuss the role and the importance of place concerning the long-term with the notion that visiting a location more often creates a different relationship with that place than that of a single visit. As explained by Tuan (1997), connection to place relates to recurrence to be able to understand the meaning of a place. Therefore, a single pilgrimage could be meaningful, but a repeated engagement with a place creates a different emotional experience (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2019). Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) introduce the concept of the "Fan Homecoming" to describe a return visit to a familiar fandom-related place. This place allows withdrawing from the mainstream and expressing identity while being at a comfortable and familiar location. Jenkins (1992) makes the connection with an alternative social

community which is built around interests, attachments and values that people in mainstream society do not share or understand, in this case, the goth fans. The "Fan Homecoming" gives people a particular place, one that an individual can travel to in order to feel free and included. For the goth fans, this might be the Wave-Gotik-Treffen in Leipzig. Because of the contested concept of subculture with all its flaws discussed above. This research uses the term goth fans, translated from Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) to refer to the people who are visiting WGT.

2.2 Control of the Tourist Industry

This research draws on tourist studies as well because Leipzig is a tourist destination for goths during the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT). Moreover, the control of the tourist industry is related to issues around commodification. The commodification of alternative cultures is a concern across groups with subcultural characteristics (Spracklen, 2009). These groups will eventually adopt the cultural practices of the dominant society (Dowd and Dowd, 2003). Moreover, individual identities can be influenced by the more powerful collective identity of the dominant culture (Dowd and Dowd, 2003). How much the individual identity is determined by the collective identity or the other way around is expressed by many researchers in tourist studies (Smith, 2012; Spracklen and Spracklen, 2013; Urry, 1990). According to Spracklen and Spracklen (2013), individuals are limited in making meaningful choices due to the control of the tourist industry and global capitalism.

The literature discusses three general assumptions related to commodification (Cohen, 1988; Greenwood, 1977; MacCannel, 1973). First of all, tourism is said to lead to commodification (Greenwood, 1977). Local culture generally serves as the first example of such commodification. In particular, local culture becomes a commodity, as they come to be performed or produced for touristic consumption. The critical issue is that commodification allegedly changes the meaning of cultural products and human relations, making them eventually meaningless. Second, commodification is said to destroy the authenticity of local products and human relations; instead, a surrogate, covert staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973) emerges. Cultural products are increasingly staged for tourists and decorated to look authentic. Third, staged authenticity is said to obstruct the tourist's genuine desire for an authentic experience. In a way, tourists are misled into thinking that they have an authentic experience when this is often not the case (Cohen, 1988). It follows from these assumptions that commodification, engendered by tourism, destroys the meaningful experience of the tourist.

Kaul (2007) argues that the issue of control is crucial in commodification. Commodification processes lead to the loss of individual control and creative freedom because of the desire to create products for tourists to consume (Kaul, 2007). Goth fans in the late eighties were vulnerable for loss of control and commodification. Goth was viewed as fashionable and shown in

the mainstream media because there was a market for people who wanted to be part of the goth movement (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018). The commodification led to bands singing to big labels, bands going on headlining tours and festivals and fans being able to buy clothes and merchandise. Places where goths could express their identity and find community became available, such as record and clothing shops and festivals. The Whitby Goth Weekend in the United Kingdom for example now attracts far more alternative subcultures and tourists with small to no interest in goth music or the goth culture than traditional goths (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018).

Therefore, commodification processes could influence the experience of goth fans going to WGT. Commodification should not be confused with commercialization. Commercialization is a more general process; here, a monetary exchange between production and consumption of something is introduced or intensified. The significant distinction between the two processes is control. For example, when musicians are free to control their performances (Kaul, 2007). Performance can become commercialized without becoming commodified when the control remains in the hands of the actors. This distinction between commercialization and commodification is essential to understand the importance of place and in what way the tourist industry has taken over the experience at the WGT. Are Leipzig and the WGT still crucial as places for the goth fans or is the experience based on the commercial and social aspects of the festival?

Moreover, according to Kaul (2007), commodification and de-commodification do not have an apparent boundary. The multiple meanings of the different actors involved should be taken into account as well. In this research, the actors are various subgenres between goth fans going to WGT. Moreover, the musical, social and commercial aspect of the festival is considered. Spracklen and Spracklen (2013) discuss the commercial aspect of commodification which may link to the experiences of the goth fans at the WGT. However, the loss of control associated with commodification, as explained by Kaul (2007), is missing. Control is essential to understand commodification processes concerning goth fans. Spracklen and Spracklen (2013) also explain the importance of the historical narrative for identity creation. For this research, the social narrative is taken into account more broadly because subcultural groups are based on similar beliefs, values, behaviour, symbols and activities, which are expressed by style and music (Gracyk, 2016).

Looking more at place, Kneafsey (2001) argues that the commodification of place involves the upgrading of place by using cultural identities within the process of production. There is a link between product and place where projects and activities associated with a place are turned into products. In this way, the identity of a place is used to add value to these products. Therefore, in the process of commodification, identities are not constructed to represent a place, but for selling

products. The tourist industry controls the place identity. When a place is commodified, profits often go to non-local companies, and mass tourism is central (Kaul, 2007).

However, how does control of a place or place identity work? First of all, the cultural landscape is an important aspect connected to the control of places. The cultural landscape contributes to the political and social orders of a place. Moreover, the cultural landscape creates narratives of group identity (Whelan, 2016). Naming streets, public statuary, architecture and urban design are crucial in constructing identity narratives. Moreover, the decision regarding these characteristics of places relates to those in control. As explained by Whelan (2016), the city form is planned and manipulated in order to represent power and ideology. The cultural landscape represents the discourses of power. However, landscapes do not only present those in power or the elite ideologies. A cultural landscape consists of multiple layers of power and overlaps with issues of race, gender, class and local identity politics. Whelan (2016) concludes that the landscape of a place shows competing discourses and identities between different social and political groups.

These various identity narratives of various social groups are as important for the control of place than the cultural landscape itself. Both identity narratives and the cultural landscape are intertwined when discussing the control of place and place identity. According to Simon (2016), identity is not objective but multi-dimensional and complex. The same as with groups with subcultural characteristics, identity is a dynamic concept constructed by people. Identity is no longer defined as a fixed set of characteristics specific to a particular group. Anderson (1983) defines identity as a social construction, a way to relate to other people and other groups. Moreover, various actors might interpret representations of identity differently. Identity is also important within the context of politics in which certain groups or actors make claims to achieve their goals (Van Dam, 2016). The dominant identity is often the group who decides on aspects of the cultural landscape and whose identity narratives are told to the outside world (Van der Aa, 2016). For example, selected heritage only shows the identity that fits the community that selected it (Van der Aa, 2016).

Therefore, the commodification of a place is visible when a group is not able to present their characteristics or identity at a place. These groups are explained by Ashworth and Graham (2016) as outsiders who may feel displaced by cultural, social or physical exclusion. Moreover, these outsiders may attempt to create places for themselves which stand outside official representations and relocate somewhere with a sense of place that is more fitted to their lifestyle (Ashworth and Graham, 2016). In a way, goth fans may feel like outsiders in some places while feeling insiders and can express their goth identity during the Wave-Gotik-Treffen in Leipzig. This would not necessarily mean commodification of the goth festival.

2.3 Meaningful Experiences

For goth fans, style is a distinctive characteristic to recognize a goth. Style is also a bearer of meaning for goths (Gracyk, 2016). According to Gracyk (2016), an authentic goth recognizes the standards and changes happening around the goth style. According to the respondents of Spracklen and Spracklen (2013), goths can distinguish between goths and tourists performing goth identities at goth events. These tourists do not have the right hair or make-up or the right combination of jewellery or piercings and tattoos, for example. However, some goths do dress up in extreme outfits (Newman, 2018), while others prefer to express themselves through art and poetry. Moreover, music is one of the cultural practices that bring goths together and is connected to authenticity. The music can evoke emotions and stimulate collective identity in the lives of goths. Music is an essential part of the collective experience (Newman, 2018). For music, places become known as authentic locations due to the musical experiences that are connected to specific places (Connell and Gibson, 2005). Therefore, people start to know places through music.

