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(Digitally Entangled) Touristic Placemaking:
Locative Media, Algorithmic Navigation & Affective Orderings

Kath Bassett

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the ways in which the locative platform, TripAdvisor mediates touristic placemaking through a case study which centres on Edinburgh’s Harry Potter tourism scene. This case study is based on three years (2018-2021) of digital, ethnographic research and is illustrative of a setting in which algorithmic navigation is essential to maintaining and/or establishing one’s touristic service in time and space. Drawing on ‘relational materialist’ histories of tourism, work which elaborates on Foucauldian notions of governance, ANT/STS and digital sociological scholarship, I forward an imagining of this genre of platform as ‘geo-pastoral technologies’ and ‘social partners’ to cultural-economic actors who accommodate tourists in the destinations travelled. This conceptualisation is useful for making sense of the specific qualities of this partnership which emerged in my corpus of data -- including it functioning as a ‘promotional partner’ and being used as a ‘thinking partner’ -- and enables me to position these qualities as ongoing accomplishments which require work on the part of touristic organisations mapped on the platform. This work, and particularly the ‘socio-technological techniques’ developed and mobilised to maintain this partnership demonstrate how the algorithmic navigation of locative media platforms is a complex, collective, and more-than-digital endeavour. In particular, I argue that the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor can be understood as a form of ‘affective ordering’ which involves: attempting to translate affects onto the platform, attending to the content which accumulates on the platform, and sometimes assembling a digital response and/or re-ordering the collective of things and factors which are understood to be preventing them from assembling a “good experience”, and in doing so attempting to differently affect future touristic audiences. I conclude by reflecting on what this ethnographic case study can contribute to our understanding of platform governance, algorithmic navigation, touristic working practice, and orderings.
Lay Summary

If you possess a smartphone and have used applications that enable you to *locate* services nearby or *find your way* when you inhabit a new city then you are familiar with locative media platforms. This project explores how this genre of digital platform -- namely TripAdvisor -- intervenes in and shapes the working practices of those employed within the tourism industry. The case study I assembled centres on Edinburgh’s Harry Potter tourism scene and was based on three years of digital ethnographic research, and involved digital and in person participant observation and interviewing individuals who work within this domain. This thesis found that TripAdvisor is intimately involved in the provision and management of tourist services, and that attempting to get this platform working in their business’s favour (instead of against them) is a complex endeavour which involves the development and mobilisation of a number of techniques. This thesis reflects on the emergent relationships tourist businesses have with TripAdvisor and thinks through how we might conceptualise and understand touristic work in the ‘digital age’.
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Dedicated to --
William F. Bassett (1928-2019), Inna Maslenitsyn (1929-2020),
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Chapter 1:
The Development of Edinburgh’s Harry Potter Tourism ‘Ordering’ & TripAdvisor as an ‘Ordering Resource’

Edinburgh has been the birthplace, home, and hangout to several significant literary figures including Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Dame Muriel Spark and more recently Alexander McCall Smith, Irvine Welsh, Ian Rankin, and J.K. Rowling. In this way, Edinburgh has an extensive literary heritage which augments city life materially (in the form of monuments, statues, plaques, museum exhibits, and venues) and intersubjectively (in the shape of perceptions and understandings about it).

Material manifestations accounting for Edinburgh’s literary heritage

Since the early 2000’s, Edinburgh’s relationship to J.K. Rowling (JKR) -- but especially the Harry Potter (HP) book series which she imagined up and wrote into being while residing here -- has become an increasingly notable aspect of the city’s cultural and touristic landscape.

It becomes apparent when researching Edinburgh online and walking through its streets that this ‘touristic ordering’ (Franklin, 2004) has developed in ways which are
distinct from the ways that other Edinburgh-based literary tourisms have materialised and unfolded here both currently and in the past. While a *Vice Media* article published in 2018¹ rendered many of these more distinctive materialisations as evidence of “ruining” the city, I choose to approach this unfolding differently. I do so by resisting the temptation to measure cultural formations, processes, and practices against what they ‘ought to be’ or ‘ought to have been’ and instead try to “understand how they have come to be what they are” (Illouz, 2008, p. 4). One important facet of this cultural-economic setting which I attend to in this thesis is its materially heterogeneous underpinnings, and in particular its digital mediations and entanglements.

Based on three years of ethnographic research conducted within Edinburgh, I suggest that one entry point for understanding how HPT came to be what it is presently is by attending to the ways that its development occurs *with* the locative media platform TripAdvisor. This genre of digital platform -- like travel agencies and guidebooks of previous epochs -- is significant in that they create the conditions in which people can travel, imagine travel, stay in and manoeuvre places, as well as enjoy the experience. Additionally, and as my thesis will demonstrate, create the conditions in which cultural-economic actors bring their touristic services into being and make a place for themselves and touristic others within localities across the globe.

Notably though, this genre of digital platform -- and its antecedent forms -- are largely absent from structuralist theorisations of tourism and touristic work. Due to these absences, I pursue a non-structuralist approach which borrows from the nascent sociology of orderings (Franklin, 2004; Kendall and Wickham, 2001; Law, 1994; 2003) which merges facets of a Foucauldian notion of governmentality (Barreneche, 2012a; 2012b; Cooper, 2020; Newmeyer, 2008; Rose-Redwood, 2006) with an actor-network theory (ANT) emphasis on ‘relational materialism’ (Franklin, 2003; Law, 1994; 2002; Latour, 1992; 1993; 1999; 2005). I do so in an effort to conceptualise, describe, and analyse the ways that locative media platforms are *involved* in the development, organisation, and provision of HP-related touristic services and experiences with Edinburgh.

### 1.1 The Sociology of Orderings & Tourism Studies
An orderings approach is well suited for the aims of this project due to the ways that it privileges attention to ‘human interventions’ in the world. It does so by providing an ontology for considering the significance of key individuals and organizations whose

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¹ *Vice News: ‘Harry Potter Tourism is Ruining Edinburgh*
dreams are essential to the ‘tourism ordering’, as well as for beginning to think through the relationality of objects and technologies of tourism in this context. This approach to studying tourism was initially developed by Adrian Franklin (2003; 2004; 2008), and draws largely on the insights of ANT and science and technology studies (STS) scholars. I will use this approach to inform my rendering of the organisational setting (‘scene’) in which I conducted my fieldwork, and came to understand the part that TripAdvisor plays in how HPT came to be what it is presently. I will also use this approach to begin thinking through how this genre of platform comes to mediate the working practices of cultural-economic actors within the environments in which they are mobilised. In this way, this approach is both descriptively and analytically useful.

An orderings approach contrasts with general sociological theories of tourism -- such as Dean MacCannell’s (1976) *The Tourist* and John Urry’s (1990; 2002; Urry and Larsen, 2011) *The Tourist Gaze* -- in at least two important ways. First, unlike structuralist accounts of tourism that tend to rely on abstract motivational explanations and attempt to “deduce its origins from behaviour itself” (Franklin, 2004, p. 283), an orderings approach concerns itself with how tourism is organized or “ordered in practice” (p. 278). In doing so, this approach relies on this specification as a ‘mode of explanation’ and “way around the problems of structure and other essentialisms” (p. 278). Second, in contrast to social constructivist accounts that tend to represent touristic objects as secondary, passive, and significant only in what they signify to human social actors, an ordering approach conceptualises them as *actants* in the production of tourism (Franklin, 2003, p. 97). In doing so this approach attends to the ways that the social nature of tourism “articulates necessarily and in complex ways” (Franklin, 2004, p. 284) with non-human and more-than-human objects, systems, processes, and so on. Put another way, this approach assumes that things (and people) play an ‘enabling role’ in tourism, in that they “enable it to happen as well as enable those processes that are central to tourism to unfold” (Franklin, 2003, p. 98) -- and recommends that we concentrate on what people and things together as ‘hybrid forms’ (p. 106) actually do.

### 1.2 Harry Potter Tourism as an ‘Ordering’

Due to the ways that organisation and management are central to how HPT came into being initially as well as currently operates within Edinburgh, the notion of ‘ordering’ is highly applicable. Orderings can be thought of as *attempts at control or management* (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 5). These attempts are never simply a ‘social matter’, but are “a materially heterogeneous set of arrangements and processes implicated in and
implicating people to be sure, but also including and producing documents, codes, texts, architectures, and physical devices” (Law, 2003, p. 1). Orderings can be of any magnitude. For example, Franklin (2004) notes how every individual is engaged in ‘ordering activities’ -- “from simple ordering of the domestic material objects around them to ordering their movements through space” (p. 286). In this way, tourists may be conceptualised as low magnitude, ‘self-orderings’ who are enabled by an ordered traveling culture (p. 278). Additionally, organisations by their very definition make attempts to order, where some attempts are larger than others (p. 286). In this way, orderings are everywhere (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 25).

The ‘ordering activities’ of both tourists and cultural-economic actors are essential to understanding how HPT unfolds. However, I will more so be focusing our attention on the latter. The organisations that these cultural-economic actors comprise may be conceptualised as ‘ordering projects’ or ‘modes of ordering’. Franklin -- drawing on John Law’s (1994) Organizing Modernity (p. 20-21) -- lays out a way of thinking about how orderings come into being and how they act in the world. First, Franklin (2004) notes how ‘modes of ordering’ stem from narratives about the world which “tell us what use to be or what ought to happen” (p. 286). Here, there are ‘ordering concerns’, ‘procedures’, ‘methods’ or ‘logics’, ‘dreams of ordering’ (and perhaps nothing more). However, more than mere narratives, modes of ordering find expression and become active only through performance, and when they become “embodied in a concrete, non-verbal manner in the network of relations” (p. 286). Here, there are ‘ordering arrangements’, ‘expressions’, ‘suggestions’, ‘possibilities’, and ‘resources’. Finally, ordering involves strategies. However, they are not always “explicitly framed or worked strategies” (p. 286). In this way, orderings are similar to Michel Foucault’s (1966) notion of ‘discourse’ in the sense that they are “forms of strategic arranging that are intentional but do not necessarily have a subject” (Franklin, 2004, p. 286). Franklin goes on and notes how ‘ordering attempts’ or ‘programmes’ once released into the world have histories of their own as they interact with other orderings.

In what follows, I will begin rendering a story about the development of the HPT ordering within Edinburgh. This story will attend to how the practice of a HPT was made possible in the first place, how it “had to be made to happen” (Franklin, 2004, p. 279), and how it involved concerted organising, management, and the enrolment of heterogeneous materials. I elaborate on the latter facet in particular to demonstrate how the locative media platform TripAdvisor is entangled within this realm and how it “make[s] a difference” (Latour, 2005, p. 71) within the working practices of key cultural-economic actors involved.
It is from this elaboration that I will identify the key sociological issues this thesis will address and where I will provide a roadmap for what lies ahead.

1.2.1 2003-2009: The Laying of the Material & Experiential Foundations

Starting in 2003, a number of material manifestations accounting for the relationship between the city of Edinburgh and the bestselling book series of all time\(^2\) began emerging on the physical surfaces of the city. This included: the cafe where JKR wrote parts of the third HP book implying it was the ‘birthplace’ via its front window display; a black plaque being mounted near another venue claiming otherwise in 2006; a hotel transforming the room where JKR finished writing the series into the ‘J.K. Rowling Suite’ in 2008; and Edinburgh City Council casting and displaying JKR’s handprints within the courtyard of Edinburgh City Chambers a couple months later. Additionally, beginning in 2009 a number of cafes around the city began “poking fun” at this phenomenon of venues claiming to be HP writing spots via assembling and hanging up signs reading something like “J.K. Rowling never wrote here” or “Harry Potter was not written here”.

*Early material manifestations accounting for Edinburgh’s relationship to the HP/JKR*

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\(^2\) *Harry Potter as Best-Selling Book Series of All Time*
With the exception of the window display of the Elephant House cafe, the material manifestations that followed it appeared after two high profile events. This included Edinburgh being designated as the world’s first UNESCO ‘City of Literature’ in 2004 and Edinburgh Castle hosting Bloomsbury’s highly publicised book release event for the 6th HP book in 2005. This first event is significant because it inspired the development of a number of literary tours of the city that would help tourists more practically locate and observe these features of the city. Important here, one of these literary tours that emerged in 2005 -- called the Book Lover’s Tour of Edinburgh -- began highlighting another venue related to JKR/HP to visitors of the city as part of its broader tour route. This venue -- known as Nicolson’s Cafe -- had been co-owned by JKR’s brother-in-law and had been JKR’s writing spot of choice when she first moved to Edinburgh and was beginning to write the seven book series. By highlighting this other venue as a writing location, Allan Foster (the tour guide and author of numerous literary travel guide books about Edinburgh) began assembling an alternative touristic narrative about the relationship between the city and JKR/HP to the one which was being forwarded by the Elephant House cafe within their front window display.

*The Book Lover’s Tour of Edinburgh (2005 until present)*

Edinburgh’s designation as a ‘literary city’ additionally inspired the creation of more materiality accounting for its literary heritage. For example, in 2005³ Robert Watt (a retired teacher and literary enthusiast) began fundraising for a plaque which would highlight Nicolson’s Cafe -- the same venue which Allan (an acquaintance) was highlighting in his tour -- as more akin to the birthplace of HP. Robert’s fundraising efforts were successful and in 2006⁴ the black plaque was mounted outside and directly below this venue. This

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³ “Magic bid to mark Harry’s roots”
⁴ “Plaque spells out Harry’s birthplace”
plaque not only helped authenticate this alternative and more historically accurate narrative about the relationship between the city and the series to visitors, but also helped establish Edinburgh’s ‘Writers Corner’ due to it being mounted close by to the memorials of Robert Louis Stevenson and William McGonagall (both of which Watt also had a hand in fundraising for). When this plaque was first mounted, Nicolsons Cafe had been shut for three years and a Chinese restaurant called Buffet King was animating this venue. In 2009 though, this restaurant also closed down and another cafe called Spoon moved in and was up until 2021 the establishment that this plaque was referencing.

However, because the venue that the plaque is referring to is on the first floor, the plaque is mounted directly outside an establishment on the ground floor called Black Medicine. This establishment was opened in 1998 and is presently owned by Dougal McBride who was the business partner of JKR’s brother-in-law (who is now retired) and is where both men shifted their attention after closing down Nicolsons Cafe in 2003. The black plaque mounted outside also affects this venue. This is because it references the ‘first floor’ of the building and there is currently no international consensus on floor numbering. This has created a situation where international tourists -- especially those from regions where ‘first floor’ is synonymous with the ‘ground floor’ -- will sometimes visit and document their experiences here under the impression that they are in the space where JKR wrote. This touristic pattern inspired Dougal to commission and hang up a sign inside his café that reads ‘Harry Potter was not written here’. This material intervention was also inspired by Dougal coming across -- and developing an appreciation of -- the first sign of this kind in Edinburgh, which hangs in Artisan Roast café on the other side of town. This black plaque then, both intentionally and unintentionally, has drawn attention to four (soon five) establishments over the years and in doing so has included them in Edinburgh’s HPT ordering.

*The four establishments that the black plaque has included in Edinburgh’s HPT ordering*
Whereas the second event -- the UK launch of the sixth HP book at Edinburgh Castle in 2005 -- is significant in that it represented the first time that Edinburgh gained considerable attention for being the place where the HP series was written. The media coverage of this book launch event represented Edinburgh Castle as visually akin to the magical school described in the HP book series and depicted in the film adaptations, but notably also used words such as ‘hometown’\(^5\) and ‘birthplace’\(^6\) to describe the city’s relationship to the series. The circulation of these media representations appears to have piqued the interest of HP’s international audience and contributed to the explosion of “Harry Potter Edinburgh”-related search queries made via Google Search during the month of this event.

*Worldwide interest in the search phrase “Harry Potter Edinburgh” between 2004 and 2021 (via Google Trends)*

In this way, this event marked when Edinburgh became more so associated with the series on the world stage, when the ‘birthplace’ discourse began to circulate more widely, and -- closely related to this -- when this discourse began developing into a semiotic resource which could be drawn upon in the assemblance of Edinburgh’s identity as a literary city, and by extension within the realm of its associated tourisms. For example, in 2007 the Elephant House cafe began using this discourse more explicitly within their front window display.

\(^5\) “Potter Magic at Edinburgh Castle”

\(^6\) “As the word goes Potter-mad for the sixth time, JK brings magic to Edinburgh Castle midnight bash begins a weekend of events to launch Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince”
First materialisation of the HP birthplace discourse in Edinburgh (2007)

One year after the Elephant House added this ‘birthplace’ sign to its front window display, the owner also commissioned the development of the café’s first website that would also make mention of the relationship between this establishment and the book series. Unlike their front window display though, their website presents their relationship to the writing of the HP book series in a historically accurate way. 2008 thus marks when digital manifestations accounting for this relationship began emerging on the globally retrievable surfaces of the commercial internet. First by the Elephant House, then by the Balmoral Hotel that developed and began promoting their JKR suite, and finally by the City of Edinburgh itself on the web page devoted to its Edinburgh Award (which had been the occasion in which JKR’s handprints were cast and displayed in the city centre). 2008 is also when a ‘place page’ was generated for the Elephant House Cafe on TripAdvisor, and when the Balmoral Hotel started gaining a reputation on this platform related to their HP association. 2008 then is when both organisation-generated and tourist-generated content accounting for Edinburgh’s relationship to the series began proliferating on the Internet and where it could be retrieved and used to inform travel -- travel which would soon be changed by the 2008 financial crisis.

However, whilst there was certainly a growing awareness about Edinburgh’s connection to the HP series during this time, the touristic resources and services which enable visitors to more practically locate and comprehend the significance of these HP features were limited and largely non-existent. The absence of such resources meant that the practices that are presently associated with HPT were quite laborious to enact and participate in. In theory, their enactment would have required: conducting extensive internet-based research before and/or after one’s trip (seeing as no travel guidebooks depicted these objects and smartphones were not the norm yet); tracking down and going on the one literary tour which included some of these objects in its route, and potentially asking the guide for further information; as well as tracking down, engaging with, and deciphering the historical accuracy of the informational content provided by venues who had associated themselves with the writing of the HP series. In this way, while the practice
of HPT by a number of determined fan-visitors certainly emerged during this period, its practice was largely inaccessible to the majority of tourists of the city and because of this was largely considered niche.

Here, the further development of Edinburgh as a global literary city by a number of cultural-economic actors, and in particular the emergence of more materiality accounting for its literary heritage is what enabled visitors to begin observing, understanding, and exploring the city’s association with JKR and HP. In this way, Edinburgh’s HPT ordering should be conceptualised as the product of this broader ordering of the city’s global identity and its public spaces. In line with Franklin’s (2003) conceptualisation of the significance of ‘objects of tourism’, it appears that the initial practice of a HPT of Edinburgh depended on the existence of ‘touristic objects’ to attend to, adopt the correct manner before, take sufficient time to see and read, and to be attentive towards the landscape they jointly compose (p. 102). These types of objects then can be said to have made a HPT of Edinburgh possible in the first place in the sense that they provided the necessary materiality for these types of touristic practices to be performed and developed. This period between 2003 and 2009 is significant then in that the material and experiential groundwork for a HPT was being laid as part of Edinburgh’s ordering as a global literary city, however the unfolding of this type tourism was organisationally disjointed and remained as such until 2012.

