

Reception of *The Hobbit* trilogy: Brazilian data¹

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Abstract:

This article presents the Brazilian results of The World Hobbit Project. Two dimensions are investigated: the quantitative data related to the 12 closed questions in the global questionnaire, along with a discussion about one of the open questions, which highlights the explanations Brazilians give in defining the film genres that are linked or not linked to the trilogy. The aim is to emphasize the characteristics of Brazilian data revealed by the closed questions, and then to address some of these aspects using a qualitative approach, based on the chosen open question. It is expected that these data will reveal the main evidence of Brazilian peculiarities in relation to the trilogy, along with audience perception of the films. The analytical approach was determined in accordance with nationality as opposed to language or country of residence, that is, answers analyzed were those from questionnaires where the respondent indicated they were Brazilian. This scenario highlights possible Brazilian elements in term of the films' reception and, based on this discussion, investigates how the trilogy was perceived by Brazilians.

Keywords: *The Hobbit*; reception of the trilogy; Brazilian audience.

1. Introduction

Studies of film reception are not common in Brazil, unlike research into other media and genres. Even though academic training and research developments on film began in the 1960s and 70s (MASCARELLO, 2005), its traditional focus relies on film analysis, theory and esthetics. According to Mascarello, Brazil ‘traditionally studies television audiences’, but ‘[...] audiences continue to be disregarded as an object of study of film studies in the country’ (MASCARELLO, 2005, p. 131). He also emphasizes the small number of Brazilian researchers in graduate programs developing studies in film reception. This is reinforced by Bamba (2013), who states that ‘Reception theories [in film] are far from forming a homogeneous and well-defined field’ (BAMBA, 2013, p. 9).²

Thus, Brazil’s participation in this research project represents a contribution towards a deeper understanding of the relationship between subjects and film consumption in the country, especially because Brazilians’ relationship with film narratives – particularly with American productions – is quite significant. Surveys on media habits in Brazil conducted by its major research institutes indicate the importance of film to Brazilians.

A study conducted in late 2015 by the State Trade Federation of Rio de Janeiro (Fecomércio-RJ), in partnership with Ipsos Institute, revealed a 100% increase in the number of moviegoers, rising from 17% in 2007 to 35% in 2015.³

These data are reinforced by the Media Data Annual Report for 2016 (Mídia Dados 2016) which indicates that almost 20% of people reported going to the movies at least once a month in 2015 (Men – 18% and Women – 16%). Research by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE, 2016) also found that despite the advent of downloads and higher ticket prices, going to the movies is one of the main pastimes among Brazilians, particularly for action/adventure films, marked as a favorite genre by 68% of interviewees.⁴

In this favorable scenario for film consumption, *The Hobbit* trilogy sold over 9,400,000 tickets in Brazil. The last part alone, *The Battle of Five Armies*, which premiered in December 2014, brought more than three million people to movie theatres⁵, demonstrating the story’s significance among Brazilians, which are confirmed by the national results of The World Hobbit Project.

The first part of this paper presents quantitative results on the films’ reception in Brazil. A comparative analysis was carried out, considering data from Brazil and from the other countries. From the 36,109 questionnaires answered in the 46 countries participating in the study, 1,223⁶ were from Brazilian participants (3.4% of the overall number of respondents), considering those who appointed Brazilian nationality.⁷

In order to infer the statistical validity of the differences and similarities found, a chi-square test was used (BARBETTA, 2007), which is not a parametric test⁸, so as to identify possible causal relations between ordinal and nominal qualitative variables. An analysis of standardized residuals was also carried out in order to identify in which questions Brazil is effectively far from the average on the answers to the values of the other countries.

In the second part, we present an analysis of responses to one open question that explores the justifications for two multiple-choice questions⁹, and asks about genre

classification according to the Brazilian participants. In this analysis, we considered all answers about the three most frequently indicated categories by Brazilians to classify the trilogy, which are: 'Part of Tolkien's legend-world', 'World of fantasy' and 'Action-adventure'. Since up to three classifications could be indicated, some of the answers appear in more than one category.¹⁰ Thus, as the text follows, the results are presented as a whole, and not by each classification.

2. Reception Research in Latin America: some theoretical assumptions

In Latin America, there are five major theoretical perspectives on the relationships between audiences and communications media (JACKS and ESCOSTEGUY, 2005), from which the most prominent and influential in Brazil are cultural consumption and reception studies.

Cultural consumption, as proposed by Argentine-born academic Néstor García Canclini, addresses 'a set of social and cultural processes involved in the appropriation and use of products' (2006, p. 80). All consumption is cultural because, regardless of what is consumed, the process includes symbolic distinction, it socially integrates and communicates, targets desires and ritualizes satisfaction on a regular basis and in an articulated manner (2006). Nonetheless, Garcia Canclini considers that symbolic value outweighs over use values in cultural consumption. He argues that the independence and autonomy of the modern artistic and intellectual fields have created independent circuits for the production and circulation of art, literature and knowledge.