Besides the discussion around commodification, goth fans are also concerned with authenticity. Authenticity is often linked to commodification in tourist studies. However, Xie (2003) argues that commodification and authenticity are not necessarily two sides of the same coin, although they are often discussed together. Cohen (1988) suggests that authenticity is a socially constructed concept. Spracklen (2009) raises the issue of how authenticity can be understood when everything is constructed in one way or the other. An extreme post-modern perspective argues that any notion of authenticity must be abandoned altogether because there is not, nor was there ever, any "absolute boundary between the real and the fake" (Wang 2000). Kaul (2007) argues that just because an objective definition of authenticity cannot be used, does not mean that all meaning is lost or that every assessment is purely subjective and therefore, identical. At the level of individual perceptions, meaningful experiences are authentic because they are free from the narratives that would contest them. The tourist industry or global capitalism does not yet control the experiences. Another way of characterizing this would be to say that they were not concerned as much with issues of objective authenticity but instead wanted to have an existentially authentic experience (Kaul, 2007).

MacCannell (1973) explains authenticity as something real or essential in a place or experience. Authenticity is the opposite of control by the tourist industry and encourages cultural diversity. Trilling (1972) explains authenticity with the notion of museum experts determining whether an object is what it appears to be or claimed to be, and therefore is worth the admiration that it is given. Also, the absence of commodification is a crucial consideration in judgements of authenticity. In order to be accepted as authentic, the product should not be manufactured specifically for the market (Cohen, 1988). Spracklen (2011) argues that authenticity is linked to the search for belonging and meaning in people's lives. Attending something, travelling

somewhere, being a fan of something, is made more meaningful for the individual if it is perceived by them to be more authentic. The search for meaning is a search for authenticity.

As explained, the concept of authenticity is socially constructed (Cohen, 1998). Different social groups have a differing conceptualization of what authenticity is and perceive an authentic experience in different ways. However, an experience or tourist attraction is influenced by the ones in control (Gibson and Connell, 2007). This control creates tensions at every tourist site between the authentic and the commercial where the initial meaning of a site is taken over by the desire to ensure profitability and success (Gibson and Connell, 2007). Both goth fans and tourists are visiting Leipzig during the WGT. Here, possible tension may be created due to the various interpretations of authentic experiences by the goths and the tourists visiting WGT. In contrast, goths visit WGT for music and identity expression (Hodkinson, 2002). At the same time, tourists go to gaze, for example, the goths and the sites. This research focusses on these tensions influencing the experience at the WGT by goth fans.

2.4 Conceptual Model

In figure 1, the conceptual model to be able to answer the research question is given. The conceptual model shows various tensions which influence the experience of goth fans at the WGT. First of all, goth identity could both be viewed as individual or collective. There is a discussion in the literature about individual identity influencing collective identity or the other way around.

Secondly, when looking at tourism, both authenticity and commodification come into play which influences the experience at the WGT. There are statements made in the literature that individuals are limited in making meaningful choices due to the control of the tourist industry and global capitalism—this issue of control links to commodification (Kaul, 2007). Commodification processes lead to the loss of individual control and creative freedom because of the desire to create products for tourists to consume (Kaul, 2007). On the other side of the loss of control by commodification, there is the authentic experience as perceived by individuals. At the level of individual perceptions, meaningful experiences are authentic because they are free from the narratives that would contest them (Kaul, 2007).

Lastly, place is discussed in the literature, which might become more or less important for the goth identity because various other processes influence the WGT experience. Tensions regarding place are linked to the concept of Fan Homecoming versus Mobility. The concept of Fan Homecoming explains the importance of place for social groups. These groups have an emotional connection to this place which increases when people are visiting this place more often (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2019). On the other hand, there is the idea of complete mobility, where rooted identities based on place are replaced by hybrid and flexible forms of identity (Bauman, 2001).

The idea of place becoming less important for individual and collective identities is linked to globalization (Easthope, 2009)

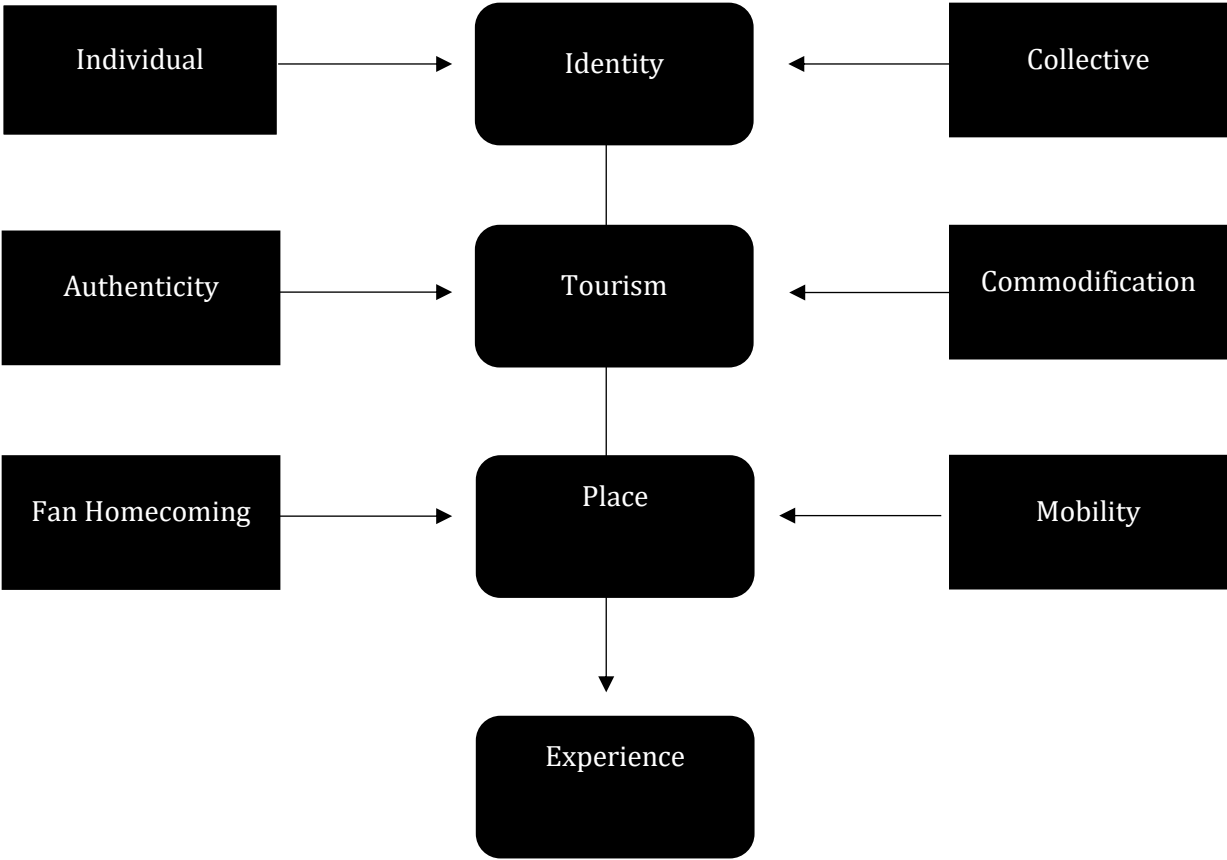


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

To be able to answer the research question, a qualitative research method of a case study is used. The qualitative approach is chosen because it is a tool to understand people's individual experiences in detail (Hennink et al. 2010). Moreover, there is the opportunity to get different insights which cannot be found in the literature yet. Although quantitative research is an useful research method, a qualitative research method is a better fit to answer the research question. Qualitative research allows going in-depth, which is difficult to gain from quantitative research by a survey, for example. With qualitative research, participants can openly disclose their experiences, thought and feeling without constraints. Qualitative research offers a dynamic approach to the research, where there is space to ask follow up questions on answers given by the participants. Qualitative research is critical in understanding the "why" behind answers of the participants (Hennink et al. 2010).

In this research, the focus is to understand how goth fans experience the WGT within a world with growing control of the tourist industry and pressure of the mainstream. The aim is not to transfer the experiences of the participants into a general theory about the importance of place and goth identities, but to offer a nuanced understanding of their situated experiences at the WGT. Here, qualitative research is appropriate because experiences, opinions and stories can vary between the participants, which is harder to capture with a quantitative research method. Moreover, little research is done on goth festivals and goth identity. Therefore, qualitative research could help capture topics and trends that are not yet established in the literature and which are difficult to catch in closed survey questions.