1.2.2 2012: The Emergence of the First Harry Potter Literary Tour

The first HP-specific literary tour of Edinburgh emerged in 2012, and was pioneered by an Edinburgh University student named Stuart Young. Stuart moved to Edinburgh from York, England in 2009 to study creative writing at the postgraduate level, but he decided to stick around after graduating due to his love of the city and the ties he had forged to its comedy scene and annual Fringe Festival. After his master’s programme concluded in 2010 Stuart began working part-time as a tour guide. In our interview, he noted that as a fan of HP, how he had already been aware of JKR’s biography and her connection to Edinburgh, but that it was during his working as a historical ghost tour guide that he began noticing that there were “a few little facts” within the tours he was performing (as well as within some of the tours others were performing) which were “related to Harry Potter”. Additionally, he started becoming privy to how these “little facts” were not only enthusiastically engaged with by tour-takers, but how they additionally tended to inspire further questions (especially at the end of tours) about the relationship between the city and the series. At this time, there were no tours in Edinburgh specifically taking up and
centring these associations. These observations, as well as his growing desire to take on a new “challenge of [his] own” motivated him to begin developing a HP-specific literary tour and assembling the foundations for what would soon become the Potter Trail tour.

The Potter Trail Tour (2012 until present)

Here Stuart began conducting extensive, largely internet-based research into JKR’s biography, consulting with other tour guides in Edinburgh, as well as re-familiarizing himself with the HP canon (via re-reading the books and re-watching the film adaptations). He did all of this in order to “scour for any kind of little detail that would make an interesting story about [JKR] or perhaps the connections [between the book series] to Edinburgh to tell on the tour”. Once he had conducted this research and had roughly mapped out these various associations, he began organising a tour route. A walking tour he emphasised is “an entertainment product, not a lecture, so it has to be structured more like a promenade”. What this means more practically is ensuring that the tour route had “frequent enough stops, and went to interesting enough locations”. Here proximity between stopping points was important to routing the tour and making it “as entertaining as possible”. For example, in regards to the inclusion of the Balmoral Hotel in the tour, he noted how “because that location is so far away from the other locations on the tour, [they] don’t walk people off to visit it because it would take 20 minutes, instead [they] just point to it, [they] try to get as close as possible as [they] can to it, and [how the tour participant] can go visit that another time” on their own.
After routing, came writing original content, crafting an engaging story, and designing an entertaining experience of Edinburgh as it related to the sites he had included in the tour route. In our interview, Stuart emphasized “structure” and “variation” as central to keeping people interested in the tour content as it progresses over the hour and half/two hour time window, but also to generating the appropriate “atmosphere” for that genre of tour. He noted for example how a ghost tour is “structured” in such a way as to “nurture historical interest”, create “suspense”, “slowly ratchet up tension towards being scared”, and ultimately to elicit a sense of “horror” or feelings of “disgust”. He emphasised how these affects elicited are central to a ghost tour being experienced and evaluated as entertaining.

In contrast to a ghost tour though, Stuart explained how “people are there to be excited about Harry Potter and not scared by terrifying stories”. Due to this imagining of what tour takers would likely be seeking, he organized the tour around “a mixture of different content” meant to nurture “childlike wonder”. He explained:

_The idea of getting back to, or, for children no problem at all, um, but certainly for the adults that go on the tour I think that one of the reasons why they are into Harry Potter in the first place, and why, they've um, ya know, stayed being fans of the books even though they are older, is because of that extensive magic, and um, yeah, wonder about the world, and, and ya know, fascination with um, the idea of a secret world, and the stories and characters. And I think trying to -- it's probably a little bit, um, it probably sounds a little bit highfalutin, just uh, it is after all a walking tour -- but really if we can give people, uh, a sort of, rekindle in them, the kind of wonder, the kind of magic that they feel when they read the Harry Potter books, or when they discovered them, or when they saw the films, whenever they discovered that world for the first time, um, then, we have done a good job._

Eliciting these feelings is complex and more practically pursued by: drawing on and weaving together excerpts and imagery from the books; JKR’s biography; Edinburgh’s broader literary heritage (especially its ties to other female authors of the city) and history (especially as its associated with the persecution of witches); pop cultural references; as well as a guide’s personal experience of living in Edinburgh and being a HP enthusiast themselves. Then these bits of information are further augmented with both humour (“so it’s not just a list of dry historical facts”) and designing interactive elements or activities into the tour (such as handing out wands and teaching tour-takers a spell to cross the street safely). These same sorts of “rules of structure” that Stuart learned the value of from his time working as a historical ghost tour guide then were also applied to the HP literary tour
he developed, but where the difference is in the ‘affective atmosphere’ (Anderson, 2014) being pursued by the guide in their interactions with tour participants as they lead them through the bustling city in both good and bad weather.

After Stuart had designed the tour, he organised a couple “run-throughs” and “pilot tours” with some “key actors in Edinburgh”. This involved giving tours to members of two student-led societies at the University of Edinburgh including the Edinburgh Revue (comedy society) and the Harry Potter Society. He commented on how the latter society was a particularly “great resource” due to their being “really into [HP]” and how performing for them helped him “make a few changes to the route” and “correct a few inaccuracies as well”. These pilot tours then, and this in-person feedback they provided, helped him work out some initial kinks related to the tour’s route and informational content, and enabled him to “hone it and transform it into something which was both enjoyable to observe (by tour participants) and to perform (by a guide).

Once he had gathered this feedback and made necessary changes to the tour itself, it came time to bring his HP literary tour into being as a touristic option and to try to promote it. This former task was pursued by working his way through the necessary paperwork associated with registering a new business, but additionally by developing a website, crafting business profiles on Facebook and Twitter, and creating a ‘place page’ on TripAdvisor. Setting up these digital profiles would enable the tour to be retrievable by those planning their travels to Edinburgh with the help of the internet.

After ensuring the tour was retrievable on Google Search and on these socio-spatial platforms, Stuart turned his efforts towards “getting people to be interested in it” and to “actually come on the tour”. He pursued this task by “standing on the Royal Mile, handing people flyers, [and] telling them about a free walking tour”. He did all of this “in costume” (which he described as “wizard-like” and “kind of like a professor from Hogwarts”) for five months in order to try and “build interest” and “get the ball rolling”. This promotional strategy is something he had learned from participating in and building an audience for his comedy performances during the Fringe Festival. He explained how this stage was the “hardest work” because:

You know when you just start out with a tour, it doesn’t matter how great it is, you are starting completely from scratch. People have never heard of you. They might look on TripAdvisor but will see that nobody has recommended us because there won’t be any reviews. There will be no website, or you could make a website, but the website will not have um, will not be featuring highly on Google’s algorithms. So, very much, the hardest work in promoting it was right at the very beginning.
This excerpt from our interview is telling as it demonstrates how becoming digitally entangled does not on its own do much for new businesses and how other, non-digital efforts are essential to their finding an audience *initially*.

Once Stuart got the “ball got rolling” though, and was “getting people to show up on the tours, giving them the best tour [he] could possibly give them”, he began “at the end encouraging them to do things like follow [them] on Facebook, leave reviews on TripAdvisor” and in particular “explaining how much this helps [the tour]” to stick around. This bit of “patter” was not only essential to the development of a digitally verifiable reputation on these platforms, but is additionally central to the ability of a tour guide to earn tips and generate an income from their performances of these tours (which are free to participate in). During this time, Stuart was additionally reaching out to and leaving flyers with hostels, local cafes, and restaurants. He did this in an effort to generate more awareness about the tour within the small business and touristic landscape of the city and to try to get ‘word of mouth’ going. In this way, and in order to “get the online presences going” Stuart “started with the [tour’s] offline presence”.

After running the tours for a couple months on his own, Stuart “brought on” a couple of his friends from the University of Edinburgh who were also a part of its student-led comedy society and trained them as tour guides. Shortly after, he received and accepted a job offer in London, England and proceeded to pass the reins of the company over to Becky Price. During the year Becky facilitated and managed the Potter Trail, she too recruited and trained some other individuals involved in the Edinburgh Revue as tour guides, as well as made efforts to maintain their good standing in the city. After a while though, the demand for tours began to increase and Becky (who also works as a nurse) decided this role “wasn’t for [her]”. She proceeded to pass the management responsibilities over to Richard Duffy and Will Naameh, both of whom currently facilitate and manage the tour.

While some of these early members of the Potter Trail recalled participating in in-person promotional efforts during special occasions (such as during the Fringe Festival), this kind of *promotional practice* soon became less necessary to their ability to *populate* their tours on the days they were being offered. This was largely because of their starting to gain prestige on TripAdvisor via receiving consistently high reviews from their tour participants. Their gaining prestige on this platform not only rendered them increasingly *visible* and *discoverable* on TripAdvisor, but also helped to increase the ranking of their broader digital profile within Google’s Search ecosystem. In this way, tourist-generated
content as it was measured and circulated via the performative infrastructures of TripAdvisor, combined with their being the only HP literary tour in Edinburgh during this time, and having ‘word of mouth’ as it circulates within the cultural-economic landscape of Edinburgh working in their favour, eventually created a situation where they were able to stop promoting the tours in person without sacrificing the number of people on their tours each day.

Here, TripAdvisor made a difference in the life-worlds of members of the Potter Trail tour by creating a context where their performing affectively compelling tours gave them potential ‘networking’ and ‘staying’ power. This is because TripAdvisor uses both quantitative and qualitative measures of sentiment of customer reviews to rank (make visible and discoverable) ‘place pages’ in its index according to their affective claim to attention (something I will expand upon in the next chapter). However, their tour performances only gain these properties when these affects are translated onto the platform by tour participants. Once mobilised by face-to-face interaction then, their TripAdvisor profile could eventually be relied upon to stand in for them in these types of touristic discovery interactions. Importantly, much face-to-face work -- namely performing tours which were consistently evaluated as being “info-taining” and accommodating of a diverse array of touristic-types -- had to be done before this could happen. The success and persistence of this first HP tour then is intimately entangled with the touristic, locative media platform TripAdvisor. As ANT scholar John Law (1994) notes: “[l]eft to their own devices human actions and words do not spread very far at all [...] other materials, such as texts and technologies, surely form a crucial part of any ordering” (p. 3). In other words, it was only by becoming involved with and mobilising other materials -- namely digital ones -- that this tour group managed to make a place for themselves within Edinburgh’s broader tourism landscape and could eventually (six years later) depend on this line of work as a primary source of income.

The success and persistence of this first HP tour didn’t just imply a new ordering of touristic experience of Edinburgh, but is also significant in its ordering of the city’s landscape. Before this tour emerged, the only HP-related touristic ‘objects’ were those associated with where JKR had conducted her writing. In this way, the touristic stories that were already circulating were centred mostly on the author herself. The Potter Trail tour features and contextualises many of these related objects and venues, but also assembles and highlights objects and spaces associated with the fictional world JKR wrote into being. These ‘places of inspiration’ were assembled by Stuart through a deep reading of JKR’s biography together with the HP books themselves. This included: two tombstones in
Greyfriars Kirkyard with engravings which align with HP character names, two buildings visible from this Kirkyard which bear some noteworthy resemblances to the fictional wizarding school JKR created, one underpass which serves as a stopping point and visual point of reference to talk about how JKR herself has discussed how her early days in Edinburgh inspired her creation of ‘Dementors’ (magical creatures), and finally a street which bears striking similarities to the fictional wizarding street which students visit for their school supplies before the start of the wizarding school year.

‘Places of inspiration’ assembled and highlighted by the Potter Trail tour

In doing so the tour assembled new objects and reinvigorated the already active touristic landscapes these objects exist within with new cultural significance.

Their tours are significant then in their highlighting of the HP-related ‘stuff’ that already existed on the surfaces of the city, but also, in their bringing new objects into Edinburgh’s HPT ordering. While some of these new HP-related objects and sites had certainly been associated with HP more informally via the performances of other types of tours (for example, ghost tours had already been associating Thomas Riddell's grave with HP), this first HP tour and its success associated these objects in ways which contributed to their becoming significant beyond the context of the tour and where some of these objects eventually took on notable ‘social lives’ of their own.
Important here, the associating of these objects with HP by the Potter Trail was not pursued through physical nor digital means. By this I mean that this organisation didn’t fundraise and commission any kind of physical marker which persists in time and space and informs HP-related touristic encounters with the city independently of a human social actor (like the black plaque does). Nor do they associate these objects with HP on their website or through their posting on their social media profiles via geotagging. In fact, early on, doing so was even largely considered risky to their ability to encourage visitors of the city to come on their tours in the first place. For example, Richard Duffy (one of the current managers) explained to me in our interview:

*I suppose in terms of the actual tour content we do, none of it is online. So like, what's most important for us is everything that is offline (laughs)[...]*

*I was wanting for ages to uh put up a map of the tour on the website because I think that it would just be a nice thing to sort of show what we cover, but then I thought like, well that's not, that's actually something that we do want to keep a little bit secret. Like when people ask over email for a detailed tour breakdown, I am just like, that isn't going to happen. I will direct them to what we've got, in that like first like bit of our website that gives you any more than that is going to ruin the experience...[In fact] it's actually, better if these things aren't online, [it] adds to the secrecy of it, that these are only things that you are going to find out in real life and if you come to certain places at certain times.*

This associating of specific objects and spaces with HP by the Potter Trail tour then was only made through affective means -- or rather, through their “attempting to transform their participants through the experience of the walking tour” (Wynn, 2011, p. 159). It is through the Potter Trail’s transformation of the experience of the tour participant then that these associations were able to eventually take on different properties which enabled these objects embedded in Edinburgh’s landscape to develop ‘social lives’ of their own.

For example, early on Stuart was approached by a journalist from *The Scotsman* who wanted to come on the tour and write up a story on it. In this news piece⁷, the affective associations Stuart was making between objects in the landscape and HP were not only made explicit, but due to it being published online were also made digital and thus retrievable in related Google Search queries. Notably, one year after this piece about the tour was published is when Thomas Riddell’s grave in particular became the feature of a number of other local news media articles and is when this HP-related object started

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⁷ Potter Trail Tour’s first media feature by The Scotsman
developing a digital profile of its own\textsuperscript{8}. Additionally, the ways that many tour participants recorded and broadcast their experiences of these tours on both social and locative media platforms created a situation where the existence of these HP-related objects was both circulated across their tour-takers’ social networks, but also in some cases anchored to digital representations of geographical space (via geotagging). These touristic and media interactions then augmented the Potter Trail’s ordering of objects in the landscape by creating digital traces of these affective associations, which together have contributed to these touristic objects becoming more so visible and discoverable independently of the Potter Trail tour.

Here, I conceptualise the first HP tour as an important ‘ordering project’ within the development of Edinburgh’s broader HPT ordering. However, while the Potter Trail’s initial ordering attempt certainly had “blueprint beginnings” (Franklin, 2004, p. 284) and involved “forms of strategic arranging that [were] intentional” (p. 286), as this ‘ordering project’ persisted in time and space it took on a more unbounded and open-ended nature. By this, I mean that once released into the world this ordering appears to have taken on a life of its own “as the people and things so ordered respond, block, enable, modify, reconfigure, spread, and inspire effects” (p. 284). In line with Franklin’s (2004) conceptualisation of orderings then, touristic ordering projects cannot be necessarily “confined to their intended object”, “may not continue in the form initially conceived”, and can have “a range of effects, intended and otherwise” (p. 284). Orderings then are “pure process” (p. 284).

1.2.3 2017: The Development of a Harry Potter Touristic ‘Scene’

For five years, the Potter Trail was the only HP-specific literary tour of Edinburgh. However, this all changed in 2017. This year marked when the UK as a whole celebrated the 20th anniversary of the first HP book with a number of events held across the nation\textsuperscript{9} -- one of which was held in Edinburgh. Here, the National Library of Scotland hosted a pop-up exhibition\textsuperscript{10} that featured a rare first edition of the first HP book that JKR had annotated with drawings and personal notes. This anniversary event marked an instance where a number of high profile news media articles emerged\textsuperscript{11} which were encouraging their readers to visit Edinburgh during these celebrations, as well as contextualised Edinburgh’s significance to the HP series and highlighted the other HP-related features that the city has

\textsuperscript{8} Thomas Riddell Grave News Coverage: 1, 2, 3
\textsuperscript{9} 20th Anniversary Celebrations across UK
\textsuperscript{10} National Library of Scotland to host exhibition to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the first Harry Potter book
\textsuperscript{11} High profile HP/Edinburgh articles which emerged in 2017: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
to offer (those that I introduced in the previous two sections). Additionally, these events inspired a number of travel bloggers\textsuperscript{12} to assemble guides to Edinburgh’s HP features and which use the Google Maps API to help individuals locate these features within the city. This latter type of resource, in particular, now enables visitors of the city to ‘self order’ and participate in HP touristic practices independently of a tour guide (something which became evident to me within a two-day intercept questionnaire I conducted near Thomas Riddell’s grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard).

2017 is also when Scotland’s national tourism board, \textit{Visit Scotland}, decided to leverage for the first time ever\textsuperscript{13} its HP film and literary associations. This decision by \textit{Visit Scotland} to do so came 16 years after the \textit{British Tourism Authority} controversially left Scotland out\textsuperscript{14} of its first HP film tourism campaign\textsuperscript{15} that was mobilised in 2001 (when the first film adaptation was being teased and released). This initial campaign -- which Scotland was excluded from -- was aimed at reinvigorating tourism to the UK (or maybe more appropriately to England) after the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease and after the September 11\textsuperscript{th} terrorist attacks (in the US) had significantly affected its international influx of tourists. Almost exactly one year after the 2016 vote to leave the EU (‘Brexit’), \textit{Visit Scotland} finally leveraged Scotland’s HP associations by launching an internet-based ‘Potterhead’ travel itinerary and map\textsuperscript{16} in collaboration with Tessa Netting\textsuperscript{17} (a YouTube personality\textsuperscript{18} and HP fan/influencer). The route \textit{Visit Scotland} guided Tessa Netting and her friend (also a YouTube personality and nerd-culture influencer) began in Edinburgh and ended in the Scottish Highlands. In Edinburgh, the two women were shown around by a member of Edinburgh University’s Harry Potter Society. During this trip, both individuals broadcast their HP-related experiences of Scotland to their substantial audiences on Instagram. Additionally, and afterwards, Tessa Netting posted a series of YouTube videos depicting in more detail their experiences. Both types of digital content broadcast received quite a bit of attention. This campaign was successful both in terms of creating awareness of Scotland’s connection to the HP franchise\textsuperscript{19}, but additionally in terms of interpellating individuals to actually visit these sites\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{12} Independent Travel Cats’s ‘Comprehensive Guide to the Top Harry Potter Sites in Edinburgh Scotland’
\textsuperscript{13} STB/VS launch first HP itinerary and map
\textsuperscript{14} SNP motion tabled in the House of Commons entitled ‘Harry Potter and The British Tourism Authority’ & BBC coverage of this motion
\textsuperscript{15} 2001 BTA HP Film Tourism Campaign
\textsuperscript{16} STB/VS Harry Potter Film and Book Locations Itinerary
\textsuperscript{17} STB/VS hosts Tessa Netting’s Potterhead Dream Trip
\textsuperscript{18} Tessa Netting Profile
\textsuperscript{19} Tessa Netting’s YouTube Videos for Edinburgh and Scotland
\textsuperscript{20} HP boosts Scottish Tourism after 20th anniversary
All of these 20th anniversary happenings are notable in that they represented an increase in the digital content being produced, broadcast, and circulated about Edinburgh’s connection to the HP book series, but importantly about its touristic features accounting for this relationship. Here, all of this attention and information appears to have inspired a number of other local and extra-local cultural-economic actors to assemble HP-related offerings within Edinburgh, seeing as it was within this time that a number of new HP literary tours, comedy performances, and themed venues began emerging (some of whom I interviewed members of and will introduce later on). The proliferation of these new HP-related services not only brought more attention to Edinburgh as a HPT destination, but also increased the net size and scope of Edinburgh’s HPT ordering and created a context where visitors now had a number of options at their disposal for observing this relationship between the city and the popular book series. Together these dynamics added ever-new HP touristic objects to Edinburgh’s cultural landscape and marked the development of what I refer to as a HP touristic ‘scene’ (Straw, 2004) within the city.

