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POLYTECHNIC OF MEĐIMURJE IN ČAKOVEC
UNDERGRADUATE PROFESSIONAL STUDY OF TOURISM AND SPORTS
MANAGEMENT

Vilim Hruškar

**FAN CONVENTION TOURISM IN THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA**

FINAL PAPER

Čakovec, 2022.

MEĐIMURSKO VELEUČILIŠTE U ČAKOVCU
PREDDIPLOMSKI STRUČNI STUDIJ MENADŽMENTA TURIZMA I
SPORTA

Vilim Hruškar

**TURIZAM FAN KONVENCIJA U SJEDINJENIM
AMERIČKIM DRŽAVAMA**

ZAVRŠNI RAD

Mentor: Marija Miščančuk, v. pred.

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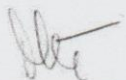
Zadatak: **Uspón fan konvencija u SAD-u**

Opis zadatka:

Što su to fan konvencije i koje su vrste konvencija. Fan konvencije kao specifična vrsta turizma koja se razvija u novije doba tehnološke revolucije. Tko su fan turisti, koje su njihove specifične destinacije i na koji način sudionici konvencija doprinose ukupnom prihodu od turizma. Statistički podaci vezano uz ovu vrstu turizma.

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ABSTRACT

Fan conventions are a newer type of gathering in which people gather for specific themes and activities related to them. This paper mainly focuses on tourism in the United States of America (USA), its development in its various aspects, and new types of tourism that are seeing great growth in current times. A special emphasis will be put on convention tourism as one of them. Convention tourism implies both business and fan conventions, and over time, fan conventions have reached great popularity because of the development of video games, comics and other modern sources of entertainment. Next, the history of fan conventions is considered. Fan conventions have their roots in the 1930s and to this day are a relatively new term. Initially, these gatherings were very small and had a more general theme. Throughout history, it is possible to see how certain events caused significant shifts in the development of this phenomenon. Fan conventions are gaining the most popularity with the emergence of the new media and therefore attracting and joining people with the same interests. As these media become more popular and diverse, so are fan conventions adapting and becoming more specific and numerous. Fan conventions have many types, which may differ according to the content they offer, the way they are held, or by a combination of more elements at once. Most of the currently popular types are based on the main media trends that have had a significant impact globally over the past 20 years. Science fiction, which has its beginnings earlier than other trends and initiated fan conventions by itself, also belongs here. Fan conventions are open to everyone and have quite a large gender diversity, even though it is often considered to be more oriented toward male audiences. It is possible to conclude that fan conventions are a successful modern type of gathering that is constantly growing in accordance with its circumstances in the media and entertainment.

Keywords: *convention, fiction, gathering, media, tourism*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my mentor Marija Miščančuk for her patience, cooperation and advice which helped me finish this final paper.

I would like to thank my colleagues and friends that shared some of their knowledge and experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of this research stems from the fact that there are more and more fan conventions and they are becoming increasingly popular so research on how they affect the entire tourism industry of the United States should be explored. It is interesting how these conventions evolve and attract more attention around the world. There are many types of conventions and ways they connect with groups of people who visit them. It is assumed that these conventions are mostly visited by younger groups of people, but depending on the theme of the convention, that could also vary considerably. This could give us a better insight into the interest in these events. It is also interesting how fan conventions originated in the first place and where their roots came from. Insight into this part of history could provide various answers for certain trends and reasons for survival and development in the USA and also in the world. It is also necessary to determine how and why individual locations differ in the development and influence of these conventions or their very existence.

The subject of this research is the emergence, development, and potential of fan conventions within tourism in the USA. Specifically, it is also intended to find out which groups of people visit these gatherings and their motives for choosing certain conventions. There are several types of conventions, so it will be investigated which types exist, how they are divided, as well as their development, popularity and causes. Differences in locations related to this topic also are to be discovered.

The goals of this research are to analyze fan conventions and their types in general. This means that today's conventions need to be looked into to see how they are divided. The next thing is to find out who participates the most in this type of tourism and understand their interests. The following goal is to study how fan conventions develop, for which it is necessary to go through the history of fan conventions in order to determine the chronological order and reason for their survival and development. The last thing is to discover if the location affects performance, which means that it is necessary to see how important the circumstances for a fan convention to be successful are.

2. TOURISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Travel and tourism in the USA play a significant role in the national economy. Tourism there contributes 2.9% of gross value added. Total annual tourism earnings in the USA are \$1.9 trillion (HRK 11.89 trillion). 14.4 million jobs are based on tourist needs, which makes tourism the sixth busiest activity in the USA and one of the top 10 in 48 out of 50 US states (<https://www.turizamiputovanja.com/turizam-u-sad-u/>). The travel and tourism industry is one of the largest employers in the USA and directly supports 5.9 million jobs. American tourism is in constant growth and it is developing faster than the overall USA economy. 1.2 million of these jobs are also supported by exports related to tourism and travel. The majority of visitors come from Canada and Mexico and represent half of all tourists in the area. After them, frequent visitors are also from the United Kingdom, Japan, and China. They also spent the most in total on travel and tourism there. Together with the federal government, travel, tourism and marketing are also managed by individual states and destinations for their jurisdictions. (<https://www.oecdilibrary.org/sites/7af173ceen/index.html?itemId=/content/component/7af173ce-en>)

The following table presents statistics of domestic, receptive and emitting tourism from 2014 to 2018 in the USA.

Table 1. The statistical representation of tourism in the USA

United States: Domestic, inbound and outbound tourism					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
TOURISM FLOWS, THOUSAND					
Domestic tourism					
Total domestic trips	2 109 300	2 178 700	2 206 600	2 247 900	2 291 100
Overnight visitors (tourists)	1 455 417	1 525 090	1 566 686	1 618 488	1 658 950
Same-day visitors (excursionists)	653 883	653 610	639 914	629 412	632 150
Nights in all types of accommodation	..	..	..	..	..
Hotels and similar establishments	875 112	899 505	933 749	973 743	998 087
Other collective establishments	..	..	..	..	..
Private accommodation	..	..	..	..	..
Inbound tourism					
Total international arrivals	177 953	176 864	175 262	174 292	169 325
Overnight visitors (tourists)	75 022	77 774	76 407	77 187	79 746
Same-day visitors (excursionists)	102 932	99 091	98 854	97 105	89 579
Top markets					
Canada	23 014	20 699	19 287	20 493	21 475
Mexico	17 070	18 374	18 991	17 788	18 387
United Kingdom	4 149	4 915	4 587	4 483	4 659
Japan	3 620	3 793	3 604	3 596	3 493
China	2 190	2 629	3 050	3 174	2 992
Nights in all types of accommodation	369 323	398 710	391 311	404 677	405 682
Hotels and similar establishments	188 939	204 281	210 147	208 138	212 207
Other collective establishments	16 327	21 707	15 177	17 050	18 546
Private accommodation	164 057	172 721	165 987	179 489	174 930
Outbound tourism					
Total international departures	121 709	130 907	141 526	148 056	157 873
Overnight visitors (tourists)	68 185	74 191	80 223	87 657	92 564
Same-day visitors (excursionists)	53 523	56 716	61 303	60 398	65 308
Top destinations					
Mexico	25 882	28 733	31 194	35 050	36 449
Canada	11 523	12 669	13 892	14 280	14 341
United Kingdom	2 832	2 885	3 197	3 756	3 927
France	2 124	2 361	2 178	2 645	3 008
Italy	1 908	2 033	2 214	2 338	2 924

Source: OECD Tourism Statistics (Database), <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/7af173ce-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/7af173ce-en> (20.5.2021.)

