

Queer fandom as a heterotopia: A netnography of Brazilian fans of *RuPaul's Drag Race*

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores how Brazilian fans of *RuPaul's Drag Race* (RPDR) construct a queer fandom heterotopia through online interactions.

Theoretical framework – We position our study within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), integrating research on queer consumer cultures and the participatory culture of fandoms. We also draw on Foucault's concept of heterotopia to guide our conceptualization.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employed netnography based on one year of data from X (formerly Twitter).

Findings – Three dimensions that shape a queer fandom heterotopia were identified: Will for the Extraordinary, reflecting fans' desire to transcend routine consumption; Care for the Collective, emphasizing community building and engagement; and Sharing Self-Promotions, exhibiting creative identities and self-representations.

Practical & social implications of research – Our results demonstrate how queer media consumers create heterotopic spaces through consumption practices within participatory fan cultures that challenge oppressive social norms. They also highlight the active role of fans in subverting media narratives and constructing spaces that, while not utopian, can help ensure the survival of queer subjectivities. Ultimately, these heterotopias increase visibility, safety, and support for LGBTQIAPN+ communities, offering clear practical and social insights.

Originality/value – This study addresses a gap in current CCT research by examining the underexplored consumption of RPDR in Brazil. It offers a rich empirical case that advances theories about global media flows and transcultural fandoms. Furthermore, our conceptualization adds value by demonstrating how interactions between queer media fans contribute to the normalization of queerness within the online fandom environment, simultaneously empowering fans to act beyond its immediate confines.

Keywords: *RuPaul's Drag Race*, queer, fandom, heterotopia, netnography.

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I Introduction

This article examines Brazilian fans of *RuPaul's Drag Race* (RPDR) in order to theorize queer fandoms as heterotopias: alternative spaces in which consumers resist oppressive social structures. To this end, we draw on marketing and consumer research, a field that has only recently begun addressing LGBTQIAPN+ consumers, who still face historical marginalization (Coffin et al., 2019; Ginder & Byun, 2015; Montecchi et al., 2024). Although the situation in Brazil is no different, researchers have striven to highlight how stigma and exclusion shape local queer consumption (Ferreira & Pereira, 2020; Moraes & Ferreira, 2021; Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012). However, despite the growing number of studies and social advances for this community, companies often reduce queer identities to marketable symbols, thereby diluting their political power through commodification. This practice often raises accusations of “rainbow-washing,” in which brands exploit LGBTQIAPN+ identities for profit without providing meaningful support (Schopper et al., 2025). It is imperative to explore how market offerings can sustain the material and symbolic survival of queer subjectivities (Florêncio, 2023).

In this sense, we agree with Llewellyn's (2022) assertion that media representations can help queer subjectivities come to life by serving as tools for recognition and validation of LGBTQIAPN+ identities. Thus, television programs focusing on queer themes offer spaces in which these identities and performances are promoted. Among them, RPDR stands out as an important queer reality show and a global platform for drag culture.

Since its launch in the US in 2009, RPDR has offered international visibility to drag artists while expanding conventional debates about queer identities (Crookston, 2020). Its cultural and market impact has attracted significant attention from researchers in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) (Laamanen et al., 2024). The program is often analyzed through practices that transform stigma into pride (Venkatraman et al., 2024) and foster audience engagement through online interactions (Canavan, 2021, 2024).

However, Campana et al. (2022) argue that, although RPDR spectacularizes and normalizes stigma, it generates dissenting reactions from the public due to its incomplete representation of LGBTQIAPN+ identities. These identities are subsequently reformulated in response to fan feedback. While this literature highlights the disruptive potential of consumption practices in promoting more

inclusive queer representation, it has not fully addressed the Brazilian context, where queer marginalization occurs within a complex sociopolitical landscape.

Understanding this gap is important for reinforcing the cultural relevance of transcultural fandom practices within consumer cultures, which shape global media consumption in unique ways (Zheng, 2023). In this sense, we align with Brazilian researchers who contribute to international debates on fan cultures. These researchers highlight how local fans negotiate international cultural products in unique ways, particularly those that reflect fans' sociopolitical perspectives through fandom-related practices (Daros, 2023; Souza-Leão et al., 2022).

This gap is particularly significant in Brazil due to the political and market influence of the program. RPDR promotes drag culture throughout the country, fostering diverse communities, online engagement, dedicated fans, and local productions (Castellano & Machado, 2017). Its local popularity stems from providing Brazilian fans with a platform for social integration, entertainment, identity exploration, and learning (Reis & Ferreira, 2017).

Furthermore, considering the country's political divisions regarding LGBTQIAPN+ issues and the deeply rooted prejudices fueled by politics and the media, the practices of Brazilian RPDR fans can be viewed as a form of countercultural and performative resistance in response to this violence (Bragança & Ostruca, 2022; Henn et al., 2017). Therefore, studying RPDR consumption in Brazil provides rich empirical data and insights into global media flows, highlighting the importance of queer media for fandom practices.

Thus, the present study aligns with the CCT agenda by examining consumption practices rooted in fan productivity and the political issues revealed through their relationship with marketing (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2022; Souza-Leão et al., 2022). Fans are a unique group of consumers who develop strong connections with media products and participate in shared activities within their fandoms (Fuschillo, 2020; Moura et al., 2023).

Fandoms are spaces where fans negotiate their desires with peers. They navigate between agreement and disagreement, showing that these communities are not utopias but places of tension and conflict (Hewer et al., 2017; Sibai et al., 2024). Through these negotiations, fans develop collective value systems that reflect the shared will of the community. These spaces are particularly important for queer fandoms, providing platforms for LGBTQIAPN+ visibility and expression of identity.

They transcend exclusionary social barriers and accelerate acceptance of non-normative sexualities (Dhaenens & Burgess, 2019; McInroy et al., 2022).

Consequently, queer fandoms enable marginalized groups to resist and destabilize restrictive discourse on gender and sexuality, fostering an environment in which queer identities are empowered and normalized. Given the importance of spaces of resistance for the LGBTQIAPN+ community, this research aims to theorize the Brazilian RPDR fandom as a queer heterotopia (Jones, 2009).

The concept of heterotopia evokes Michel Foucault's understanding of spaces that allow subjects to develop and understand themselves. According to Foucault & Miskowiec (1986), a heterotopia is a diverse social space that is articulated as an "other" space, real (i.e., a heterotopia) rather than imagined (i.e., a utopia). Thus, heterotopia emerges as a process in which spaces are recreated by the collective will of the interacting subjects.

In consumer contexts, heterotopias emerge when consumers construct or sustain their desires by engaging with existing market spaces (Rokka & Canniford, 2016; Roux & Belk, 2019). Drawing on Foucault & Miskowiec (1986) concept of heterotopia, this perspective indicates how marketing relationships represent contemporary transformative arrangements in which pre-established spaces are remodeled according to the will of those who inhabit them. These adjustments often reflect broader resistance to institutionalized norms, emerging through routine actions that express imagined or utopian values. When these processes converge, they produce a space with multiple enacted utopias – or simply, a heterotopia.

Specifically, queer practices can create heterotopias, which are spaces where community desires are expressed and where deviation, contestation, experimentation, and freedom are encouraged (Bazin & Naccache, 2016). Online environments amplify this potential; fans of queer media can use virtual spaces to reaffirm their values, find community acceptance, celebrate diverse sexualities, resist dominant power structures, and challenge oppressive narratives. Thus, they effectively generate a heterotopia – "a space where queer is normalized" (Llewellyn, 2022).

Instead of viewing online communities as merely productive spaces or places of meaning-making, we align with scholars who conceptualize fandoms as heterotopic spaces in Foucauldian terms (Chen, 2021; Souza-Leão et al., 2024). In this sense, we theorize queer fandom as a heterotopia to highlight its transformative and empowering qualities, which enable counter-hegemonic

resistance, performativity, and the re-signification of identity. Considering the gap in CCT studies regarding the nuances of the transcultural RPDR fandom in generating heterotopias in a Latin context, we ask: **How do Brazilian RPDR fans create a queer fandom heterotopia through online interactions?**

To address this question, our research uses a netnographic approach, a well-established method for studying online consumer communities (Kozinets, 2020), to examine the interactions of Brazilian RPDR fans on social media. Our work contributes to the literature by deepening the understanding of heterotopic spaces for LGBTQIAPN+ media fans, particularly in the underexplored context of Brazilian RPDR fandom, and by offering a transcultural perspective on global media consumption.

Building on previous interdisciplinary work on fan practices as the foundation of queer heterotopias (Jones, 2009; Llewellyn, 2022), we argue that these spaces normalize queer performances within fandoms and empower individuals to extend them beyond fan communities. By engaging publicly, fans challenge Brazil's normative, patriarchal, and conservative structures, thereby contributing to broader social change in a country with persistently high rates of violence against LGBTQIAPN+ people. Thus, our study explores queer fandom heterotopias as both safe spaces and active agents in reshaping social contexts beyond fandom while recognizing their limitations.