*New touristic ‘objects’ which were added to Edinburgh’s HPT ordering starting in 2017*

The development of a more fully fledged HP touristic scene is central to the story I will be rendering moving forward about how locative media platforms like TripAdvisor make a difference to the working practices of cultural-economic actors. This is because its development represented a moment where the platform became not only a means of
bringing one’s HP-related offering into being as a touristic option (like I described with the Potter Trail), but additionally created a context where it became a key site of competition, and where one’s organisational ‘place page’ became one of the key materials for competing. For already established organisations like the Potter Trail, their reputation/ranking on TripAdvisor became something that they as a tour company had to work to *preserve* in order to *maintain* their place in Edinburgh’s tourism landscape. Whereas for newcomers, the stakes were even higher and they had to work to *develop* a reputation/ranking and *establish* a place for themselves on the platform (and in the city). This context then is characterised by the algorithmic navigation of locative media platforms being essential to maintaining or establishing one’s touristic organisation in time and space, and where placemaking processes and touristic development are digitally entangled.

1.3 Locative Media Platforms as Touristic ‘Ordering Resources’

In the context of Edinburgh’s HPT scene, I conceptualise TripAdvisor as a key touristic ‘ordering resource’. This is because it has the capacity to shape tourists’ *understanding of* and *engagement* with the cultural-economic landscape of Edinburgh. Whereas for those accommodating tourists, the platform shapes their organisation’s *visibility* and *discoverability* within this landscape. This capacity makes it important that HP touristic organisations -- especially those which are not writing locations/historically unique within this domain -- not only have profiles on this platform (are retrievable), but that they *work* to maintain and/or improve their ranking on the platform in order to ensure their visibility, discoverability and/or attractiveness over other similar services. In this way, the platform has the capacity to *order* the ‘working practices’ (Franklin, 2004, p.280) of cultural-economic actors involved in this touristic scene.

TripAdvisor poses a unique challenge to touristic organisations though. Unlike social media platforms where account managers have direct control over the content which populates their profile and shapes the impression they are giving off, locative media platforms operate differently. Here the impression given off is based on the content that their customers generate. In other words, they *do not* directly control the impression they are giving off via this platform, their customers do. In this way, while social media platforms enable touristic organisations to develop their public image, locative media platforms more so assemble their reputation. This reputation as it is assembled by the performative infrastructures (or algorithms) of the platform can have implications for whether or not they are visited or passed over.
This configuration of TripAdvisor contributes to the ‘felt sense’ amongst many of the cultural-economic actors I came in contact with during my field work that they do not have much control over their profiles and by extension the impression they are giving off to those who use this platform to navigate the city. While for some this means that they focus more of their attention and work on their social media profiles (where they do have more control over the content displayed), for others this felt sense has contributed to their developing organisation strategies intended to get these platforms working for them, as opposed to something that “happens to” them. These working-understandings of TripAdvisor by some cultural-economic actors involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene made me curious about how exactly these organisations attempt to do this. My thesis will thus be taking up how some HPT touristic organisations attempt to exercise agency in a context in which this agency is digitally entangled, and by extension algorithmically governed by TripAdvisor.

While TripAdvisor certainly isn’t the only digital platform which matters in this context, the platform’s mobilisation of a more objective ranking system meant that at the time of my systematically assembling data (2018-2019), it was not only identified by my research participants themselves as the most “important” and/or “challenging” platform to get working in their favour, but additionally had the most noticeable impact on their thinking and the conduct of their organisations’ working practices comparatively to Google Maps which uses a more personalised ranking system. For example, many of my research participants commented on how Google Maps did not cause them nearly as many problems and how it even seemed to be a more “positive” testimonial space comparatively. For these reasons, their Google Maps ‘place pages’ were something which they still kept an eye on, but which they didn’t feel they needed to be quite as vigilant towards. Whereas for TripAdvisor, even organisations without explicitly planned or worked TripAdvisor strategies -- and who in some cases even claimed to not give the platform “much thought” -- had still to some extent organisationally internalised the platform dynamics and even mobilised its logics within their operations and service delivery at certain moments in their developments.

1.3.1 TripAdvisor as a Locative Media Platform

Due to these characteristics of touristic organisations’ relationships with TripAdvisor, this thesis will be focused on their interrelationships with this platform and this platform only. While most scholastic accounts of TripAdvisor analyse it as a form of social media, I instead pursue an analysis of the platform as a form of locative media.
TripAdvisor certainly has ‘social features’ and makes use of ‘social data’, however I suggest that it is tourist’s utilisation of the platform as a ‘travel agent’ and form of ‘spatial media’, that enables us to make sense of how the platform intervenes in the working practices of those who accommodate them (something which I will expand on in the next chapter). However, importantly this conceptualisation of TripAdvisor also aligns with the platform’s development as a touristic ‘ordering resource’.

For example, when TripAdvisor was first launched in 2000 as a travel search engine, its founder Stephen Kaufer and his small team of developers were initially concerned with amassing the “official words from guidebooks”, newspapers, magazines, other travel media21, and in particular were attempting to make this information accessible to tourists based on the specific places which they were making reference. Here, the developers generated profiles -- what I will refer to as ‘place pages’ -- for an array of touristic services, venues, and/or prominent ‘points of interest’ which were being referenced within these pre-digital and in some cases now-digital touristic resources. However, TripAdvisor’s developers had also included a button on these ‘place pages’ which read ‘add your own review’. This feature was wildly successful, so much so that the company pivoted and began developing the platform in ways that centred and appropriated (Jarrett, 2016) this type of user-generated content. For example, soon afterwards they began making these reviews more of a centrepiece on these ‘place pages’. Additionally, starting in 2005 TripAdvisor began ordering (making visible and discoverable) these ‘place pages’ based on its own users’ ratings (‘bubbles’) and reviews, instead of based upon external web references, like it had been doing previously (Alaimo et al., 2020, p. 5465).

While TripAdvisor has always been a form of ‘spatial media’ due to its making information accessible based on notions of place and its organising of ‘place pages’ according to the cities and regions they belong, it wasn’t until 2007 when TripAdvisor’s developers integrated Google Maps into the platform’s workings (via the Google Maps API) that it became operational as a form of locative media. It was during this same time that TripAdvisor also began collecting data, not only on the places represented within its geoindex, but also on tourists’ behaviours (Alaimo et al., 2020, p. 5466). Importantly though, TripAdvisor’s functionality and usability as a form of locative media increased significantly during the “rise of the smartphone” (Wilken, 2019, p. 8) and when the tech company launched its first iPhone and Android mobile applications in 2010. TripAdvisor’s

21 BBC News Interview with Stephen Kaufer
becoming as a form of locative media not only changed how, when, and where its content was accessed by tourists, but later on (around 2014), also enabled its developers to begin providing a more personalised homepage for its registered users which would draw from their travel preferences, recent location-based search history, and their mobility patterns to curate ‘place pages’ for them to discover. Importantly though, TripAdvisor’s curation of ‘place pages’ in its city-based ‘discovery pages’ and ‘tabs’ continues to be based on their overall ‘popularity’ and not based on personalised preferences -- something which distinguishes their broader ranking system from other locative media platforms like Google Maps.

In the context of this thesis then, I use the term ‘locative media’ to refer to a genre of digital platform which relies on digital mapping and uses physical location as a dominant ‘ordering logic’ to make informational content embedded within its index retrievable and discoverable. Whereas, I use the term ‘platform’ to denote how these digital media are “composite entities whose operations are contingent on the orchestration of technological capabilities into a dynamic and well-functioning whole”, which assemble together a number of different elements (data warehousing environments, distributed data management systems and tools, protocols, APIs, GPS and other smart device sensors, social buttons, user interfaces, and so on) to form ‘multi-sided markets’ in which “different types of participants trade their interests under a set of rules and conditions which are shaped by the nature of each platform (type of product or service traded) and the ways it is governed (platform owners)” (Alaimo et al., 2020, p. 5463). TripAdvisor fits well within both of these descriptions seeing as its platform functions as an index to the geocoded touristic landscape; is place-oriented as well as location-sensitive; acts as a complex, materially heterogeneous ‘ordering resource’ which provides specialised travel and hospitality services; and in doing so brings a number of different social actors and their interests together.

1.3.2 Thesis ‘Roadmap’

As things stand, most scholastic accounts of locative media centre on the production and development of these platforms, or on their end-users who roam, navigate, and “have the power to document their memories, feelings, biases and reactions to places” (Graham et al., 2011). There are however very few accounts that explore what the proliferation of this genre of digital platform implies for the working practices of cultural-economic actors whose services are subject to customer evaluation and now platform measurement. In an effort to help forge such an understanding, I will be pursuing a
'relational materialist' (Law, 1994) theorisation of touristic work in Chapter 2. I do so by taking seriously the 'social life' (Appadurai, 1986) of this genre of platform -- and importantly its antecedent forms -- within the UK/Western European touristic context. Building on Franklin’s (2004) initial application of an orderings approach and work which expands on Foucauldian notions of governance I assemble an imagining of locative media platforms as ‘geo-pastoral’ technologies. It is from this genealogical-type analysis that I will introduce some concepts which will act as methodological guidelines for investigating touristic work in this context of digital mediation, and where I will also specify my focus on the notion of ‘affect’.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss how I designed, improvised, and conducted this digital ethnographic project; how I assembled data and later on went about making sense of this data; why I made certain practical, ethical, and theoretical decisions which have come to shape my ordering of things; and finally will give you a sense of what data and materials assemble what lies both before and ahead of this third chapter. Here, I will also specify my use of the term ‘scene’ (Straw, 2004) to describe what I came to attend to within my fieldwork and describe how I learned about locative media platforms in this context. Additionally, I will specify my conceptualisation of ‘technology’ and distinguish it from how many who interpret Foucault mean it, and in doing so will position my main conceptual formulation (‘Geo-Pastoral Technology’) as a Foucauldian and Latourian hybrid. Finally, I will specify my focus on touristic organisations who prioritise TripAdvisor and pre-empt my attention to the ‘socio-technological techniques’ (Kendall and Wickham, 2001) they mobilised between 2018 and 2019. In doing so, I position this second Latourian and Foucauldian hybrid as an analytical tool for exploring how human social actors attempt to live with and thrive in a context characterised by the now mundane dynamics associated with algorithmic governance.

After these two methodological detours, I will pick back up the story I began rendering in this chapter by focusing our attention on two positionings within the HPT scene between 2018 and 2019. Within both narratives I render in Chapter 4 I emphasise two qualities of these organisations’ ‘social partner[ship]’ (Valkonen, 2010) with the TripAdvisor platform. These two qualities help me specify my conceptualisation of the platform as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’, but additionally provide the foundation for understanding this partnership as an ongoing accomplishment which requires work on the part of the organisations mapped on the platform. This work and in particular the ‘socio-technological techniques’ developed and mobilised by these organisations to maintain their partnership with the platform will be the focus of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. In both of
these chapters, I will assemble thick descriptions of two clusterings of techniques that emerged within participant observation and my interviews with the members of these organisations. These two clusterings of techniques demonstrate how the algorithmic navigation of locative media platforms like TripAdvisor is a complex, collective, and more-than-digital endeavour.

In *Chapter 7*, I will specify and elaborate on the three main arguments which I am forwarding based on my engagement with my data and the relevant scholastic literatures. This will involve elaborating on my working conceptualisation of TripAdvisor as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’, making explicit and further developing my argument that the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor can be conceptualised as a form of ‘affective ordering’, and finally taking stock of what both of these conceptualisations mean for our theorisations of touristic work. I will also reflect on the professional subjectivities which locative media platforms appear to be shaping and propping up within the setting of Edinburgh’s HPT scene. In *Chapter 8*, I will reflect on where we have wandered and will grapple with what this thesis can contribute to tourism studies and digital sociology, the limitations and strengths of this research, and finally will do some thinking on what some changes within my field (and in light of the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic) may mean for future research on locative media platforms.
Chapter 2:
Forging a ‘Relational Materialist’ Theorisation of Touristic Work

Here is a paradox. Tourism abounds with things, tourist things, and tourists are tied up in a world of tourist things for a considerable period of their time. And yet, if you read all the past and current textbooks on tourism, and make a list of all the really important explanations of tourism, the key concepts and theoretical developments, you will discover that these things are not held to be very significant. At least, not in themselves, that is. [...] The solution to this paradox is remarkably simple: tourism teems with tourist things because they are absolutely essential for its very existence; because tourism is composed of necessary and important links and relationships between humans, machines, animals and plants and an enormous universe and variety of objects, and because their interrelationship produces effects that ought to interest us. As with any form of organised, ordered activity, tourism can really only be thought about in terms of these assemblages because to think about only, say, the human dimension, is to artificially reduce the complexity and the number of relationships (and assemblages of relationships that have consequences), at our disposal; tools and props needed to understand how and why particular tourist things happen.

Adrian Franklin (2003, pp. 97-98)

Following on from Adrian Franklin’s (2003) ontological proposition that touristic objects matter and have important implications for how tourism is enacted by tourists, I will attend to how touristic objects also have implications for how tourism is organized or ‘ordered’ in practice by cultural-economic actors who work to accommodate them. Previous research on touristic work and labour has largely focused on it as a form of interactive or experiential service work, and in doing so has highlighted its ‘performative’ (Bryman, 2004; Urry and Larsen, 2011), ‘emotional’ (Hochschild, 1983), and ‘aesthetic’ (Warhurst et al., 2000) dimensions. While these scholars certainly take notice of the materially heterogeneous underpinnings of this work, they tend to conceptualize these entities as merely ‘theatrical props’ and ‘instruments of expression’, or in some cases as comprising the context of tourism and in doing so setting some terms for this kind of work. In this way these works position touristic materiality as ‘intermediaries’ (Latour, 2005) which “transport meaning or force without transformation” (p. 39), as opposed to ‘mediators’ (Latour, 2005) which “transform, translate, distort, and modify meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (p. 39). The main assumption of these accounts then is that touristic work is primarily a form of customer service and thus mostly human-oriented work.
In the previous chapter, I began demonstrating how the touristic digital platform, TripAdvisor makes a difference within the working practices of cultural-economic actors and in doing so positioned locative media platforms as ‘actants’ within Edinburgh’s HPT ordering. In particular, I situated this genre of digital platform as a key ‘ordering resource’ within this context. This conceptualisation will be elaborated on in this chapter by attending to the digital platforms themselves. Here, I take seriously Arjun Appadurai’s (1986) suggestion that it is in the biography of objects that their agency and ‘social life’ becomes evident. In what follows, I will situate these digital ‘ordering resources’ -- and their antecedent forms -- as touristic ‘ordering attempts’ and ‘projects’ in their own right in an effort to illuminate their ‘social life’ or what John Law (1994) refers to as ‘relational materialism’ (p. 23). To do so, I first engage with Adrian Franklin's (2004) initial application of an orderings approach and especially the historical account he assembles about Thomas Cook (the man and the company/first travel agency). I do so in order to begin thinking through how exactly touristic ‘interventions’ and ‘technologies’ have -- from the very beginning -- been involved in the ordering of both human social actors and the broader environment. In this way, his account is foundational to my beginning to grapple with the dual nature of touristic ‘ordering resources’ as they come to intervene in the working practices of cultural-economic actors involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene.

2.1 The Dual Nature of Touristic ‘Ordering Resources’

Franklin (2004) develops and elaborates his ‘tourism as ordering’ approach in an effort to account for how modern tourism emerged initially in the 19th century and to demonstrate how it “had to be made to happen” (p. 279). He pursues the former task by specifying how the tourism ordering was itself “the object of another ordering” (p. 280) -- that of nation-formations -- and showing how during this “period, but not before, the dream of modern tourism could be dreamed” (p. 286). Here, he suggests that it was nationalism -- especially in its production of nationalized knowledges, cultural and scientific traditions, places, spectacles, and exhibitions -- that interpellated “the peasant and industrial worker" as belonging (for the first time ever) to a wider world beyond their everyday worlds which created a curiosity for this new belonging and “the prospect of taking up a place in the new national cultures that beckoned them” (p. 298). These entirely new social ties, organized by the state and new institutions of learning and culture, were made possible through transformations in technologies of communication and mobility (Gellner, 1983; James, 1996). Franklin (2004) argues that it is in this “context of the creation of this greater sense
of belonging and connectivity” (p. 290) to which one was now associated that we have to situate tourism.

However, importantly, Franklin (2004) clarifies that while the task of travelling in Britain and “enumerating and writing about the possibility of British Grand Tours” (p. 288) by the social elite in the mid 18th century was certainly “a crucial part of this eccentric national place making” (p. 288), that ultimately these new places opened up for inspection were never really intended for the entire nation. In fact, John Byng -- whose published work was “both inspired by the thought of a British tourism” and “constitutive of its further development” (p. 289) -- wrote almost exclusively for the social elite and never imagined that “the picturesque peasants about him might one day share in this pleasure” (p. 291). He, like other members of the traveling elite, made a big deal of the working classes’ ‘state of ignorance’, wrote about them in disapproving tones, and strongly objected to their presence at these new national sites on the grounds that “only a completed and ongoing education provides the necessary means of appreciation” (p. 291). In this way, it wasn’t until Thomas Cook entered the scene that this opening up of the nation (and beyond) for inspection was truly extended to the masses.

This is where Franklin’s (2004) latter task of accounting for “the formation and working practice” (p. 280) of the tourism ordering begins, and why it is pursued via a focus on the “pioneering and globalising work” (p. 280) of Thomas Cook. He starts this task by detailing Cook’s ‘dream of tourism’ which he places in the context of “the religio-political groundswell of working class non-conformism” (p. 292) which preached the ideals of study and education, equality, social progress, and self-improvement. He notes how for Cook, extending the numbers and sorts of people who had access to travel was envisioned as a positive and democratizing project that had the potential to produce a more evenly educated civil society. For Cook, accessibility to the world -- “its natures, histories, peoples and cultures” (p. 292) -- was a much needed resource for modern individuals and nations, and a path to enlightenment in a globalising world. He notes how Cook pursued this dream with great “zeal, viewing it as part of his religious vocation” (p. 292) and launched his first ‘excursion’ (guided tour) in 1841.

There were, however, significant obstacles to the realization of Cook’s dream. For example, despite the expansion of railways, schedules and fares were complex because of competing railway companies. Additionally low-cost accommodation was limited and guidebooks for the budget traveller were non-existent. The absence of the latter, and of travel information generally, meant that most places “existed predominantly for themselves” and in this way were extremely “difficult and disorientating for anyone but its
own inhabitants” (p. 293). However, ultimately Franklin (2004) argues that the “corollary of this” (p. 293) was the absence of the desire to travel among the middle and working classes.