2.1 Leading types of tourism in the United States

As tourism develops, there are more and more transitions from mass tourism to specific types of tourism. This change increases the connection between visitors and reduces the number of people in one place. Because of this change, certain types of tourism are able to develop much more and faster than others. Some of these types or areas in the USA include cultural heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, medical tourism, agritourism, urban tourism, space tourism, and meetings or conventions.

Cultural heritage tourism is a type of tourism that is defined as a journey to experience the places, artefacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present, including cultural historic and natural resources. (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2012). Activities in this type of tourism include visiting art galleries or museums, attending concerts or performances, and recreation in national parks or at monuments. There are currently 24 sites listed under the United States World Heritage Sites, of which 12 are natural, 11 cultural, and 1 mixed.

Sustainable tourism is becoming a growing trend globally as it becomes an increasingly familiar topic. This type of tourism describes activities based on natural resources or other natural or cultural attributes where they promote local economic development and avoid harm to the environment. Also included here are properties such as hotels and shops that are labelled as "eco-friendly" companies. They have certain standards that must be adhered to and these standards are monitored by organizations like the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Medical tourism is a type of trip where you travel to another country or region to experience certain medical services that are not available near the usual place of residence.

Agritourism combines activities from which income is generated through cultivation, agriculture, or other natural resources with tourist activities. Activities or attractions for this type of tourism include outdoor recreation, educational experiences, direct sales on farms, parties such as harvest or dance festivals, and catering services (<http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/factsheets/what/>).

According to the listing of agriculture from the United States Department of Agriculture in 2012, 33,161 farms offer agritourism and recreation services worth \$704 million.

Urban tourism is a type of tourism that takes place in urban areas. According to the United Nations, 54% of the world's population lived in cities in 2015. In the USA there are a lot of large cities that have many attractions and developed tourism. These types of destinations offer a wide range of cultural, architectural, technological, social and natural experiences and products (<https://www.unwto.org/urban-tourism>).

Space tourism is a newer type of tourism based on space travel. Several companies like SpaceX and Virgin Galactic offer orbital and suborbital flights. This type of tourism is still in development, but it is growing rapidly in popularity.

Meetings and conventions represent the majority of trips in the business travel category. As demand increases, over the last 20 years, the exhibition space for these needs has increased by 50%. In addition to business conventions, newer fan conventions also belong here and are growing in popularity (<https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R43463.html#fn48>).

3. THE HISTORY OF FAN CONVENTIONS

Fan conventions are the kind of gathering where people meet for specific topics they like. These conventions may involve various activities related to this topic. Common activities at fan conventions, in general, include participating in panels that are led by special, fan favourite guests, playing games or watching shows mostly based on the topic of the convention, buying exclusive merchandise from various sellers and artists, participating in special events and meeting people. Today there are various types of conventions and many different themes. At first, many of these types were not developed or did not exist; so the conventions then had a more general direction.

The first fan convention was created for science fiction. This was Philcon, when a small group of science fiction fans met in New York in 1936 (Dunn and Herrmann, 2020). In 1939, the first worldwide science fiction convention called WorldCon was created. More than 200 people participated in this gathering, which at that time was the most ever. At the time, fan conventions were generally based mainly on science fiction. Some of the essential writers of such works were Edgar Rice Burroughs, HP Lovecraft, Flash Gordon, Robert E. Howard and Buck Rodgers. These were all very small gatherings attended only by the biggest fans.

Picture 1. First recorded intercity meet-up of science fiction fans



Source: <https://vocal.media/geeks/the-rise-and-history-of-comic-conventions>

The next fan convention that was significant for the development of conventions was Disclave. Disclave was created in 1950 by the Washington Science Fiction Association. For a long time, this was one of the main conventions for science fiction and fantasy in the early years. There were 22 people at the first gathering, but over time they developed considerably and attracted some famous writers such as George R.R. Martin, the author of Game of Thrones.

Before the 1960s, fan conventions were mostly small gatherings. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the number of fans increased drastically. This increase is significantly related to the growth in popularity of superheroes, science fiction and fantasy due to movies and series from Hollywood (<https://viralhare.com/con-history-the-rise-fall-and-rise-of-fan-fueled-conventions/>). New comics also influenced fans of the era. Big monsters, like Godzilla, became popular with readers. Other popular works of the time that advanced science fiction writing and expanded the genre include the films "The Day the Earth Stood Still" and "Forbidden Planet", and the comic book "Fantastic Four". In the decade of the 1960s, over 17 new fan conventions were created, more than double the increase from the past 30 years.

At the time, the most significant convention that arose in 1966 was the Lucca Comic convention in Italy. It is one of the first conventions to focus more on comics than science fiction. Although fans of science fiction, fantasy and horror also gathered here, as with other conventions, the Lucca Comic convention stood out because they put the word "comic" in the name of the convention. This prompted future conventions to also take advantage of this naming method. It is currently the second largest convention after Comiket in Japan.

In 1970, the first Comic-con was held in San Diego. About 200 people came to the first gathering, which was customary at the time. As the years passed Comic-con developed extensively and expanded beyond exclusively comics into other media and genres. Following the success of the Star Wars movies, other distributors and studios have used Comic-con to promote their products that might appeal to people who visit fan conventions. Eventually, Comic-con made a huge impact on fan conventions in the USA and later in the world. A lot of new conventions have been created under the Comic-con influence.

The current biggest fan convention is Comiket, which is held 2 times a year in Tokyo. Comiket was created in 1975 for comic book fans and fans who created their work based on the franchises they love. They needed a place where they could buy and sell their own creations, and Comiket was created because of that demand. The name Comiket itself comes from merging the words comic and market (<https://www.comipress.com/article/2008/08/03/3636.html>). Comiket is the most unique and popular fan convention because it supports many independent writers. Some popular franchises like "Hellsing" and "Neon Genesis Evangelion" were originally created by independent writers who received support on Comiket.

Fan conventions before the 1980s were themed more generally. In the early 1980s, popularity grew more than ever before. Because of this, many more fan conventions have emerged with more specific themes and a focus on only certain things. Some examples are fan conventions like the "Starfleet International Conference" which focuses on "Star Trek" and "Gallifrey One" which focuses on "Doctor Who." Due to the success of such fan conventions, over time more and more fan conventions are emerging with increasing specialization in various topics or franchises (<https://vocal.media/geeks/the-rise-and-history-of-comic-conventions>).

3.1 Types of fan conventions

Fan conventions can be small events held in local communities in halls or libraries, and they can also be huge festivals held in an arena or a hotel. Each convention is organized differently and has different goals and audiences, thus creating its own uniqueness. There are many terms used in descriptions or types of fan conventions, and it can be confusing for someone who is just getting acquainted with fan conventions. These types are generally distinguished by the main theme of a fan convention, but there are also types of conventions that are determined by the way they are run, or by a combination of multiple elements. The most popular types of fan conventions at this time are comic book conventions, gaming conventions, anime conventions and science fiction conventions.

Comic book conventions, as noted in the history of fan conventions, have had a great influence and development over the years, so they are currently some of the biggest conventions. This type of convention can be divided into two subtypes. The first is big entertainment exhibitions where one can mostly find the sales rooms, special guests, autograph signings, giveaways and big announcements. These conventions are also often described as pop culture events. Examples of such conventions are Comic-con, Comiket, and Wizard World. Others are smaller fairs that focus more on buying, selling, and exchanging comic books. At these conventions, it is sometimes possible to find very rare editions of individual comics.