As explained, a case study is used to answer the research question. The case study approach is useful to employ for obtaining an in-depth understanding of an issue, event or phenomenon in its real-life context. (Crow et al. 2010). According to Yin (1994), a case study is useful when trying to answers how or why questions about an event or phenomenon which the researcher has little or no control over. In this research, the experience at the WGT influenced by various processes related to identities, place and tourism. A case study can help to understand and explain causal links and pathways related to an event or phenomenon.

This is different from a quantitative design, which often seeks to test a specific hypothesis. Moreover, the broad and complex discussion regarding subcultures, tourism and place can be narrowed down into a manageable research question with the use of a case study (Heale and Twycross, 2018).

3.1 Case Study

Leipzig is located around 160 kilometres from southwest Berlin and constitutes of 600.000 inhabitants as of 2019 (Stadt Leipzig, 2019). Leipzig is an important urban centre in East Germany. The Second World War and the period of the German Democratic Republic are directly visible in the city by the monuments and the historical buildings. The fall of communism is directly related to demonstrations held at the St. Nicholas Church in Leipzig, which is now a big tourist attraction. Other historical buildings, such as the museums, the Battle of the Nations monument, the New City Hall, the Germany National Library and much more attract many tourists to Leipzig (Leipzig Region, 2020). Leipzig is also an important centre for music, both classical and modern dark alternative music. Oper Leipzig is one of the famous opera houses in Germany. Many famous classical composers, such as Mendelssohn and Bach lived and worked in Leipzig.

The case study for this research is the Goth Festival in Leipzig, called Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT). The WGT is not only a music festival. The program of WGT is varied and considered as unique, more than 100 bands and artists are performing during the annual goth festival (Maier, 2020). Aside from the main festival area in the south of Leipzig, there are indoor performances at various locations all over the city, for instance in clubs, churches and the opera house. In addition to the music, there are two medieval markets, art exhibitions, readings, a Victorian Picnic and the opportunity to go shopping for dark clothing and accessories at the Black Market (Maier, 2020). The year 2000 had over 25.000 visitors, whereas 2019 had 18.000 visitors in Leipzig (Hoffert-Karas, 2019).

For this research, the case study of the WGT is used to examine the social, musical and commercial aspects of the festival. Furthermore, to understand commodification processes and the importance of place for the goth identity and how this is connected to the experience at the WGT.

3.2 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview style is chosen as the data collection method for this qualitative research. With semi-structured interviews, the participants are given space and freedom to highlight and explore issues that are important to them. There is an opportunity for the participants to determine essential themes. Moreover, participants are asked if they want to add something themselves. The opportunity for participants to add their topics improves the validity of the information given by the participants (Punch, 2013).

The interview guide (Appendix B) consists of opening, main and closing questions to make the participants feel comfortable during the conversations. First of all, the meaning of goth for the participants is discovered. After that, the WGT is discussed to understand the importance of the WGT for the participants. Thenceforth, the tensions between identity, tourism and place are examined, which is important to be able to answer the research question. Lastly, COVID-19 is

brought into the conversation to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 measures. All themes are based on the literature and are divided into questions understandable for the participants. Due to COVID-19, there was no possibility to do observations during WGT, because the government cancelled the festival of 2020. Therefore, the necessary information was received from previous years with the use of online articles, the website of the festival and their Facebook page. COVID-19 also led to the decision to shift from face-to-face in-depth interviews during the WGT to in-depth interviews with the use of Skype and telephone. The data collection method consists of semi-structured interviews using Skype or telephone, depending on the preference of the participants.

Web-based technologies such as Skype and FaceTime are commonly known as alternatives for face-to-face interviews during qualitative research (Hooley et al. 2012). According to Janghorban et al. (2014), Skype offers researchers an acceptable interview method to collect qualitative data, especially when participants are geographically distant from the researcher (Mirick and Wladkowski, 2019). Skype gives some benefits for doing qualitative research, many of which are similar to telephone interviews (Holt, 2010). For example, the use of Skype can overcome geographic barriers (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014), mobility issues and the challenges around having busy schedules (Padgett, 2017). These benefits are applicable for this research because it is not possible to meet participants face-to-face or to visit the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) due to COVID-19.

3.2.1 Participant Recruitment

As explained, this research focusses on commodification processes, identity construction of goth fans and the importance of place during the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) experience in Leipzig. Therefore, participants of this research needed to perceive themselves as a goth fan. Therefore, it is possible to be goth without, for example, presenting as a goth at work and only present the goth identity during the weekend. As stated by Straw (1991), members of a group with subcultural characteristics can have shifting behavioural patterns. For example, people become more or less committed to the social group over the years but still perceive themselves as part of that group. In sum, participants of this research need to perceive themselves as goth, regardless of their commitment. Secondly, the participant has visited the Wave-Gotik-Treffen at least one time before. This criterium is essential because WGT has been cancelled for 2020 due to COVID-19.

Social media is a valuable tool to be able to recruit participants with the appropriate criteria for this research; mainly, Facebook is used. Becoming a member of multiple Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) Facebook groups made it possible to contact people who have visited the event. Facebook is used as the primary tool to get participants because one Facebook group already consists of more than 30 thousand members from all over the world. People were asked through Facebook if they

wanted to participate by interviewing about their WGT experiences. Contacting online groups or networks and asking them for participation is anticipated by interaction with the group and approval of the gatekeepers (Dunn,2016). Therefore, the owners of the Facebook groups were contacted beforehand to get informed consent.

As explained above, participants in this research need to meet two requirements. Therefore, criterion sampling is used to recruit participants for this research. This method implies that all participants meet specific criteria and that the recruitment of participants is based on those criteria (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). Besides the two criteria, this research is trying to gather various goth fans and to gather participants who vary between age, gender and nationality. This relates to the statement made in the literature that commitment may vary between age (Straw, 1991). Furthermore, Hodkinson (2002) state that goths have various subgenres.

Because of limited time and resources, linked to COVID-19, snowball sampling is adopted as well. More potential participants can be recruited by asking participants if they know others who might be interested in participating in this research (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016).

3.2.2 Reflection on Data Collection

Some limitations and challenges are identified for online interviewing (Mirick and Wladkowski, 2019). First of all, there is the possibility to create a sampling bias by excluding people without access to the required technology (Cook, 2012). However, this statement is less valid now the use of technology is more common (Oates, 2015), but it can still be a challenge when participants are from a group that has less access to the internet. This research assumes that goths going to WGT have good internet access because the internet is necessary to buy the festival tickets, book a hotel or the camping and to be able to plan the trip to Leipzig.

Moreover, nonverbal cues or situational responses, such as gestures and expression could be missed during online interviews (Cater, 2011; Seitz, 2016). When using the web camera, the interaction is comparable to a face-to-face interview with the presence of nonverbal and social cues (Mirick and Wladkowski, 2019). However, the web camera often shows only a small part of the body, which created obstacles in observing all of the participant's body language (Cater, 2011). During telephone interviews, the researcher is not able to access nonverbal cues. Because of this, rapport might be more challenging to achieve when doing telephone interviews (Mirick and Wladkowski, 2019). Each interview method of qualitative research has its benefits and limitations (Dunn, 2017). However, Skype is recognized to be the most efficient way to gather information for this research.

Unfortunately, some participants only wanted to participate in the use of Online Chat. Here, the absence of paralinguistic clues could be problematic. It is challenging to recognize distress or discomfort or to communicate empathy (Dunn, 2017). There is also the possibility of substantial

gaps between questions sent and the response received, which could be misinterpreted. Nevertheless, the participants interviewed for this research project made a great effort to explain their experiences and opinions in detail. The chat conversations were a little bit smaller than the Skype sessions but still useful for the analysis. The chats allowed to ask follow-up questions which improved the quality of the conversation. The chats often took around one or two days, with some spaces in between. Therefore, eight Online Chats are considered valuable and add additional information to the other interviews.

Besides the one-on-one interviews and the chats, two interviews are based on paired interviewing, interviewing with two persons at the same time (Houssart and Evens, 2011). There are many advantages to use paired interviewing as a data collection method (Wilson et al. 2016). For this research, for example, participants could provide more complete data as each participant fills in the other participants' memory lapses and gaps during the conversation (Houssart and Evens, 2011).