According to Garcia Canclini (2006)¹¹, cultural consumption includes media consumption processes, which can contextualize the analysis of mass media reception (TOALDO, JACKS, 2013). Because of its particularities, media consumption can be understood as a branch of cultural studies, as Garcia Canclini (2006) argues that although economic demands interfere in the production, style and circulation of media products, they have a certain autonomy in their own dynamics of production and consumption that enables them to be considered cultural goods.

In regards to reception studies, the most developed perspective in the region, both Mexican Guillermo Orozco and Spanish-Columbian Jesús Martín-Barbero propose addressing the issue through mediation analysis. The two models (with different theoretical and epistemological origins) are highly compatible and can be overlapped, with distinct yet complementary analytical dimensions.

The first states that the main implication in viewing the audience as subject is to consider it in an individually and collectively conditioned 'situation' (OROZCO, 1991). Another implication is that an audience is formed in a variety of ways and changes over time. These moments are transcended because they merge with everyday practices, are responsible for negotiating meaning, and for the appropriation of or resistance to mass content.

As a social institution, which produces meaning and gains legitimacy with the audience, communication media are also mediators. In addition to being agents for reproducing reality, they also produce it, and entail rational and irrational reactions in

receivers. Receivers, in turn, are also responsible for psychological mediation determined by social and cultural aspects, resulting from their interaction with the environment they live in as part of a constant, dialectical process.

Much like Orozco, Martín-Barbero (1987) also has proposed understanding communication as based on social practices, through which the receiver is considered the producer of meaning and everyday life, the primary research space. Media 'uses', therefore, are vital for the analysis of the appropriation of receivers, who re-elaborate, reshape and redefine mass content according to their cultural experience, which is the foundation of this appropriation.

A central concept for Martín-Barbero, mediation can be understood as a means of overcoming the dichotomy between production and consumption, or between the logics of production and of use. Mediations structure, organize and reorganize receivers' perception of their reality and can also implicitly or explicitly assign value to this reality. As such, 'research on uses forces us to move from a media space to the place where meaning is produced' (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1987, p. 213).

Among the different mediations that comprise the so-called Mediation Theory, cultural competence stands out as the first form of mediation present in its analytical model (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1987), still seen in its most recent version (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2003). This refers to the capacity for interpretation and appropriation by receivers in relation to media content, consisting of a series of configuring elements, particularly cultural matrices and industrial formats, two additional mediations proposed by the model. Cultural competence is shaped by the cultural practices of receivers, fed by knowledge, memories, imagination, etc. which arise according to social classes, age, and gender, among other elements (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1992).

Thus, Martín-Barbero (1990) argues that meaning in reception processes is inscribed in the making of subjects. According to the author, analysis of media discourse leads to the understanding of meaning which, though important, does not fully encompass the process of producing meaning: 'in order to address the meaning of communication one must first address the meaning of communication to people. Meaning is always the relationship between a text and a situation, with enunciators in a temporal and spatial context' (1990, p. 36).

The author addresses the issue of meanings from a social mediation perspective (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2003), involving interaction between sociocultural structures and dynamics to produce fabricated meaning through the reception of media products. The different dimensions that interact during this process create a varied system of exchanges that moves away from the idea of vertical communication, where the receiver is dependent or easily manipulated. As such, Martín-Barbero (1990) defends the notion of approaching the receiver in order to fully grasp the meaning in messages, since it is important to consider those who respond and what is done in response to it, that is, the practices of subjects move to the forefront.

Although the study on *The Hobbit* can also be integrated into the media

consumption perspective, the specific objectives that guide the investigation affiliate it with what has been considered as a reception study. Toaldo and Jacks (2013) report that media consumption research considers phenomena from a broader perspective than reception studies 'precisely because it focuses on relationships with the media as opposed to messages, to use a simplified view of the process' (2013, pp. 7-8). Similarly, Leal (1995) argues that a reception study aims to reconstruct the way in which a specific message from a media product is interpreted, understood and experienced by a group of people, whereas in media consumption the focus is not on the appropriation of specific programs or genres, but rather on understanding the overall meaning of communications technology and the receivers' experience in their everyday lives.

Thus, although the analysis of Brazilian data is based on the same questionnaire used in other countries without highlighting the distinctive traits of its national culture, it is guided by reception theories developed in Latin America that are intensely present in Brazilian research. Thus, a receiver-centered mediation is applied in this analysis, that is, the cultural competence to explore the possibilities of meaning production by the participants, emphasizing that many of these participants are close to associating their competences to those identified in interpretive communities consisting of fans, the so-called fandoms (JENKINS, 2013).

3. Reception à la Brazilian: initial results

The analysis carried out in this study aims to compose a scenario of the audience of *The Hobbit* in Brazil.¹² This analysis focused on answers to multiple-choice questions in which Brazilians are significantly different from the world average.¹³ As previously indicated, one of the open questions¹⁴ was also analyzed, focusing on how Brazilians classify the movies in terms of their film genre.