Picture 2. Comic-Con's biggest stage



Source: <https://deadline.com/2019/07/comic-cons-biggest-stage-our-hall-of-fame-for-hall-hs-most-heroic-panels-1202644716/>

Gaming conventions gained their popularity later than comic book conventions due to video games not yet existing then. In gaming conventions, there are also two subtypes: video game conventions and board game conventions. Currently, video game conventions prevail, where it is possible to play certain video games with other participants, participate in tournaments and competitions, try new consoles and games, hear big announcements, and buy exclusive products

related to a particular topic. Some examples of video game conventions are PAX, E3, Gamescom, and Infogamer, which is held annually in Zagreb (<https://gamerant.com/gaming-conventions-world-smallest-largest-ranked/>). As for the conventions of board games, they have also developed with the growth of video games since there are many board games based on them. The emphasis here is also not just on playing, but also focusing on shopping, panels, and special events. Some examples are Gen Con, Spiel and UK Games Expo (<https://www.meeplemountain.com/articles/the-board-gamers-guide-to-board-game-conventions/>).

Anime, a term that comes from the English word animation, at this point in Japan refers to all kinds of animation, regardless of the origin and style of drawing. But at the international level, it has become synonymous with the Japanese one (Welin, 2013). Anime, as we know it today, dates back to the 1960s, but the Japanese started animation in 1907 (Tandarić, 2016). Anime conventions began in the 1980s and anime in general first gained popularity in Japan and later in the USA and even in the world. At anime conventions, it is possible to hear news about anime, participate in panels, find exclusive products and play theme-related games, as at gaming and comic conventions (<https://reelrundown.com/animation/Things-to-Do-at-an-Anime-Convention-or-Comic-Book-Conventions>). Costumes in characters from various anime series (cosplay) (Dunn and Herrmann, 2020) are also very popular here. Examples of anime conventions are Anime Expo, Otakon and Anime Central (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/growth-anime-events-dallas-middaugh>).

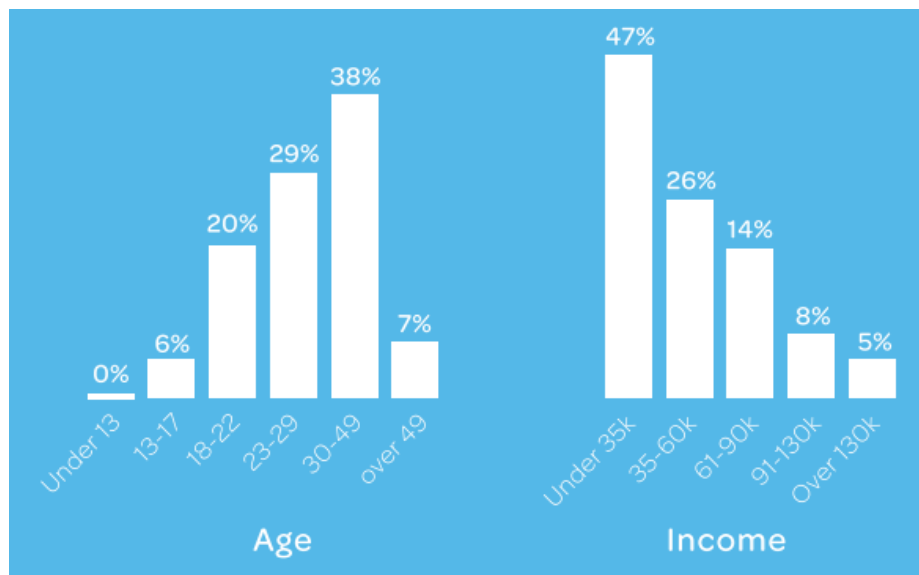
Science fiction conventions are the oldest type of convention and are currently still popular. This type of convention can be divided into 3 subtypes: general, literary and traditional conventions (<https://www.upcomingcons.com/convention-types>). General conventions have a wide range of content related mainly to science fiction; literary conventions focus much more on literature than general conventions, and traditional conventions have similarities with general and literary conventions, but are mostly held by other fans and are nonprofit (<https://twincitiesgeek.com/2018/12/just-what-is-this-convention-anyway/>).

3.2 Demographic view of participants

In 2014, a survey was held by Eventbrite where they interviewed 2,600 people who had bought tickets to fan conventions in the past two years. The purpose of this research was to help organizers and communities gather data to better see who is interested in these events and take advantage of potential opportunities. They also wanted to see if there was any truth to outdated prejudices about this kind of event. In the study, 55% of responses were from men, and 45% were from women. As for the age of the participants, they learned that the division of participants below and above 30 years of age is almost the same. The majority of participants were in the 30-49 age group. It is possible to see that fan conventions are heading in a direction where there is increasing diversity in age and gender, and that the ageing prejudices about the much more male and young population attending these events are not valid (https://eventbrite-s3.s3.amazonaws.com/marketing/britepapers/Britepaper_Fandoms_Survey.pdf).

Picture 3 shows the percentages of the respondents' age groups and their annual income in dollars.

Picture 3. Age and annual income of participants



Source: Eventbrite

https://eventbrite-s3.s3.amazonaws.com/marketing/britepapers/Britepaper_Fandoms_Survey.pdf
(29.5.2021.)

4. RESEARCH ON FAN CONVENTIONS TOURISM

The subject of this research is fan conventions and their impact on tourism and the interests of potential visitors. This research aims to determine who is interested in fan conventions, what is most appealing about them, and how they are related to the location or other attractions.