According to Franklin (2004), the significance of Thomas Cook was not only his organization of travel then, but the “creation of this desire, the articulation of interpellation” (p. 283). He accomplished this via carefully researching every aspect of the tours he offered, negotiating fares, investigating the logistics of accommodation and restaurants, and producing guidebooks for the routes offered which detailed what would be encountered, why it was of interest, and why it mattered to them. This latter bit was important because high culture did not itself interpellate the ordinary worker (MacCannell, 1976) and “indeed its mysterious, inaccessible qualities created insecurity and self-doubt instead” (Franklin, 2004, p. 294). But Cook spoke to workers directly, he “travelled in their districts and organized public meetings, deploying brass bands -- anything to command their attention” (p. 294). And once he had it, he would then tell them why these national sites and exhibitions belonged to them as much as anyone. Cook also produced a travel magazine, *The Excursionist* and used it as a “vehicle for persuading” the public of the virtues of tourism and to “foster the travelling habit” (p. 294). Franklin argues that the cultivation of the desire for tourism in Thomas Cook’s lifetime is “just as significant to the tourism ordering as rail connectivity, the smoothing out of travel experiences and the opening of new destinations” (p. 295).

Importantly though, Cook’s was also involved in these latter more logistical tasks via the development of a ‘circular system’ which consisted of tour tickets, guidebooks, transport tickets and railway timetables, hotel coupons, circular notes (precursor to traveller’s cheques), and “the trusted Cook’s staff in their identifiable uniforms at major transportation hubs” (Newmeyer, 2008, p. 244). Franklin (2004) doesn’t himself elaborate much on the different facets of this assemblage nor on this stage of the company’s development, but he does reflect on its significance to the broader tourism ordering. Namely, he notes how its development enabled individuals the opportunity to travel independently of Cook’s direct oversight and “to embody and perform yet further ordering” (p. 295). By this he means that individuals were now able to ‘self-order’ and how these self-orderings and the ‘new wave’ of travel writings they inspired added new places, things, cultures, and natures onto “a world already touristically ordered” (p. 295).

Additionally, Franklin (2004) notes how other companies -- whose orderings were based loosely on Cook’s -- emerged and were added to the “net size and scope of the tourism ordering” (p. 295) and how overtime all these ventures were influential in building
investment in an entirely new ‘visitor infrastructure’ which transformed localities and made them into “places for others, places for exchange” (p. 295). In this way, Thomas Cook (the man and company) was involved in the important work of ‘translation’ -- or rather, “making different cultural milieu accessible and explicable to those from other cultures and places” (Franklin, 2008, p. 39). This work was as much cultural as it was socio-technological in the sense that it was accomplished “in and through technologies not primarily developed for it” (Franklin, 2004, p. 293) as well as produced new ones which would help extend the tourism ordering in time and space. Together, both accounts Franklin (2004) produces illuminate how the tourism ordering “emerged from in the middle of things” (p. 283), how it remade the world a new as a touristic one -- “a world to be seen, felt, interpellated, and travelled” (p. 277), and how it became an important ordering of modernity and global society, creating a range of ‘ordering effects’ (p. 278).

Ultimately, Franklin (2004) argues that Cook’s organizational efforts -- which were “aimed initially and powerfully at inspiring the will to travel on a sedentary culture” (p. 284), and later on at assembling an “entire materially heterogeneous network” (p. 278) which could support and enable their ability to be tourists -- were what helped smooth travel and rendered it ‘touristic’ (p. 299). In this way, he highlights how Thomas Cook’s ordering of tourism organized both the tourist and the wider environment. However, Franklin (2004) also qualifies his focus on Thomas Cook’s ordering of tourism by noting how it is not meant to undermine the many other tourism dreamers and the specificity of their ‘ordering attempts’ (p. 286). Such a recognition on his part suggests that this approach may be adapted and applied to thinking through the significance of other touristic organizers, and the “materially heterogeneous sets of arrangements and processes” (p. 285) they have unleashed into the world.

As alluded to before, I am utilising this ‘relational materialist’ (Law, 1994) historical account to take seriously contemporary socio-technological attempts to order the spaces of tourism, tourists themselves, and, in the case of my thesis, the working practices of those who accommodate them in the destinations visited. Here the ‘ordering logics’ of TripAdvisor and its respective digital platform or ‘ordering attempt’ is of interest to me. For the tourist, this genre of digital platform fulfils and expands upon the functions that travel agencies (like Thomas Cook), travel magazines, guidebooks, and maps were once (exclusively) called upon for. Whereas for touristic cultural-economic actors this genre of platform fulfils and expands upon the functions of print and other forms of media, as well as offers novel avenues to bring themselves into being as a touristic option and make a place for themselves and touristic others in the localities they operate.
However, while this approach is invaluable for situating touristic interventions within broader cultural-historical processes and for starting to unpack the dual nature of their ‘ordering-attempts’ (i.e. their ordering of both people and space), it ultimately needs to be drawn out in a few places to aid our zooming in on and thinking through the intimate and complex relationality between these touristic interventions and their ‘end users’ (tourists and those who work to accommodate them). I will do this by integrating ideas and concepts developed by scholars who have elaborated on Michel Foucault’s notion of governmentality in their theorisations of tourism, mobilities, and digital technologies. These literatures are useful because they enable us to begin envisioning these interventions as having the capacity to conduct the conduct of both tourists and those who accommodate them, as well as having the capability to transform the environments each move about and operate within. Put another way, these interventions can be said to govern how tourism is performed, how it is made to happen, and how it plays out as an ordering. After all, and as Franklin (2004) notes, ‘ordering’ is like ‘governance’ in that “attempts at governance, and ordering attempts, are the very stuff of the world, the way the world operates as a process of becoming” (p. 285).

2.2 Touristic ‘Ordering Resources’ as ‘Governance’

But how exactly do these touristic interventions govern, and what implications does this governance have for the social relations and spaces of tourism? I will start this section by reviewing work that has traced touristic governance overtime from the 19th century up until the 20th century in the Western European context in order to assemble a historical basis for understanding contemporary forms of touristic socio-technological governance. I will then apply and extend this analysis and bring it into the 21st century by drawing on scholarship attuned to analysing digital and algorithmic governance in order to speak to how these platforms order tourists and those who accommodate them. After this, and in an effort to unpack how touristic locative platforms order the spaces of tourism, I will be drawing on scholarship which analyses governance as it relates to geographical territory. I will use both strands of literature to forward an imagining of locative media platforms as ‘geo-pastoral’ technologies. I contend that such an imagining is useful for making sense of the ways that these platforms intervene, participate in, and mediate the working practices of those who accommodate tourists and constitute the HPT scene within Edinburgh.
2.2.1 Pastoral Governance

Trent Newmeyer (2008) also takes an interest in Thomas Cook’s contribution to modern tourism and argues that Foucault’s (1989; 2000) notion of ‘pastoral power’ is well suited for understanding the complex relationality between tourists and travel agencies, and more broadly for making sense of the social relations of tourism. Here, he emphasises ‘pastoral governance’ as “normative rather than carceral”, and as acting “upon souls not bodies” (p. 245). He notes that it does not seek to produce “blind docility but instead voluntary compliance” (p. 245). In this way, it is more seductive than it is oppressive in the sense that it “shapes a field of possible choices and actions for individuals by providing them with meaning for their activities and an understanding of themselves as subjects” (p. 245). The rationale of pastoral governance is to preserve ‘the flock’ through individualised guidance, it is to “constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one” (Foucault, 2000, p. 307). To accomplish this, it “establishes avenues that facilitate the empowerment of others by allowing certain actions while excluding others” (Newmeyer, 2008, p. 246). Ultimately, it seeks to shape conduct by working through individuals’ “desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs” (p. 246), and in doing so also exerts its power through these same means. In this way, it “necessitates the existence of free, responsible subjects” (p. 246). Here, he understands governance as “the conduct of conduct, the regulating, influencing and managing of a particular subjectivity” (p. 246) and notes how these techniques of governance “can be employed at various levels and objects of governance -- self, household, organisation, community, or state” (p. 246), or in the case of his project, the provision of tourism services.

Newmeyer’s (2008) conceptualisation of ‘pastoral governance’ is informed by the body of theory and research that grew out of Foucault’s work on ‘governmentality’. He notes that while governmentality studies have helped further our knowledge and understanding of governance of social problems and reform organisations, that ultimately these ‘modes of governance’ don’t capture the ‘entire spectrum of governance’ -- “especially when it comes to cases that straddle the divide between social philanthropy and commerce, like Cook’s tourism” (p. 247). Additionally, he notes that while there has been a fairly complete mapping of the varieties of governance, there has yet to be research which “traces the shifting, adapting, and changing operations of governance” (p. 247) within specific institutions or organisations. Given these gaps, he notes how it is not surprising that the notion of pastoral governance has not been used to analyse tourism. However, he points out how critics of tourism have, from the very start, used the metaphor of ‘shepherd and sheep’ to describe (albeit negatively) the relationship between tourism
organisers -- like Thomas Cook, John Murray, and Karl Baedeker -- and their tourists. He goes on and suggests that “if pastoral governance involves the ‘conduct of conduct’ then the role of the tourist conductor can usefully be understood as a form of pastoral governance” (p. 247).

2.2.1.1 Travel Agencies & Pastoral Governance

Like Franklin, Newmeyer (2008) anchors Thomas Cook’s dream of organized tourism within the religio-political thought of its time. However, while Franklin emphasises its links to nation-formation and nationalism, Newmeyer more so emphasises its situatedness with the temperance movement and the subjectivating dimensions of it. His placing Cook’s dream and organizing within this context is key to his introducing the appropriateness of the analytical lens of ‘pastoral governance’. For example, he highlights how Cook was a Teetotaller, temperance tract publisher, and Baptist missionary and how “it is no coincidence that a pastoral approach to travel-as-reform would be integrated into the development of tourism” (p. 248). He notes how like many others in Victorian Britain, Cook felt that “alcohol and other forms of improper consumption led to poverty and destroyed self-control” (p. 248). Cook did not advocate for prohibition though, but rather for the creation of forms of recreation which could “foster subjectivities that could resist temptation” (p. 248) -- such as those associated with working class hangout spaces such as the pub, gambling hall, or brothel, as well as more middle class spaces like the new department stores which were emerging. He notes how Cook’s aim then was to cultivate subjects who could consume “wisely and prudently for their own betterment” (p. 248) and believed that “[p]roperly organized and conducted tourism would provide a healthy, safe, counter-attraction to the damaging pleasures of drink and uncontrolled shopping” (p. 248).

Additionally, Newmeyer (2008), like Franklin, takes issue with how structuralist accounts of tourism have theorised its origins and nature, and similarly uses the specification of it’s organization as a ‘mode of explanation’. In doing so, he too emphasises the socio-technological dimensions of Cook’s organizing, and in particular how its materially heterogeneous assembly is key to understanding how pastoral governance can evolve and change. For example, Newmeyer notes how early on Thomas Cook realized that successful excursions were the ones that were well planned, advertised, that ‘tamed’ the more dangerous aspects of travel, and that involved Thomas Cook’s ‘personal superintendence’ (p. 250). In particular, he emphasises how “Cook’s careful and precautionary conducting was in play long before” (p. 151) the tour actually took off, and how these efforts on Cook’s part were made explicit in the handbooks he produced before
each trip, but more implicit in the evolution of his ticketing system and the development of company’s ‘circular system’.

However, more so than Franklin, Newmeyer (2008) highlights the intimate relationship between Thomas Cook and his excursionists, and in particular the importance of his setting up and maintaining important lines of communication with his ‘flock’ (including chatting to them individually on excursions but additionally via his magazine and even personal letter correspondence). This up-close and personal style of attending to them allowed Cook to “access their wants and desires” (p. 252) and ultimately guided how he designed future tours, fulfilled his role as conductor, and how he came to recognize what logistical issues needed taming in order to enable tourisms’ ‘ennobling qualities’. For example, this style of management and communication is what clued Cook into: what facets of this experience put his tourists at the greatest risk of being financially exploited and informed how he stepped in and ultimately the system he developed to prevent this from happening moving forward; how differentiated his flock was in terms of social class and travel preferences, and of the budding desire (especially among his more well off tourists) for different classes of train transport and hotel accommodation; but maybe most significantly, of the growing desire to have more control over their travel experiences and to be able to travel independently of Cook’s direct oversight. Here, he emphasizes how tourists who travelled wholly independently of Cook had to “endure the annoyances and misfortunes” (p. 254) associated with a largely disorderly touristic infrastructure. However, this all changed with the development of Cook’s ‘circular system’, where the “close pastoral guidance of Cook” would now operate “at a distance through the various components of the circular system” (p. 256).

The first component of Cook’s ‘circular system’ were the ‘circular transport tickets’ which could be purchased from the Cook offices and allowed his tourists to “decide and plan their own individual route[s] in advance” (Newmeyer, 2008, p. 259). The tickets would entitle them to rail and steam boat travel on particular routes within a certain period of time. Newmeyer (2008) notes how this system “substantially reduced the confusion and miscommunication” (p. 260) associated with communicating in a foreign language or dealing with less familiar currency. Now all his tourists needed to know was the departure and arrival times of their train -- which they accessed via Cook’s novel ‘Continental Timetable and Tourist Handbook’ -- and to get themselves to the stations and ports on time, find the right train, and listen for their particular stop. The second component were the guidebooks for different routes which outlined sites of interest and restaurants (both for British cuisine and for local/national cuisines for the more adventurous traveller) which
“now [bore] Cook’s stamp of approval” (p. 257) and created a situation where people could now choose whether or not they followed his guidance. Additionally, it enabled tourists to augment this guidance with the guidance and recommendations offered to them by other touristic ‘conductors’ such as Baedeker’s or Murray’s travel guidebooks as well as ‘word of mouth’ recommendations from friends and/or family.

The third component were ‘hotel vouchers’ which would guarantee tourists a fixed rate for accommodation (preventing them from being subject to price gouging) and required they carry less money with them when they travelled “thereby decreasing the hardship wrought by robbery and bad exchange rates” (p. 261). Just like the transport tickets, they were accepted at all hotels participating in the scheme (and listed in The Excursionist) and had to be used within a specific amount of time. Newmeyer (2008) notes how this system also helped to “standardise the hotel business in terms of quality of service and fair pricing” (p. 261), and how the list of hotels that accepted Cook’s vouchers continued to grow exponentially giving tourists a wider selection of choices along different routes. The fourth and final component of this system were Cook’s ‘circular notes’ and what became the precursor to ‘traveller’s cheques’. These could be purchased when booking the trip or at any time before departure, and were issued in the national currency and could be redeemed at most banks, hotels, and Cook’s office. Before this scheme was developed, some, but not all banks would exchange money for tourists, but they were “selective and finicky about exactly who they would exchange money for” (p. 263).

Newmeyer (2008) highlights how the development of this system meant that Cook’s organisation and governance became dispersed and made the responsibility of a greater number of subjects -- and I would add ‘objects’ -- within the agency, but also importantly in terms of the tourist them self. This materially heterogeneous intervention offered tourists much of the same “ease, affordability, and security” (p. 256) that the conducted tours did, but also enabled them to become ‘touristic subjects’ who were “responsible and in control, that were more adaptable to different cultures, environments, and circumstances” (p. 256). In doing so, the ‘circular system’ restored some of the “adventurousness, responsibility, and self-discovery of travelling” (p. 256). In fleshing out the transition within Thomas Cook’s company from pastoral governance being practiced ‘up close’ to ‘from a distance’, Newmeyer expands our understanding of touristic governance by demonstrating how it is not just a “totalising, hierarchical force” which “crushes individuality”, but how it is can also be a force which “cultivates a multiplicity of subjectivities, some of which resist, and in doing so change the process” (p. 265).
What I appreciate most about Newmeyer’s (2008) theorising is its applicability to thinking through the social relations which assemble through and around other touristic, materially heterogeneous sets of arrangements and processes which have historically and contemporarily been essential for the “success, safety, and happiness of a tourist” (pp. 247-248). For example, he notes how whether it was a religious pilgrim acting as a guide in the 13th and 14th centuries, or an educator acting as a chaperon during the Grand Tour in the 17th and 18th centuries, travellers have often relied upon those people and organisations “who were more experienced and knowledgeable to direct them” (p. 247).

Additionally he points to the use of travel guidebooks to guide independent travel as evidence that the role of the conductor (even in literary form) is important for us to pay attention to, and argues that understanding all of these as forms of ‘pastoral governance’ will give us greater insight into the social relations of tourism.

2.2.1.2 Travel Guidebooks & Pastoral Governance

In regards to Newmeyer’s latter suggestion, I would agree that the notion of ‘pastoral governance’ can be employed to make sense of the production and use of travel guidebooks, and in particular those which emerged in the 19th and early 20th century -- such as Murray’s Handbooks for Travellers and Baedeker’s Guides. Comparatively to travel ‘handbooks’ of previous epochs, travel ‘guidebooks’ were designed to be more mobile, practical, and standardized in order to enable the tourist to organize their time and economic resources more efficiently. Similar to Thomas Cook’s conducting, guidebooks were intended to “take trouble” (Younger, 1973, p. 21) -- or rather the uncertainties of travel -- on through their clarity, precision, and reliability. In this way, they were meant to “comfort the timid and encourage the daring” (Mendelson, 1985, p. 286) via their reassuring, steadfast, and proverbial tone. Their content was focused “primarily on what ought to be seen rather than what could be seen” (Koshar, 1998, p. 326) as well as “what sense to make of [what they were seeing]” (Goodwin & Johnston, 2013, p.44). Both 19th century publishers also tended to recast esteemed national writers within their guidebooks by using excerpts of poetry in an effort to “guide the finer feelings of the tourist” by “supply[ing] the right passages at the proper moment” (Buzard, 1991, p. 42).

Additionally, travel guidebooks (especially Murray’s and Baedeker’s) were produced with the intention of cultivating ‘touristic subjects’ who could participate in national life (Koshar, 1998) in distinguished ways by providing “moral probity with practical wisdom” (Mendelson, 1985, p. 386), rendering them capable of traveling independently of hired servants, guides, and other practitioners of the growing tourism industry (Koshar, 1998;
Mendelson, 1985), and to “consolidate and focus [their] attempt to assemble tourist sights and objects in a more precise image of the nation” (Koshar, 1998, p. 332) and help inspire a “specific sense of national [pride or] difference on the part of the tourists themselves” (p. 328). Mendelson (1985) writes that a traveller with a guidebook in hand constitutes ‘a system’ -- where the traveller them self and the relationship they enjoy with the guidebook is comparable to “a personal intimacy...[a]nd like all worthwhile intimacies, it both nurture[s] and liberate[s]” (p. 288). Similar to Franklin (2003) then, he observes how we actually become involved with ‘things’, how they play an ‘enabling role’ in tourism, and how people and things together take on a hybrid status.

Finally, both Murray’s and Baedeker’s “systematically solicited and appropriated” (Alacovska, 2017, p. 662) reader/tourist input and feedback in order to update and grow their guidebooks. In doing so, both publishers “interpellated readers [tourists] as fully fledged participants in guidebook production” (p. 671). This was unique for the time, since postage costs were paid by recipients and were expensive even for established companies. In this way, their welcoming and utilisation of copious reader correspondence is evidence of the importance placed on this kind of participation and input within this genre of publication. Thus, in addition to tourists having an intimate relationship with their guidebooks while travelling, both publishing companies were also in “intimate communication” (p. 671) with their readership, and this intimacy helped them to be privy to changes in their audiences’ attitudes and preferences, but also the environment they were attempting to guide them through. Travel guidebooks then can be conceptualised as governing pastorally in so far as they: are produced with the “salvation” (Foucault, 1982, p. 783) of the tourist in mind, attempt to “shape a field of possible choices and actions for individuals by providing them with meaning for their activities and an understanding of themselves as subjects” (Newmeyer, 2008, p. 245), establish avenues meant to facilitate the empowerment of tourists, and shape conduct by working though individuals’ desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs.