For that, it is important to have specific data on the profile of the Brazilian group. It mostly included participants aged 16-25 (53.6%) and 26-35 years old (27.1%), and was composed by 56.7% of men and 43.3% of women. The data corroborate other national surveys related to film consumption among Brazilians.¹⁵

In regards to their occupations, 51.6% are students, 19.7% are liberal professionals, and, among other occupational categories, 9.2% work in creative industries; 8.2% in administration and 5.3% are self-employed. In terms of level of education, most participants are university students (45.1%). Such predominance can be explained by the greater access to the Internet of this segment in the country. A study indicates that 'among university-educated users, 72% access the internet every day, with a daily average of 5h41 from Monday to Friday' (BRASIL, 2015, p. 7). Among those with lower levels of education, this figure falls significantly to 5% and 3h22, respectively. In terms of age, '65% of young people aged 16 to 25 years old go online every day for an average of 5h51 on weekdays' (BRASIL, 2015, p. 7), which also reinforces the predominant age group among participants (16 to 25-year-olds).

Considering the quantitative data, which departed from chi-square tests, the overview in which there are significant differences between Brazilians and the other nationalities is the following:

Q.3: Please choose up to three reasons for seeing The Hobbit films, from among the following

Alternatives	Brazil (%)	Others (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
I wanted to experience their special features	16,6	12,4	203	4.337	0,000
I am connected to a community that has been waiting for the films	27,1	34	331	11858	0,000
I love Tolkien's work as a whole	73,8	70,2	903	24483	0,006
I like to see big new films when they come out	20,4	13,2	250	4592	0,000
There was such a build-up, I had to see them	17,3	7,2	212	2504	0,000
I knew the book, and had to see what the films would be like	60,3	52	738	18158	0,000
I love Peter Jackson's films	17,5	26,7	214	9311	0,000
An actor that I particularly like was in them:	18,6	25,3	228	8831	0,000
Richard Armitage	3,8	5,8	47	2030	0,004
Benedict Cumberbatch	7,4	9,9	90	3469	0,003
Martin Freeman	7,5	13,4	92	4691	0,000
Evangeline Lilly	2,2	3,6	27	1252	0,010
James Nesbitt	0,2	1,2	3	416	0,002
Aidan Turner	1,7	3,1	21	1083	0,006
Hugo Weaving	2,9	4,4	36	1550	0,012
Another?					
Please specify	2,5	4,2	30	1477	0,002

Among the reasons that led Brazilians to watch the movie, the data that call attention the most in terms of discrepancies are: expectations for the trilogy (Brazil 17.3%, others 7.2%); interest in major film productions (Brazil 20.4%, others 13.2%); interest triggered by the book (Brazil 60.3%, others 52%); experience with special effects (Brazil 16.6%, others

12.4%); love for Tolkien’s work as a whole (Brazil 73.8%, others 70.2%). On the other hand, the data suggest a lower interest by Brazilians, compared to other countries, in terms of: interest in Peter Jackson as a director (Brazil 17.5%, others 26.7%); the idea of community construction around the books and movies (Brazil 27.1%, others 34%); and special interest in an actor or actress (Brazil 18.6%, others 25.3%). A significant difference was found in seven out of the 14 actors and actresses in the questionnaire, and Brazil shows lower figures in all of them in comparison to other countries.

It can be inferred that the ‘spectacular’ qualities of the film can be implied in the interests expressed by Brazilians. They showed a greater interest in the film as such, since the most important factors for them were the expectation for the film, its special effects and the fact that it is a huge production. In addition, there was little interest in the movie director and cast, and in connection with communities formed around the film.

As we can see below, responses to the book *The Hobbit* are explored, since parts of the data address previous readings of Tolkien’s books (see Q.3) in the answers given by Brazilians, as opposed to data in the other countries.

Q.18: If you did, what did you think of it?					
Alternatives	BR (%)	OTHERS (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
Not read	24,9	22,5	305	7865	0,000
Awful	0,1	0,2	1	53	
Poor	0,5	0,6	6	200	
Average	1,4	5,2	17	1818	
Good	18,9	30	231	10483	
Excellent	54,2	41,5	663	14467	

The answers given by Brazilians who read *The Hobbit* reveal differences from other countries. Brazilians ranked the movie as ‘Excellent’¹⁶ more frequently than other participants, the only answer where Brazilians gave higher results. At the other end of the scale, other countries classify it as ‘good’¹⁷ and ‘average’¹⁸ more often than Brazilians do.

Q.17: Have you read The Hobbit?					
Alternatives	BR (%)	OTHERS (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
Had it read to me	0,5	1,7	6	609	0,000
Read once	29,8	27,1	364	9471	
Read more than once	41,2	44,9	504	15667	
Still reading	3,6	3,1	44	1076	
Not read at all	12,9	13,1	158	4573	
Planning to read	12	10	147	3490	

Moreover, according to the data, the number of people ‘planning to read’¹⁹ the book is higher among the Brazilians who have not read it yet, which reinforces their interest by the book. On the other hand, Brazilian results are distant from the other countries in the categories ‘had it read to me’²⁰ and ‘read more than once’²¹, which were less frequently mentioned in the case of Brazil.

Going back to the movie, concerning the classification of the trilogy, the following classifications stood out in terms of genre:

Q.4: Which of the following come closest to capturing the kind of films you feel *The Hobbit* trilogy are? Please choose up to three.