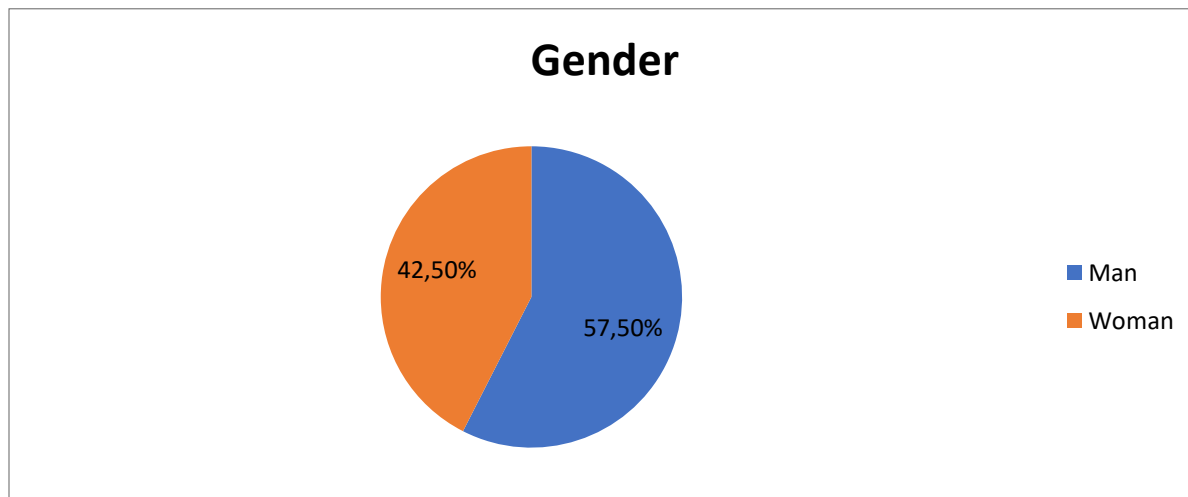
4.1 Research methodology

First of all, secondary data describing fan conventions and showing various circumstances corresponding to some of the goals of this work have been studied and printed. Secondary data is taken from many different sources to make the results as accurate as possible. After that, an online anonymous survey was conducted, which further confirms or reveals responses to the objectives of this survey. The survey is composed by the author of this study. The survey consists of 15 questions that, in groups, serve various purposes. The first four questions examine the gender, age, level of education acquired, and employment status of respondents in order to determine the interests of individual groups of people. The following 2 questions examine general tourist trips and tourist trips to the USA to see the will to travel and the impact of distance or location. Then 4 questions examine the knowledge, experience and attractiveness of fan conventions to establish familiarity with this term in Croatia and see what is the most famous and popular. The last set of questions asks respondents to determine what attracts them to tourist destinations, and how important these circumstances and the location itself are for the success of fan convention tourism. Eight of these questions were closed-type questions with only one answer selected. Three questions offer a scale from 1 to 5 for respondents to determine the knowledge, influence, or importance of certain elements of these topics. 2 questions are of a closed type with the ability to select multiple answers and to choose the answer "other" where respondents have the option to write or add an answer themselves, and there are 2 more open-ended questions where the respondents list what is required according to their own knowledge or desire. The survey was conducted between 20 May 2021 and 1 June 2021. The poll was completed by 79 people from Croatia. The results obtained are further processed in Microsoft Office Excel. The results of each question are presented in an appropriate figure and further explained. The results also draw some identifiable conclusions.

4.2 Research results

The survey was conducted on 80 respondents, 57.5% of them were male and 42.5% female.

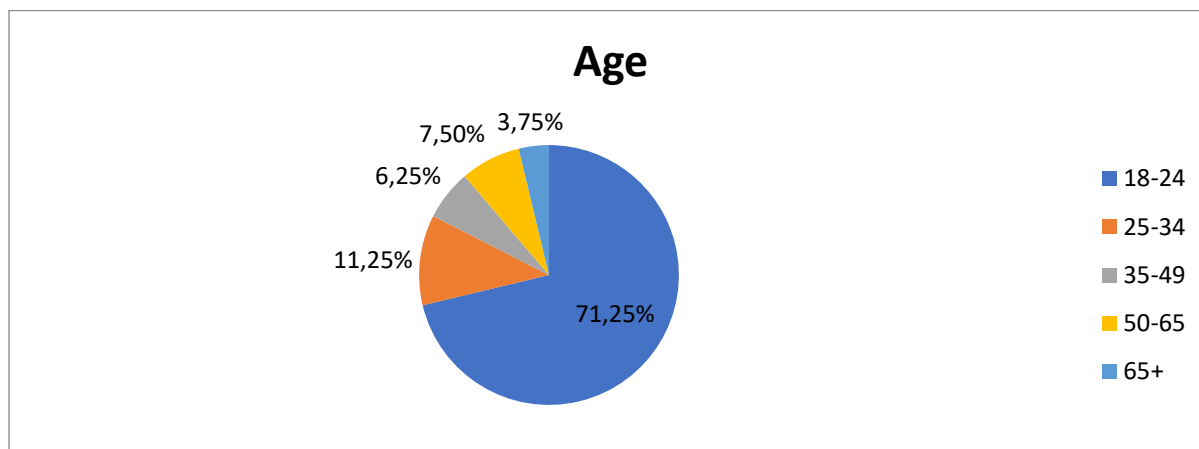
Figure 1. Respondents' gender



Source: Created by the author

As for the age of the respondents, the majority are 18 to 24 years old (71.25%); then 11.25% are 25 to 34 years old, 6.25% are 35 to 49 years old, 7.5% are 50 to 65 years old, and only 3.75% are above 65 years of age.

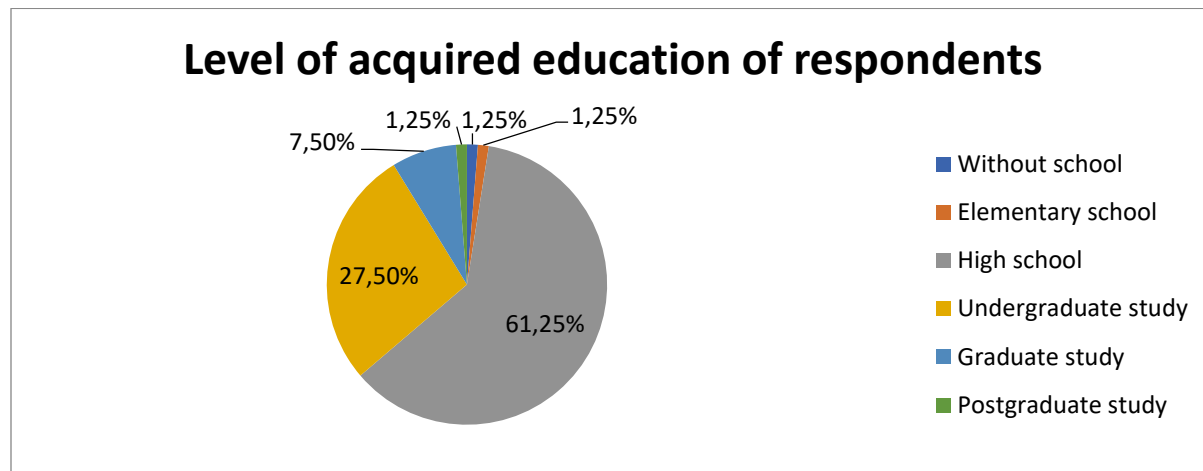
Figure 2. Respondents' age



Source: Created by the author

As for the level of education (Figure 3), the majority of respondents graduated from high school (61.25%), followed by those who completed undergraduate studies (27.5%), and those who completed graduate studies (7.5%). There is 1.25% of the respondents who do not have any education, those with completed primary school and those with completed postgraduate studies.

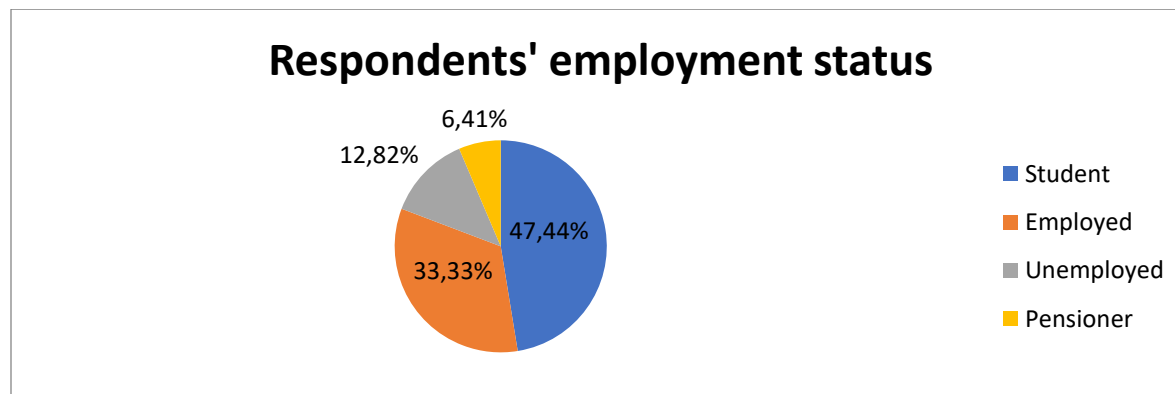
Figure 3. Level of acquired education of respondents



Source: Created by the author

Then, the employment status of the respondents was examined. 47.44% of them said they were students, 33.33% said they were employed, 12.82% were unemployed, and 6.41% were pensioners.