2.2.1.3 Locative Media Platforms & Pastoral Governance

Given that both travel agencies and guidebooks are antecedent forms to contemporary touristic locative media platforms, it isn’t too much of a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the ways that these digital interventions ‘conduct the conduct’ of tourists is pastoral in nature. Although, I would even argue that the algorithmic configuration of digital platforms may even represent an intensification of these dynamics. Rosalind Cooper (2020), for example, argues that the notion of ‘pastoral power’ is useful
for understanding contemporary algorithmic governance. Cooper’s analysis shares some similarities with Scott Lash’s (2007) theorisation of ‘post-hegemonic’ power’, however while Lash understands ‘post-hegemonic power’ as a novel form of power arising with the advent of algorithms (p. 71) and pervasive information technologies (pp. 65-66), Cooper (2020) on the other hand argues that “the post-hegemonic age has a far more archaic moment of arising” (p. 34). More specifically, Cooper argues that what Lash deems as ‘post-hegemonic power’ resembles Foucault’s notion of ‘pastoral power’ and how when viewed genealogically it is more appropriate to say that both find expression in and continue to operate in the “algorithmic register” (p. 48).

Cooper (2020) conceptualizes ‘pastoral power’ similarly to Newmeyer, however she additionally highlights it as a “permanent intervention in the daily conduct, in the management of lives” (Foucault, 2007, p. 154), and as a ‘technology of power’ that “cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people’s minds, without making them reveal their innermost secrets” and possessing a “knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it” (Foucault, 1982, p. 783). Cooper (2020) argues that ‘algorithmic governmentality’ operates similarly. She makes this comparison by attending to: the “voluntary aspect” (p. 45) and “confessional dimensions” (Foucault, 2012) of participation on digital platforms (p. 45), how algorithms are involved in the ‘profiling’ of users via their ‘digital traces’ (p. 40), as well as how they ‘shepherd’ our attention and conduct via ‘anticipatory tactics’ (p. 45).

Something which Cooper doesn’t centre within her theorising of algorithmic governance, but which is particularly applicable to locative media -- and especially TripAdvisor since it collects data on its users’ behaviour as it relates to geographical territory -- is that Foucault (2007) noted how a shepherd’s power (prehistory of the pastoral motif) is exercised “by definition over a flock, and more exactly, over the flock in its movement from one place to another” (p. 125). Based on these analyses then, the notion of ‘pastoral governance’ seems suitable for making sense of the relationality between touristic digital platforms and tourists. In this way there seems to be some continuity in terms of the relationality between travel agencies, guidebooks, and now locative media platforms and tourists.

However, what is largely missing in both Franklin and Newmeyer’s account, as well as the literature on travel guidebooks, is how these socio-technological interventions additionally come to order or ‘conduct the conduct’ of those who accommodate tourists. While Newmeyer (2008) does note how Thomas Cook standardised several facets of travel and how this impacted quality of services and pricing (p. 261), there aren’t many accounts of how exactly this changed the working practices of those now involved in the budding tourism industry, nor the precise qualities of this relationship with the travel
agency. Similarly, there are few accounts of how inclusion/exclusion in guidebooks shaped the conduct or ‘working practices’ of touristic organisations embedded in the destinations depicted. While certain kinds of touristic organizations (especially hotels) were able to benefit from linking up with Thomas Cook via being featured in his travel magazine, such a relationship was far less likely when it came to guidebooks where publishers and writers tended not to respond to solicitations for being featured by local touristic businesses. In this context then, the analytical lens of pastoral governance is less appropriate for making sense of these relationalities of the past, nor will it suffice on its own at least for describing the relationality between locative media platforms and those who accommodate tourists within destinations travelled to contemporarily.

By this I mean that the notion of ‘pastoral governance’ is partially useful for making sense of the relationality between locative media platforms and those who accommodate tourists contemporarily. This is because cultural-economic actors can now enjoy the status of ‘users’ of these platforms by becoming managers of their organization’s associated geocoded entries -- or ‘place pages’ -- and the content which accumulates on them. In this context, and with my ethnographic data in mind, I suggest that pastoral governance as an analytical lens is useful for understanding certain aspects of my participants’ relationships with locative media platforms, and in particular their engagement with the affordances and tools provided which enable them to become more aware of how their services are perceived by their customers and enable the cultivation of professional subjectivities which are sensitive, responsive and adaptable to the various data and information which accumulates on their organisation’s ‘place page’. In this way, I suggest that these platforms govern pastorally insofar as they intervene in the ordering of souls and lives and may become ‘technologies of subjectification’ (Zhang, 2020, p. 566) for touristic practitioners and organizations.

However, as evidenced by Franklin’s account, touristic materially heterogeneous interventions do more than order touristic subjects, they additionally order the spaces of tourism and the environment in which both tourists and those who accommodate them move about and operate. In this way, locative media platforms (like travel agencies and guidebooks), in addition to being ‘pastoral technologies’ are also ‘environmental technologies’. In what follows, I will review literature that builds on and expands upon Foucault’s work on governmentality and geographical territory in order to develop a basis for understanding how these platforms order and govern the spaces of tourism. Doing so will enable us to gain a more nuanced sense of the relationality between these platforms and cultural-economic actors who accommodate visitors in the destinations travelled.
2.3.1 Environmental Governance

Carlos Barreneche’s (2012a; 2012b) work is well suited for understanding how socio-technological interventions order the spaces of tourism. Drawing on Foucault’s (2008) ‘governmentality’ framework, he delineates an ‘environmentality’ (2012a) framework to assess the mentalities and strategies of governance that the emergence of the geospatial internet and proliferation of locative media platforms are giving rise to. To shed light on some of the modes of governance at work in locative media, he focuses on Google’s approach to geolocation -- or rather its ‘spatial ontology’ -- and analyses it’s locative platform Places (which is now integrated into and inseparable from Google Search and Maps and is similar in many ways to TripAdvisor) as an ‘environmental technology’ (Foucault, 2008). Here, he defines ‘spatial ontology’ as a way of describing spatial entities (categorizing and indexing) which “embodies an ordering that is always a product of a specific way of knowing the world” (Barreneche, 2012a, p. 337).

In terms of Google’s categorizing and indexing of ‘Place Pages’ and functionality as a tool for ‘location search’, Barreneche (2012a) contends that the platform should be “considered in a media lineage that spans yellow pages to online business directories and review websites” (p. 334). By this, he means that both locative platforms and city directories are indexes to the geocoded city. Additionally both media were marketing technologies inasmuch as they both profit on visibility in listings and through selling advertising services. City directories he notes functioned on a subscription-based model, but since in most cases even those businesses that did not pay subscriptions were still listed, a way of highlighting subscribers was listing them with capital letters (2012b, pp. 12-13).

However, similarly these platforms and their databases represent a rupture in this mode of spatial categorization and indexation. First, current locative media platforms “introduce a new development on this model by capitalizing also on the visibility of users, rendered visible to marketers through access to data analytics and direct monitoring” (2012b, p. 13). Second, digital geocoding/tagging of media objects extends indexation beyond text (lists of people and places) to include a wide array of media (reviews, photos, directions, and so on). Third, place databases allow the informational indexing of space in a way that enables users to access location-specific information. In this way, the information can be re-ordered by its “association with a potential myriad of datasets” (p. 13). In this sense, locative media platforms create channels and set the conditions of possibility for the circulation of new flows of information (p. 13).
Whereas in regards to Google’s ranking (or ordering) of ‘place pages’ and functionality as a tool for ‘local search’, Barreneche (2012a) notes how there is actually a ‘geodemographic ontology’ (p. 337) underlying its logic of ordering (Burrows et al., 2005; Burrows and Gane, 2006). By this, he means that both locative media platforms and geodemographic systems use mapping technologies, rely on a database of consumer identity behaviour, and use cluster analysis to produce segmentation classifications. Additionally both do this in an effort to ‘sort places out’ “according to the cultural capital and collective desire attached to them” (p. 337), facilitate “the ordering of modes of life for economic governance purposes” (p. 338), and when made public enable and encourage people to ‘sort themselves’ (pg. 338) via making informed decisions about where to go (visit or move).

Nevertheless, Barreneche (2012a) points out how there are also important ruptures seeing as location platforms “introduce new geodemographic variables” (p. 339). Namely, the household is decentred as both the ‘basic unit of consumption’ (and the individual is centred) and node of connecting people to the marketing network (where this connection is now established directly through ones’ smartphone). Here, the geodemographic marketing slogan ‘you are where you live’ is replaced by ‘you are where you go’ (p. 339). Most importantly though, he highlights how traditional geodemographic systems use stable classifications which are unable to respond to population mobility, whereas locative media platforms make possible the tracking of mobile individuals allowing an “automatic and crowd-sourced collection of a wider set of data that is dynamically fed back to users” (p. 339) representing a kind of ‘real time geodemographics’ where every user interaction with the platform “represents a permanent survey and profiling of social spaces, algorithmically sorted in terms of heterogeneity rather than in terms of fixed ontologies” (p. 339). Here, “the resulting spatiality is not only automated but also ontogenetic as it is in constant becoming” (p. 339) (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011).

With these continuities and ruptures in mind, Barreneche (2012b) more specifically details Google’s ‘spatial ontology’. In terms of its categorizing and indexing, its logic is based on what is termed ‘venues’ or ‘points of interest’ (pp. 15-16). This system embodies a bottom-up (whereby its users are allowed to contribute by adding new places to the database) and ‘topical’ (based on taxonomies of venues with likeness to the yellow pages system of categorization and thus has a commercial bias) approach to location data (p. 16). These categories are important because they set the limits for what spaces can actually be indexed and annotated, and thus what exactly has the ability to become visible. However, importantly he reminds us that it’s not just about the indexing or ‘inscription’ of
In terms of ordering logics, Google’s ‘spatial ontology’ is based on the “collective symbolic capital of social spaces as accumulated and sorted by Google’s algorithms” (2012a, p. 337). By this he means that it’s ‘spatial ontology’ is not strictly geographical, but also calculated through a place’s online presence (their ‘PageRank score’) which includes the measurement of media-driven attention (‘attention capital’) via the quantity (number of georeferences -- citations or mentions of a place which tie it to a particular locale, flow of visits and check-ins, and etc.) and quality (sentiment of reviews, authority, ratings and so on) of the online media presence of places included in their geoindex (p. 337). Another important ordering factor is personalization where a ‘ranking premium’ (p. 336) may be assigned to geospatial entities based on the user’s interest or preferences which are extracted from the user’s search history and previous reviews, ratings, and recommendations. This incorporation of difference in spatial ordering raises questions about “the software sorting of the information we get depending on our socio-spatial profiles” (p. 339).

Barreneche (2012a; 2012 b) argues that this, coupled with the algorithmic measurement of sentiment -- i.e. whether or not a geocoded object “mobilizes an affective response in the form of a further act of communication” (2012b, p. 10) with the platform -- can be conceptualised as a form of ‘environmental power’ which works as “a modulation of the relationship between the user and [their] environment though ‘affective calculation’ and the modulation of affectivity -- perception of place” (2012a, pp. 336-337). In this way, he understands location platforms as providing users with “a form of secured environment that delineates a horizon of possibility that frames experience” (p. 340). Here, he argues that platforms “do not create users but the environment within which they exist” (p. 340) -- an ‘environmentalism’ (Foucault, 2008, p. 261) or ‘environmentality’.

Barreneche (2012a) goes on and highlights how the ‘environmentality’ of locative platforms has particular influence over mobility and ‘offline’ economic behaviour. Because of this, he notes how the generation of ‘place pages’ tends to compel cultural-economic actors to enrol in Google’s platform “at risk of not being able to have any control over [their] business web presence” (p. 342). Upon enrolling, he notes how cultural-economic actors are made responsible for collecting local data, structuring content according to guidelines, creating ads and coupons, tracking user’s search behaviours in order to optimize their page ranking (p. 342). Additionally they are provided with tools to manage
their relationship with their customers (p. 343). There is a possibility here, he notes, of a place’s online presence working as a ‘mark of distinction’ and where “the accumulation of symbolic capital of places in publicly searchable databases may potentially constitute another vector of valorisation of places shaping the future city” (p. 346).

However, conversely if place’s visibility is determined by the ranking criteria of these socio-technical systems then ‘media underrepresented places’ may be obscured by these very same algorithmic workings. In this context, invisibility might imply new forms of cultural-economic exclusion as obscured places could be deprived of having more flows of people (decreased levels of economic interaction, lower levels of tourism, and fewer cultural exchanges) (Barreneche, 2012b, p. 20). Here he highlights how unlike sovereign or disciplinary forms of governing space, that locative platforms do not entail establishing territorial restrictions, but an ‘environmentality’ which administers a “space in which a series of uncertain elements unfold” (Foucault, 2007, p. 35) with the aim of fostering the circulation of people and commodities (Barreneche, 2012a, p. 344). In this way, he understands power as being exercised as an environmental intervention “through the mediation at a variety of points of the relationship between users and the environmental surroundings” (p. 344).

2.3.1.1 (Pre)modern spatial media & historically specific ‘spatial ontologies’

While Barreneche argues that city directories and geodemographic systems are central to a genealogy of locative platforms as ‘environmental technologies’, I would add that pre-modern travel handbooks and modern guidebooks are also important to this genealogy. This is because these touristic resources, in addition to conducting touristic subjects pastorally, additionally produced and ordered the geographical spaces of travel/tourism. That is, they categorized and indexed, as well as ranked and ordered objects of these landscapes in an effort to make them explicable and visitable, and in doing so mobilised historically specific ‘spatial ontologies’. For example, 13th and 14th century ‘indulgence handbooks’ (which were produced and used by religious pilgrims) categorized and indexed various biblical sites (Friedman and Furstenberg-Levi, 2017), and ranked and ordered them based on their sacred claim to attention. Whereas 16th and 17th century treatises on travel method (which were produced and used by mostly upper class men who participated in the first round of Grand Tours or what is sometimes characterized as the ‘classical Grand Tour’) categorized and indexed various antiquitous objects and sites, and ranked and ordered them based on their moral claim to attention (Adler, 1989, p. 18). During the 18th and early 19th centuries when the character of the Grand Tour
shifted to a more ‘romantic’ and ‘scenic’ character, travel handbooks began categorising and indexing ‘natural scenes’ and the “art to be found in nature” (p. 22) and in this way began to rank and order objects based on their aesthetic claim to attention.

In regards to the 19th and early 20th century travel guidebooks discussed previously, these resources categorized and indexed the new ‘objects of nation’ (both heritage objects and natural scenes), and ranked and ordered them according to their national claim to attention (Koshar, 1998). During the post-war era of the 20th century, when the heavy emphasis on nationalism in guidebooks was being questioned and increasingly seen as inappropriate (Mendelson, 1985), guidebook publishers began to change up how they did things where instead of employing a universalist system of design which simplified the user (as mostly similar to one another), they instead began reducing the complexity of the landscape depicted in an effort to render it attractive and comprehensible to different lifestyle groups (Michalski, 2004, p. 213). In doing so they categorised and indexed ever-new objects of landscapes and cityscapes, and produced a diverse array of rankings and orderings based on the lifestyle groups they were attempting to appeal to and guide (ordered according to their subcultural claim to attention).

Interestingly, Michalski (2004) even compares this transition from the ‘vade mecum’ style (objective) of guidebook to the ‘belles lettres’ style (subjective) to the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the emergence of the ‘personalized internet (p. 212)’.

The point here is that in categorizing and indexing, as well as ordering and ranking touristic objects embedded in geographical space, pre-modern handbooks and modern guidebooks, like contemporary locative media platforms, transformed features of the landscape into places to visit, ‘places of desire’ (Barreneche, 2012b, p. 10). This not only translates the environment into “places for others, places for exchange” (Franklin, 2004, p. 295), but additionally “using the resources of history, language and culture” (Hultman, 2007, p. 330) prescribes (in the case of pre/modern guidebooks and GIS mapping) or ascribes (in the case of locative media) a spatial identity to the regional landscape by positioning culture as ‘in place’ and as having certain fixed characteristics. In doing so, these forms of touristic mapping not only create a cultural landscape, but also a series of ‘servicescapes’ or ‘experiencescapes’. Additionally, and in terms of cultural-economic actors, or what Johan Hultman (2007) refers to as ‘mapped subjects’, they become ‘hybridized’ and this mapping “enable[s] these subjects to sight themselves as economic actors” (p. 327). In this way, both (pre)modern guidebooks and touristic locative media platforms “gives substance to the relationships within the [mapping] project” (p. 320), or rather an anchoring which prevents them from disintegrating as easily. Additionally, these
resources can also act as a ‘manual for the future’ (p. 331) or rather, can be utilized for the planning and creation of further materiality, as well as for ‘reinventing itself’ and drawing out these identifying characteristics in the process of touristic development.

Where there is a rupture then, in terms of the touristic cultural mapping enacted by (pre)modern travel guidebooks and touristic locative media, is what or who decides what exactly becomes indexed and how these entities are therein ordered and made visible. In the case of (pre)modern guidebooks, what was indexed and how it was ordered was decided by human social actors and gatekeepers such as publishers and authors who were guided by broader cultural and political discourses of the time about what constituted ‘culture’. Whereas in the case of locative media platforms, users (both tourists and those who accommodate them) can add ‘place pages’ to the geoindex. In terms of ranking and ordering though, algorithmically configured systems “play a critical role in deciding what articles [...] gain admission to the cultural realm [...] their doing so thus points in the direction of a [...] court of algorithmic appeal in which [media] objects [...] are heard, cross-examined and judged independently, in part, of human beings” (Hallinan and Striphas, 2016, p. 129). Put another way, cultural authority is “displaced significantly into the realm of technique and engineering” (p. 122).

In the case of touristic locative platforms, it appears that touristic objects embedded within the global landscape are now increasingly ranked and ordered according to their affective claim to attention. As Barreneche notes these ‘spatial ontologies’ have implications for what becomes visible and what is hidden from sight, as well as for what is visited and what is passed over. In sum, locative media platforms generate an ‘environmentality’ in which both tourists and those who accommodate them operate. However, while Barreneche argues that their doing so means that they don’t create users, I would disagree and instead suggest that they both create an environment, and -- as evidenced by the tools and guidelines they supply administrators of ‘place pages’ with to keep an eye on and potentially affect their ranking within the platform’s geoindex -- also attempt to cultivate ‘mapped-subjects’ “capable of taking on responsibilities for [these] technologies” (Nygren and Gidlund, 2012, p. 509) or in the case of my research their digital ‘place pages’.

2.4.1 Locative-Media Platforms as ‘Geo-Pastoral Technologies’

In the context of my research then, I understand touristic locative media platforms as technologies that mobilize and make possible a style of governance that is both environmental and pastoral in nature. Put another way, I understand these technological
interventions as governing ‘geo-pastorally’ in settings where they are mobilised. Here, I use ‘geo’ to denote how these interventions order social and territorial space and function as technologies of spatial production and management (Crampton, 2004; Hannah, 2000; Rose-Redwood, 2006). Whereas I use ‘pastoral’ to denote how the management of ‘user subjects’ and ‘mapped subjects’ is increasingly affective and personalized via profiling of users and social space. For the ‘user subject’, the ‘spatial ontology’ of the platform provides them with “a form of secured environment that delineates a horizon of possibility that frames experience” (Barreneche, 2012a, p. 340) via “a modulation of the relationship between [them] and [their] environment though ‘affective calculation’ and the modulation of affectivity -- perception of place” (pp. 336-337). Whereas for the ‘mapped subject’, this ‘spatial ontology’ renders them (in)visible based on these algorithmic calculations, or rather whether or not interactions with their service “mobilises an affective response in the form of further acts of communication” (Barreneche, 2012b, p. 10) with the platform (i.e. ordered/ranked according to their affective claim to attention).