On the other hand, an essential disadvantage of paired interviewing related to this research is the danger of one person dominating by talking the whole time or not allowing the other participant to express themselves (Houssart and Evens, 2011; Morris, 2001). This disadvantage is avoided by asking the other participant to share their opinion as well. Moreover, there is the issue of participants parroting each other, repeating each other's answers. Alternatively, participants might not be genuine, because they feel as they need to tell the same story, although they experienced the situation differently (Houssart and Evens, 2011). Therefore, the researcher needs to note who said what and when, who interrupted who, and who changed the direction of the conversation (Morris, 2001).

3.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is an appropriate research method (Nowell et al. 2017). It is a method to identify, analyse, organise and describe which themes are found during the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this research, thematic analysis is used to interpret the information given by the participants. Thematic analysis will identify common themes, ideas and patterns of meaning related to the conceptual model. Thematic analysis is useful in this research because the aim is to interpret people's opinions, knowledge, experiences and values and create patterns and themes for answering the research questions. However, thematic analysis involves the danger of missing nuances in the information given by the respondents because the researcher decides on the themes that are being discussed (Nowell et al. 2017). Thematic analysis is, in a way, subjective and relies on the researcher's judgement. Therefore, the researcher needs to make clear why specific themes are important for this research and which are not. This careful reflection is critical and will be done with the use of inductive and deductive coding.

This research consists of nineteen participants in total—ten out of the nineteen participants interviewed with the use of Skype. One participant interviewed with the use of a phone call. All interviews took between thirty and eighty minutes, with an average of 57 minutes. The other eight participant conversations were based on chats. These chats were also considered valuable because the participants took much afford to explain their arguments with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

The personal characteristics of the participants are viewed in table 1. The names of the participants are changed, which was the preference of the participants.

Name	Age	Gender	Country	Goth Style	Method	Occupation
Léa	43	Female	France	Romantic/Vampire	Chat	Accessory Maker
Daniel	48	Male	Israel	Metalhead	Chat	Personal Trainer
Alex	27	Male	Sweden	Post-Punk	Chat	Musician
Emma	30	Female	Switzerland	Victorian	Chat	Hairdresser
Sophia	34	Female	Greece	Gothic Rock	Chat	Dance Teacher
Noah	29	Male	Switzerland	Electro/Fetish	Skype	Cook/ Musician
Liam	42	Male	Canada	Electro	Skype	IT Expert
Mark	42	Male	Vietnam/ Switzerland	Industrial	Skype	Software Engineer
Inge	32	Female	Germany	Victorian	Phone Call	Church Employee
Sander	34	Male	Germany	Goth Punk	Chat	High School Teacher
Kevin	31	Male	The Netherlands	Death Rock/Industrial	Chat	Tattoo Artist
Caspar	29	Male	Germany	Post-Punk/Industrial	Chat	Print Shop
Chloe	42	Female	Canada	Metal/Industrial	Skype	University Professor
Ilse	32	Female	Germany	Japanese Goth	Skype	Experience Designer
Astrid	25	Female	Norway	Metal/Victorian	Skype	Unemployed

Tom	45	Male	United Kingdom	Metal/Gothic Rock	Skype	Astronomer
Lieke& Sara	26& 23	Female& Female	The Netherlands	Industrial	Skype	Micro Biologist/ Musician
Chris	33	Male	Switzerland	Industrial/Electro	Skype	Musician
Mia& Lucas	32& 34	Female& Male	Canada	Folk Rock	Skype	Artist/ Software Engineer

Table 1: Personal Characteristics Participants

3.3.1 Coding Scheme

Table 1 presents the coding scheme, which is used to analyse the interview transcripts. The codes have labels based on the literature and the interview guide, to be able to focus on the essential parts of the interviews and to do the thematic analysis. However, two codes are established during the first round of coding the interview transcripts. These newly developed codes are "Carnival" and "Dominant Culture". These two themes are discussed multiple times by the various participants without being brought up by the interviewer. Therefore, the decision is made to add two additional codes for the thematic analysis.

Codes	Label	Codes	Label
Goth Subculture	Explanation Meaning Own Story Music	Social Aspect	New people Locals Socializing
Identity	Internet Expression Weekend Goths	Commodification	Changes WGT Problems WGT Media Commercial Loss of Control
WGT	Explanation Motivations Preparation	Authenticity	Subculture Experiences Products People
Activities	Besides WGT Favourites WGT Not Attending	COVID-19	Feelings Impacts
Carnival	Visitors Photographers	Dominant Culture	Trends Social Media Power

Table 2: Coding Scheme for Interview Analysis

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Every research design requires ethical considerations (Dowling, 2016). To be able to start the interviews, participants need to permit being involved in the research. The participants have the right to know what it is they are consenting to (Dowling, 2016). Therefore, the interviews will start with informed consent (See Appendix A), which will clarify the topic of the research, the issues explored and the expectations of the researcher. The informed consent will also explain that the participant will stay anonymous and that the participant can withdraw at any time.

The rise of the internet has changed qualitative research, creating new ways of collecting qualitative data such as online surveys, and new ways of recruiting participants. New methods mean new challenges to research ethics, especially to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality (Dowling, 2016). Participants contacted by social media give these challenges. Therefore, when respondents are contacted through social media, it is immediately explained how the researcher found the participant and what the aim of the contact is. Information about the participants found online is only used to select the participants for this research to be able to protect the privacy of the participants. Informed consent is critical for starting the research because the internet can already give away much information about participants without their consent.

Moreover, participants are personally involved in the research. It is essential to take into account the preferences regarding the anonymity of the participants (Dowling, 2016). Therefore, participants are asked if the information gathered in the interviews can be used for the research. Furthermore, the participants were asked if their real first name could be used in the research or if they prefer a pseudonym. All names have been changed into pseudonyms. The participants were not concerned with choosing their pseudonyms.

Lastly, it could be possible to raise issues that may be upsetting or evoke emotions during the interviews. In this research, talking about the past and getting in contact with the goth lifestyle were sometimes sensitive issues. For instance, participants were telling stories about being bullied or having personal problems. This is not necessarily a danger or concern regarding this research. However, it is appropriate to take into account these personal stories and to handle them correctly during the interviews.

3.5 Insider or Outsider Debate

Although the researcher is not a goth fan, this research is based on insider information of visitors going to the WGT who consider themselves as goth. Therefore, this research consists of first-hand experiences by goth fans visiting WGT. Moreover, the knowledge generated is based on a literature review and information gathered out of the stories, opinions and perceptions of the participants.

Qualitative research leads to new insights. However, there is also the risk of wrong interpretation (Punch,2013), meaning that interpretations are lacking well-supported arguments. According to the Insider or Outsider debate, the ability to interpret the information given by participants may depend on the characteristics of the researcher (Dowling, 2016). Here, an insider could interpret information differently than an outsider. One position in the debate is that information gathered and interpretations made are more valid when being an insider. This statement relates to participants being more open to someone who has similar characteristics and the researcher being able to interpret the information as an insider, because of understanding of the situation or phenomenon. However, being an outsider could also be beneficial for the research. Participants make more of an effort to clearly express situations, opinions and feelings to the researcher (Dowling, 2016). Finally, the notion can be made that a researcher is not just merely an insider or an outsider.

In this research, the researcher is considered to be an outsider, being substantially different from the participants. First of all, the researcher is not a goth fan and does not have any background related to goth. Moreover, the research is done without visiting the WGT. The interests related to music and lifestyle are different between the researcher and the participants. On the other hand, although being somewhat different, goth fans also relate to the researcher in some aspects, for example, regarding education. Goth fans also went to school or college. Also related to work, goths also have day time jobs and are not always dressed in goth style. Moreover, the situation around COVID-19 is understandable for everyone and affects everyone today. These differences and similarities of both the researcher and participants are necessary to understand answers given by the respondents and to interpret the answers correctly. This research is considered valuable with the use of the Insider or Outsider debate.

4. Analysis

4.1 Goth Fans: Expressing the Goth Identity

Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) explained that the goth subculture is a contested concept with multiple meanings given to what goth is. As shown in table 1, goths consider themselves as part of various subcategories. The respondents of this research were asked to explain in which subcategory they feel part of. The interests of the respondents put them in one or more of these subcategories, which makes someone a goth fan. The meaning of goth being different between individuals is also confirmed during the interviews by, for example, Sander:

Ask a hundred people who associate themselves with goth, get a hundred different answers.
(Sander, 34, German)

Although goth has multiple meanings for goth fans, the respondents state that people from outside the goth community make generalisations regarding goth. The respondents agree that there is a substantial difference between what people think what goth is and what it means. Noah's quote shows how he thinks that other people feel about goth:

People from outside the goth subculture see goth as a dark scene with some dark sounds and melodies. But the people in the goth subculture might be black, but are coloured from the inside
(Noah, 29, Swiss).