2 Literature review

2.1 Queer consumer cultures

Despite persistent social stigma that elicits global political resistance (Coffin et al., 2019; Ginder & Byun, 2015; Montecchi et al., 2024), the evolution of LGBTQIAPN+ rights advocacy has shaped a more prominent queer political discourse and consumer landscape. As LGBTQIAPN+ rights have advanced and queer studies have expanded – including from a Brazilian perspective (Ferreira & Pereira, 2020; Moraes & Ferreira, 2021; Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012) – an ideal market shaped by queer consumer cultures has emerged (Peñaloza, 1996).

Queer consumption contributes to the formation of consumer cultures related to the LGBTQIAPN+ community (Eichert & Luedicke, 2022; Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012). This community is highly diverse and should not be reduced, segmented, or limited to a single subculture (Kates, 2002; Peñaloza, 1996). This diversity is especially

relevant in an era in which social media has expanded and the LGBTQIAPN+ community uses it to consume, interact, and share ideas about their experiences, which is a form of productive consumption (Canavan, 2021; McInroy et al., 2022). This type of consumption is part of a broader movement in which people come together across cultural environments and media to find other consumers or products and intensify their consumption practices. This phenomenon is often referred to as convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006; Moura et al., 2023).

For the LGBTQIAPN+ community, this convergence culture, driven by media and entertainment brands, creates new relationships between consumers and products (Crookston, 2020). Specifically, queer community consumption influences the creation of meanings that highlight queer perspectives on popular culture (Turner-Kilburn, 2022). This suggests a utopian refuge where differences are accepted as the norm and identity and relationships are formed.

Consequently, research on the queer consumer market has inspired many studies, especially in the field of CCT. Maclaran et al. (2017), for example, note that CCT integrates queer studies to critically analyze consumption and the market, offering a holistic view that transcends gender dichotomies. To advance in this direction further, a queer manifesto has emerged as a fundamental initiative that aims to critically promote queer theory in marketing, break with prevailing knowledge paradigms, and enrich academic discourse (Pirani & Daskalopoulou, 2022). The recent publication of the first marketing book to position gender and sexuality issues as central themes in consumer studies has reinforced the importance of the topic (Daskalopoulou et al., 2024).

However, some consumer studies exploring the queer universe may lack a robust theoretical basis or simply present possibilities for future research (Ginder & Byun, 2015; Montecchi et al., 2024). In this sense, Coffin et al. (2019) pointed out critical gaps in queer literature within consumer studies. The authors highlighted the prevalence of research focusing primarily on an Anglo-American audience, addressing predominantly gay men, disregarding the intersection of sexuality with other social attributes, treating non-heterosexual consumption as a marginalized subculture, and lacking robust interdisciplinary connections.

Thus, it is clear that marginalized consumer communities require a multifaceted approach that encompasses cultural, historical, and social contexts. Thus, exploring queer communities in different locations, such as Brazil, is crucial and is the focus of this study.

This aligns with Vera et al.'s (2019) proposal that these studies are relevant in Brazil due to the country's plurality and social problems, which could contribute significantly to international literature.

Consequently, queer consumption is becoming increasingly relevant within the CCT agenda as researchers explore its sociocultural dimensions, value systems, and aspects of identity (Arnould et al., 2023). Interest in the cultural facets of consumer behavior is especially important in the digital age because social media profoundly influences consumption patterns and provides new social interactions for consumers (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2022; Souza-Leão et al., 2024).

2.2 Consumer cultures and participatory fandom

Queer consumer cultures have a fascinating cultural context that makes them an ideal topic for study. However, they have not yet been widely explored (Coffin et al., 2019; Ginder & Byun, 2015; Montecchi et al., 2024). These cultures provide a solid foundation for investigating queer consumer culture and serve as crucial platforms for marginalized communities to express themselves, especially when considering online community activities (McInroy et al., 2022).

Overall, the virtual environment demonstrates how members of digital cultures engage in various practices and construct meanings through their consumer relationships (Arnould et al., 2023). More specifically, consumers' active engagement in productive roles emphasizes the importance of participatory culture, which refers to consumers' engagement with market offerings in productive, creative, and community-oriented ways. This topic is relevant to the CCT agenda (Fuschillo, 2020; Jenkins, 1992, 2006; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2022; Moura et al., 2023).

Participatory culture influences modern consumption dynamics by revealing how its members (i.e., fans) intensify their consumption practices, assist the experiences of other members, and disseminate the consumed media product (Moura et al., 2023). Originally presented by Kozinets (2001) as an emblematic consumer subculture, fan consumption practices have become a recurring theme in CCT studies (Arnould et al., 2023). These practices are unique in that fans establish deep emotional connections with the objects they consume and with their peers. This manifests as intense loyalty, liveliness, and unique consumption patterns (Chen, 2021; Fuschillo, 2020).

Additionally, fans use available technology to connect with each other and share content that validates the values of fandom (i.e., the “realm of fans”) (Fuschillo, 2020; Hills, 2003). For instance, some fans actively incorporate queer perspectives into media to challenge the underrepresentation of queer individuals outside of it (Dhaenens & Burgess, 2019; McInroy et al., 2022; Turner-Kilburn, 2022).

Consequently, CCT scholars have increasingly focused on the drag universe (Laamanen et al., 2024; Venkatraman et al., 2024), particularly the online activities of RPDR fans (Campana et al., 2022; Canavan, 2021, 2024). However, these studies pay little attention to the specificities of Brazilian fans, a gap that this study aims to fill. This research situates Brazilian fandom – and, by extension, transcultural fandom – within the context of global media consumption (Daros, 2023; Morimoto, 2018; Souza-Leão et al., 2022; Zheng, 2023).

In this sense, fandoms amplify the impact of consumed content by fostering interactions that generate new interpretations and connections (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2022). Therefore, understanding these nuances is essential. In his seminal work, Jenkins (1992) explores how subcultures centered on queer identities form within these fan communities. These subcultures are characterized by active engagement with consumer products. Thus, it is crucial to recognize that queer fandoms are vital spaces for sharing interests in queer media and create environments relatively favorable to historically marginalized forms of expression.

2.3 Fandom as a heterotopia

Fandom is a sociocultural space that encourages interaction and the sharing of values and perspectives among its members. This sharing is often fostered by positive collaboration among fans (Fuschillo, 2020; Moura et al., 2023). However, it can also lead to disagreements (Hewer et al., 2017; Sibai et al., 2024) and discussions about distorted representations, such as the underrepresentation of transgender or non-white individuals in the media (Campana et al., 2022; Llewellyn, 2022).

In any case, fans engage their peers in transforming their consumption relationships by establishing or maintaining connections that combine rationality and imagination (Souza-Leão et al., 2024). Chen (2021) points out that this combination is an emblematic feature that explains how fandoms typically function as heterotopias.

From this perspective, a fandom provides a heterotopic community through which its members can navigate the continuum of prosumption. In this community, members are not mere passive consumers, but rather engage in productive practices through consumption. They also express individual and collective concerns, such as identity projects and affective economies (Souza-Leão et al., 2024).

This theory is based on Foucault & Miskowiec’s (1986) argument that acts combining imagination and rationality are subjective, contextual practices occurring as we interact with multiple social spaces to seek and adapt to pleasurable ways of life. The connection between these different, or “other” spaces, which combines the desires of various agencies, is called a heterotopia.

According to Roux and Belk (2019), in order to better understand the Foucauldian heterotopias present in consumption practices, one must know their characteristics. Unlike utopias, they represent concrete enactments. They are unique adaptations that highlight differences in how subjects deal with the regularity of their social environment. They are illusory, designed to transform previously established spaces. They are ambiguous, presenting multiple interpretations of the same space. Heterotopias are dependent; they cannot be isolated from the spatial and temporal context in which they exist and were conceived. Consequently, heterotopias can be developed, maintained, and questioned through consumption practices in which consumers assume the role of co-creators of their relationships with other market agents, either in person or virtually (Rokka & Canniford, 2016; Roux et al., 2017).

Heterotopias generally incorporate diachronic accumulations, which make tangible the relationship that each subject experiences with a given space and question it. However, they are constituted by social relations that continually adjust the spaces in which subjects live. These adjustments stem from questioning broader power relations that govern their practices or behaviors. They are also associated with adapting routine practices to live in a utopia. When multiple utopias confront and potentially combine with each other, a heterotopia representing the values of its members emerges (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986).

Consequently, the development of a heterotopia can be observed in the ways consumers come together and interact to create environments of deviation and contestation, as seen in queer practices (Bazin & Naccache, 2016). Given the various sociocultural inhibitors LGBTQIAPN+ individuals face throughout their lives,

it is common for certain consumption practices to fuel the desire of queer communities to develop and maintain a heterotopia that embodies their values (Llewellyn, 2022). From a Foucauldian perspective, consumption is a cultural practice that allows for self-affirmation and enables individuals to ensure the symbolic and material survival of LGBTQIAPN+ subjectivity and the collective spaces they create (Florêncio, 2023).

In this context, queer heterotopias are relatively safe spaces for resistance, transgression, subversion, and questioning of heteronormative social logics. These spaces allow for the coexistence of diverse queer performances and practices without regulation or fear and provide recognition (Jones, 2009; Llewellyn, 2022). Thus, it is appropriate to expand the CCT literature to explore the practices of the Brazilian RPDR fandom in virtual environments, particularly on open social networks, as these spaces often display public, non-anonymous posts. This allows us to examine how this queer fandom creates a heterotopia.