Alternatives	Brazil (%)	Others (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
Fairytale	4,2	8	51	2791	0,000
Prequel / sequel	15,7	24,6	192	8576	0,000
Star attraction	2,2	4,5	27	1564	0,000
Part of Tolkien’s legend-world	70,4	61,3	861	21380	0,000
Multimedia franchise	7,3	11,3	89	3944	0,000
Action-adventure	31,5	24,1	385	8393	0,000
Peter Jackson movie	15,5	22,6	189	7894	0,000
Literary adaptation	44,1	23,8	539	8303	0,000
Coming-of-age story	5,2	3,7	64	1300	0,007
Hollywood blockbuster	13,9	19,4	170	6754	0,000

Data indicate ‘Part of Tolkien’s legend-world’ (Brazil 70.4%, others 61.3%); ‘Literary adaptation’ (Brazil 44.1%, others 23.8%); ‘Action-adventure’ (Brazil 31.5%, others 24.1%); and ‘Coming-of-age story’ (Brazil 5.2%, others 3.7%). On the other hand, Brazilians’ classifications are most distant from: ‘Prequel/sequel’ (Brazil 15.7%, others 24.6%); ‘Multimedia franchise’ (Brazil 7.3%, others 11.3%); ‘Peter Jackson movie’ (Brazil 15.5%, others 22.5%); ‘Hollywood blockbuster’ (Brazil 13.5%, others 19.4%); ‘Star attraction’ (Brazil 2.2%, others 4.5%); and ‘Fairytale’ (Brazil 4.2%, others 8%).

The sense of a diachronic relationship with the movie is an outstanding feature among Brazilian participants, be it in previously reading the book, following Tolkien’s work or classifying it as a coming-of-age story. Although not very noticeable, there is a tendency towards ranking it as an action and adventure movie. Another result that supports previous answers is that Peter Jackson does not seem to mobilize them, nor do the cast. In addition, they do not regard the movie as a blockbuster or multimedia franchise, even though more Brazilians watched the movie because it is a great film production, as indicated by Q3 (above). It is important to highlight that fewer Brazilians classified it as a ‘Fairytale’ in comparison to the other countries studied.

Q.5: Are there any of these that you definitely would not choose?
Again, please pick up to three.

Alternatives	BR (%)	Others (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
Fairytale	46,7	28,6	571	9968	0,000
World of fantasy	2,9	1,4	35	472	0,000
Prequel / sequel	5,8	3,6	71	1262	0,000
Star attraction	26,6	19,6	325	6854	0,000
Family film	13,1	15,5	160	5403	0,022
Action-adventure	3,5	5,8	43	2009	0,001
Peter Jackson movie	7,4	3	90	1056	0,000
Literary adaptation	6,1	10,5	75	3657	0,000
Coming-of-age story	13,1	38,2	160	13341	0,000
Hollywood blockbuster	21,9	13,3	268	4652	0,000

Concerning the classifications which Brazilians believe do not apply to the film, data indicate that Brazilians are not within the expected average in the following categories: 'Fairytale' (Brazil 46.7%, others 28.6%); 'Hollywood blockbuster' (Brazil 21.9%, others 13.3%); 'Star attraction' (Brazil 26.6%, others 19.6%); 'Peter Jackson movie' (Brazil 7.4%, others 3%); 'Prequel/sequel' (Brazil 5.8%, others 3.6%); and 'World of fantasy' (Brazil 2.9%, others 1.4%). Considering the same question, the answers from other countries are also quite different from Brazilian participants' by disagreeing with 'Coming-of-age story' (Brazil 13.1%, others 38.2%); 'Literary adaptation' (Brazil 6.1%, others 10.5%); 'Action-adventure' (Brazil 3.5%, others 5.8%); and 'Family film' (Brazil 13.1%, others 15.5%).

Q.12: Have you taken part in any of these other activities connected with *The Hobbit* films?

Alternatives	BR (%)	OTHERS (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
Producing fan art	5,6	7,8	69	2707	0,006
Blogging	5,5	8,4	67	2934	0,000
Role-playing	21,7	9,8	265	3432	0,000
Collecting merchandise	26,2	21,6	321	7519	0,000
Commenting online	39,4	30	482	10470	0,000
Gaming	32,9	23,4	402	8146	0,000
Making fan videos	1,2	2,1	15	747	0,029
Visiting filming locations	3	5	37	1727	0,002
None of these	30,4	33,4	372	11638	0,032

Data shows that participants from Brazil were coherent in their answers, except for two categories: ‘World of fantasy’, in which Brazil stood out in relation to the other countries, and ‘Family film’, which was more frequently indicated by them. This is because participants agreed and disagreed with all the other categories in question Q.4.

In regards to the activities related to the universe of the movies, Brazilians mostly engage in two actions concerning games: ‘Role-playing’ (Brazil 21.7%, others 9.8%) and ‘Gaming’ (Brazil 32.9%, others 23.4%). Other options included ‘Commenting online’ (Brazil 39.4%, others 30%) and ‘Collecting merchandise’ (Brazil 26.2%, World 21.6%). On the other hand, the other countries appear to be distant from the answers by Brazilians in three activities. Two of them are related to generation of content: ‘Blogging’ (Brazil 5.5%, others 8.4%) and ‘Producing fan art’ (Brazil 5.6%, others 7.8%) – besides ‘Visiting filming locations’ (Brazil 3%, others 5%). There were also differences in terms of people who did not engage in any of these activities (Brazil 30.4%, others 33.4%).