Figure 4. Respondents' employment status

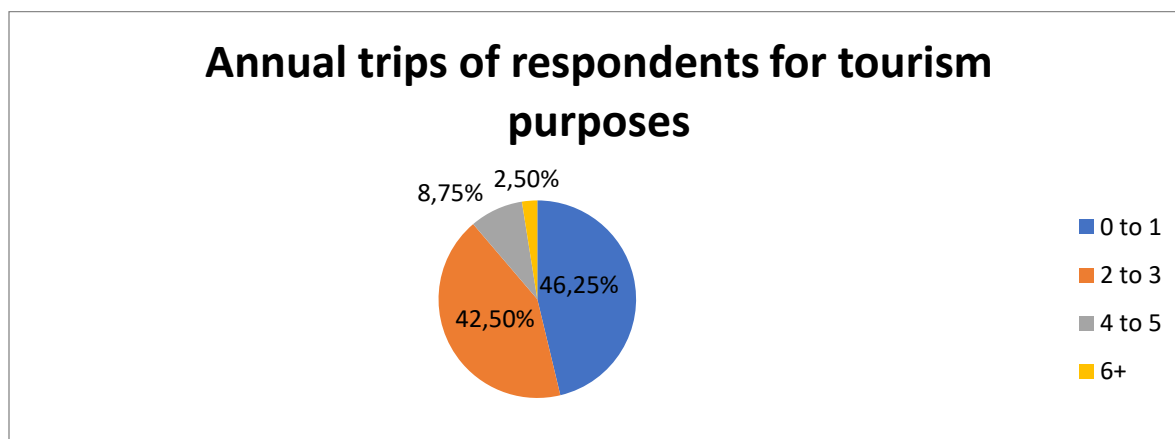


Source: Created by the author

From the first four questions, it can be concluded that most of the participants in this survey are young adults who have a high school diploma and are currently studying or working.

Figure 5 shows how many times a year respondents travel for tourist purposes. Most respondents travel once a year (46.25%), and up to a maximum of 3 times a year (42.5%), 8.75% of them travel 4-5 times a year, and 2.5% travel 6 times or more a year.

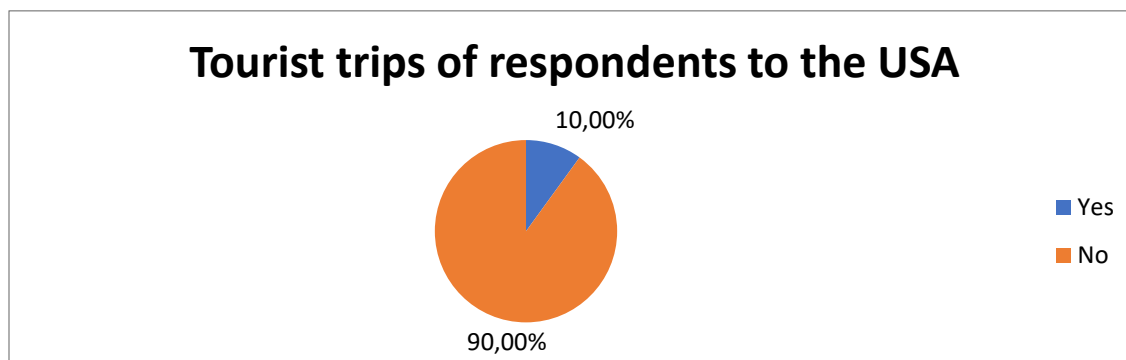
Figure 5. Annual trips of respondents for tourism purposes



Source: Created by the author

On the following question, respondents answered whether they had ever travelled to the USA for tourism purposes. According to the results, it can be seen that the vast majority of 90% have not, and the minority of 10% have.

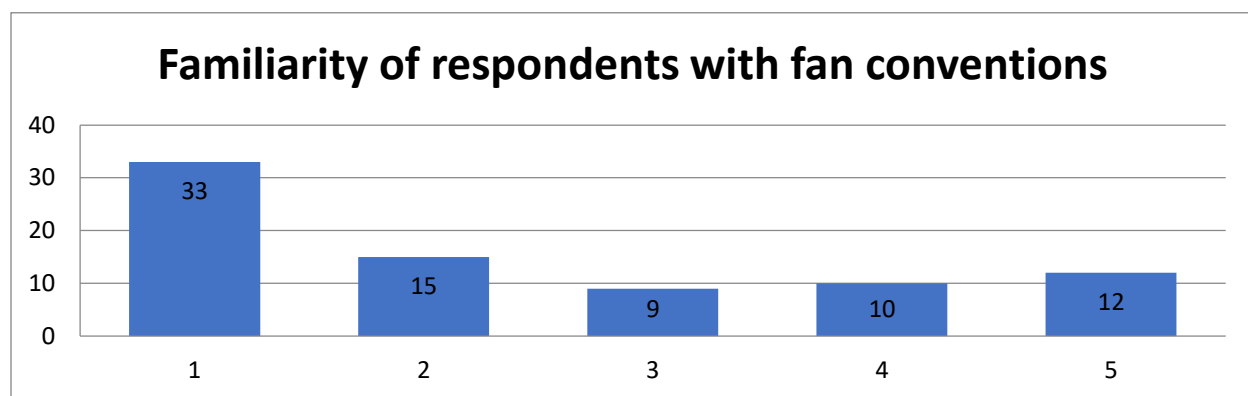
Figure 6. Tourist trips of respondents to the USA



Source: Created by the author

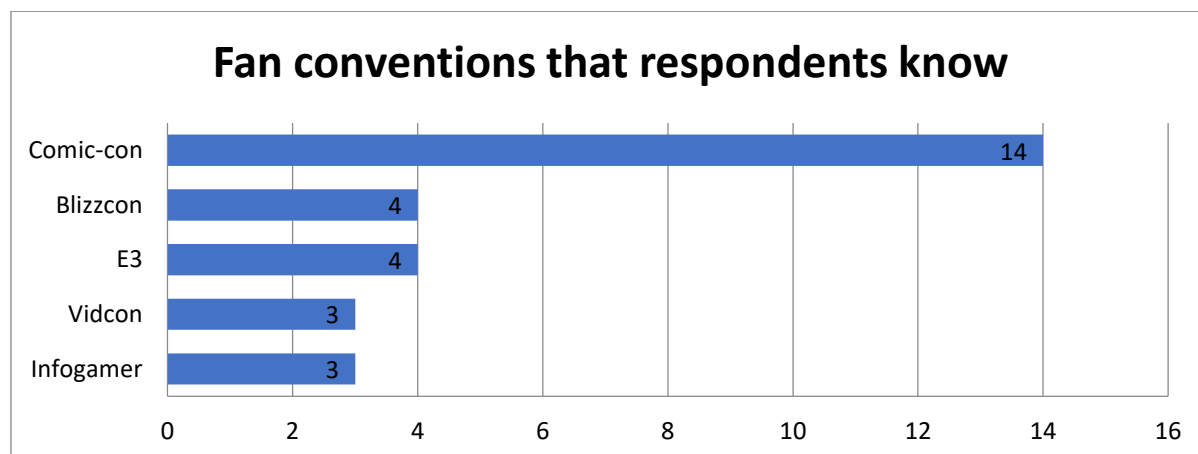
On the next question, respondents were asked how familiar they are with fan conventions. The answers are shown on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “not familiar at all” and 5 being “very familiar”. Figure 7 shows that the majority of respondents (42.5%) were not at all familiar with fan conventions, and 18.8% of respondents said they had little knowledge of fan conventions (number 2 on the scale). 61.3% of respondents gave a negative response here. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that this term in Croatia is still relatively new.