3 Methodological procedures

Consistent with our research question, this study uses a netnographic methodology to examine the cultural dynamics, content dissemination, and digital interactions of Brazilian RPDR fans. Developed to study online communities and cultures, netnography has long been used in consumer research to explore fandom-related interactions (Kozinets, 2001). It has also been applied to marketing studies of RPDR fandoms (Campana et al., 2022; Canavan, 2021, 2024) and Brazilian fandoms (Moura et al., 2023; Souza-Leão et al., 2022, 2024), thus reinforcing its relevance in CCT. Building on this literature, our study focuses on the productivity of Brazilian RPDR fans using a qualitative, interpretive, and culturally grounded approach based on Kozinets's (2020) netnographic framework.

We selected the Brazilian RPDR fan community due to its diversity, expressiveness, and active engagement. The program's significant impact in Brazil is evident through investments such as the launch of a national franchise, singer Anitta's guest judging appearance on the main franchise, and drag participants' frequent tours around the country. The program's growing fan base, with over 78,000 members in the official Brazilian Facebook group, further demonstrates its success. However, this fandom's productivity is most visible on X (formerly Twitter), with thousands of posts in 2022 alone. This far surpasses other platforms, which tend to suffer from heavy administrator moderation, as is

the case with Facebook. Consequently, X was chosen as the main location for data collection to ensure relevance, representativeness, timeliness, and spontaneity.

Cultural immersion, which involves becoming familiar with ongoing discussions and identifying nuances in changing themes by immersing oneself in the community studied, occurred naturally. The lead author has been following RPDR since 2017 and has interacted extensively with the program by watching various franchises, participating in online groups, and attending related events in different countries. The co-authors, who have varying levels of familiarity with the program, contributed by offering an outside perspective, reducing biases, and assisting in the interpretation process.

The data collection process involved an extensive and thorough exploration to capture RPDR fans' interactions within a context aligned with the research question. The process included simplifying, searching for, selecting, and storing data. First, publications were collected using the Meltwater social media monitoring and analysis platform. Although this data processor assisted in the collection, we emphasize that a rigorous manual analysis of the data was performed to take into account the sensitivity of the information (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Specifically, the software was only used to collect data with a sequence of filters based on the researchers' experience. These filters were designed to align the final dataset (see Table 1) with the study objective.

We performed the analysis and interpretation of the data manually, based on the coding of qualitative data, without using any software. First, we read the corpus to establish a chronology of representative events within the virtual community. This iterative process involved several nonlinear steps. First, we created codes based on the meaning of the posts. Then, we reflected on the initial coding and compared and grouped related elements based on similarity. This process subsequently resulted in distinct thematic categorizations. Subsequent rounds of verification and

Table 1
Research corpus

Dimension	Detail
Dataset size	4,892 posts from X (formerly Twitter)
Post types	Original and quote posts
Hashtags	#rpdr, #rupaul, #dragrace, #rupaulsdragrace, #rupauldragrace, #dragracebr, #dragracenamtv, #dragracebrasil
IP addresses	Brazil
Time period	2022

refinement led to broader generalizations and theorizations. Our goal was to connect the identified codes and categories to existing literature and answer our research questions.

To ensure robust analysis, reliable results, and effective management of research biases, we adhered to various quality criteria. Validation and triangulation with supervisors contributed to rigorous data analysis, supporting the credibility and methodological rigor of our approach. We established a representative and coherent data corpus, considering factors such as data size, duration, and saturation. Praxis and reflexivity enabled alternative interpretations by taking into account evolving researcher perspectives and ongoing engagement with the literature, enriching the analysis. We respected the cultural context through axiological sensitivity and sought to present the results with coherence and contextual clarity, supported by several examples.

Finally, we emphasize this study's ethical commitment to preserving the anonymity of participants and the cultural integrity of the data. Following Canavan (2024), we acknowledge that the ability to remain invisible in digital environments through methods such as lurking or covert data collection does not absolve researchers of their ethical responsibilities. Thus, we took deliberate measures to safeguard user information. In addition to anonymizing all data, we translated the original posts into English. We also transformed illustrative photographs into drawings and pixelated the images. This final step aligns with the ethical approach adopted by Leban et al. (2021) concerning the presentation of netnographic data images from public social media platforms.

4 Results

Our analysis identified three categories that constitute a heterotopia of queer fandom created by Brazilian fans of RPDR. These categories are autonomous yet interconnected, enacting a heterotopia through fan engagement with the queer-themed TV show. They are interpreted here as agents that challenge harmful social norms. Each category is named to reflect perceptions of virtual interactions (the empirical context) and Foucauldian concepts previously explored by CCT studies (the theoretical contribution). They are defined and discussed in the following subsections.

4.1 Will for the Extraordinary

This category reflects Brazilian RPDR fans' desire to transcend their ordinary consumption practices.

Their engagement extends beyond enjoying a high-quality reality show to include consuming products directly or indirectly related to the program, whether complimentary or critical. This consumption is unique not only because of activities within the fandom but also because it extends to other social contexts.

This category illustrates the ongoing search of fans for extraordinary content, intensifying their emotional connection to the media they consume (Jones et al., 2022; Moura et al., 2023). As Jenkins (1992) notes, this continuous engagement reflects a relationship with the media that expresses personal values and concerns about identity that might otherwise be socially constrained. Specifically, fan practices related to queer culture become a means of disinhibition and self-projection within a social context that often limits them (Llewellyn, 2022).

In this sense, the category aligns with Foucault's (2020a) notion that subjects continually seek ways to express their wills. These wills reflect relational interests that must adapt to the social context. Will enables individuals to define themselves and transforms imagination into rationality by making it public. Consequently, wills can be linked to resistance exercises, in which subjects create collectively desired heterotopias (Foucault & Miskowicz, 1986). This is evident in the four codes in this category, which highlight queer fandom as a heterotopia manifested by extraordinary consumption surrounding a queer-themed reality show.

The first code in this category, Code 1, reflects how fans are involved with the competition promoted by the TV show. In this code, fans interact with the entertainment offered through the show's challenges or games. Since the show's format requires participants to demonstrate various skills in their quest for the crown, fans commonly engage with the performances, conflicts, plots, games, and challenges. Code 1 is not only one of celebration, but also encompasses expressions of sarcasm, irony, and criticism. Figure 1 presents four examples that illustrate Code 1. Example 1 shows a fan interacting with the competition by ranking their favorite drag queens. The second post highlights the impressive "lip-sync" duel between two drag contestants and how it enriched the fan's listening experience with a Demi Lovato song. The third post shows the fan's involvement in the show by praising the drag queens' catwalk looks and performance in the "Snatch Game" comedy challenge, while eagerly awaiting the "Ball," a costume challenge featured on the show. The last post illustrates how criticism itself becomes part of the extraordinary nature of consumption when someone expresses dissatisfaction with a season.

Code 2 refers to fan comments about events related to the TV show, either directly or indirectly. These events include official gatherings, such as DragCon (a drag culture convention), theatrical performances, and live episodes, as well as informal fan gatherings, such as viewing parties at bars. Additionally, Code 2 reflects fan engagement in buying and selling tickets to these events, participating in live experiences, sharing regrets about not attending in person, and expressing criticism of the drag queens, the production, or other fans. Figure 2 provides examples of Code 2. Example 5 shows a fan discussing a warm-up party to watch the fourteenth season, and Example 6 shows a fan expressing a desire to attend a live event if *Drag Race Brasil* were to hold one. Example 7 illustrates how fans negotiate and contextualize criticism through extraordinary dialogue. Amid complaints about the high cost of meeting the show's contestants, one person points out that others may not realize how expensive these experiences are in different countries.

Code 3 illustrates comments from fans interacting with official products from the TV series, products endorsed by the series and its cast, and products used by the cast during the series. Fans often express appreciation for, criticism of, or evaluation of these products, in addition to buying, selling, or indicating a desire to own them. These products include music, music videos, makeup, clothing, games, and more. Notably, fans seamlessly integrate these products into their daily lives. Figure 3, for example, shows a fan listening to the series soundtrack at a college job fair. Another example highlights praise for the release of the RPDR game. The last example shows a fan laughing at the release of a song they did not like, which coincided with Spotify going offline. This adds a crucial facet to the extension of the series' media products into fans' everyday experiences because engagement occurs even in contexts of disapproval.