This is in line with Alex, who states:

Goth is not only a scene, but it is also a lifestyle (Alex, 27, Swedish)

Although goth is viewed as not only a scene, which is elaborated in the quote of Alex, music is mentioned as being the essential aspect of being a goth fan. When someone listens to goth music but is not dressed in black, this person is still considered as a goth. During the interviews, this was confirmed by most of the respondents. For example, Liam emphasises the importance of music for goth fans:

In order to be part of the scene, it is like, I would think that you would like the music and also do the aesthetic in some extent. I mean, at the same time though, there are like people that go to the concerts that are not dressed up and get accepted as part of the scene. But if you were just had the look but you didn't like the music, I think that is usually when people think that

person is a poser. I really do think that music is the heart of it in that specific sense. (Liam, 42, Canadian)

Furthermore, besides the music, there are other aspects linked to being goth (Hodkinson, 2002). These other aspects become clear during the interviews where respondents mention architecture, literature and fashion as aspects of being goth. Relating to the quote of Liam, enjoying other forms of art besides music is familiar about goth, but it is not what makes someone a goth. Goths are defined by the music they listen to. However, in the example of Mark, music could also divide the goth fans because there are many subgenres:

A lot of goth people would say that it is the music, but it is the fascination of dark things that basically clues together all these different styles. It is like, yeah, maybe the music is also what divides us apart. The obscure and the dark things are what brings everyone together and clues everyone together. (Mark, 42, Swiss)

Interestingly, it seems that the quotes of Liam and Mark suggest some tension regarding goth identity being based on the music style or the dark aesthetics of goth. Here, the discussion about the concept subculture and individual versus collective identity shown in the literature is visible. The information gathered through the respondents suggests that subculture might not be an excellent way to describe the goth community. As discussed in the literature, there is an overestimation of the coherence and stability of social groups (Straw, 1991). Individuals in subcultural groups differ in terms of commitment, continuity and distinctiveness (Hodkinson, 2002). During the interviews, this is confirmed by Emma, who explained that commitment to one style, the gothic style, became less important over the years:

As a teenager I thought everything that I couldn't associate with the goth scene was utterly boring and dull. As I grew older I realised that there is so many different shades of interesting and beautiful. I learned that it was more important to be authentic than to be true to one style. In clothes, music or lifestyle. (Emma, 30, Swiss)

In the example of Emma, age is an essential factor that changed the attitude of Emma being goth and what it means to be goth. Although the literature is committed to the idea that social groups are not coherent and stable due to the individuals involved, the social group could also change collectively. While Hodkinson (2002) and Straw (1991) do not explore this idea further, the interviews showed that the goth community has changed. For example, Chloe explains that the

changes in the community created a decrease in the importance to express her subcultural identity:

It used to be really important, but I think, I would say subcultural identity overall becoming a lot less important to me. Because I think part of it is just because there has been a shift in values over the last probably decade or so. (Chloe, 42, Canadian)

To continue about subcultural identity, the CCCS links the class to understand the collective identity of a subculture (Malbon, 1999). Bennet (1999) questioned about subcultures being class-based and argues that subcultures are created to escape class-based identities and construct new forms of identity. Looking at table 1, the occupations of all respondents are shown. These occupations seem to suggest that indeed class is not visible in today's society between the goth fans interviewed. Moreover, statements made by Bennet (1999) about constructing identity relate to those made by the respondents:

Being part of the goth community makes me feel safe and accepting, somewhere you can truly express yourself. (Léa, 43, French).

As is evident from what Léa says, being goth allows her to express herself beyond today's society, where she does not feel safe and accepting. According to Bennet (1999), individual identity is essential, suggesting that taste and identity are dependent on the impulses of individuals. Looking at the various subcategories related to the interest that the respondents put themselves in, individual identity indeed seems essential.

In contrast, the concept of Genre suggests a collective identity based on music (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Moreover, the concept of Tribe proposes a greater emphasis on collective identity with the social group opposing themselves from Others who have other characteristics (Maffesoli, 1996), which none of the respondents directly related too. Sara makes clear that it is possible to be around goths without being goth. However, as already shown with Léa, all respondents recognise the importance of being able to express their identity as goths.

It is nice that someone from outside the goth scene shows interest in you, when you are open-minded, nobody will have an issue. You don't even have to wear black haha. You are not always able to see someone's music taste based on appearance. (Sara, 23, Dutch).

4.2 Coming Home

As shown in the previous section, multiple meanings are given to what goth is. Moreover, the goth identity can be based on both individual and collective aspects such as music, fashion and lifestyle. However, how important is place for goth fans to be able to come together to express the goth identity?

Multiple respondents explain that the goth community is not highly represented in their hometowns. As elaborated well by Noah, the lack of representations is connected to small living places:

Switzerland is really small. And I live in a small town and you see not so much people wearing clothes like black or goth style. I think the most live in Zurich, there are also the most parties. And in small places, you do not see them that much. (Noah, 29, Swiss)

More respondents explain that there are few or no events related to goth in their hometown, which makes WGT as a place to come together even more important. Because there is always the pressure of the dominant culture reducing the distinctive characteristics of the subculture (Dowd and Dowd, 2003), which becomes easier when goths do not have a place to express themselves. On the other hand, for respondents who live in Germany, goth is well represented in the bigger cities. For example, Ilse has multiple neighbours who are goth as well:

Yeah, I live in a shared flat and most of my flat mates wear black or like aspects of the goth scene. (Ilse, 32, German)

Goth being well represented in Germany relate to the concept of "Scene" by Hesmondhalgh (2005). A "Scene" is generally associated with a geographical location (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Interestingly, respondents who live in places where goth is not highly represented, refer to Germany and Switzerland as places of the goth scene. During the interviews, this was confirmed by for example, Astrid who states that Germany has a goth scene unlike Norway:

I did not really met a lot of people like me before, because goth in Norway is just a few people. I found out that there is a goth scene in Germany. And I found out that the WGT is where this scene comes together. That's when I knew I needed to go. (Astrid, 25, Norwegian)

Moreover, as Tom recounts, distances influence the opportunity for goths to go to goth events:

Yemen is a big university city. There are a few goth nights and some concerts. When I was in Canada, you felt really remote because it is on an island. It is a few hours to get to other cities. In Germany, everything is a lot closer. I am a hour away from Leipzig. I guess that is the main difference if you look at the goth nights. (Tom, 45, English)

Regardless of the distance mentioned by Tom, various goths from all over the world visit Leipzig during the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) (Hodkinson, 2002). The respondents understand that there is a goth scene in Germany which comes together at the WGT every year. Here, tensions around the importance of place are again visible. On the one hand, identities are hybrid and flexible and are not linked to any specific locations (Bauman, 2001) While on the other hand, the concept of "Scene" comes back by the respondents referring to the WGT as an import place for goths.

The main reasons for visiting WGT and Leipzig are based on the social, commercial and musical aspects of the goth festival. Mia clearly summarizes these aspects:

The WGT is important for connecting with old friends, to see the latest fashion, socialize, and enjoy the music. (Mia, 32, Canadian)

Although these aspects are mentioned multiple times by the respondents, there has been a change in importance from musical to social aspects. Born (2000) argues that music can reflect and construct identities, but subcultural identities are not merely constructed by music. Respondents explain that they are half of the time engaged in conversations. Moreover, Casper explains, when visiting WGT for the first time, he was trying to see as much acts and artists as possible. However, after a few times visiting WGT, it was more about meeting friends:

I even had a day without seeing any bands, I was just hanging out with some friends (Casper, 29, German)

For me it is the social aspect and the fashion most. The bands are a cool extra. I usually see 3 to 4 concerts out of over 120. (Emma, 30, Swiss)

Emma creates the same suggestions with here statement that music is not the main reason for goths to visit the WGT. It is about coming together to share the same experience. Goths can hang-out with like-minded people with shared interests and lifestyles at the WGT. Therefore, WGT is essential to meet people who have similar interests, norms and values who respondents are not

able to interact with during daily life. As emphasized by Sophia, goths can express their identity at the WGT. WGT is viewed as a place without judgement, a gathering of goth fans:

It is the only time goths are actually the majority of the people and that is a unique feeling. It is like the bats have occupied the whole city! And many people get to meet only then, once a year at WGT, so it also keeps relationships. And for every goth it is a dream to attend at least once, experience how it is to not be the odd and weird one, but to be part of this huge group (Sophia, 34, Greek).