The data possibly leads to the conclusion that Brazilians’ engagement does not go further into creative practices that involve the production of content, which are considered the most relevant ones to fan culture. When it comes to visiting filming locations, the most likely explanation is simply the distance between Brazil and New Zealand.

Q.13: What is the role that you think fantasy stories can play today?					
Choose up to three which are nearest to your opinion.					
Alternatives	BR (%)	OTHERS (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
They are a way of enriching the imagination	76,4	67,3	934	23483	0,000
They are a way of experiencing and exploring emotions	44,8	29,3	548	10239	0,000
They are a source of hopes and dreams for changing our world	25,8	35	315	12200	0,000
They are a way of escaping	41,5	54,6	508	19035	0,000
They are a form of shared entertainment	28,5	25,3	349	8831	0,011
They allow us to explore different attitudes and ideas	35,8	28,8	438	10061	0,000
They are a way of creating alternative worlds	42	45,9	514	16029	0,007
No particular role	0,7	2,2	9	759	0,001

The data also showed distinctions in the answers on the role of fantasy stories today. Brazilians indicated that they are a way of ‘enriching the imagination’ (Brazil 76.4%, others 67.3%); they are a way of ‘experiencing and exploring emotions’ (Brazil 44.8%, others

29.3%); they are a ‘form of shared entertainment’ (Brazil 28.5%, others 25.3%); and they ‘allow us to explore different attitudes and ideas’ (Brazil 28.5%, others 25.3%). On the other hand, other countries’ averages indicated that fantasy entails an alternative role to what is real/concrete, as they are a ‘way of escaping’ (Brazil 41.5%, others 54.6%); they are a ‘way of creating alternative worlds’ (Brazil 42%, others 45.9%); and, to a lesser extent, this feature is also present in the idea that they are a ‘source of hopes and dreams for changing our world’ (Brazil 25.8%, others 35%).

Q.14: How important was it for you to follow stories and debates around the films?²²					
Alternatives	BR (%)	OTHERS (%)	N (BR)	N (others)	P Chi-square
Not at all	14,8	17,7	181	6171	0,000
Slightly	18,3	25,1	224	8763	
Reasonably	29,7	29,3	363	10225	
Very	25,5	17,8	312	6204	
Extremely	11,7	10,1	143	3523	

In regards to the importance of following the stories and debates around the trilogy, Brazilians are quite distant from the average of the other countries, as they indicate the answer ‘very’²³ more often than ‘slightly’²⁴ and ‘not at all’.²⁵ These data may indicate more interest in connecting with the communities created around the movies, although they disagree with the answers in Q.3. In this question, Brazilians indicated the option ‘I am connected to a community that has been waiting for the films’²⁶ less often than the average of the other countries.

3.3 Audience competences²⁷

In order to comprehend some of the competences of the participants in relation to the movie, the quantitative data previously presented (Table Q.4) are revisited and considered through Martín-Barbero’s perspective, so as to explore the reasons for their differences and similarities (question Q.6). In this case, only answers of the three most prominent classifications (Q.4) were analyzed, namely: ‘Part of Tolkien’s legend-world’, ‘World of fantasy’ and ‘Action-adventure’. The data of question Q.4 are thoroughly presented in this section.

In terms of recognition of the film trilogy, a sign of the competences developed by the participants, the data indicated the respondents mastered the narrative universe, since 70.4% (861) classified the trilogy as ‘part of Tolkien’s legend-world’, 44,1% (539) as a ‘literary adaptation’, 15.7% (192) as a ‘film series’, and 15.5% (189) as a ‘Peter Jackson film’.

With respect to the technical, esthetic and production aspects of the trilogy, 30.3% (370) categorized it as having ‘spectacular scenery’; 13.9% (170) as a ‘Hollywood

blockbuster'; 9.3% (114) as 'digital innovation'; 7.3% (89) as a 'media franchise'; and 2.2% (27) as featuring 'famous actors'.

For genre-related aspects, 64.2% (785) classified it as a 'world of fantasy'; 31.5% (385) as 'action-adventure'; 5.2% (64) as a 'story that follows a character'; 4.2% (51) as a 'fairytale'; 3.4% (41) as a 'family film'; and 2.4% (29) as a 'children's story'.

In categories considered less consistent with the films, the previous answers were confirmed in that these categories were the most cited: 'children's story' with 60.3% (738); 'fairytale' at 46.7% (571); and 'famous actors' with 26.6% (325)²⁸.

Concerning the answers justified by the participants in the open questions of the questionnaire²⁹, the three most prominent categories for classifying the trilogy were Part of Tolkien's legend-world, World of fantasy and Action-adventure³⁰, as previously mentioned. 'Part of Tolkien's legend-world' predominated with 861 citations; however, only 691 respondents explained their choice. This was followed by 'world of fantasy', selected by 785 participants, where only 135 explained their selection. The third category, 'action-adventure', was chosen by 385 respondents, of whom 306 explained their choice.