Code 4 represents fan posts about the cast's work outside of the series. Fans tend to highlight the

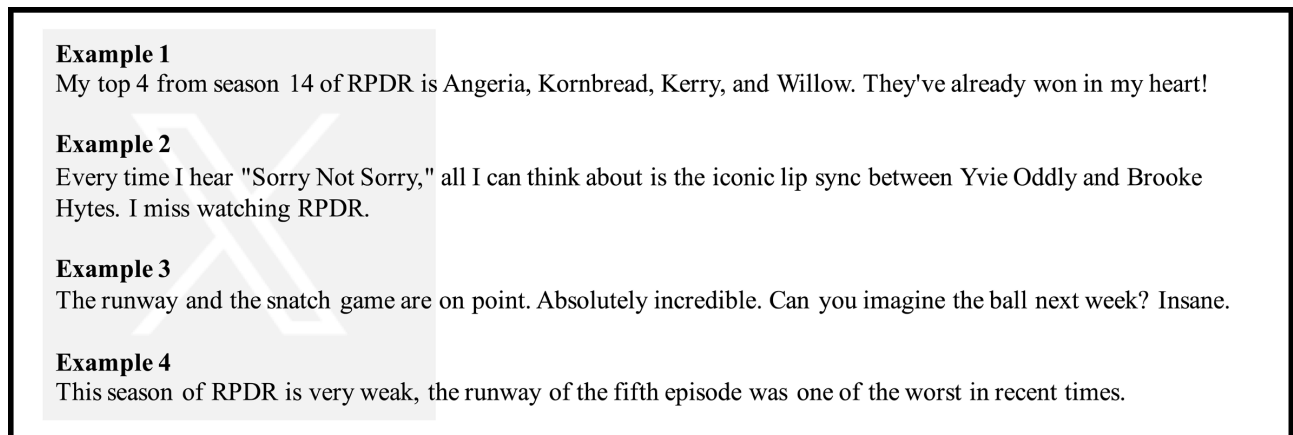


Figure 1. Examples of Code 1

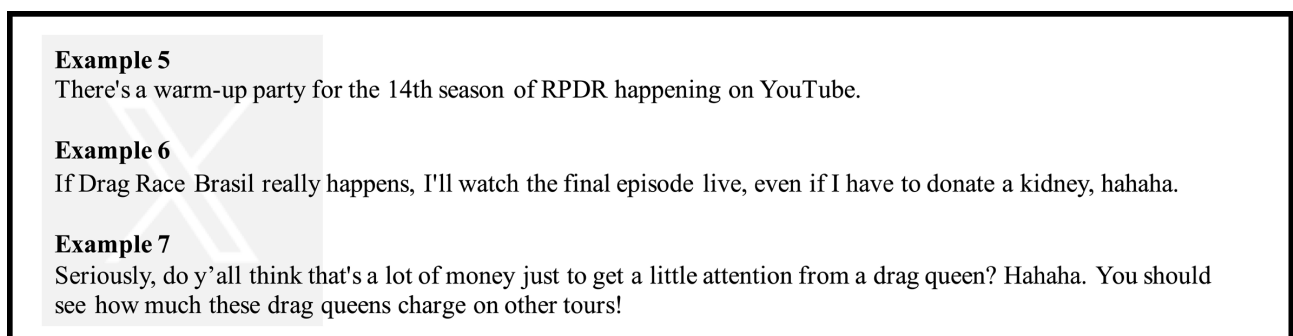


Figure 2. Examples of Code 2

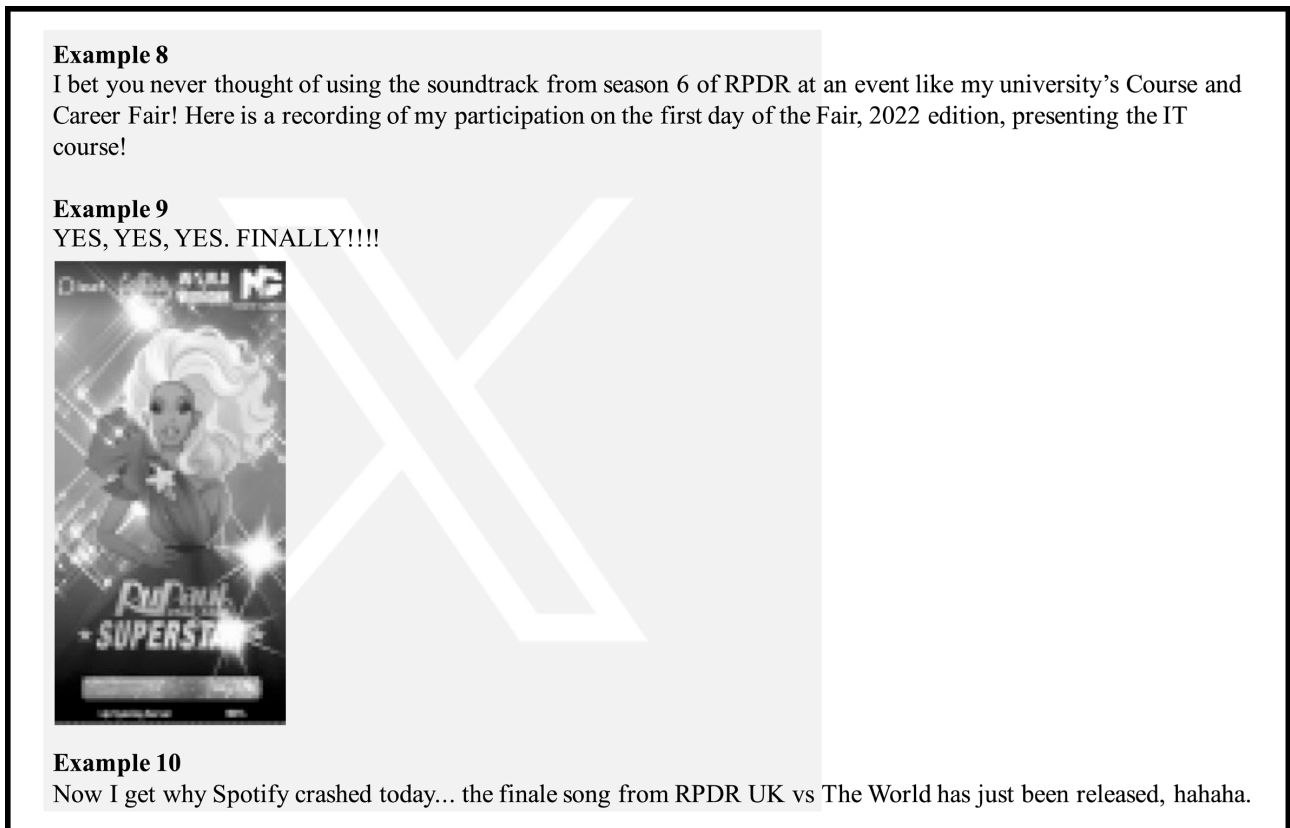


Figure 3. Examples of Code 3

cast's participation in other media projects, such as TV shows, movies, and pop culture events, as well as their personal projects, including music, performances, business ventures, YouTube channels, and podcasts. The external achievements of individuals who appeared on the TV show are often celebrated as symbols of success, though they are sometimes criticized as well. Figure 4 provides examples of these aspects. The first post promotes ticket sales for the musical *Priscilla*, featuring former RPDR contestant Jinkx Monsoon. The second post praises drag queen Shea Couleé for her role in a Marvel miniseries. The third post is a sarcastic critique questioning the choice of Violet Chachki and Gottmik to host *RuPaul's Drag Race Fashion Photo RuView*, arguing that the decision was based on favoritism and beauty standards rather than talent. This post also illustrates the uniqueness of the fandom, as engagement includes critical reflection alongside enjoyment.

4.2 Care for the Collective

This category highlights the efforts of Brazilian RPDR fans to maintain and strengthen collective viewing

practices with one another. They engage in various activities to connect with other fans and encourage new viewers to watch the show. Interactions about the series with both fans and non-fans are important, highlighting relationships within and outside the fandom. These interactions may also take the form of disagreement, reflecting a less affectionate and often more critical engagement with others.

Fandoms are not always spaces of pure communion; disagreements and even aggression can occur (Hewer et al., 2017; Sibai et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these emotional bonds between consumers are fundamental to fandoms and, more broadly, to fan culture itself (Fuschillo, 2020; Hewer et al., 2017). Fans often seek to transition from potential sociocultural isolation to interactive spaces where they can socialize with like-minded individuals (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2022). For fans of queer media, spaces that allow them to maintain healthy connections with others who share similar interests or experiences of marginalization are even more important (Bazin & Naccache, 2016; Campana et al., 2022; Dhaenens & Burgess, 2019).

In this sense, the cultivation and maintenance of these relationships can be understood through Foucault's (2020b) concept of caring for oneself and others. According to Foucault, understanding and caring for oneself requires relating to and caring for others. Only a subject who nurtures relationships with others can truly care for themselves. When a person invests in preserving collective relationships, they strive to understand the rationality behind others' imaginations, allowing them to navigate social spaces more effectively. Since this social space is collective, a heterotopia must be constructed that encompasses the diversity of relationships experienced by

its members (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Based on this idea, four codes provide insight into the emergence of a space that fosters intra- and extra-fandom relationships. This highlights another aspect that helps define queer fandom as a heterotopia.

Code 5 explores how fans actively influence and are influenced by the fandom. This includes expressing their influence, recommending the series to others, and being motivated to watch it based on the opinions and encouragement of other fans. Examples 14 and 15 in Figure 5 illustrate this code. The first example shows someone sharing their experience introducing RPDR to others.