The quote of Sophia is suggesting a feeling of belonging for goth fans revisiting WGT. Revisiting a place for the reasons discussed above can also be linked to the concept of Fan Homecoming by Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019). All respondents have visited the WGT at least once; some went multiple times while others are planning on going again. Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) introduce the concept of the "Fan Homecoming" to describe a return visit to a familiar fandom-related place. The literature refers to a traditional pilgrimage to explain this phenomenon. Here, the meaning of place could increase with recurrent visits. Interestingly, Chris makes the same reference:

I would describe WGT as a pilgrimage that we all have to go on. (Chris, 33, Swiss)

According to Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019), place is important for social groups when this place is connected to the objects of fandom. The place associated with the object of fandom can create a powerful emotional experience. The idea of Fan Homecoming is not entirely related to objects of fandom when looking at the WGT. Although being a fan of goth music is an important reason for visiting the festival, the social aspects and the opportunity to express are the main reasons for the respondents to revisit WGT. Although not elaborated further by Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019), looking at the example of Inge, coming home to the goth family seems more important for goth fans to decide on going to WGT. The emotional bond created with a place, as explained by Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) seems to connect to meeting people with the same interests and lifestyle for goth fans. These people with the same interests and lifestyle are referred to as being part of the goth family. Therefore, coming home to WGT is coming home to the goth fans that are together every year at WGT:

The WGT is not like other music festivals, It feels like coming home every year. The WGT for me is a big family meeting. I have met my friends from all out Germany. It is more than a festival were you listen to music. It is important to meet people. (Inge, 32, German)

Interestingly, the respondents refer to coming home to WGT rather than coming home to Leipzig as the quote of Inge Showed. This finding links to the concept of Fan Homecoming described by Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019). The goth fans are coming to the goth festival to express their interests and identity. As explained by Hodkinson (2002), attending goth events is important for goths to interact and to develop friendships. Because of these opportunities during goth events, a strong sense of identity, community and belonging is created. Here, the goth event, in this case, WGT, is viewed as an important place for the goth community. Place is linked to the event and not to the geographical location precisely. The concept of "Scene" is generally associated with a geographical location (Hersmondhalgh, 2005) However, the respondents do not necessarily link Leipzig to the goth scene, they refer to the WGT as the place for goths. Alex emphasis WGT as an important place for goths and Noah even refers to WGT as the hometown of the goth subculture:

WGT is a very important place for the community, it is established and essential. (Alex, 27, Swedish)

WGT is like the home town of the scene I would say. And it is happening in the whole city, you have like over twenty locations where you can go. (Noah, 29, Swiss)

Looking at the quotes of both Alex and Noah, it seems that the respondents do not link place to geographical location, the goth festival itself is viewed as the place where goths fans come together to express the goth identity. Although the respondents refer to the goth festival itself as an essential place for goths, they also make some references to the city of Leipzig. The same as with Noah who mentioned that the festival is spread over the whole city, Ilse refers to the different ways that Leipzig is involved during the WGT:

The whole city is immersed in black and the Leipzig people are really welcoming about the festival visitors. And everyone decorates their shop windows in black and you buy black pizza and black ice cream. It is super cute and fun. There are museums opening their doors for the goths and doing activities. It is really interesting how normal people and goth people immerse on these days. (Ilse, 32, German)

The respondents talk about the aesthetics and the rich history of Leipzig. All respondents argue that the whole city is involved during the WGT, various tours are organized around the city, there is the opportunity to visit museums and to learn about the history of Leipzig. In line with Mark, every respondent makes one or more positive arguments about the city of Leipzig being an

addition to their complete experience by mentioning the activities that they are doing besides the actual festival.

I like to go to lectures and listening to different concerts, also the non-goth ones, the classical ones, I really like the Classical music and the Orchestra is really good and the church is really beautiful. Doing a historical tour around Leipzig is also something cool. To also know what different things happened in this place and to understand the historical figures (Mark, 42, Swiss)

Although the respondents mention Leipzig, the city is not directly linked by the respondents to the WGT. The WGT is viewed as the place for goths to come together, not Leipzig especially. Because the respondents do not directly link the city of Leipzig to the WGT, it might be possible to move the WGT to some other location without influencing the initial aim of the goth fans coming to Leipzig. The reasons for this is because the social and musical aspects of the festival are viewed as most important. Here, it seems that the festival is rather placeless with the social and musical aspect being more critical than the physical aspects. This can be linked to Shim and Santos (2014) who argue that connection to place is in decline and that place-based communities are weakened. However, the city of Leipzig is indeed linked to the experience of the goth fans coming to Leipzig. As shown by the previous two quotes, the city of Leipzig is involved during the WGT creating a complete experience. Therefore, the experiences of the goth fans are influenced in some way by WGT being in Leipzig, which makes the WGT not completely placeless. Mark even makes the statement that Leipzig has become part of the festival, which suggests more significant involvement of the city of Leipzig in WGT.

The city becomes the festival, before this, Leipzig was only the host. (Mark, 42, Swiss)

The importance of place is recognized by the respondents when talking about the situation around COVID-19. Although all respondents understand the situation around COVID-19 and know that it was not possible to have a WGT this year, many respondents feel considerably sad about the cancelling of the festival. Most respondents were looking forward to seeing friends again who they only see once a year at the WGT:

I know quite a few friends who were supposed to play the festival this year. But I also have friends of mine who I met at the festival, who, you know, go to Leipzig every year and support it. This is the only time a year that I see these friends. (Lucas, 34, Canadian)

The importance of visiting a place is connected to the idea of Tuan (1997), where repeated visits increase the emotional bond with a location. For example, Lucas coming back to Leipzig every year to see his friends creates an emotional bond with the geographical location being important for seeing his friends. However, as explained, the WGT is more viewed as the place for goth fans than the city of Leipzig itself. In a way, an emotional connection is made to the WGT in which the physical location is tangible (Beeton, 2016). Beeton (2016) refers to film-induced tourism when making this statement, where the film is the reason for tourism rather than the geographical location. Although not the same case, WGT is also the reason for the goth fans to visit Leipzig in the first place. Therefore, Leipzig is tangible as a physical location even though Leipzig is part of the WGT experience according to the Respondents.

4.3 Carnival

With the discussion regarding place becoming more or less important for goth fans, what other processes in today's society influence the experience at the WGT? In the previous section, the importance of the social and musical aspects of the WGT is already shown. The literature expressed concerns about the commodification of alternatives cultures (Spracklen, 2009). However, the respondents do not refer directly to commodification; they use the idea of a Carnival when explaining the changes at the WGT over the years.

According to Srpacklen and Spracklen (2013), individuals are limited in making meaningful choices due to the control of the tourist industry and global capitalism. Here, the tension between the individual and the collective is again visible, with both being influenced by commodification processes (MacCannell, 1973). As explained, commodification should not be confused with commercialization. According to Kaul (2007), the significant difference between the two concepts is based on control. With commercialization, individuals are still in control and monetary exchange is central. Whereas with commodification, loss of control is visible with for example the tourist industry taken over or globalization influencing a tourist attraction.

Looking at the commercial aspects of the festival, the respondents refer to the options to go shopping for clothes and souvenirs. Moreover, the headliners of the festival are viewed by the respondents as a commercial aspect of the festival. As summarized well by Mark:

This mainstream acts in the later years, in mine opinion got booked by profit reasons. For me this is the commercial character. But it is not the predominant element in my opinion like in other festivals where you have these big headlines of you know, these festivals posters with these big names going smaller going smaller. I mean, that is not happening, because I never saw WGT in this format, because I think it is more than that. It is more than a poster and the hierarchy of playing names. (Mark, 42, Swiss)

In line with Mark is the concept of commercialization, as explained by Kaul (2007). The festival is not trying to influence the decisions of the WGT visitors by, for example advertising the more prominent names instead of showing, the smaller acts. The control stays with the visitors of the WGT when deciding on which acts to see.

However, there are also signs of commodification which are pointed out by the respondents. Especially Sophia makes evident that there are more and more big brands taken over, while small creators have a hard time to survive. This directly links to Kaul (2007), where the tourist industry is taking over and where, in this case, small creators are losing control.