These justifications were analyzed and classified into three domains: a) the cinematic artefact: the relation with the artefact and its universe (news reports, gossip, fandoms), which leads to the construction of a repertoire of specific (literary, audiovisual, narrative, etc) knowledge and expertise; b) genre grammar: made evident through knowledge on the film genre identified; and c) film experience: relates to the habit of watching movies and is entailed by the construction and manifestation of a personal taste, as well as in informal knowledge, and not by a repertoire of expertise.

It is expressed in perceptual abilities and appropriation and is formed based on three domains: a) the cinematic trilogy: involving the relationship between the trilogy and its surrounding universe (articles, interesting facts, fandoms), building a repertoire of specific and specialized knowledge (narratives, audiovisual, literary, etc.); b) genre-related wordings: revealed in knowledge related to the film genre identified; and c) the 'cinema experience': the habit of watching films, expressed in the construction and manifestation of personal taste and informal knowledge, and not imposed by a more specialized repertoire.

Analysis of these explanations shows the extent to which cultural competence (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2003) involves the production of meaning by participants in relation to the trilogy.

3.3.1 The cinematic trilogy domain

This domain is largely revealed in the answers categorized as 'Part of Tolkien's legend-world', although it is also present in other classifications. The data indicate that the different expertises that shape the production of meaning are formed prior to watching the film and based on audiovisual, film and literary knowledge, familiarity with Tolkien's work, as well as RPG games, among others.

In general, it emerged that reading Tolkien's work is indicated as the main source of knowledge construction, which explains the existence of a more competent audience

resulting from their long-standing relationship with the author's stories and universe. In some explanations the notion of fan is clearly evident, corroborating the impression that this competence is formed through a diachronic relationship with the work and its references, since, besides the consumption of Tolkien's work, they can identify other cultural products at hand, such as books and films, as here:

I have read the book and watched the films, I'm a fan of all Tolkien's work and I know what it's about. But, once again, films and books are two different things. The book is geared more toward children, and the films are more "graphic" with all the battles. [#847]

The competence required to move between literary and audiovisual enjoyment may have been a determining factor in some cases. If on the one hand some answers clearly demonstrate the idea of two different products, there are also statements in which recipients demonstrate the interrelationship between book and movie, suggesting that the movie enabled an audiovisual representation of a universe once restricted solely to the imagination of readers. That can be noticed through statements arguing that it became possible to imagine the characters' faces and bodies because of the actors and actresses:

From now on the actors have given a face and voice to characters whose appearance, voice and body language I could only imagine before. [#2910]

In an attempt to explore the different types of domains involved in the meanings mobilized by Brazilians, the following domains were established:

a) ***cinophilia***: knowledge involving notions of narrative, screenplays, framing, and photography, among other characteristics that comprise the films. Data on production, budget, locations, box office information and the use of special effects also contribute to this type of domain.

b) ***literary***: prior literary knowledge, not necessarily exclusively related to the trilogy, and therefore connect their experience with the film adaptation to their knowledge of literary genre.

c) ***fannishness***³¹: 'worship' of Tolkien's work and/or the director Peter Jackson and knowledge of particularities in both the book and film adaptation, indicating the differences between the two. Knowledge of details about the life of the author/director and their other work, etc., in addition to adopting a position on the adaptation of the work, both for *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*.

3.3.2 Genre-related Wording Domain

This is a highly specific domain that seems to encompass several forms of expertise, all related to knowledge of Tolkien's fictional universe. This is evident in classifications of the film as 'action-adventure', but also appears to a lesser degree in answers that categorize it as a 'world of fantasy' and 'part of Tolkien's legend-world'.

Although this domain is less evident in the dataset, it is noteworthy because of the importance attributed by some receivers to the power of the plot and the fantasy atmosphere created by the author. These types of answers feature discussions or explanations about the classification selected, since for these participants the trilogy is *obviously* part of Tolkien's legend-world, since the author has a specific and unique style in creating fantasy that is easily recognizable to insiders. As such, there are no rational arguments on which they can base their classification of the film as 'Part of Tolkien's legend-world', for example. It is almost as if Tolkien's stories (and subsequently the work of director Peter Jackson) have created a subgenre within the fantasy category:

Tolkien's work (and Peter Jackson's adaptation) have a unique esthetic that almost establishes the films as a separate genre within fantasy cinema. [#3483]

This statement indicates more logical reasoning, where the film is categorized as 'world of fantasy' reflecting the classification of the book it is based on, which still involves genre-related wording though more centered in the literary sphere.

Another type of response that reflects this domain is disagreement in classifying the trilogy as a 'children's story' because, in the understanding of these receivers, the initial intention of the book plot, created as a bedtime story for the author's children, is overshadowed by the power of the adventure in the films:

The Hobbit was initially a children's story. Seeing its adaptation to film, after *The Lord of the Rings*, this is no longer possible. It's an action-adventure film because it's an action-adventure film! [#2338]

According to the data, the genre-related wording domain is constructed based on informal knowledge but primarily by the practice of the recipients in their consumption of both the books and films.