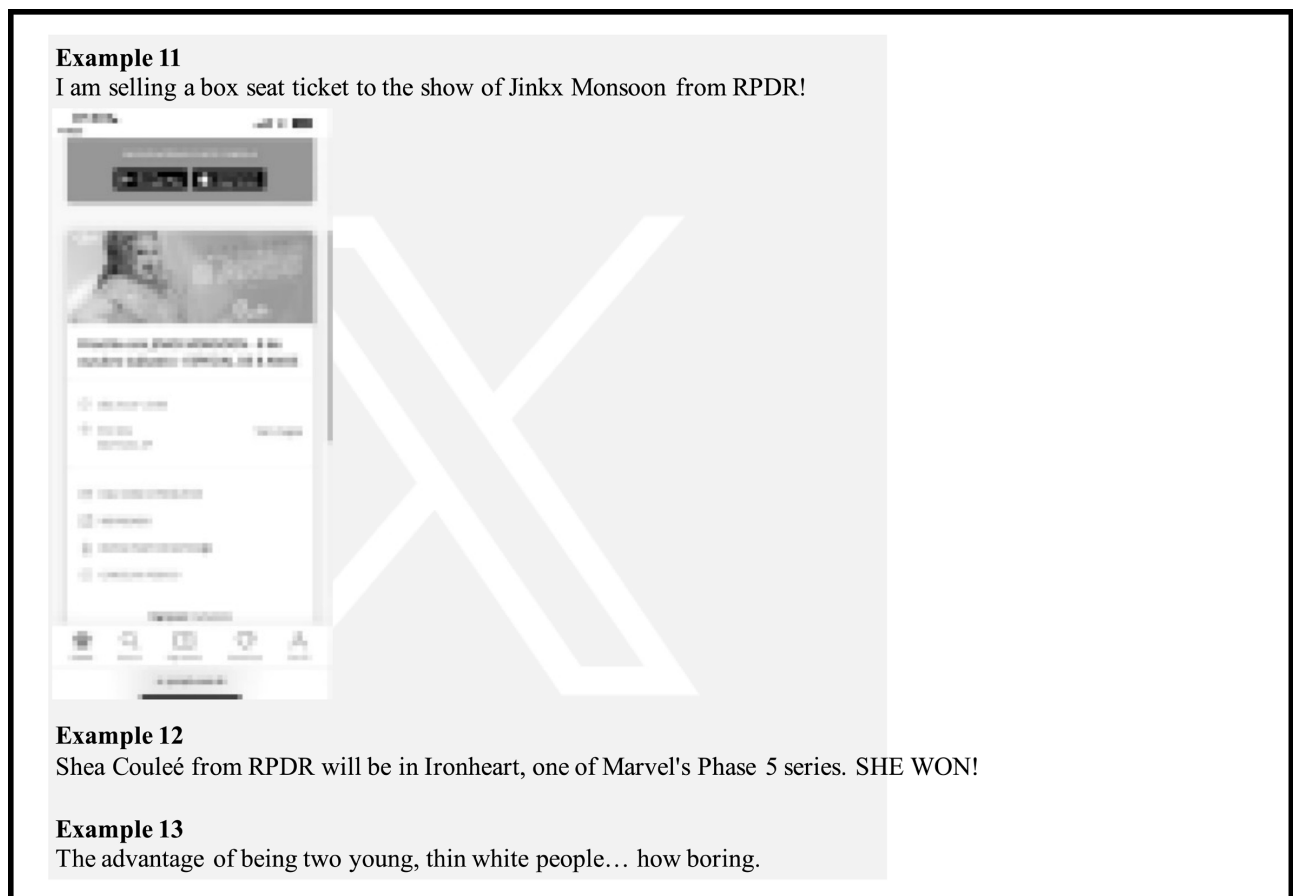


Figure 4. Examples of Code 4

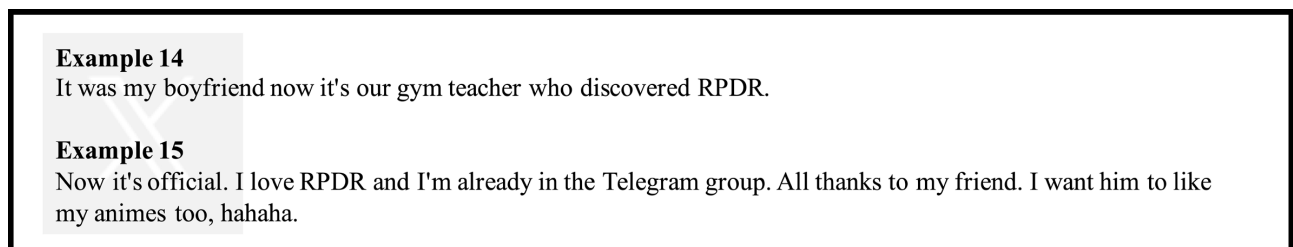


Figure 5. Examples of Code 5

The second example shows someone expressing gratitude to the person who recommended the series, which led them to enjoy the show, join a Telegram group, and become part of the RPDR fan community.

According to Code 6, fans seek to connect with others who share their interest in the TV show. They participate in discussions and ask for opinions on various aspects of the show's universe. They typically engage in this activity by asking questions and creating polls. Figure 6 illustrates this code with examples. Examples 16 and 17 depict fans initiating discussions about particular episodes and seasons with other fans. Example 18, on the other hand, depicts a fan expressing a desire to have a friend who is also a fan of RPDR and who has similar favorite contestants.

In Code 7, fans explore the show's universe by interacting with each other to collect data, share discoveries, and speculate about future events related to the series and its cast. This includes sharing release dates, spoilers, episode developments, and broadcast channel information. Fans also seek news and trivia about the cast, as well as speculate about future episodes, potential hosts for other franchises, and ideas they would like to see, such

as national artists participating in international versions of the program. Figure 7, for example, shows one fan asking about the premiere date of the fourteenth season of RPDR, another discussing potential hosts for *Drag Race Brasil*, and another speculating about the number of applications for the Brazilian franchise due to the high expectations surrounding the performances.

Adopting a more critical stance on careless interactions, Code 8 transcribes fans' criticisms of the negative and often toxic behavior and opinions of other fans. These posts criticize various aspects of fans' behavior, such as toxic attitudes, spoilers, unnecessary hatred, and negative comments about drag queens. They also support or defend certain aspects of the show or its participants while disagreeing with other fans' criticisms and opinions. Example 22 (Figure 8) shows a fan criticizing people who say that Jaida Essence Hall did not deserve to win the season of the TV show, and wishing that Gigi Goode had won instead. The fan also points out that some of these comments are racist. Example 23 shows someone classifying the fandom as toxic and speaking out against the hatred and death threats directed at a contestant on the show.