Creators and artists of the scene are very important. If we don't support them, they will not be able to create anymore, since we are talking of a subculture. Especially now where goth came into mainstream fashion and many commercial brands produce merchandize aimed at goths, small creators often struggle to survive, but they are the backbone of the subculture and should be there when goth is not a trend anymore. (Sophia, 34, Greek)

Commodification seems to have a more considerable influence on the experience at the WGT than commercialization. The big brands replacing the small creators, as emphasized by Sophia is an example of commodification. However, the literature is mainly focussed on the control of the tourist industry when discussing commodification (Cohen, 1988; Greenwood, 1977; Kaul, 2007). And not necessarily around the phenomenon of subcultures.

Besides the tourist industry, this research shows that the dominant culture is influencing the experience at the WGT, with following trends becoming more important than the musical aspect of the festival. This is confirmed by Astrid, who explains in her quote that social media, influencers and clothing brands have gotten more popular at WGT over the years. These actors control the trends, and more and more people are buying clothes from these popular brands. Moreover, Astrid refers to the creativity of individuals being impacted, and people are starting to look the same. Although not wholly similar, individuals being impacted relates to the control issue discussed by Kaul (2007). Together with the statements of Dowd and Dowd (2003) who argue that subcultural groups could adopt cultural practices of the dominant society and lose the characteristics that made them a separate group in the first place.

I think there has been more influence with the whole Instagram goth stuff and like the influencers and like the clothing brands have gotten more popular. So I see a lot more clothing brands selling their stuff and people wearing it. And then everybody looks the same. Which is,

kind of the opposite I feel of being goth or any alternative person. Because we like to be different. You know, we want people to be individual. (Astrid, 25, Norwegian)

The respondents do not directly refer to commodification as a significant process which changed the experience at the WGT over the years. Instead, the reference to Carnival is made multiple times by the respondents. The idea of a Carnival is used in a negative sense by the respondents. In the descriptions of Sophia, it becomes clear that she thinks that more people put the focus on their outfits and to be seen and photographed for publicity:

I notice that more and more people start to come that put focus on the outfit and to be seen/photographed and not on the Treffen itself or the events and the concerts. It seems like some people come only to gain publicity so they try to make outfits to get a lot of attention from photographers. With these outfits it's hard to do anything else besides being photographed, so for many it is like a carnival that becomes extremer every year in a desperate attempt to get noticed. (Sophia, 34, Greek)

The idea of the respondents that people are focussed more on the trends than the social and musical aspects of the WGT as emphasized by Sophia is linked to the concept of Carnival. However, Ilse also refers to the Carnival when talking about people who are wearing costumes. With this quote, Ilse suggests that some people at the WGT are wearing costumes and therefore are not goth fans. This influences her WGT experience because she does not like this part of the festival.

It is, there are many people who do not buy a ticket and have no a wristband, no normal ticket. And they will walk or wear a costume that they buy at the Carnival. So big dresses and they are make it like a costume. I don't like, I hate it. (Ilse, 32, German)

Although the concept of Carnival is not discussed in the theoretical framework, there is literature about the relation between festivals and Carnival. In this literature (Aching, 2010; Shields, 1990) liminality is linked to loss of control as discussed by Kaul (2007). Liminality means the social defined area which allows individuals to experience freedom besides ordinary life (Shields, 1990). In this case, the festival area of the WGT which allows goths to express their identity. Moreover, Carnival is described as a festivity where power structures change temporarily (Bakhtin, 1984). During Carnival, high and low hierarchical structures do not merely invert but are merged and blurred (Weichselbaumer, 2012).

Shields (1990) state that liminal zones can be exploited to make people think they are escaping the structures of everyday life when, in fact, they are not. This statement by Shield (1990) could

be linked to the control of the dominant culture, which is shown by individuals trying to follow the trends and gaining publicity for themselves. Here, individual identity is more visible. Moreover, goths can express their identity during the WGT as elaborated by the respondents. However, the power of the dominant culture still puts individuals in a particular direction regarding, for example, fashion and social media. Which again recognize the tension between the individual and collective identity, as shown in the conceptual model. Finkel (2009) also recognizes that powerful actors are still shaping creative freedom.

Because of the increase in interest to make the perfect picture, people might think that all goths are wearing costumes to be photographed. However, this does not mean that everyone at the WGT wants his or her picture taken without asking:

I don't enjoy the Victorian picknick so much. I went the first time and because it is held outside in a park anybody can go and it has turned really into such a fashion show, photographers and outsiders everywhere, taking pictures and videos without asking, while you are eating for example and staring at you as if we are objects in exhibition. Many outsiders also come and dress really fancy, which is kind of cool, but some of us call it the "carnival". So, my friends and I prefer to go to a more quite location to have our picknick, much more cosy. (Lieke, 26, Dutch)

As explained by Lieke, the reaction against the publicity and unwanted photographers is to not go to certain events of the WGT anymore. The Victorian Picknick is one of these events and mentioned by multiple respondents. While goth fans are staying away from the Victorian Picknick, multiple websites, newspapers and the social media show pictures and videos of the Victorian Picknick as being the main event of the WGT. When googling the WGT, pictures of the Victorian Picknick are shown first. This links to the ideas of Finkel (2009), where the ones in power are still shaping freedom. However, Astrid suggests that the original organizer did not have the intention to create the Victorian Picknick in a way that it is now:

The original organizer is not even attending the Victorian Picknick anymore (Astrid, 25, Norway)

Astrid states that the original organizer is not attending the Victorian, which suggest some form of authenticity. Astrid sees the importance in the original source of the WGT. Although commodification processes are influencing the experience at the WGT, in what way is the experience at the WGT still viewed as authentic by the respondents?

Besides the control of the tourist industry and the dominant society, various subgenres of goth fans come together to celebrate the goth identity, which is elaborated by Tom:

Although some people are showing off, all goth genres come together at the WGT and it is really nice to see them mixing (Tom, 45, English)

As discussed by Wang (1999), the perceptions of what authenticity is according to individuals is essential because authenticity is socially constructed (Cohen, 1998). Multiple meanings can be given to what authenticity is. Many respondents refer to the opportunity for unknown artist to perform at the WGT as a unique aspect of the festival. Moreover, as discussed by Mark, the WGT is viewed as authentic because all the extra events besides the events organized by the festival. It is not one organization that limits and regulates everything, which suggests that there is no complete control of the tourist industry.

The different events besides the festival, such as the lectures and museums, are making it authentic again. It gives an authentic, it is not that one organization limiting everything and is regulating everything, because it is so diverse, these sideshows. The mass or the total of it will give you a good and an authentic image of it. And there is space for everyone. I mean uhhh, everyone can have diverse expression by style, by music. At the end it is a gathering together and these people get along and get together and they get together yearly for many many years. So I think this is a quite authentic representation of what every year this gothic culture worldwide represents. (Mark, 42, Swiss)

The social aspect of the festival, which is a crucial aspect for goth fans to visit WGT, also relates to authenticity. Many respondents mention that the opportunity to meet up with friends is an authentic experience. These goths go to WGT to meet their friends once a year. Here, the respondents refer to the people at the festival being authentic instead of the festival itself. These people attending the festival care about what they are doing and they care about the goth community. Moreover, they care about making the festival the best that it can be. As Liam explains:

The biggest highlight for me was meeting so many great people, and here is where authenticity comes in. (Liam, 42, Canadian)

Although commodification is visible and some negative aspects of Carnival are shown during the WGT, there is still the opportunity to have meaningful experiences at the WGT.

There are still a lot of authentic goths that are religiously going to WGT to have the best time of the year! (Sophia, 34, Greek)

5. Conclusion

This research aims to explore how goth fans experience the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) within a world with growing control of the tourist industry and pressure of the mainstream. The focus was mostly on the importance of identity creation for goth fans and how commodification processes influence the experience at the WGT. However, identity creation and commodification are discussed in this research within the scope of Cultural Geography, which makes place an essential part of this research. To be able to understand better the importance of place in today's society, the tensions regarding Fan Homecoming and Mobility, as discussed by Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) are examined.