Additionally and when cultural-economic actors become ‘users’ of these platforms, they are given access to data and information unique to their geocoded venue (a personalized programme if you will), as well as afforded tools which enable them to track and reflect on their encounters with visitors and the provision of their service more broadly. In this way, these platforms provide avenues that facilitate their (supposed) empowerment as ‘mapped subjects’ by allowing certain actions while excluding others, and in this way shapes a field of possible choices and actions for touristic organizations by providing them with meaning for their activities and an understanding of themselves as ‘mapped subjects’. These ‘environmental technologies’ then represent a “permanent intervention in the daily conduct, in the management of lives” (Foucault, 2007, p. 154) for touristic ‘mapped subjects’ and have implications for how they bring themselves into being, manage their presence, as well as the user-subject generated content which accumulates on their associated ‘place pages’ on these platforms. In this way, this governance is ‘pastoral’ in the sense that it ‘orders souls and lives’ and functions as ‘technologies of subjectification’.

In sum, touristic locative platforms may be usefully conceptualized as ‘geo-pastoral technologies’ due to the ways that they assemble the environment in which both tourists (user subjects) and cultural-economic actors (‘mapped subjects’) move about and operate, but also in the sense that they provide each with affordances and tools for bringing themselves into being and understanding themselves as spatial and mapped subjects. Clearly locative media platforms are not just ‘theatrical props’ or ‘instruments of expression’, nor are they merely facets of the touristic backdrop which make little
difference to the conduct of touristic work, but are instead ‘mediators’ (Latour, 2005) which “transform, translate, distort, and modify meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (p. 39). These capacities mean that locative media platforms require oversight and management on the part of cultural-economic actors whose touristic services are mapped on these platforms. This seems to imply that touristic work is not just human-oriented, but additionally technology-oriented and that our theorisations of this work need to attend to both of these dimensions in tandem in order to assemble a more nuanced understanding of it both contemporarily and in the past.

2.3 Attending to Digital Materiality & Affectivity within Touristic Working Practice

Given this understanding of the agency, social life, and relational materialism of locative media platforms within the realm of tourism in the Western European context, I suggest that cultural-economic actors have to handle far more multiple of tasks than is depicted in accounts which focus only on the interactions between human social actors “among-themselves” (Latour, 1993, pp. 106-107). In order to create space for perceiving what roles these digital platforms play in the provision of HP touristic services within Edinburgh, I use Bruno Latour’s (1993, 1999) concept of ‘collective’ as a “methodological guideline” (Valkonen, 2010, p. 165) for investigating touristic work in this context. Following the work of Jarno Valkonen (2010) -- who initially translated this concept over to the domain of tourism studies -- I understand HP touristic services as “a collection of social actors, with their emotional expectations and bodily involvement” (p. 165), and of cultural objects, natural and social circumstances, and technological devices. All of these things have an effect on the work of those who accommodate tourists. The emphasis of this approach then is that touristic work is not just a social relationship, but is a relationship with touristic objects, things, and technology as well. As Valkonen (2010) argues, taking these associations between humans, non-humans, and more-than-humans seriously is important “in order to be able to understand what this kind of ‘hybrid-work’ requires” (pp. 170-171).

By examining the work of cultural-economic actors as a ‘collective’ of tasks, we can see what kind of demands work requires from the cultural-economic actor, which ways locative media platforms are manifested in practices of accommodating tourists, and how these platforms become a part of that work. In this thesis then, I will attend to the kinds of abilities, skills, and practices working in Edinburgh’s HPT scene requires, and in particular what it means to work within a competitive context which is digitally mediated and governed by the platform logics of TripAdvisor, but importantly what it means to work with
these platforms as ‘social partners’ (Valkonen, 2010, p. 170). In this way, I am also interested in the intimate and complex relationality between these platforms and those who work to accommodate tourists, and in the sorts of professional subjectivities these socio-technological configurations of relations co-create, reward, and are potentially propping up.

Seeing as TripAdvisor’s platform governs geo-pastorally, and in particular makes my participants’ touristic organisations mapped visible and discoverable based on their affective claim to attention, my descriptions and analyses of these approaches, strategies, abilities, skills, and practices taken to managing them -- or what I will position in the next chapter as socio-technological ‘techniques’ -- will focus largely on their affective dimensions and qualities. By doing so, I will also be forging an ‘affective ANT’-inspired approach which takes cues from the framework assembled by Daniel Sage, Chloe Vitry, and Andrew Dainty (2020) in their exploration of the use of new technologies in organisational contexts. In this piece, they cross-fertilize ANT concepts with Gilles Deleuze’s (1988; 1992; 2017) reading of the affective philosophy of Spinoza in an effort to conceptualise how affects are organised to serve managerial interests and agendas. From their own experiences of conducting ethnographic work, they suggest that the ANT notion of “following the actors themselves or rather that which makes them act” (Latour, 2005, p. 237) falls short when following “how technologies are organised through and with affects” (Sage et al., 2020, p. 346). In particular, I will be demonstrating how touristic affects are ordered by cultural-economic actors involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene, and how this ordering affects their positionality on the TripAdvisor platform.
Chapter 3:
Researching Edinburgh’s HPT Scene, Locative Media Platforms & Algorithmic Navigation

My interest in researching the ways in which locative media platforms intervene, participate in, and govern the working practices of those who constitute Edinburgh’s HP tourism scene has been anything but linear. Indeed, this followed from my initial project proposal, focused on the augmented reality, location-based game Pokémon Go. My shift towards the project now embodied in this thesis began in November 2017 when Niantic (developer of Pokémon Go) announced that they would be teaming up with Portkey Games (HP-associated game label affiliated with Warner Bros) to develop a HP augmented reality, location-based game similar to Pokémon Go. When this new game was announced, I decided that because I had not had the chance to experience the release of Pokémon Go while inhabiting Edinburgh, it made more sense for me to prepare myself to study the release of this new game. Where better to enact such a project, I thought, than in one of the cities that had inspired facets of this fictional world?

In January of 2018, two months after I had begun committing myself to this more place-appropriate research direction, Vice Media published an article by a budding Glaswegian journalist entitled ‘Harry Potter Tourism is Ruining Edinburgh’. This article, I have come to recognise, was -- among other things -- a reaction to the emergence of a more fully-fledged HP touristic scene within the city. In this article, the author disdainfully commented on the HPT-related services that existed within Edinburgh and rendered them -- in addition to Airbnb -- as threats to the city’s Old Town. Notably this article made little mention of the very real literary histories and associations that these touristic services highlight, and instead made it seem as though these cultural-economic actors were trying to make a HP tourism happen in a place where it is inappropriate. Almost immediately after being published this article sparked discussion and debate on Twitter as well as within the Edinburgh subReddit about the relationship between the city and the HP series, as well as about tourism and touristic services more broadly.

What specifically drew my attention within the original Vice article was that the journalist used some of the same melodramatic language that journalists covering the ‘Pokémon Go summer’ (2016) had employed to render the game as disruptive and even dangerous. In particular, the author highlighted how the grass in front of Thomas Riddell's grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard had been “churned into mud” and used this as evidence that
this kind of tourism was ruining the city. Because of my initial research focus, his use of this language started making me curious about what digital materials might be playing a part in these aggregated visits to Thomas Riddle’s grave. However, while this journalist was using the mud as evidence of ruining, I began imagining it as a ‘lovemark’ (Jenkins, 2006: 228) or rather as evidence of aggregated emotional investments and bodily interactions with the cultural and natural environment, and of this site in Edinburgh being personally, locally, and pop culturally significant.

More broadly then, this Vice Media article made me curious about how HP tourism is digitally entangled. I wondered, for example, what part did digital content and information play in Edinburgh becoming better known as a HP touristic destination, how tourists navigate the city and engage in this realm of tourism, and how cultural-economic actors accommodate, manage, and assemble these types of touristic services for visitors? This marked a shift from researching what I assumed would become another novel, AR, location-based game (it wasn’t), to studying the more mundane ways in which touristic mobilities and everyday, cultural-economic life occur with mobile digital technologies and locative media platforms. In what follows, I discuss how I designed, improvised, and conducted this digital ethnographic project; how I assembled data and later on went about making sense of this data; why I made certain practical, ethical, and theoretical decisions which have come to shape my ordering of things; and finally providing a sense of what data and materials assemble what lies both before and ahead of this chapter.

3.1 Conducting a ‘Digital Ethnography’ of Edinburgh’s HPT ‘Scene’

This thesis is centred on locative media, however this ethnographic project did not start out focused on this genre of platform alone. It started as a broader exploration of the ways in which a whole range of digital technologies and media -- including search engines, websites (travel blogs and service domains), social and locative platforms -- mediate and are entangled within the performance and enactment of HPT tourism by visitors and local, cultural-economic actors. While I do not discuss or analyse these other genres of digital media in the substantive chapters to the same extent that I do locative media, they were nonetheless important to my familiarising myself with Edinburgh’s HPT scene, and in particular to the design and improvisation of my digital, ethnographic fieldwork.

3.1.1 Ethnographic Mapping & A Purposive Sample of Edinburgh’s HPT Scene

For example, one of my first ethnographic tasks was to assemble a digital map of all of the public, permanent HP-related ‘touristic objects’ (Franklin, 2003) embedded within
Edinburgh’s landscape. Having recently moved to Edinburgh and having spent some time engaging with the city touristically I was already aware of some of these objects. However, I systematically identified and verified these touristic objects by making the search query “Harry Potter Edinburgh” via Google Search. Here I clicked into the links this search returned (mostly travel blogs and news articles) and then would map any new features which I had not come across previously until I reached saturation (by the fifth search results page) on My Maps (Google’s map-making application) (see Figure 1).

This original ethnographic map and purposive sample of HP touristic objects embedded in Edinburgh’s cultural landscape included: two HP literary tours (the original and one which had emerged later on); an improvised HP fanfiction show called ‘Spontaneous Potter’ held at Monkey Barrel Comedy Club (produced by the co-manager of the original HP tour and which inspired the creation of the comedy club’s magic-themed escape room venture later on); Greyfriars Kirkyard (where graves which inspired some HP character names sit); George Heriot’s School (one of the buildings which inspired the fictional school of Hogwarts); Victoria Street (inspiration for Diagon Alley); Black Medicine (cafe owned by business partner of brother-in-law of JKR and where the black plaque is mounted); Spoon Cafe (where Nicholsons Cafe use to be and where much of the first and second book were written); the Elephant House cafe (where parts of the third book were written and which claims “birthplace”); the Balmoral Hotel (where the seventh and final book in the series was completed); both Museum Context locations (curiosity and HP shop, one is on the street which inspired Diagon Alley and the other on the street thought to have inspired Knockturn Alley); The Dog House (a pub which serves a butter-flavoured beer); the Department of Magic & Magic Potion Tavern (magic-themed escape room and bar); JKR’s handprints outside of Edinburgh City Chambers (memorialised after JKR was granted the Edinburgh Award in 2008); and finally the Writers Museum (small museum which doesn’t include any female writers in their permanent exhibits but profits off of them in their gift shop) and the Book Lover’s Tour (literary tour which takes off from the Writers Museum and helped render a more historically accurate narrative about JKR and the city after when the Elephant House claimed “birthplace”).
These 16 mapped points were to become my field sites and vantage points for learning about the digital entanglement of HPT tourism within Edinburgh. After adding practical information to these mapped points (such as service hours and notes about quieter and busier service periods from Google Maps), I sorted them into one of five color-coded categories (or ‘map layers’) including: ‘Tours & Performances’, ‘Places of Inspiration’, ‘Writing Places’, ‘Themed Venues’, and ‘Exhibits & Other’. These categories would help me plan my fieldwork in the city according to the seasons and importantly the weather. Between May 2018 and August of 2019 I spent one to two weeks at each of these field sites. In most cases, I conducted one week of systematic participant observation, and then after this would occasionally visit and hang out at these field sites more informally and as a means to discern how representative my previous, systematic observations were. I will detail what this process looked like and how it evolved over time, what I began learning via hanging out, how I used these forays as a means to additionally recruit individuals who own, manage, and work for and/or around these sites as research participants, and how these forays and the digital background research I assembled beforehand informed the qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews I conducted.

3.1.2 Preparing to Enter the Field

The focus of my initial fieldwork forays were the various HP literary tours of the city. I started here to begin learning more about the various HP touristic objects I had included
in my sample (how they are represented and talked about with tourists) and even as a means to further verify this sample (and because the weather was more conducive to). I decided to approach the tour organisation who had advertised themselves as the “original” HP tour of Edinburgh -- who you now know as The Potter Trail tour -- first, as I hypothesised they would be most privy to changes in Edinburgh’s tourism landscape over the years and that they may have important insight into how Edinburgh had become better known as a HP touristic destination.

Before approaching this tour organisation, I decided to conduct some background research via their website, news articles and blog posts written about them, their Facebook business profile, Twitter profile, and TripAdvisor ‘place page’. At the time they did not have an Instagram profile, however some of their previous tour participants had created and used a hashtag (#pottertrail) and thus I was able to see what some of them documented while participating in these tours. While the digital content which they as an organisation had created and broadcast gave me a sense of their background as a company, their demeanour, and hints about what their tours cover; the content which their customers had generated (and which is readily accessible via these same digital services and profiles) enabled me to gain insight into what other tour participants had noticed and found significant.

Both types of digital content were incredibly helpful for priming my senses and attuning myself to their tour performances and the setting in which the tour takes place. This digital content then enabled me to develop a sense beforehand of what I might want to document, and additionally served as a reminder that I needed to be paying attention to and documenting that which does not become recorded and translated onto these platforms by either them or their customers. Conducting this type of research before engaging with a new field site not only helped me manage some of my initial anxieties related to being present and assembling quality data, but additionally enabled me to present myself to cultural-economic actors who work in these domains in a way which demonstrated that I had done my research, respected their time, and had a clear sense of what I wanted from an interview with them. For these reasons, these preparatory digital research practices were something which I engaged in before I began fieldwork at every single one of my 15 other field sites, as well as something I re-familiarised myself with and jotted down notes about before I interviewed owners and managers of touristic services.
3.1.3 In the Field

3.1.3.1 Participant Observation & Assembling Field Notes

Upon receiving ethics approval, I showed up to my first tour in weather appropriate apparel and with space on my mobile smart device for new photographs, my Keep Notes application open and ready for quickly jotting down field notes, and with a recruitment letter tucked into the back pocket of my jeans. As I stood at the starting point of the tour, I snapped some photographs of my surroundings and jotted down some notes about the diverse groupings of people around me also waiting for the tour to begin. In particular, I made notes about their demographic traits and emotional dispositions. When the tour began, I took many photos capturing the tour guide’s performance and their tour participants’ reactions to the tour content and touristic objects that had been contextualised via storytelling. The field notes I jotted down had to do with: the tour structure and content; some observations about the tour guide’s approach to their audience, how they delivered the content, their sense of and use of humour, as well as the different types of work they appeared to be engaging in; and importantly how tour participants were engaging with the tour guide and setting with their mobile smart devices throughout. Here I mostly observed tour participants using their camera applications to take photographs of HP-related objects, guides, and sometimes themselves, as well as in one case saw someone assemble and send a Snapchat.

Between tour stops, I chatted with some of the other tour participants in attendance and asked them how they were enjoying the tour. In cases where they engaged with me further, I asked how they had learned about this tour and what made them decide to choose this tour in particular. At this point, I hadn’t quite honed how I asked tourists about their engagements with digital resources, so their responses were usually just “the internet” to the first part of this question, and then either a comment on how this organisation’s website looked the “most professional” and/or because of their TripAdvisor ranking/customer reviews. Later on I would hone these questions through conducting an intercept questionnaire at Thomas Riddle’s grave where I would ask visitors two questions: 1) How did you learn about the existence of this site? and 2) How exactly did you navigate to this site? It was here where I learned different ways to ask about and learn about the more specific digital resources self-guided tourists were using. At the end of this first tour though, the tour guide thanked everyone for participating, prompted for tips, and suggested that we “follow” the Potter Trail on Facebook and “leave” them a review on TripAdvisor. Already I was gaining a sense of how a number of digital applications and
services were entangled within their customers’ participation in and enjoyment of the tour, as well as which digital platforms they as an organisation depended on.

This is -- for the most part -- how exactly I proceeded to assemble field notes and what exactly I made notes about while inhabiting my other 15 field sites. The only exceptions to this method was when I was inhabiting two outdoor field sites which aren’t tightly managed by any one organisation (Greyfriars Kirkyard and outside Edinburgh City Chambers), and associated cafes and themed bars where sitting and hanging out was acceptable and in some cases even the norm. In these cases, and instead of using the Keep Notes application on my mobile device, I took notes in a cardboard/paper notebook or in a word document on my laptop. In the case of the former alternative method, this was in an effort to signal to tourists inhabiting these outdoor sites that I was conducting research, that I wasn’t just loitering and watching them, and that they were welcome to approach and chat with me if they wanted to or if they developed any kind of problem with my being there. I attempted to signal these pieces of social information additionally by wearing my Edinburgh University student ID card on a lanyard on the outside of my jacket. I did this because I wasn’t planning on centring tourists’ practices nor perspectives in my project and thus didn’t have any kind of more formalised informed consent procedure designed for my encounters with them. Therefore, in these cases I just tried to make it as apparent as I could who I was and what I was doing. Whereas in the case of the latter alternative method of note taking (and more so similar to my relying on the Keep Notes app), this was done in an effort to mostly conceal that I was taking notes on the social environment and as a means to prevent making anyone inhabiting these sites and venues alongside me from feeling self conscious and suspicious of my intentions. I did this because I would eventually make myself known to the people who manage these sites and venues (including sharing that I had hung out in an effort to understand how HPT plays out here) and because I would be more formally seeking their informed consent. I will illustrate this latter way of doing things by using the example of my first fieldwork experience.

3.1.3.2 Recruitment for Interviewing

After this first tour ended and once most tour participants had dispersed, I volunteered to take a photograph of a family with the tour guide and then afterwards approached the tour guide in order to place my tip for the free tour into the sorting hat in her hands. At this point, I also struck up a conversation with her via complimenting her tour performance, highlighting what I had enjoyed most, and asked how long she had been tour guiding. I then proceeded to introduce myself as a student and PhD researcher, told her a
bit about my PhD project, noted some observations I had made about this touristic “world” (as I was calling it at the time) and its digital engagements, handed her my recruitment letter, and asked if she would be willing to participate further via being interviewed. She seemed interested, told me a bit more about the organisation and in particular mentioned the person who manages their digital presence, and then told me that she would be more than happy to sit down for an interview the following week. At first I asked whether she would be willing to share her mobile number with me, however when I saw her hesitate, I said “or I can add you on Facebook?” She nodded and then proceeded to provide me with her full name/screen name. When I returned home afterwards -- and after I had transferred my notes onto a word document and reflected a bit on this first fieldwork foray -- I requested her ‘friendship’ on the platform and a couple hours later I was notified that she had accepted my ‘friend request’. The following Monday I sent her a Facebook message and we set up a time to meet up for some coffee and an interview.