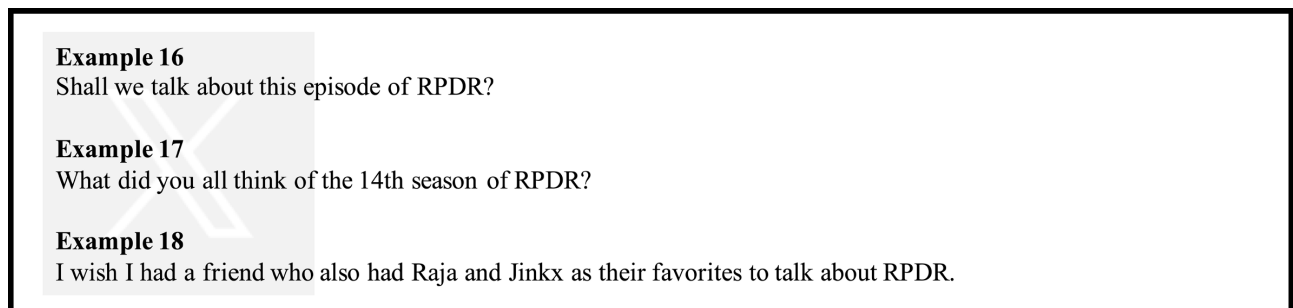


Figure 6. Examples of Code 6

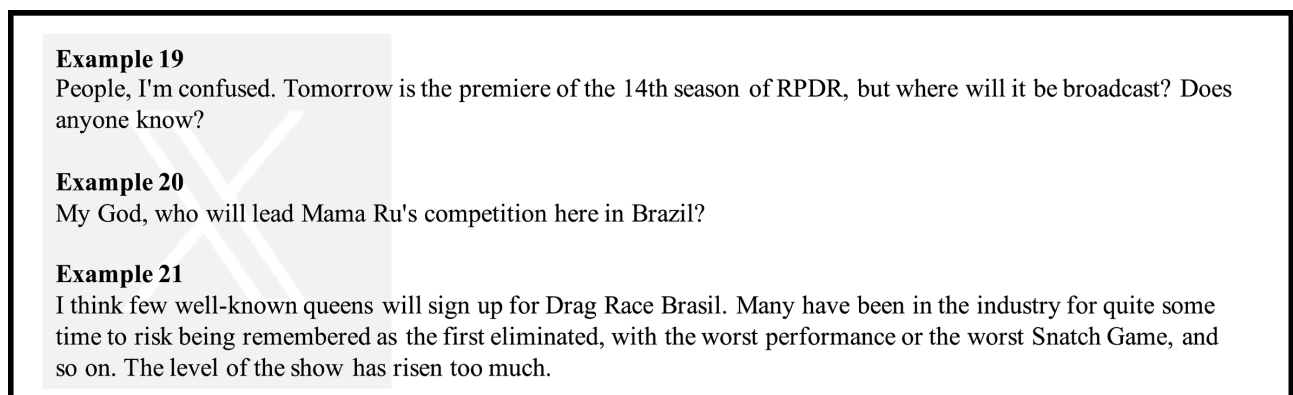


Figure 7. Examples of Code 7

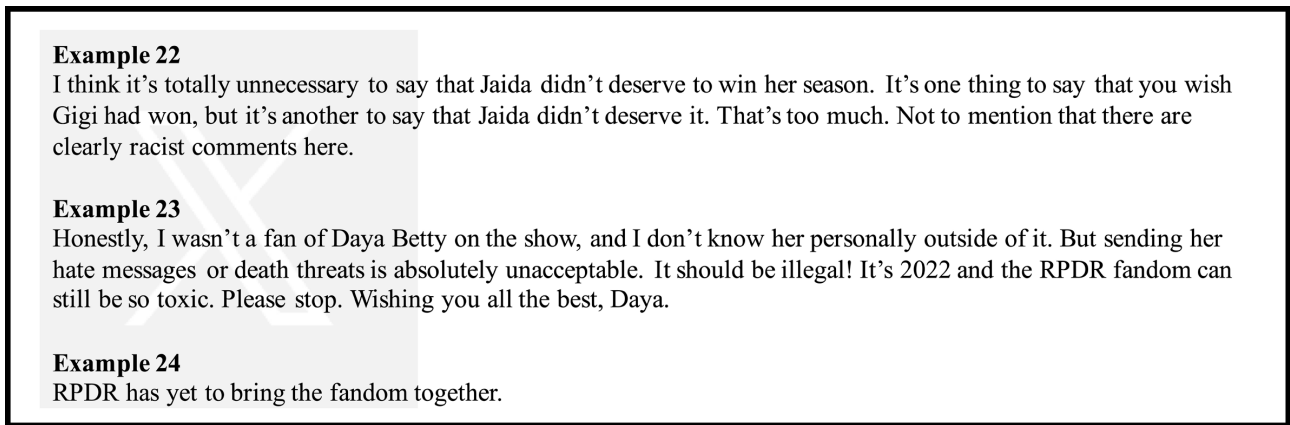


Figure 8. Example of Code 8

Example 24 further elaborates on this perspective, with a fan suggesting that the fandom may be fragmented due to internal contradictions.

4.3 Sharing Self-Promotions

The third category showcases the professional and personal self-promotions that Brazilian RPDR fans share online. Through fan productions such as art, videos, and fiction, fans reveal their identities and demonstrate their involvement with the TV show, as well as the impact of the drag phenomenon on their lives. By publicly sharing these works, fans expose themselves, and their content often reaches individuals beyond the fandom who may not be familiar with the show.

This category shows how producing content allows fans to showcase their skills and express themselves (Canavan, 2021, 2024; Chen, 2021). According to Hills (2003), fan productivity functions as a form of resistance that endorses, critiques, and adapts media content in ways that reflect fans' values, identities, and social contexts. For fans of LGBTQIAPN+ themed TV series, creating original content such as developing a drag persona inspired by the series offers an opportunity to explore and express their ontological conditions (Kozinets, 2001; Morimoto, 2018; Turner-Kilburn, 2022; Venkatraman et al., 2024).

According to Foucault (2020b), expressing one's ontological condition is an attempt to gain recognition and acceptance within one's social context. This exercise is interactional, never purely individual. A subject's ontological condition is shaped by the social space in which they act, producing truths (i.e., knowledge) about their subjectivity. This knowledge shows how each person's

imagination can be adopted by others and indicates that multiple utopias can coexist and be implemented, creating a space that represents its diverse members and consolidating a heterotopia (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). From this perspective, a third category emerges that shapes our understanding of queer fandom as a heterotopia. This category is reflected in four codes and emerges through posts that are typically published publicly and not anonymously. These posts reinforce the identities of fans both inside and outside the fandom.

Code 9 refers to fan productions inspired by the series, which can be creative or professional. Fans often produce original, humorous content related to the show, including fan art, videos, podcasts, memes, parodies, and creative objects, such as paintings and pillows. They also create translations and dubbing and act as influencers. Additionally, fans interact with content produced by others, often expressing their emotions and opinions about it. Figure 9 presents three examples. Example 25 shows a fan posting digital fan art of drag queen Willow Pill. Example 26 shows someone promoting their fan video on YouTube, in which they analyze an episode of RPDR. Example 27 shows a fan announcing a podcast dedicated to discussing RPDR.

Code 10 captures the concept of fans sharing images of themselves referencing the TV show. They do this by taking selfies and self-portraits alone or with others. These photos can range from selfies to iconic moments involving interactions with the series, its cast, or friends while watching the show. Figure 10, for example, includes three such photos. Example 28 shows someone sharing a photo with two former RPDR contestants and expressing their excitement about the encounter.

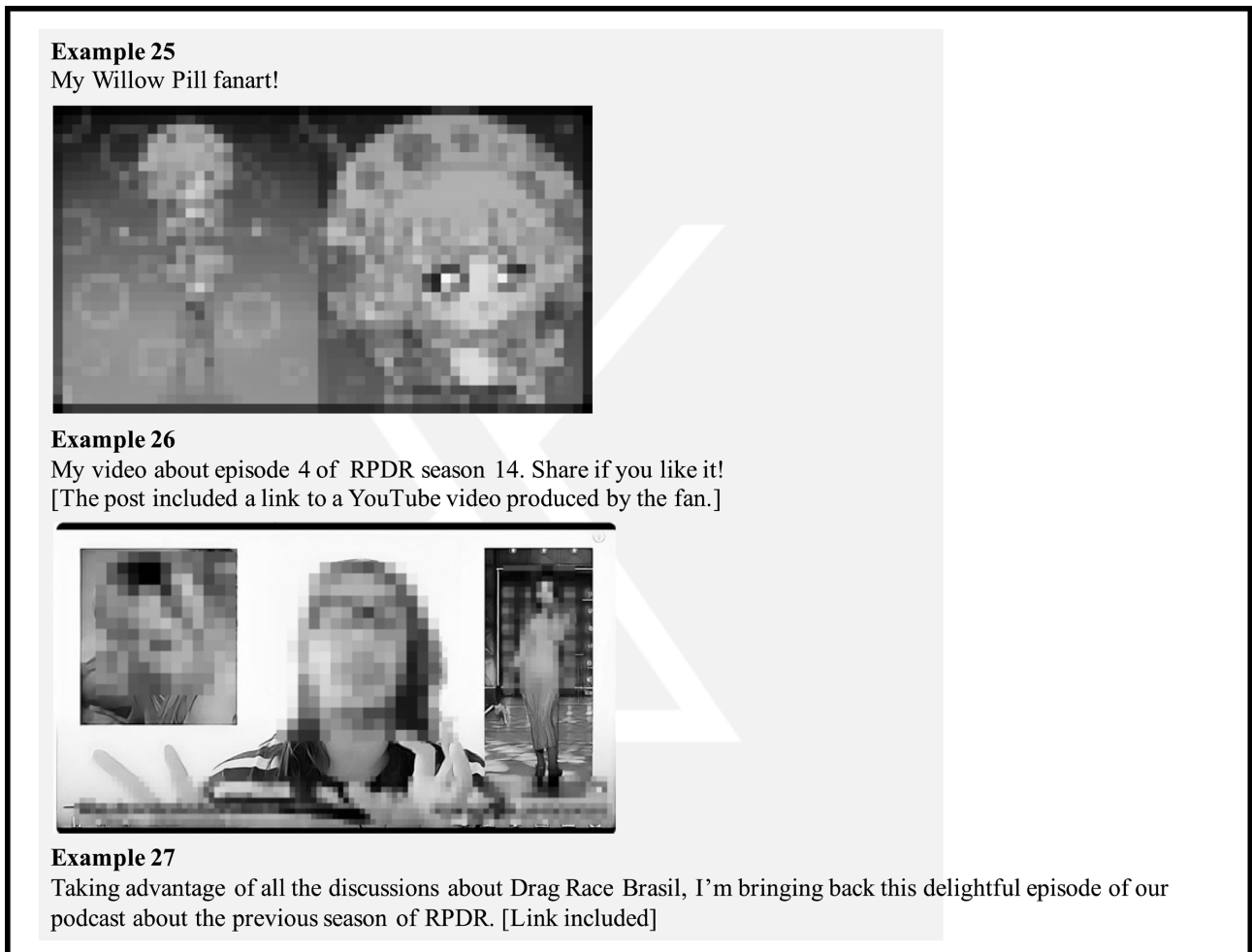


Figure 9. Examples of Code 9


Example 29 shows a fan posting selfies on Instagram and tagging RPDR with hashtags. Similarly, example 30 includes a link to Instagram and hashtags and shows an image of a fan who attended a drag culture event.