Figure 7. Familiarity of respondents with fan conventions



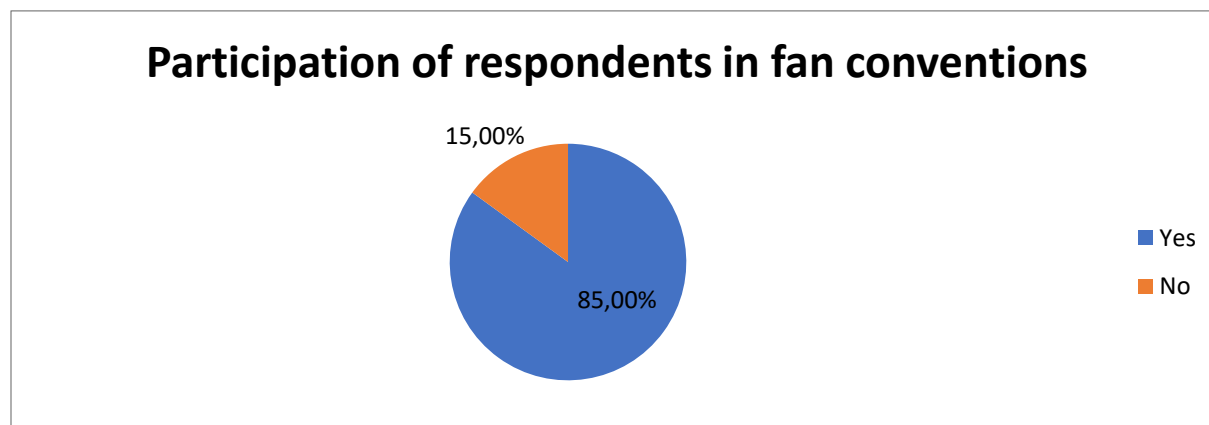
Source: Created by the author

Next, respondents listed fan conventions they know. Of the 79 respondents, 31 (39.24%) responded. Since 60.75% of respondents answered the previous question negatively, this 39.24% coincides with the same percentage of respondents that said they were familiar with fan conventions. Comic-Con was listed the most times (14), then Blizzcon and E3 4 times and Vidcon and Infogamer 3 times. Other fan conventions received 2 or fewer responses, as seen on Figure 8.

Figure 8. Fan conventions that respondents know

Source: Created by the author

As for the next question, the majority (85%) of the respondents answered they did not participate in a fan convention, and a minority (15%) replied that they did.

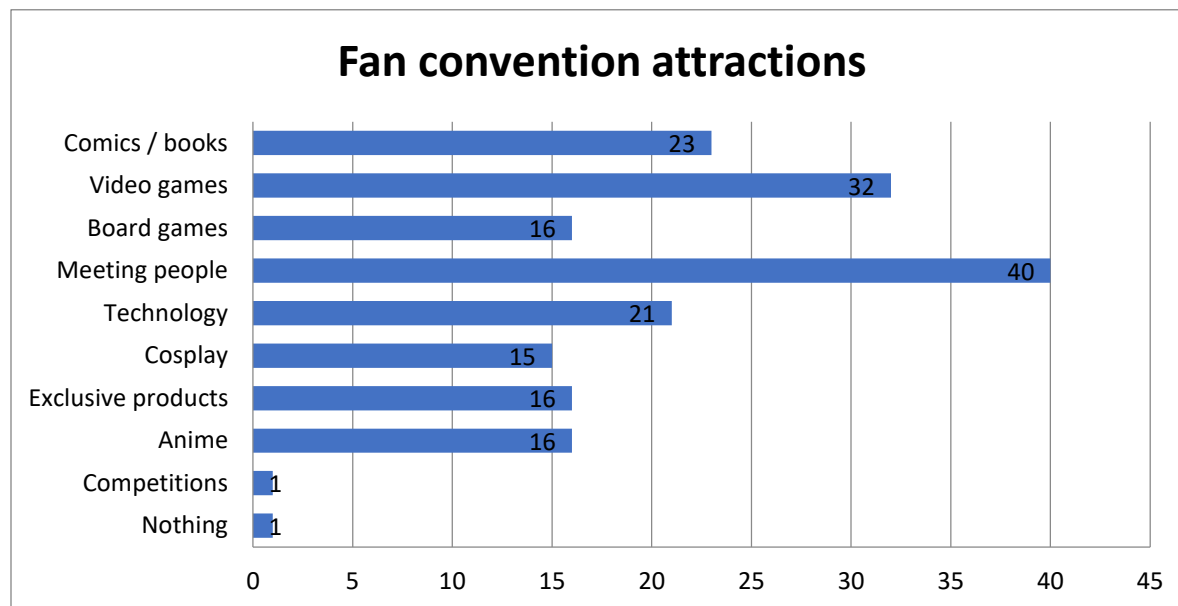
Figure 9. Participation of respondents in fan conventions

Source: Created by the author

Afterwards, it was examined what attracts respondents to fan conventions (Figure 10). The largest number of respondents attend conventions to meet people (50%) as it is universal for each convention. Then, 40% of respondents replied that they were attracted by video games, and 28.7% because they were interested in comics and books. Respondents are most interested in

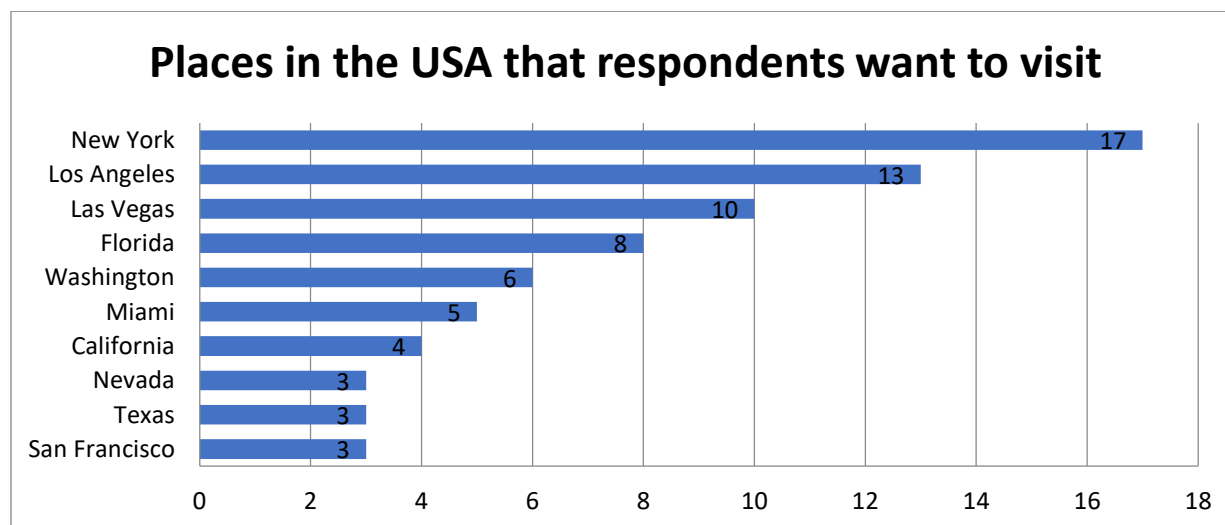
gaming conventions, but the familiarity with these conventions is divided. When it comes to comic conventions, Comic-con is the most known.