As the results show, the musical, social and commercial aspects are essential for creating the WGT experience. However, as emphasised by the respondents, the social aspect became more important over the years. All respondents are visiting WGT each year because of the people they met at the festival. This repeated visits confirm research done by Waysdorf and Reijnders (2019) explaining that an emotional bond to a place increases when individuals visit a place repeatedly. The initial aim of the WGT was to be a meeting for goth fans (Hodkinson, 2002), and this is still visible in the motivations of the goths visiting WGT. Nevertheless, society changes, and so does the festival. The initial aim of expressing the goth identity collectively changed into a more individualistic mindset of some of the visitors of the WGT. This individualistic mindset links to commodification processes of the festival. However, the respondents did not directly refer to commodification. The respondents explain commodification through the concept of Carnival. Some individuals at the WGT are trying to make the perfect picture for social media because following trends and social media are essential aspects of today's society. Expressing the goth identity collectively is in this case, replaced by individual success.

In contrast with previous research around commodification, which is mostly focused on the control of the tourist industry, the interviews in this research suggest that the control of the dominant culture could also create commodification. In the case of WGT, the dominant culture influences the experience at the WGT because publicity and social media are essential for the dominant culture. In contrast, goth was initially viewed as outside the mainstream (Hodkinson, 2002). The importance of being seen and being part of something is essential in today's society with changes the experience at the WGT.

This research also broadens the discussion around the importance of place for identity expression. Although Leipzig contributes to the experience at the WGT, the experience is mostly created by the people. The visitors can create an authentic experience, and the visitors are also the ones who create the commodification by transforming part of the WGT into a Carnival.

When the WGT keeps booking new unknown bands and trying to keep the initial aim of creating a meeting for goth from all over the world, the WGT will probably stay an important place for goth fans. The WGT helps to keep alive what matters to goth fans, being able to socialise, express identity, listen to music and have fun. The goth community cannot exist without having events such as the WGT. Therefore, people thrive on making them happen.

6. Reflection

To be able to answer the research question, a literature review is done to understand all concepts involved. The theory and the conceptual model added value to the analysis by creating a better understanding of the tensions between individual and collective identity, authenticity and commodification and the ideas around place regarding Fan Homecoming and mobility. Because of the theory, the analysis is based on a robust Framework.

However, the analysis also showed insights that have not been discussed in the theoretical framework. The Carnival aspects, as discussed by the respondents, for example, and the control of the dominant culture through trends and social media are the main concepts missing in the theoretical framework. Further research could go more in-depth into the phenomenon of Carnival within festivals and the influence of the dominant culture of the identity of goth fans. Moreover, commodification is not only based on the tourism industry. Commodification is also possible due to the pressure of the dominant society influencing subcultural groups (Dowd and Dowd, 2003). A qualitative research method is considered to be an appropriate method to understand how goth fans experience the WGT within a world with growing control of the tourist industry and pressure of the mainstream. However, observations during the WGT could be a valuable addition to the interviews done. Observations could be an addition to the statements made by the respondents because statements could be directly linked to observations made which create more in-depth. Moreover, the behaviour of people could also say a lot about their experience at the WGT. Additionally, a comparison between what is perceived by the respondents and what is directly visible at the festival itself could be made. Unfortunately, observations were not possible due to COVID-19.

For this qualitative research and to be able to answer the research question, enough respondents are gathered. However, there are still various subgenres without the goth community which are not represented in this research. Moreover, not all ages groups are covered in this research, while the literature states the significance of age on experiences. It was not possible to gather enough age groups to interpret age as a factor which might be interesting for further research.

Place is important for the WGT due to the aesthetics of Leipzig and the idea of going on a pilgrimage and come back to a place multiple times. For future research, it could be interesting to discuss other goth places where goths can express their goth identity and discover if there are similarities or differences. The aim of this research was not to make any generalisations, the focus of this research is to provide a rich, contextualised understanding of commodification and place during the experience at the WGT. However, further research could help understand the importance of place for communities and to create a more general theory about the influence of commodification on place and experience.

7. References

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Before interviewing with a potential participant, the informed consent is read carefully by the participant. The participant needs to permit being involved in this research. All participants have the right to know what they are consenting to. Below, the topic and the expectations of the researcher are clarified.

This research is done for a master thesis from the study Cultural Geography at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. This research aims to examine the perceived experiences of the goth subculture during the Wave-Gotik-Treffen in Leipzig. The focus is on the commodification processes of this goth festival, with the festival losing its meaning for the subculture and becoming a market feature only. The stories, experiences and opinions of the participant are central in this research. Moreover, due to the COVID-19, participants who have visited Wave-Gotik-Treffen before are precious.

The participant can decide if the interview will be done by email contact, a phone call or Skype conversation. Because of COVID-19, there is no possibility to meet face-to-face. However, the researcher will still make sure that the participant stays anonymous. Personal characteristics, such as names or address, are not used in this research. Privacy is taken into account at all time. When interviewed by a phone call or Skype, the researcher would like to record the interview. This way, the researcher can use the information at an optimal level. The recordings will be deleted after the data collection is complete. The interview will consist of questions about being goth, reasons for visiting Wave-Gotik-Treffen and experiences at the festival. The participant is also free and encouraged to add their additions to the interview.

By accepting this arrangement, the participant agrees that:

- He or she is informed about the topic and intention of the research.
- He or she knows that the information given by the participant is used for educational purposes and will be shared with the University of Groningen.
- He or she is aware that quotes can be used anonymously in the final product of the research.
- He or she is aware that the interview is recorded and interview transcripts could be shared with the supervisor of the project.
- He or she knows that current permission is not binding and that he or she can withdraw and anytime without reason specification.

Considering all of the above, the participant permits attending in this research by replying on this arrangement in a way preferred by the participant.

For any questions or uncertainties:

E-mail: d.rozeboom@student.rug.nl

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Appendix B: Interview Guide

Main Theme	Main Questions	Follow-up
Introduction	Can you tell me something about yourself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - Hobbies
Goth	<p>Can you explain in your own words what Gothic is?</p> <p>What does being part of the goth culture means to you?</p> <p>Can you tell me your stories about becoming a goth?</p> <p>What kind of activities/events are you going to that is related to goth?</p> <p>Can you be part of the goth subculture if you do not like the music ?</p> <p>Can you tell me something about the goth subculture and the Internet?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What words come in your mind when you think about Gothic? - How important is being goth for you and your life? - How old were you? - How did you get in contact with the goth subculture? - Are there people in your surrounding who are goth as well? - How important is the internet for the goth subculture? - In what way is the goth subculture showed on the internet? Are there a lot of false assumptions?
Wave-Gotik-Treffen	<p>What is Wave-Gotik-Treffen?</p> <p>Why did you go to WGT the first time?</p> <p>How does a day at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen looks like?</p> <p>How do you prepare for going to the WGT?</p> <p>What events during WGT are you attending and which not? And why?</p> <p>What do you like the most about WGT?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With whom are you during WGT? - How many times did you go to WGT? - Do you meet new people at WGT? - Why are you still going to WGT? - Do you always buy the official ticket? - What really stands out during your time at WGT? - Do you speak other goths from different countries
Identity	<p>How important is music for the goth community?</p> <p>Can you explain the social aspect of WGT? Why is it important?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Music or Socializing - Is WGT important for expressing Goth identity? - How do you feel about people performing the goth identity, who are not goth in daily life?

	In what way is the goth subculture depending on WGT? Why?	
Commodification	<p>Are there any changes compared to previous years?</p> <p>Do you encounter any problems when visiting WGT?</p> <p>What is your experience with the local community?</p> <p>In what way is WGT organized for the goth subculture?</p> <p>In what way does WGT promotes the festival?</p> <p>How do you feel about the media attention given to the festival?</p> <p>What is your experience with people gazing at you?</p> <p>In what way is the commercial aspect visible at the festival?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What stands out to you if you compare different years at WGT? - Are there things at the festival you do not feel comfortable with? - How is the publicity? - Is the goth subculture being portrayed properly at WGT? - Is the organization normalizing the goth lifestyle? - Does publicity and the commercial aspect impact the initial aim of the meeting?
Authenticity	<p>What makes the goth subculture authentic?</p> <p>In what way is the festival authentic or not?</p> <p>What are authentic experiences at the festival?</p> <p>Is the WGT in danger of losing its meaning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When are you authentic as a goth? - Is authenticity important for you? - Are there also product or events that are not related to goth?
Closing	<p>Did you plan on going this year to WGT before the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>In what way does cancelling WGT impacts the goth subculture?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you feel about not able to attend this year's WGT?