Code 11 describes fans who transform themselves into drag performers. They promote their art on social media and often seek validation, opinions, recognition, tips, and suggestions from others. This usually involves posting before-and-after photos to show their transformation from their everyday selves into their drag personas or to demonstrate the evolution of their work over time. The examples in Figure 11 illustrate this. The first example shows someone sharing photos of themselves in and out of drag and seeking feedback on their art. The second example shows someone displaying their drag look and asking for a celebration.

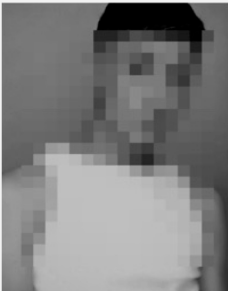
Code 12 describes fans who fantasize about participating in the show. They create imaginary and

humorous scenarios about what they would do if they were on the show and express their desire to be part of the series. Fans often share their desire to participate in the show and discuss what they would do if they had the opportunity. This self-reflection aligns with self-promotion because fans seek to interact with others in a personal and unique way by sharing ideas that reflect their personalities. Figure 12 illustrates this with three examples. The first post shows someone jokingly suggesting a catchphrase they would use if they participated in the program. The second post shows a fan expressing admiration for a dress worn by Jennifer Lopez and imagining how they would create a similar look for a show challenge. The third post depicts a person expressing disappointment at not participating in the Brazilian franchise while emphasizing their strong desire to do so.

Example 28
I had an amazing time at the meet and greet with the gorgeous Yvie Oddly and Brooke Lynn Hytes! The production team scared me so much with the “DON’T TOUCH” warnings that I kept my arms behind my back, afraid to even brush against them. After seeing how everyone else was hugging them, I realized I could've joined in on the fun! Hahaha.



Example 29
I posted it and then ran away... [Several hashtags were used, including various related to RPDR.]
[The fan shared a link to an Instagram post featuring a carousel of self-portrait photos and a video, exemplified by the image below.]



Example 30
I'M SO CRAZY, “I wanna party every day”, like in the song of Grag Queen! [Several hashtags were used, including various related to RPDR.]
[The fan shared a link to an Instagram post that shows self-portraits and photos from a Drag event, exemplified by the image below.]




Figure 10. Examples of Code 10

5 Discussion

This research is situated in the fields of marketing and consumer research. It engages with debates on the marginalization of LGBTQIAPN+ communities (Coffin et al., 2019; Ginder & Byun, 2015; Montecchi et al., 2024). Consistent with research on consumer culture, we draw on studies examining drag culture and the consumption

of RPDR (Campana et al., 2022; Canavan, 2021, 2024; Laamanen et al., 2024; Venkatraman et al., 2024). However, we identified an underexplored empirical gap in this literature with regard to the Brazilian context. This gap is particularly relevant given that transcultural fandoms reveal important nuances about the consumption and reinterpretation of global media in local contexts (Morimoto, 2018; Zheng, 2023) and considering that

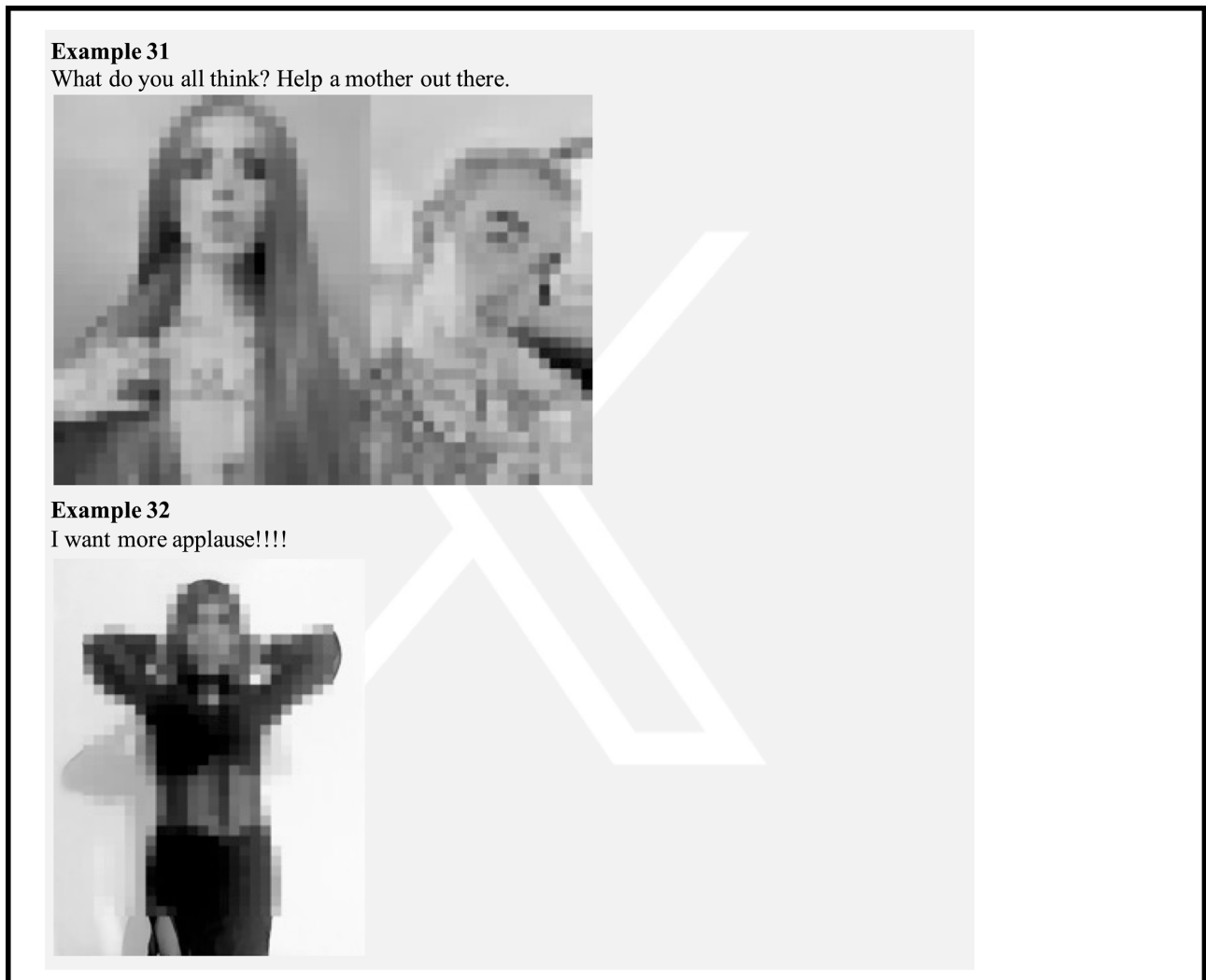


Figure 11. Examples of Code 11

Brazil is a country where LGBTQIAPN+ communities face oppressive and violent conditions (Ferreira & Pereira, 2020; Moraes & Ferreira, 2021; Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012). Our research contributes to existing studies on transcultural theories by demonstrating how Brazilian RPDR fans create spaces of resistance and visibility for queer communities through their online practices and interactions. This leads us to conceptualize this transcultural queer fandom as a heterotopia.

In addition to this empirical contribution, we draw on studies examining the creation of heterotopias through consumption practices (Rokka & Canniford, 2016; Roux & Belk, 2019; Roux et al., 2017). Previous research shows that virtual environments can function as heterotopic spaces in fandoms (Chen, 2021; Souza-Leão et al., 2024). Building on these findings, we explore how consumption practices in LGBTQIAPN+ contexts

produce spaces of resistance framed by the logic of queer heterotopias (Bazin & Naccache, 2016; Jones, 2009). Following Llewellyn (2022), we acknowledge that fan activities related to the queer community, such as fan fiction, can contribute to the conceptualization of fandoms as queer heterotopias. These activities reformulate media representations through queer narratives, emphasizing online environments and fan fiction as precursors to spaces where queer identity is normalized. Building on this literature, our findings suggest that these heterotopias extend beyond the fandom itself, empowering fans to resist and assert their visibility in broader social contexts where queer identity remains marginalized.

Specifically, our results reveal three main categories that elucidate how fans create heterotopic spaces through practices related to queer media consumption. The first category, “Will for the Extraordinary,” illustrates how



Figure 12. Examples of Code 12

Brazilian RPDR fans seek experiences that transcend routine contexts and the limits of the media product itself. The second category, “Care for the Collective,” demonstrates how fans maintain community relationships and connect with wider audiences to influence and engage them. The third category, “Sharing Self-Promotions,” illustrates how fans publicly disclose aspects of themselves and their identities in ways that affirm LGBTQIAPN+ subjectivities. Together, these categories demonstrate the creation of a heterotopia within the fandom through fan practices. However, this heterotopia is not limited to the fandom as fans expand their interactions, connecting these practices, expressions, and interactions with broader social dynamics.