Figure 10. Fan convention attractions



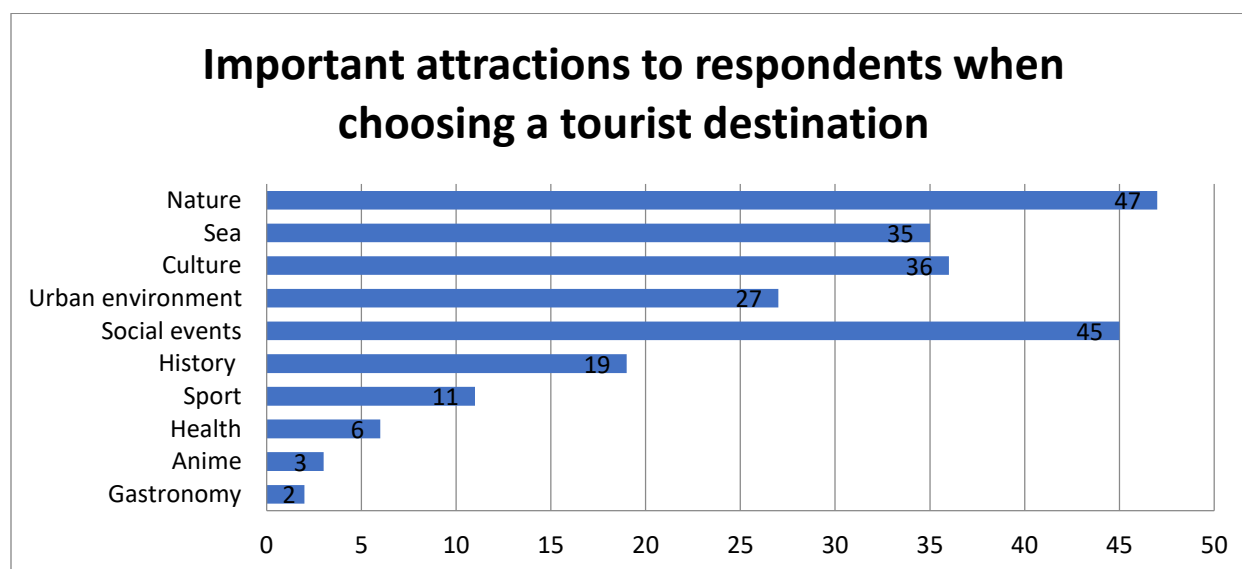
Source: Created by the author

In the following question, respondents showed which places in the USA they would like to visit. This question was answered by 66.25% of respondents. The most popular destination was New York, which was mentioned 17 times. Next is Los Angeles, which has been mentioned 13 times, Las Vegas 10 times, Florida 8 times, Washington 6 times, Miami 5 times, California 4 times; and Nevada, Texas and San Francisco 3 times. Other places are mentioned 2 times or fewer. Many of these places are popular tourist attractions and have many fan conventions nearby.

Figure 11. Places in the USA that respondents want to visit

Source: Created by the author

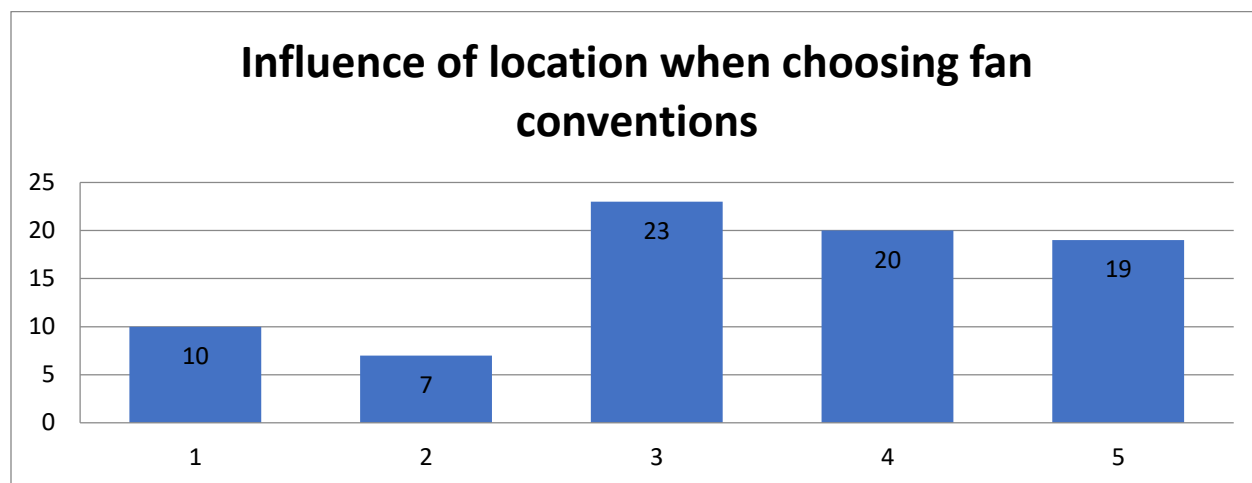
Afterwards, the respondents were asked what was important to them when choosing a tourist destination (Figure 12). The most responses included nature (60%) and social events (56.3%), immediately followed by culture (45%) and sea (43.8%). Since natural and cultural attractions along with social events are important to respondents, it is possible to see that these attractions also have a significant impact on social events such as fan conventions.

Figure 12. Important attractions to respondents when choosing a tourist destination

Source: Created by the author

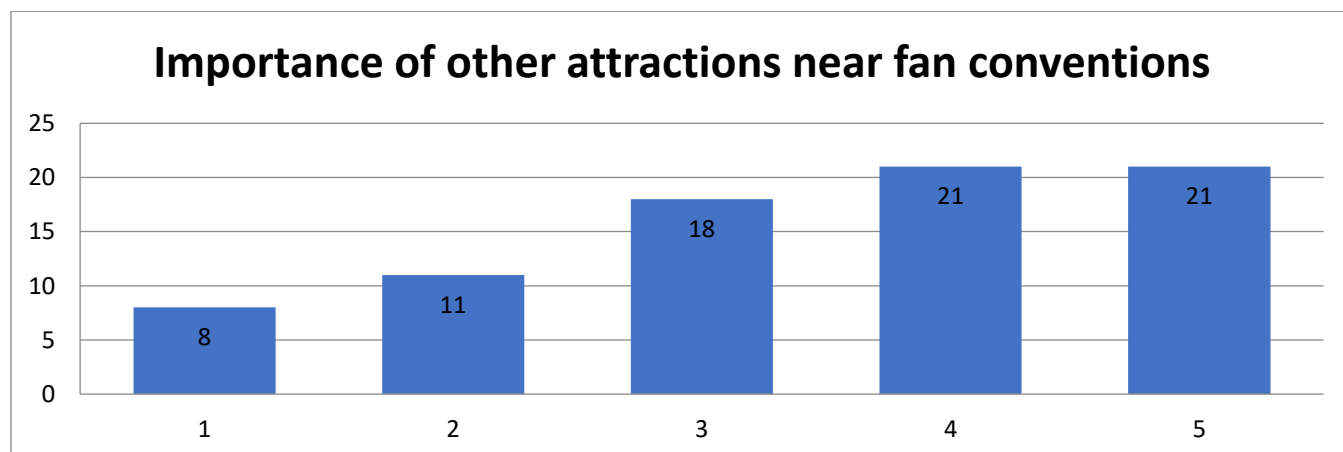
Then, the influence of location when choosing fan conventions is taken into account. The answers are shown on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning it does not influence their choice at all, and 5 meaning it influences their choice very much. Here most of the answers are found from average influence (number 3 on the scale) to very large influence. 48.8% of respondents said their location strongly or very strongly influenced their fan convention selection. It is possible to conclude that the connection of the location to fan conventions is essential.