This same procedure -- which involved becoming a service participant first, conducting participant observation, introducing myself to someone who works at the site or venue in person, and then asking if they would be willing to be interviewed and/or willing to connect me with someone else for an interview -- was how I attempted to recruit the majority of individuals who work for the organisations I included in my purposive sample of Edinburgh’s HPT scene. This procedure was especially successful when it came to recruiting participants from other tour organisations, those who perform HP-related comedy shows, and with some cafe owners. Notably though, once I had made contact with and interviewed one person in each of these organisations I was generally able to have them connect me with others in this same organisation. For example, after my first interview with this member of the Potter Trail, they asked the manager of the tour -- who you now know as Richard Duffy -- if he would be okay if I came on his tour and interviewed him afterwards. After giving me his next tour date and time, she also told me that I should send him a ‘friend request’ on Facebook because he would now know who I was. I did this and after I attended his tour and interviewed him, we kept up the rapport we had developed and would occasionally touch base about new developments within Edinburgh’s HPT scene. He became my key informant in the field, helping me on several occasions get connected to other people who were part of the Potter Trail and in one case someone from another organisation (something I will elaborate on soon). In this way, I utilized snowball sampling techniques once I had made contact within specific organisations and as a means of getting connected to others within these same organisations.
Originally I had intended to include more HP literary tours in my sample. However, after learning about how competitive this service-specific market had become, I limited my focus to only one other HP tour which emerged later on and whom the Potter Trail had suggested I chat with due to his experiences of going independent after he had been mistreated by one of their more “morally-cheeky”, bigger, extra-local competitors. This decision to limit which tours I included in my sample was largely related to my awareness of how I conduct interviews. For example, I am well aware that when my ‘conversation partner’ asks for clarification about a question that I will sometimes use examples from my other interviews to explain what I mean or ask if they have similar experiences or understandings. Leaking this type of information in this context of increased competition could potentially come to harm those who had already sat down with me and who had been so generous with their energy and time. For these reasons, I decided to limit my sample, recruitment, and interviewing of other tour organisations operating in this realm. This limiting means that I am unable to speak in great depth about any one service-specific market which makes up Edinburgh’s HPT ordering, however the benefit of doing so was that it enabled me to build a trusting relationship with this pioneering tour organisation and this relationship is ultimately what allowed me access to the broader HP touristic scene within Edinburgh.

Before elaborating on how the development of this trusting relationship with the Potter Trail aided my fieldwork practice and focus though, I want to be reflexive about other factors that may have contributed to our establishment of an enduring, trusting relationship. Looking back I can see that it was, in part, also my queerness (politics and orientations) which played a part in things as well. In regards to my queer politics, I often find myself curious about collectives that use tools embedded within capitalism to order themselves differently, and especially in more equitable and even socialist ways. Influential in this curiosity is Judith (now Jack) Halberstam’s (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*, which I found myself returning to at a number of points during the PhD process. In the field though, and early on, I learned that the Potter Trail’s owner and two managers together only take 10-15% of the tour’s total income and that tour guides keep 85-90% of what they earn during their tours. This ‘financial ordering’ on their part appeared to play a significant part in minimising gendered hostilities within their organisation -- hostilities which I would come across in other organisations I included in my sample, but which I was also very familiar with from my own time working in various service-oriented roles before starting my PhD. So I think my queer politics also informed my curiosity with this organisation and likely shaped, in part, my orientating towards them in the field.
In regards to my queer orientations (Ahmed, 2006), it is also possible that my ‘embodied situatedness’ (Rooke, 2010) as a white, middle class, butch-feeling and often presenting, bisexual, cisgender woman, and overtime revealing some of these different facets of myself -- via my style and habits of presenting myself, my Facebook profile (i.e. one component of my ‘recruitment apparatus’), and later on verbally sharing bits about myself in response to two members of this tour sharing about their gendered presentations and sexualities – which may have also affected things. For example, overtime I noticed that the two members who I had shared these things with began reaching out to me and initiating more informal digital chats. During the pandemic this took the form of recommending queer/feminist-themed television series and films to one another, and sometimes discussing them. Even before this more explicit sharing about ourselves though, there already seemed to be an enduring rapport forming with these two members (which I am not entirely sure how to rationalise) and which overtime may have also shaped other members’ increasingly friendly orientation to me beyond our formal research encounters within the city and on online. In this context then, I think this enduring rapport and bond (partially associated with these various facets of ourselves that we eventually connected on) may have also contributed to my caution in the field and in particular, my wanting to ensure that my methods did not come to hurt this organisation within the cultural-economic context they operate. In this way, a ‘queer ethics’ (Detamore, 2010) – which expressed and embodied moral ties to the LGBTQ community (Denzin, 2003) -- developed and guided my fieldwork at certain points too.

Ultimately, this limiting of HP literary tours I sampled and this building of a trusting relationship with the Potter Trail tour enabled me access to the other pioneering organisations associated with Edinburgh’s HPT scene. For example, in the case of recruiting participants associated with the kirk and kirkyard, other cafes, the hotel, shop, and pub, the recruitment procedure I had forged and mobilised with HP-related tours and performances was less successful -- on its own at least -- and required that I follow up face-to-face interactions within their venues with an email or Facebook message. In two cases though, this following up was also unsuccessful and I decided to try enrolling other individuals outside of these organizations into my efforts. For instance, when I was struggling to make contact with the owner of the first HP curiosity shop, I asked Richard of the Potter Trail if he would be willing to introduce me to this individual, since he had mentioned in our interview that they occasionally met up for a pint together. The other difficult to reach participant was the owner of the first cafe in Edinburgh to claim JKR/HP links. Here I asked a fellow PhD colleague to put me in contact with a male-identifying
friend of hers who apparently exercises with the owner of this cafe. These two individuals - - who I enrolled others in order to make contact with -- were in fact initially wary about participating due to the negative media attention Edinburgh’s HPT scene had been subject to (and which they had been depicted in). Upon sensing and learning this, I made even more of an effort than I typically did within our digital communications to be as forthright as I could about my perspective on the Vice news piece, my intentions and ethics, and to reassure them that I was not going to be taking such an approach within my writing. Both of these introductions by Richard and a fellow PhD colleague (and importantly their expressing trust in me as a person and researcher in these introductions) and my reassuring these target participants of my research intentions and ethics, were successful and both eventually agreed to interviews.

Finally, and as I spent more time hanging out in the city and more informally at my various field sites, I also developed some other relationships this way which would come to serve my research project. For example, when I was conducting participant observation and attempting recruitment at my first improvised HP fanfiction show held at one of Edinburgh’s main comedy club establishments, I met another individual who would become a key informant and an important social connector. After the improv show finished and as I was finishing my beer near the bar while also trying to keep an eye out for the main organiser of the comedy group to come out of the backstage area, I decided to strike up a conversation with someone who I thought was the pianist/music composer for the show. Within this chat, I revealed that I was at the show for research purposes and how I was attempting to recruit the main organiser. He took interest and mentioned to me that he sometimes performs as a guest comedian in this same groups’ improvised Sherlock Holmes show. He then proceeded to excuse himself, disappeared for a few minutes, and then returned and told me that him and this individual were headed next door for post-show drinks and that I was welcome to come along and introduce myself to him/recruit him. I did this and successfully recruited this individual for an interview the following week. At the end of the night, I thanked this individual for his help and we added each other on Facebook.

This night felt like my first ‘chance encounter’ in the field, and it certainly continued to serve me. For example, a couple months later and after running into this individual a couple other times at this same comedy club, he mentioned to me how he had just started working as a Games Master in the HP-themed escape rooms below this venue for some extra income between gigs. Upon learning this, I asked him if he would be willing to participate in my project and sit down for an interview. He agreed, and afterwards
proceeded to introduce me (via Facebook Messenger) to one of the owners of the escape rooms and three other individuals who work as Games Masters. In this way, my recruitments for this last organisation (who I will introduce more formally in the next chapter) were made via a personal connection I had forged while in the field and notably within Edinburgh’s comedy scene. This is where I really began to comprehend the interconnectedness of Edinburgh’s HPT scene with its comedy scene. So maybe it wasn’t so much a ‘chance encounter’, as much as a testament to how small and interconnected Edinburgh is (and of that “village feel” that participants and residents of the city kept mentioning to me in our various encounters). The main take-away here then is that I used a combination of purposive, snowball, and convenience sampling when it came to recruiting individuals who work within this domain as research participants. Additionally though, there was a ‘queer ethics’ which emerged and guided me at points in terms of what organisations I would sample and this would come to affect what sort of data-informed ordering – or story – I would be able to pursue and render within this thesis.

3.1.3.3 Interviewing, Questionnaires, Informal Chats & Assembling Transcripts

In total, I recruited 30 individuals who work for and/or operate around the 16 field sites I included in my purposive sample of Edinburgh’s HPT scene. I facilitated 24 qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews (22 of these were in person, and 2 of them were over the phone); assembled and distributed 4 qualitative, digital questionnaires (via Google Forms); and struck up 2 informal chats and recorded the premises of these chats in my ethnographic field notes. In the majority of cases, research participants became my ‘conversation partners’ (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). However, in 6 cases it became clear to me that this method was not going to be appropriate and that I needed to adjust things and offer an alternative method of participation.

For example, two individuals who volunteer and work for Greyfriars Kirk expressed in our email communications that they did not feel that they knew enough about what I was researching for an interview, but both mentioned that they would be willing to answer some of my questions over email. I designed a qualitative questionnaire for the both of them via Google Forms and they answered my questions this way. This method was useful for gaining a better sense of how the Kirk and Kirkyard had been affected by the practice of HPT over the years, as well as for gauging their thoughts and feelings about how things had been unfolding more recently. However, it was less fruitful as a method in terms of gaining clarification about these sentiments. As a work around to these discrepancies, I tended to ask the other individuals associated with this field site and who did agree to sit
down with me for an interview if they would be willing to provide context and help me interpret their colleagues’ responses. This was somewhat clarifying both in terms of better understanding the perspectives expressed in the questionnaire, but mostly in terms of further learning about their own thoughts and feelings about the unfolding of this type of tourism.

In the case of the General Manager of the Balmoral Hotel I never communicated with him directly, only his executive assistants and it was they who told me that he didn’t have time to meet with me in person, but that he would be willing to answer some of my questions if I laid them out through email. I again assembled a Google Forms questionnaire and sent it off to his executive assistants who belayed my questionnaire to him and advised when his responses would be available to me in the form. In this context, this method was useful for gaining an understanding of how he approaches his role in the hotel, how this role is also enacted digitally and in particular, how it involves his keeping an eye on and occasionally responding to customer reviews on TripAdvisor. However, this method was less fruitful in terms of learning more about his specific routines and digital practices as General Manager. It is because of these discrepancies in data points that I do not feature this participant or venue in the coming chapters despite their being one of four organisation in my original sample who prioritises the platform and has protocols in place to manage the platform (a focus which I will touch on more soon).

In the case of the man who pioneered one of the earlier literary tours of Edinburgh, he agreed over email to sit down with me for an interview in the 30-minute time slots before or after his Sunday tours (and after/before he commutes by train to/from Edinburgh). However, because my interviews lasted on average an hour, I asked him if he would be willing to answer my questions via Google Forms instead. He agreed, so I assembled another questionnaire and sent it off to him. He responded promptly, but not in a lot of detail. I decided to pose some follow up questions to him and his responses to these were very enlightening -- but not in the ways I had originally imagined. His responses were actually a big part of what interested me initially in the historical development of HPT in Edinburgh and are what enable me in the first chapter of this thesis to render a more detailed story about Edinburgh after 2003 (when the first HPT-related venue emerged and claimed “birthplace”) and before 2012 (when the first HP literary tour emerged).

Related to this, his digital questionnaire responses and the interview responses of the individual who pioneered the latter, HP-specific literary tour were also influential in my coming to conceptualise my field as a touristic ‘scene’. This conceptualisation arose more
forcefully out of the more systematic historical research I would conduct later on (a process that I will discuss in more depth in the next section). However, it seems worthwhile mentioning in this section that the development of both types of literary tours were influential to the emergence of more touristic materiality, services, and venues related to these “particular clusters of social and cultural activities” (Straw, 2004, p. 412) within the city of Edinburgh. Here, tour guides may be conceptualised as pulling “together the material artefacts and strands of information necessary to their craft” (p. 418) and in their tuning into and adapting their performances for diverse touristic types, actively trace “lines of connection between the local and the international” (p. 418). Similarly to how Will Straw (2004) discusses the significance of ‘disk jockeys’ to the various disco ‘scenes’ of the 1970’s, tour guides also weave “together various elements of” the touristic apparatuses or assemblings they comprise and act as mediators in a “complex set of cultural and commercial processes” (p. 418). This unique positioning makes tour guides important contacts for scholars of tourism to engage with and learn from if they wish to develop an understanding of the emergence of particular types of touristic orderings and cultural-economic scenes.

Finally, I struck up two informal chats with a Janitor/Gate-Keeper of George Heriots School (one of the buildings thought to have inspired Hogwarts) and with a Front Desk Manager at the Balmoral Hotel who gave me a tour of Room 552 / ‘The J.K. Rowling Suite’. In both cases, I learned through these informal chats about how frequently tourists attempt to interact with these less public sites and about how these patterns of interaction have changed over the years. I also gained some insight into their perceptions of how others in these same organisations feel and think about their being included in this domain of tourism. In both of these cases I made myself known as a researcher, made it evident that I was collecting information for these purposes, and asked if they were okay if I wrote down what they told me (which they were).

Admittedly, I had initially wanted to recruit the Janitor/Gate-Keeper of George Heriots School for an interview and even attempted to do so. However, I quickly realised that my American-style of communicating my enthusiasms, and in particular my fieldwork observations about his role in things, combined with my middle-class forwardness in approaching him and introducing myself for these purposes, were not interpreted in the way that I had intended. Indeed, he appeared to think that I was asking him out on a date and quickly told me that he had a girlfriend and that she would not be comfortable with our meeting up for a coffee to discuss his observations about HPT over the years. His response perplexed me as I had been forthright about my role as a researcher, but also
made me feel embarrassed and even a bit frustrated that our interacting had been complicated by heteronormative assumptions. These feelings coloured the overthinking I would engage in for the rest of that afternoon. At this point in my fieldwork, I had been presenting myself in a straight(er)-laced way because I thought that it might be safer for me to do so, especially in terms of navigating the city. However, this occurrence made me reconsider my initial gender presentation strategy and marked a change in how I styled myself moving forward. For example, this was the point at which I stopped wearing eyeliner and putting as much effort into my hair on fieldwork days. Additionally I began wearing more androgynous garments and tops that de-emphasised my female-associated silhouette during fieldwork forays and interview encounters.

This updated and more authentic-feeling gender presentation strategy was successful insofar as I did not appear to intimidate the other straight working class men I came across and was able to foster research relationships with them that didn’t get misconstrued as romantic advances. This strategy was far from foolproof though, especially when it came to some of the straight middle class men I came in contact with in the comedy scene. Indeed, in one case it appeared that my more androgynous presentation and qualities were hetero-sexualised and where I had to be more verbally explicit about my personal boundaries. In this way, my nationality, class, gender, and imagined sexuality also came to shape fieldwork encounters and at times required management on my part in order to ensure my own safety and prevent these dynamics from interfering with my goal of speaking to as many different people who were a part of this touristic scene. This occurrence then came to shape how I presented myself aesthetically in the field, but also importantly how I would frame research participation and data collection for the Front Desk Manager at the Balmoral Hotel, and where I developed a third way of participating in my project for some target participants apart of the organisations in my purposive sample.

In the majority of cases though, I pursued in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the individuals who I met and who worked in this domain. This mostly included owners and/or managers and in the case of two organisations (the ones that I will be centring in the next chapter) their tourist-facing workers. My initial interview guide -- which I adapted to each organisation in my purposive sample, further personalised for each individual I interviewed, and which also informed the digital questionnaires I assembled and distributed -- was designed to help me develop an understanding of: the touristic organisations they are associated with and their understandings of its association with Edinburgh’s HPT scene; their roles in these organisations and in particular the routines
and practices associated with their fulfilment of this role; their engagement with and experiences of the digital content and/or digital services and platforms prioritised by their associated organisation; their understandings of the opportunities and challenges of these digital services and platforms for the organisation and/or for their own work; their perceptions of how increased awareness of Edinburgh as a HP touristic destination has impacted the organisations they work for and/or their own work; and finally -- their thoughts and feelings about the *Vice Media* article which had been published in 2018 (a couple months before I began fieldwork).

In cases where I was interviewing tourist-facing workers, I often drew on my personal experiences -- or in the case of tours, our shared experiences -- of my conducting participant observation of their service to contextualise my questions, learn more about something they had mentioned, or to frame an inquiry about something that I wondered was related to something they had mentioned. Occasionally I would also draw on my own personal experiences of working in the service and hospitality industry to learn about their working practices and conditions. For example, I came to recognise a couple of instances in my interview encounters where participants’ associating me with the realm of academia seemed to make them feel insecure and talk about the work they do (and especially some of its requirements) in a self-deprecating and/or demeaning way. In cases where this appeared to be happening, I would often reveal that I have worked in a number of customer-facing roles in the service industry and that we all have to do what we have to do to support ourselves and make ends meet. I also sometimes emphasised that I thought that there was a delicate art to this kind of work that takes time to hone and get right. This -- in addition to regularly making my critical opinion of the *Vice* article known -- enabled me to get beyond the negative discourses about their line of work (both more broadly and specifically) which most participants appeared to have internalised and would express within our interview encounters.

In the case of many male-identifying participants, these negative discourses were expressed via humour but also sometimes by rationalising their organisation’s involvement in Edinburgh’s HPT scene via making comparison to other organisations’ involvement. Whereas for many female-identifying participants, these negative discourses were similarly expressed via humour, but also sometimes would give shape to ‘shame-spirals’. In both cases, my participants’ expressions of negative affects about their involvement in Edinburgh’s HPT scene threatened to take the interview in a tonal direction which I wasn’t comfortable going along with -- both in terms of having my opinions of other organisations operating in this domain affected by these types of narratives, as well as the possibility of
some individuals leaving our interview encounter feeling bad about the work they do. So in cases where these dynamics appeared to be occurring I would attempt to alter the trajectory of the interview by drawing on and expressing one or more of these three types of sentiments in an effort to keep the interview focused on their broader embodied experiences, approaches, and working practises. These three types of sentiments were well received and tended to initiate changes in how research participants went about answering my future questions and explaining their work.

In this way, revealing parts of myself and making my outlook on their work known enabled me to manage (to a certain extent) their feelings and expressions of shame which appeared to be getting in the way of them sharing about things in ways which felt genuine, respectful towards themselves, and productive in terms of my actual research interests (and not what they imagined me to be interested in based on my positioning as an academic). This kind of ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) was certainly draining at times – not because I wasn’t being genuine (I absolutely was), but because it tended to remind me of my own feelings of shame which I had to regularly manage when I was working in these types of customer-facing roles previously. However, unlike my research participants, I had never had this kind of work I did demeaned and centred in a click-bait Vice article. It truly is a shame that these types of work (more broadly speaking) are not more valued and tend to be thought about as low-skill, and (more specifically speaking) as being somehow dishonest due to their touristic and popular cultural entanglements. In other cases though, my sharing my experiences of working in these similar types of domains allowed me to demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of what they were sharing and to ask more specific questions about their working conditions, relationships with owners and managers, and especially the gendered dynamics within the organisations they worked.