Figure 13 illustrates how these interrelated categories reinforce each other (as shown by the circular arrows) and extend beyond queer fandom (as shown by the outward arrows), creating a complex, dynamic heterotopia.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial because it is the main social contribution of this research. The study reveals that, in Brazil – a country where the LGBTQIAPN+ community faces significant challenges – consumption becomes a vital means of affirming rights and creating

spaces of resistance. This counters the negative narratives perpetuated by the media and politics. Furthermore, we demonstrate that consuming queer content fosters identity affirmation and resistance to oppressive structures. This allows fans to express and elaborate on their subjectivities while generating an “other” space – a heterotopia.

According to Foucault & Miskowiec (1986), such spaces emerge through deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In this process, members modify preexisting spaces through their will, care for others, and the possibility of self-affirmation. Our results suggest that the fandom enables fans to merge fan and queer cultures, creating consumer relationships marked by engagement with the media and social resistance.

This resonates with Foucault’s (2020a, 2020b) notion of subjectivation as a continuous process in which individuals negotiate desires against the moralities governing everyday life. By combining imagination with collective rationality, fans adapt social spaces and preserve the multiplicity of coexisting desires. Therefore, living with the collective opens up possibilities for recognition, identity affirmation, and transforming shared spaces into more inclusive environments where fans can comfortably express themselves.

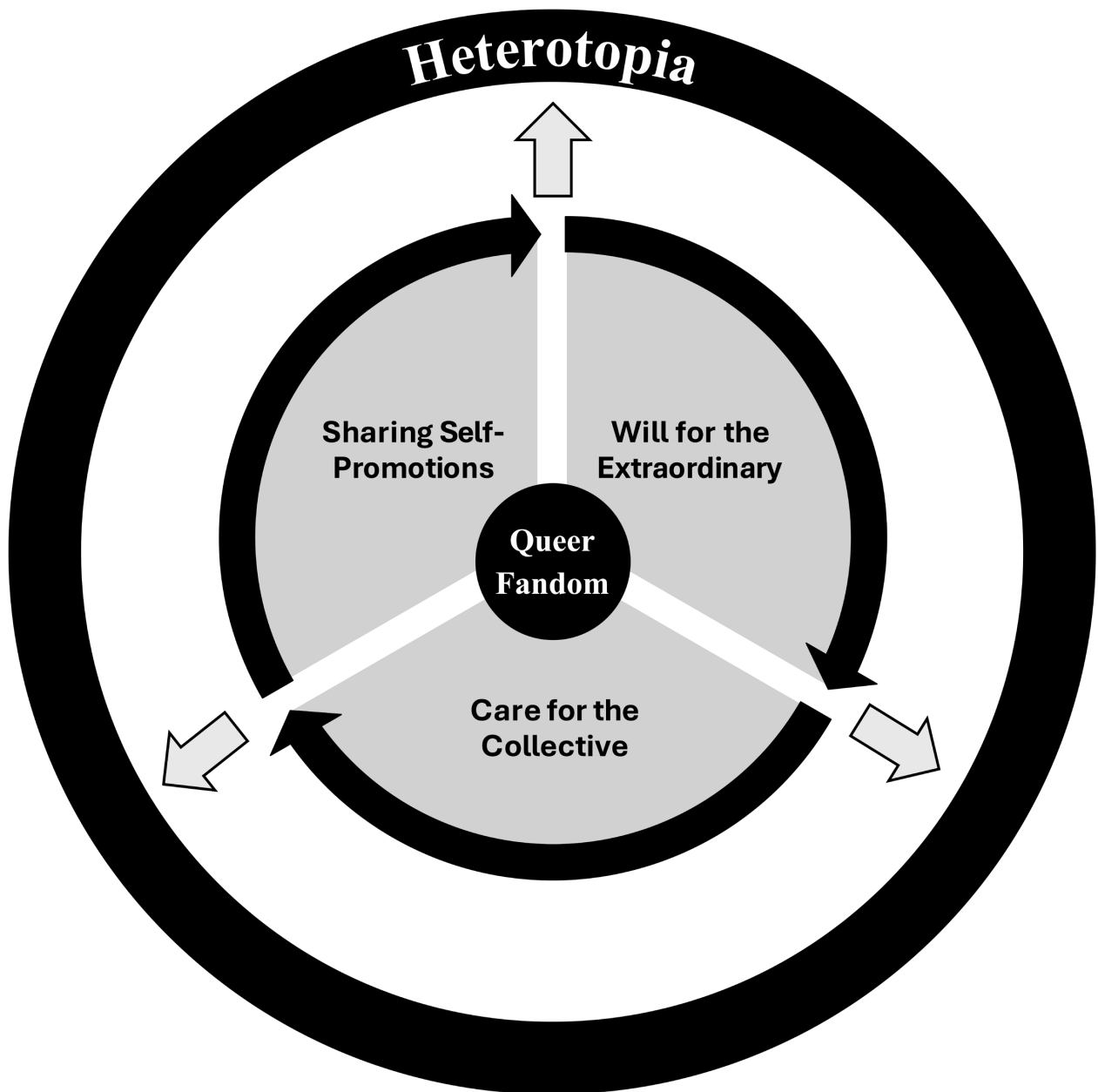


Figure 13. Dynamics of a Queer Fandom Heterotopia

6 Conclusion

As our results show, the dimensions that make up the online interactions created by a queer fandom – Will for the Extraordinary, Care for the Collective, and Sharing Self-Promotions – enact utopian spaces that represent their subjective conditions. These spaces are consistent and complementary, indicating the existence of heterotopias that demonstrate how the Brazilian RPDR fandom appropriates and mobilizes the series as a civic

instrument by consuming and interacting with a media product relevant to queer culture.

Consuming and interacting with RPDR allows fans of the analyzed queer media fandom to assert themselves as active members or engaged allies of the LGBTQIAPN+ community. Their consumption practices reiterate continuous resistance against negative narratives disseminated by traditional media and serve as spaces for self-affirmation and the construction of sisterhood among peers. Therefore, it is important to highlight this study's contributions, limitations, and agenda for future research.

6.1 Contributions of the study

As discussed earlier, the study's results encourage a critical view of the heterotopias constructed by fans. While fandoms can provide inclusive and celebratory spaces, they can also reproduce disagreements and brutalities that lead to exclusion (see Hewer et al., 2017; Sibai et al., 2024). It is worth noting that scholars have emphasized that not all fans of LGBTQIAPN+ media feel adequately represented or included. This includes transgender people, bisexuals, lesbians, women, older audiences, and Black fans (see Campana et al., 2022; Llewellyn, 2022).

Consequently, our results corroborate these perspectives; Brazilian fans often discussed racism within the fandom and pointed out toxic practices among its members. These tensions challenge the notion that queer fandoms are purely utopian spaces of expression and resistance. They also raise questions about inclusion and exclusion, as well as how the commercial appropriation of identity-based representation can empower some while keeping others on the margins. Fortunately, as Campana et al. (2022) note, RPDR often listens to fan voices to reformulate its representations, e.g., by increasing the diversity of its cast. The Brazilian fans in our corpus celebrated this positive change. Thus, this indicates possibilities for the practical contributions of the study.

Overall, our results align with critiques of how companies often fail to accurately represent marginalized communities, perpetuating stereotypes and monetizing LGBTQIAPN+ identities without providing genuine support. This practice leads to accusations of rainbow-washing (see Schopper et al., 2025). In the specific context of RPDR, the show contributes significantly to the normalization of queer existence but simultaneously fails to fully represent certain groups. It also often spectacularizes drag bodies in ways that may reinforce hegemonic logics (see Campana et al., 2022).

Furthermore, our findings underscore the active role of fans in deconstructing queer narratives and creating heterotopic spaces that materially and symbolically sustain queer identities (see Florêncio, 2023). These spaces often contest the hegemonic structures reproduced by the series. These findings suggest that organizations should improve their offerings based on the voices of marginalized communities and support them authentically.

However, as fans extend queer subjectivities beyond fandom, policymakers must guarantee safe and visible public spaces. Finally, while our study explores the creation of these heterotopic spaces, its limitations may generate opportunities for future research.

6.2 Limitations and future research

This study acknowledges certain limitations. The netnographic approach focused exclusively on participating members and data collected using Meltwater software. This data was restricted to Brazilian activity related to RPDR on X (formerly Twitter) in 2022 and was filtered by specific hashtags. These limitations were intentional, enabling us to focus on Brazilian fans, address our research questions within a clearly defined scope, and manage the immense volume of potential online data. However, these choices open up possibilities for future research, particularly when considering new perspectives from different media products, consumer groups, locations, periods, platforms, and methodologies.

Future research on the RPDR fandom could benefit from studies in different countries, including cross-country comparisons (e.g., Brazil versus other nations), to identify characteristics that facilitate or hinder the emergence of heterotopias. Additionally, expanding the temporal and platform scope of the data could help assess whether these dynamics remain consistent over time or vary across different social media environments. Examining other media products and incorporating an intersectional perspective on marginalized groups (e.g., race, class, gender identity, sexuality, age, and geography), as suggested by Coffin et al. (2019), could reveal whether similar or distinct heterotopic dynamics emerge beyond RPDR. Using complementary methodologies such as ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and artistic approaches could enrich our understanding by capturing fans' lived experiences beyond online contexts. These possibilities would enable researchers to problematize heterotopias further, and we acknowledge the potential for future research to explore fandom ruptures as heterotopias.

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