3.3.3 Cinema-experience Domain

This domain was identified in the three classifications, but is more prominent in explanations regarding the film as an 'action-adventure'. Here, personal experience, opinion and taste are mobilized and this preference often transcends the saga of the universe (both literary and film), falling under the fantasy genre as a whole.

Explanations range between answers with very little detail, describing classifications as based on ‘personal opinion’ or those that cite peculiarities of the film, such as special effects, the beauty of the locations featured, and fantasy worlds that provide a unique film experience. There are also references to peripheral features of the plot, such as the creation of the medieval world and its scenarios:

I really like fantasy worlds, particularly those that Tolkien created in this supernatural medieval world, and I pause the film in places like inside Erebor, the elfin woods, Rivendell, the Shire; I’d love to live in one of those cozy hobbit holes (laughs).[#35432]

Thus, in this domain in particular, the production of meaning by receivers may be related to very personal appropriations, such as the experience of ‘transporting’ oneself to the fantasy world and esthetically enjoying it:

Another thing that I really notice in all the film adaptations of Tolkien’s work are depictions of the landscapes described. I love visually entering an Ent forest or a field that Gandalf and Shadowfax are galloping across; it’s just incredible. [#32803]

It can also be inferred that the type of relationship some receivers establish with the film trilogy seems to essentially incorporate the dimension of desire which, from a sociocultural perspective of consumption (GARCIA CANCLINI, 2006), is one of the theories that could explain this.³² In this case, reception of the films as an object of desire means that the film experience³³, defined here as the cinema-experience, and the imaginary reflect a dreamlike space and the projection of fantasies:

The idea of an ancient world without modern technology and magical appeal in the medieval scenarios and imaginary beings has always appealed to me...it’s so strong in my imagination that I sometimes feel I could go there...be a wizard or a knight...search for treasure and ancient knowledge...maintaining a code of honor and conduct, and always defending those in need. [#35207]

Finally, even though we are far from draining out all meanings entailed by the more than 1,200 Brazilians who answered the questionnaire, it is possible to outline a panorama of their engagement with the films and the book that originated them. Moreover, we could observe the extent to which this engagement is attached to the configuration of cultural competences, as stated by Martín-Barbero (2003), which, in turn, set the relations with these media products.

Final considerations: *The Hobbit* in Brazil

The scenario formed based on analysis of the film trilogy's reception among Brazilians indicates good acceptance and significant involvement with the narrative universe, since not only the films enjoyed intense consumption and approval, but also other narratives linked to them, available in other types of media.

This consumption involves material issues of access to technology and circulation devices for this content that, combined with the Brazilian social and economic reality, may be decisive in how the narrative is enjoyed. However, it also encompasses cultural dimensions, whereby classification and interpretation of the films are subject to the tradition of the national cinema critique.

However, these circumstances reinforce how well-received these films were by this audience, since there are not only positive statements about the details of their production and distribution, but also efforts to appropriate the narratives, particularly in terms of pursuing information in the form of discussions.

The range of formats of the cultural products, from the book to streaming on a cell phone, contribute to increasing access to the narrative and shared knowledge about it. Mastering information on a film or book distributed across different formats enables better articulation of these elements to identify common factors, which was evident in the audience of *The Hobbit* as a result of the research conducted by the Brazilian team.

This interest and shared information reinforces the affectionate involvement of this audience with the trilogy and indicates the formation of a community capable of articulating the cultural product alongside a repertoire and criteria of local interpretation.

By addressing ways of assessing the trilogy, the study revealed the knowledge of fans regarding its narrative universe. Brazilians demonstrated an intimate knowledge of this universe in its different formats, which is reinforced by the data concerning involvement and forms of engagement surrounding it. Engagement with a cultural object is one of the main characteristics that identify fans.

Particularly noteworthy in the Brazilian data set are indications of fan engagement and the near absence of anti-fans or even of a group of more critical and/or dissatisfied fans, based on the fact that all the responses analyzed showed a predominantly positive stance toward Peter Jackson's work. Nevertheless, it is important to underscore that there was little correlation between the trilogy and the director in questions that enabled this type of connection, particularly in the open question analyzed in this article. In this case, affection-based dimensions of likely fans were more evident in relation to Tolkien's work – both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* – and the fantasy narrative. This reinforces a national scenario of overall appreciation for this type of audiovisual narrative, evident in the worldwide success of both of Peter Jackson's trilogies, as well as other narratives such as Harry Potter and the recent global phenomenon *Game of Thrones*.

Despite the likely national idiosyncrasies, it is believed that the overall acceptance among Brazilians was very similar to the overall results of The World Hobbit Project, whose

data, although not addressed in this article, can be perceived in the overall analysis of the study.

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Notes:

¹ Portuguese-English translated version by Henrique Denis Lucas and Luísa Flores Somavilla.