Figure 13. Influence of location when choosing fan conventions



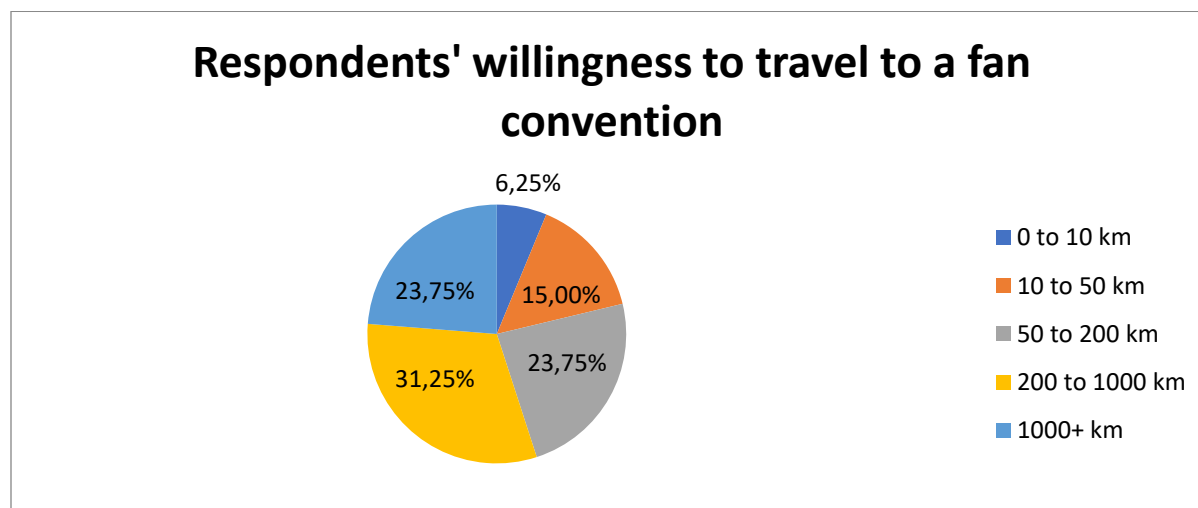
Source: Created by the author

The second-to-last question of this survey was to examine how important other attractions near fan conventions were to respondents. Figure 14 shows that the answers are very similar to the previous question's answers. The answers are, once again, shown on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "other attractions are not important at all" and 5 being "other attractions are very important". 52.6% of respondents said that other attractions near fan conventions are important or very important. It is also possible to draw the conclusion that the connection of other attractions to fan conventions is essential.

Figure 14. Importance of other attractions near fan conventions

Source: Created by the author

The last question asked respondents to determine how many kilometres they were willing to travel to participate in a fan convention (Figure 15). The most responses were for 200-1000 km with 31.25%; 50-200 km and 1000+ km both had 23.75%, 10-50 km collected 15% of responses and 0-10 km 6.25% of responses. Most respondents would travel at least 50 km to visit the fan convention.

Figure 15. Respondents' willingness to travel to a fan convention

Source: Created by the author

4.3 Research restrictions

The biggest problem with data collection was collecting enough responses. Despite sharing the survey online and on social media in multiple ways, it was necessary to further motivate potential respondents to complete the survey.

4.4 Discussion

The survey was conducted on 80 people who were mostly high schoolers or undergraduates between 18 to 24 years of age. This is similar to most of the people who also attend fan conventions in the USA. However, people in Croatia are not as familiar with fan conventions as those in the USA in general. Fan conventions in Croatia are very limited, so the majority of respondents have not attended any, and even fewer have been to the USA. The most well-known fan convention according to the survey was Comic-Con, with over 3 times the results over any other convention. The only Croatian fan convention that the respondents identified was Infogamer, mentioned 3 times. The location of a convention is very important for those attending it, as well as other attractions located near it. Some of the most popular places in the USA to visit are New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Florida. Those places have a lot of natural and cultural attractions along with social events, including fan conventions, which are all highly valued among respondents.

5. CONCLUSION

Fan conventions have become a popular modern type of gathering that is slowly being created and developed globally. Throughout history to this day, fan conventions are the most relevant in the United States. Although the biggest fan convention, Comiket, is located in Japan, the conventions in the US are much better known and there are more in number. Fan conventions were created for the first time in the US for science fiction works that began to get attention there. Throughout the history of fan conventions, it is possible to see that development was initially most often based on the growth, quantity and popularity of science fiction works, and later comic books, video games, and technology. The U.S. was at the top at all times in terms of the development of these media, and so fan conventions got a lot of attention there.

As for the current types of fan conventions, comic, gaming, anime, and science fiction conventions are the most dominant. The oldest types of these, and in general, are science fiction conventions, which have remained at the top from the very beginning to the present day. Science fiction remained relevant because the genre itself expanded from books to movies and video games that also became very popular. Today, there are also many smaller types of conventions to satisfy as many interests as possible, but they, depending on the size, are sometimes difficult to sort out due to differences in the name or combinations of elements from other fan conventions.

According to the demographic of the participants of fan conventions, it is possible to see that the audience of fan conventions is quite diverse. It has been found that over time, the demographics of these events have changed in the direction that more and more different people want to participate in. Most of the participants belong to the age group between 18 and 49. Less common groups of visitors to these events are children and older adults.

For the last goal, it was necessary to determine how much influence the location has on the success of fan conventions. Here, the most results are seen from the survey, where respondents often expressed that location has an average, strong or very strong influence on fan convention selection. Fan conventions have also developed better in affordable locations due to tourism, conditions, or settlements that already exist there. Survey respondents also responded very similarly when looking for how important other attractions near fan conventions were to them.

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ATTACHMENT

Survey

Research on fan convention tourism

Dear participant,

I would kindly ask you to take 5 - 10 minutes to fill out a short anonymous survey on fan conventions and tourism related to them. This research is carried out for the purpose of creating a final paper. The research is carried out by Vilim Hruškar, a student in the 3rd year of undergraduate professional study of tourism and sports management. The aim of the survey is to find out who are the most frequent participants in fan conventions, what are the key interests and attractions, and how much the location affects the tourism of fan conventions.

I thank you in advance for your time and effort!

Gender

- Man
- Woman

Age

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-65
- More than 65

Level of acquired education

- Without school
- Elementary school
- High school
- Undergraduate study
- Graduate study
- Postgraduate study

Employment status

- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Pensioner

How many times do you annually travel for touristic purposes?

- 0 to 1
- 2 to 3
- 4 to 5
- 6+

Have you ever traveled to the USA for touristic purposes?

Yes

No

How familiar are you with fan conventions?

1 2 3 4 5

Not familiar at all Very familiar

If possible, list some fan conventions you are familiar with.

Vaš odgovor _____

Have you ever taken part in a fan convention?

Yes

No

What do you find attractive at fan conventions? (Multiple choice.)

- Comics / books
- Video games
- Board games
- Meeting people
- Technology
- Cosplay
- Exclusive products
- Anime
- Ostalo: _____

Specify some destinations in the USA you would like to visit.

Vaš odgovor _____

What do you find important when choosing a tourist destination? (Multiple choice.)

- Nature
- Sea
- Culture
- Urban environment
- Social events
- History
- Sports
- Health
- Ostalo: _____

How much does the location impact your choice of fan convention?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- It has no impact It has a big impact

How important do you find other attractions near fan conventions?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Unimportant Very important

How far are you willing to travel to visit a fan convention?

- 0 to 10 km
- 10 to 50 km
- 50 to 200 km
- 200 to 1000 km
- 1000+ km

Thank you!