² These aspects have been reinforced in Brazil by state of the art communications research conducted over the last 20 years. Among the 45 reception studies developed in the then 11

Graduate Communications Program in Brazil in the 1990s, only two dealt with film (JACKS, MENEZES E PIEDRAS, 2008). From 2000 to 2009, while 111 of the 209 reception studies addressed television, only seven highlighted film. (JACKS et al., 2014). A current survey (2010 to 2015, also coordinated by Jacks) indicates a continued scarcity of empirical studies on film audiences. Mascarello (2005) also presents data that reinforce this scenario, based on the annual Socine conference, the main event of the country's academic film society: 'of the universe of 290 articles, only 10 focus on film audiences, of which eight address reception – from a theoretical perspective – and none include any form of empirical research' (p. 131).

According to the author, this demonstrates the 'absence of nationally recognized research in the reception of Brazilians films or films in general'.

³ The survey included 1,200 consumers in 72 municipalities across the country from December 2 to 14, 2015. Source: Agência Brasil. Available at www.agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/cultura/noticia/2016-02/habitos-culturais-crescem-entre-os-brasileiros-de-2007-2015-mostra-pesquisa. Accessed on July 25, 2016.

⁴ 'The study assessed around 20,000 people between August 2014 and September 2015 in the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza and Brasília, as well as inland areas of the South and Southeast'. Source: www.cineclick.com.br/noticias/acao-e-o-genero-de-filme-favorito-dos-brasileiros-constata-ibope. Accessed on July 25, 2015.

⁵ Source: Adoro cinema - www.adorocinema.com/filmes/filme-210516/bilheterias. Accessed on July 25, 2015.

⁶ There was also the indicator country of residence; in such case, 1,208 participants appointed living in Brazil.

⁷ The triangulations between data from Brazil and data from the other countries was carried out by the PhD student Fernando Gonçalves, from the PhD Program in Sociology at UFRGS.

⁸ Which does not require data to be distributed in a normal curve.

⁹ 'Which of the following come closest to capturing the *kind of films* you feel *The Hobbit* trilogy are?' and 'Are there any of these that you definitely would *not* choose'.

¹⁰ Also, when refining such material, answers justifying choices other than the four categories were eliminated.

¹¹ The original article is from 1991.

¹² The only criterion to being able to answer the questionnaire was having watched at least one movie of the trilogy.

¹³ Only questions that reveal differences are considered here. As mentioned before, the chi-square tests indicate the relevance of the Brazilian data in relation to the other countries'. For that, the P-value indicated in the last column is always lower than 0.05.

¹⁴ 'Can you tell us why you've made these choices in Questions 4 [Which of the following come closest to capturing the kind of films you feel *The Hobbit* trilogy are?] and Question 5 [Are there any of these that you definitely would not choose?].

¹⁵ According to Mídia Dados (2016), 70% of Brazilians aged 15-19 go to movie theaters at least once a month, followed by 54%, aged 20-29. In regards to gender, there is a difference between respondents of this study and the profile appointed by Mídia Dados: 52% of women and 48% of men.

¹⁶ Standard Residue: 6,7.

¹⁷ Standard Residue: -6,9.

¹⁸ Standard Residue: -5.7

¹⁹ Standard Residue: 2.1.

²⁰ Standard Residue: -3.2.

²¹ Standard Residue: -1.9.

²² As tables Q.14, Q.16, Q.17 and Q.18 were not focused on multiple-choice answers, the chi-square test was generated by each question, and not by the alternatives, as in previous questions. In order to identify the relevant options, standard residues were generated (the most prominent discrepancies were indicated by figures higher than 1.96 or lower than -1.96).

²³ Standard Residue: 6,1.

²⁴ Standard Residue: -4,6.

²⁵ Standard Residue: -2,3.

²⁶ Other questions that set Brazil away from the other countries are: opinions on the movie *The Lord of the Rings* (Q.16) and how they watched the trilogy (Q.19 and Q.20). These questions are not discussed in this paper for not relating to the specific competencies of Brazilians towards *The Hobbit*.

²⁷ In order to explore meanings attributed by the audience, questions related to the classification of the movie were analyzed: how to classify it or not, in which the participants chose up to three among the alternatives previously presented.

²⁸ The same occurs in questions that required respondents to indicate non-agreement with the film genre: 'action-adventure' with 3.5% (43), 'spectacular scenery' with 3.2% (39) and 'world of fantasy' with 2.9% (35), which were the most cited as possible classifications for the films, as previously indicated.

²⁹ Although the movie was mostly ranked as 'literary adaptation', this category was analyzed in the open question because it was not one of the three most chosen categories in the questionnaires, perhaps for being an obvious answer.

³⁰ The first step was to read the responses and exclude the explanations that did not refer to the three classifications chosen for analysis. This is because respondents could choose up to three categories for the trilogy, but did not explain all of their choices.

³¹ A reference to those who fall into the category of 'fans'.

³² The author provides six theories that, in combination, override partial analyses of consumption, namely 'consumption as an arena to reproduce the power of the work and expansion of capital', 'as a place where classes and groups compete for appropriation of the social product', 'as a place of social differentiation and symbolic distinction between groups', 'as a system of integration and communication', 'as a scenario aimed at desires', 'as a ritual process' (GARCIA CANCLINI, 2006).

³³ We adopted this term to define the peculiarities of the respondents in terms of their esthetic experience of the trilogy, which does not necessarily refer to a process of enjoyment and/or specialization, but encompasses the trajectory of the respondents in film consumption.