In cases where I was interviewing the individual who had pioneered the service or venue, I would ask them about what had inspired or motivated them to bring this organisation into being initially and would attempt to learn about how the service or venue and/or their management of it had changed or evolved overtime. In cases where I was interviewing the individual in charge of managing their organisation’s digital profiles (often this was the same person), I would ask them what digital platforms they prioritise and/or think are the most important to their developing and/or maintaining their place in Edinburgh’s cultural-economic landscape. For each digital platform they mentioned I would then pose further questions to them about: why they think this platform is so important for these purposes; how they approach these platforms and/or what they depend on them for;
the types of content which they assemble and/or come across from their audience/customers here; what they appreciate and/or dislike about engaging with this platform; how they learned to manage the platforms in the ways that they do; and finally -- what it’s like having their image and reputation as an organisation partially tied to these platforms.

Before my interviews with individuals who manage their organisation’s digital presences and profiles, I would re-familiarise myself with these public-facing digital profiles. This was so that I could make a note of them in my interview guide and so that I was prepared to appropriately prompt them to speak about these. This was also a useful practice though for learning about the digital platforms they do not prioritise and why. Additionally, this was often important for prompting many to speak about their experiences with locative media platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google Maps. Maybe not surprisingly, the majority of these individuals spoke mostly unprompted about their experiences with social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, whereas getting them to articulate their experiences with locative media platforms tended to require my prompting and demonstrating my awareness that their organisations are also represented on these platforms. In this way it wasn’t just my participant observation experiences, but additionally my engaging with their organisations digitally which came to inform my interview questions.

While I demonstrated an awareness of these digital presences in our interviews, I never asked them specifically about any types of content which I knew about, and instead allowed them to guide my attention to this content and shape my subsequent understandings of this content in the context of this thesis. I came to recognise that my participants assumed and/or even expected that I had or would take a glance at their organisation’s public-facing digital presences and profiles. This became especially apparent to me with how they brought up, referenced, and discussed specific digital content, where they would often say something like “if you go on our profile you will see…” or in some cases participants even suggested that I verify what they were saying by going on their digital profiles. Interviews thus came to act as -- among other things -- a means of learning about the significance, stories, and professional processes and practices associated with these digital profiles and the content embedded on them.

As noted before, my ethnographic project was focused on a whole array of digital platforms and services. However, towards the end of my time in the field I started circling back to being more so focused on how locative media platforms and in particular TripAdvisor are managed and engaged with by touristic organisations. Here my interview
with the acquaintance I had met during the improvised HP fanfiction show and who had started working as a Games Master in the magic-themed escape room reinvigorated my focus on this genre of platform. This interview was admittedly an attempt to learn more about this organisation and importantly a means of becoming connected to the owner and manager of this establishment, rather than a means of learning in depth about the digital platforms they rely on. Due to these motives, I only asked about digital platforms within this interview as an afterthought. However, his responses to my questions were where I began to recognise the ways in which tourist-facing workers were intimately involved in the management of locative media platforms despite their not being the ones who are the ‘account managers’ of their organisation’s TripAdvisor ‘place page’. This marked another moment where I began reflecting more on my own experiences working in domains similar to this and where I began imagining new possibilities for my analysis of this platform.

After this interview, I quickly updated my interview guide to account for these insights and to see what else I could learn from tourist-facing workers. I also decided to push back my “exiting the field” date and asked this individual if he would be willing to connect me with three other Games Masters (one other male-identifying and two female-identifying workers) who might be willing to be interviewed. Finally, I also reached back out to Richard and asked if I could interview a couple more of their Tour Guides (two-male identifying and two female-identifying). I reached back out to the Potter Trail because through this other interview I had come to recognise their organisation as having a similar entanglement with TripAdvisor that the Department of Magic had. In this way, I utilised theoretical sampling as my interviews became more centred on locative media platforms as a means to learn more about organisations who prioritise this genre of platform and enrol their customer-facing workers in this process of attempting to get the platform working in their favour.

These interviews (both the first round and second round) were largely conducted in the cafes, restaurants, or bars of my participants’ choice and/or within the venues they own and/or work within. In one case, I conducted an interview outside in a public park. In all cases, we would chat informally for a bit, and then after a while I would start making reference to the interview as a means to transition over. I would then ask them if they were okay if I recorded our interview via a digital voice recorder so that I could later transcribe our exchange. All research participants agreed to this. At the start of the recording, I would thank them again for agreeing to participate, would hand them my project information sheet that I had printed out and would explain a bit about what they could find here. Then I would provide them with a bit of context about the purpose of my research, why I had
recruited them for an interview, and alluded to the types of questions I would be posing to them. I emphasised that participation was voluntary and that they could stop and withdraw from the interview or my recording at any point. I advised that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions I would be posing, but that if they didn’t feel they knew enough or didn’t want to answer any one of my questions, that we would skip past those and move on. After this, I asked them if they were still willing to participate. All participants verbally agreed to proceeding with the interview.

In this way, I prioritized gaining my research participants’ informed consent verbally. This is because I know that in many cases research participants are trying to be present in our social exchange and don’t read through the papers I hand them or that they will even (in some cases, not this case though) sign. In this way, it was important to me that I gained both verbal and nonverbal feedback that communicated to me that they were aware of what their participation means and entails in this context. While these interview encounters were certainly the first time I sought their more formal informed consent, it would not be the last. Here, informed consent was a process engaged in at multiple points during the entirety of fieldwork due to its ever-evolving and ethnographic nature. Additionally, all participants whose interviews I centre and/or whose service performances I describe in this thesis were sent copies of the chapters which feature them and were asked whether I had interpreted them correctly and if they were comfortable with my featuring of their interview excerpts. It was here where I additionally asked them if they wished for me to maintain their real names (due to its historical nature) or would prefer I assign them a pseudonym. While all participants from one organisation requested that I keep their real names, I have assigned pseudonyms to the tourist-facing workers of the other one.

The mobilisation of both the first and second versions of my interview guide were informed by the methodological principle of “non-digital-centricness” (Pink et al., 2016, p. 9). This principle for doing digital ethnography suggests that researchers de-centre the digital as the focus of their data assembly in an effort to “acknowledge the ways in which media are inseparable from the other activities, technologies, materialities and feelings through which they are used, experienced and operate” (p. 9). This principle was pursued and developed within my interviews by making them more focused on my participants’ associated organisations and their positionings in the HPT scene, as well as centring their roles, routines, and practices within these organisations. This doesn’t mean I didn’t ask more specifically about these digital technologies and media, but for the most part I prompted these discussions based on how these platforms had already emerged within their discussions about these other things, and used these more organic emergences as a
means to learn more about the digital within the context of their organisational life-worlds. Sometimes participants did try to hurry to these discussions as I think they thought that’s what I was looking for, however, even in these cases I asked if we could come back to ‘the digital’ after we had chatted more about their organisations and roles. By ordering my interview exchanges in these ways, I was able to gain invaluable insights into how ‘the digital’ is “a part of something wider” (p. 11) -- and in the case of my research, “wider sets of environments and relations” (p. 9).

Interviews lasted anywhere from 32 minutes to 164 minutes, and on average lasted 74 minutes. After I conducted the interviews, I would upload the audio file onto my laptop so that it could be saved and backed up. I would also write up notes afterwards where I would reflect on what I had learned, what I felt went well, what maybe didn’t go as well, and any new ideas or concepts the interview had introduced to my thinking. Initially I transcribed interviews immediately after conducting them as a means to learn from and improve my interview guide for future interviews. However, after a while, this became harder to maintain as a habit and I instead transcribed the majority of them in the month following my last interview. I transcribed interviews verbatim and took note of changes in tone or affective disposition, bodily gestures, sarcasm and humour, as well as laughter. In total I transcribed 1,782 minutes (29.7 hours) of dialogue which came to assemble 523 pages of interview transcript. These transcripts were then cleaned and uploaded onto NVivo for coding and analysis.

3.2 Researching TripAdvisor as a ‘Social Partner’ to Cultural-Economic Actors

3.2.1 First Iteration of Data Analysis

By the time I had made my exit from the field and was preparing to begin data analysis, I knew that it was my participant’s engagements with locative media platforms that I was keen on exploring further due to the ways they had emerged in my interviews with tourist-facing workers. However, I also felt that it was important that I develop a working-understanding of these touristic organizations’ conceptualizations, uses, and experiences of their service websites and social media profiles. Such an understanding would help me better understand their conceptualisations, uses, and experiences of locative media platforms comparatively.

In an effort to understand the place of locative media platforms within their working practices and relative to these other types of digital services and platforms then, my first iteration of data analysis involved drawing out (via coding) and bringing together (via the
aggregation of this coded content) all mentions of these different genres of platforms across my 30 transcripts on NVivo. Doing so revealed that websites and blogs had been mentioned 87 times, social media platforms 211 times, and locative media platforms 173 times. I then developed a number of sub-codes related to whether the mention was associated with a ‘conceptualisation’, ‘use’, ‘practice’, or ‘experience’. While doing so I began to recognise that some organisations were better than others for learning in-depth about how these different genres of digital services and platforms are entangled within their working practices. This recognition helped me narrow down which organisations and interviews I centred in the first wave of data analysis.

Initial analysis was chaotic and messy, however it revealed the different uses of and expectations invested into their engagements with these different genres of digital services and platforms. It was here where I began to conceptualise websites, social, and locative media platforms as ‘social partners’ and in particular ‘promotional partners’ to my participants’ touristic organizations, and where I came to recognise other notable partnership qualities. For example, social media platforms served as key ‘communication partners’, whereas locative media platforms appeared to serve as ‘reflexivity partners’ (as I referred to it then). However, and closely related to what I will discuss next, some participants were able to engage with the latter genre of platform as a ‘reflexivity partner’ -- or what I will refer to moving forward as a ‘thinking partner’ -- much more intuitively than were other organisations depicted on the platform and included in my sample (which at this point included 10 HP-related touristic organisations).

In my early writing and attempts at sense-making, it became evident that while these 10 different HP-related touristic organisations all approached and used their websites and social media profiles (Facebook and Instagram) relatively similarly, that there was far more diversity in terms of approach to and experiences of locative media platforms, and especially TripAdvisor. For example in my initial writing about TripAdvisor I identified three main approaches including an ‘active’, ‘reactive’, and ‘passive approach’. Importantly these names do not exactly do justice to these organizations' relationships with the platform -- hence why I now just describe these various relationships by noting whether or not the platform is prioritised within their working practices or whether it is just left to accumulate reviews on its own terms. Nonetheless, these early categorisations helped me begin rendering a data-informed story about the diverse relationships my research participants and their associated organisations had with TripAdvisor.

For example, those who I had categorised as taking a ‘passive approach’ (5 organisations) tended to have been added to TripAdvisor by customers and hadn’t
themselves made their profiles -- even if later on they did come to “claim” and thus manage them. The managers of these organizations also tended not to respond digitally to reviews out of fear that their responses might make things worse, and instead just hoped that new reviews would accumulate and push these ambiguous or negative reviews down further on the page. Those who I categorised as taking a ‘reactive approach’ (1 organisation) had a similar trajectory to those who took a more ‘passive approach’, however where they differed was that they would respond digitally to some types of reviews as a means to defend their businesses from evaluations they deemed to be exaggerated or untrue. What both approaches had in common though was that they generally felt pretty powerless when it came to shaping the impression their organisation was giving off via the platform. Closely related to this, they also tended to share how early on they had taken reviews incredibly personally and in some cases even avoided engaging with the platform because of how disappointed and frustrated it made them feel. However, they also noted how overtime they became more familiar with and less surprised by what emerged on the platform, how they had learned how to better de-personalise and re-contextualise this content (although even this required much emotional management), and even how they sometimes find what emerges here to be useful for addressing and mending operational dysfunctions within their services and/or venues. These participants thus did come to engage with the platform as a ‘thinking partner’ even though they didn’t necessarily think of it as a reliable ‘promotional partner’.

Conversely, the 4 organisations I had categorised as taking an active approach (including the Potter Trail tour, the Potter Tour, the Balmoral Hotel, and the Department of Magic escape rooms) had an entirely different, and even positive affective experience of TripAdvisor. This did not mean that they didn’t also have negative experiences with and even annoyances related to the platform (they certainly did). However, unlike the other 6 touristic organisations discussed before, these organisations had developed organisational approaches and strategies aimed at getting this platform working for them as a reliable ‘promotional partner’. These approaches and strategies, I came to realise, are what enable them to exercise more control over their digitally-entangled reputation, but more than this also enable them to use the platform more intuitively as a ‘thinking partner’.

As I attempted to make sense of these dynamics though, I began recognising that the data I had assembled based on mentions of TripAdvisor did not enable me to tell the whole story about these approaches and strategies (and as I had been writing about them in my fieldwork and interview memos). In other words, the platforms appeared to be entangled in working practices and processes that I had not initially coded as being related
to their management of the platform. Additionally, my interviews alone were not sufficient and I realised that I would also need to draw on my experiences in the field to illuminate what I was struggling to write about. Another issue which emerged was that the language I was using and adapting to describe things -- largely language I had learned from engaging with John Urry and Jonas Larsen’s (2011) *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* and Mark Graham’s (2014) work on ‘data shadows’ -- no longer felt useful and indeed were feeling rather clunky.

3.2.2 COVID-19 as an Actant in my Data Analysis Process

Soon after completing this first iteration of data analysis and as I was thinking through my next steps, the COVID-19 pandemic began unfolding, the world shut down, and travel and tourism across the world was paused. Before the first lockdown was announced I had been assembling a lecture on ‘digital technologies and space/place’ where I was using the ‘Pokémon Go summer’ and student’s experiences of travel and tourism as interactive activities meant to get them thinking about and applying the content of this lecture to their own lives. Suddenly my examples and activities felt depressing and even tone deaf. This moment was pretty much the exact opposite of the ‘Pokémon Go summer’ and the cultural moment which had sparked my interest in researching locative media platforms initially. During this time I reached out to and checked in with some of my key informants and research participants. Here, the anxieties they expressed to me about the present and even their futures made me acutely aware of my privilege as a researcher. Suddenly it didn’t feel very good to be leveraging their experiences and stories for my own professional advancement, especially when I wasn’t even sure if they would gain the support they needed from the government to maintain themselves through this event. All of these feelings lead me away from engaging with my data again.

Before the pandemic occurred, I hadn’t considered myself to be researching tourism. I had been explaining my work to others by saying how I was using a case study in tourism in an effort to understand the more mundane ways in which locative media comes to mediate the life words of small, independent businesses. This did capture who exactly I had attended to within my ethnographic fieldwork. However, when the pandemic began it became very clear to me that I was in fact researching tourism and that I shouldn’t be trying to distance myself from this domain of activity seeing as my participants’ organisations who do mostly serve tourists versus those who serve locals in addition to tourists had very different problems confronting them now. It was during this time that I began questioning why I had been distancing myself from tourism, and eventually began
wondering why so many sociologists around me were similarly uncomfortable when it comes to producing research on this domain of activity. Eventually, I would come across work exploring how ‘sociological anxieties’ (related to theoretical trends of thought within the discipline) have affected the historical development of sociological theories of and ideas about tourism, and which thoughtfully questions “whether we yet have a respectable scholarly analysis of tourism, or whether the social science literature on the subject substantially blends with the emotionally-charged cultural image relating to travel and tourists” (for the full analysis, see: Franklin, 2003, pp. 26-33). Engaging with this work would help me identify, better understand, and manage my own disciplinary-shaped feelings of discomfort with tourism, and likely shaped my tending towards a more cultural-economic approach to tourism -- instead of a more political economic one -- within this thesis.

During this initial point in time though, and as a means to process the dramatic changes my field was undergoing and which my research participants were navigating and managing in real time, I began keeping an eye on all the news coverage about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry. These articles tended to use language such as ‘unprecedented’ to describe all that was happening. At first this language triggered my anxiety and worry about my research participants, but after a while I found myself becoming more so annoyed with its overuse as I began to think back on moments in my own lifetime -- such as the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks and the 2008 financial crisis -- which had in fact impacted travel in ways which had also changed it. I thus found it hard to believe that events before my lifetime hadn’t also temporarily paused and changed travel.

What I think really pushed me forward in addressing some of the issues I had identified after completing my first iteration of data analysis, was learning two things. First, that the guidebook publisher *Lonely Planet* was permanently closing down most of its offices, its production facilities, and that it would no longer be financing multi-week research trips to update its guidebooks (something which set them apart from other guidebook publishers operating before the pandemic)\(^{22}\) and would instead opt for desk-based research\(^{23}\). Second, that *TripAdvisor* was cutting 900 jobs globally and reducing its total workforce by 25%, closing most of its offices permanently except its headquarters, that its CEO Stephen Kaufer would be foregoing his salary for the rest of the year as a cost-saving measure, and that most salaried employees were asked to move to a four-day


work week and take a 20% salary cut for three months. Both of these news stories, combined with research I had conducted earlier on into the political economic practices of TripAdvisor and where I had learned that Google Maps was starting to seriously impede on TripAdvisor's market share, prompted me to ask if the pandemic might begin creating the conditions in which the materiality of travel -- the materiality which I was centering in my thesis -- might shift and change. Whether or not this actually became the case, it felt timely and important for me to understand the material histories of travel and tourism.

3.2.3 Second Iteration of Data Analysis

In an effort to do this, I returned to the literature with more of a focus on travel and tourism. I started my research by digging back into *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Urry and Larsen, 2011) and identifying different epochs of travel and tourism, and then used this information to begin making search queries on Google Scholar which would enable me to learn about the appointed peoples (guides, chaperons, teachers, and later on travel agents) and literatures (indulgence handbooks, treatises on travel method, travel handbooks, and later on travel guidebooks) which had been essential to making mobility decisions and meaning-making within these different eras of travel and tourism. In my downtime I also began watching documentaries and films about -- or which depicted -- travel and tourism or commerce and consumption from the 13th century up until the present moment in the Western European context. All of this research helped me recognise that some of the qualities which I had been conceptualising as being novel about locative media were not actually that new and in doing so helped me hone how I was thinking about this genre of media.

Importantly, It was also through this research where I finally began coming across sociological literature on travel and tourism which was taking its heterogeneous materiality seriously. It was specifically in my research into Thomas Cook’s significance to organised, mass tourism where I came across the language of ‘orderings’ and began recognising the potential usefulness of two Foucauldian notions of governance to the sense making I was attempting in the context of this project. Here, the language of orderings provided me with a way to begin conceptualising what locative media platforms do and how they act, but importantly also came to shape how I would analyse my ethnographic data and how I would begin rendering a story about the development of HP tourism in Edinburgh and as it had occurred with TripAdvisor.

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24 Massachusetts-based TripAdvisor to cut 900 jobs, close Boston Office
This focus upon ordering and development additionally helped me address another issue which emerged when I began re-coding my data -- namely that my interview data related to TripAdvisor wasn’t depicting a single moment in time and thus couldn’t be analysed accurately unless I separated out these discussions based on the time period they were making reference to. This was important for tracing how my participants’ relationship with the platform develops and changes overtime and -- from what I could tell from my interview data -- as a by-product of wider happenings and unfoldings (such as increased demand and competition). This revealed another issue: I needed to be able to say something about these wider happenings and unfoldings that had influenced changes in their relationship with the platform.

This type of analysis didn’t just require re-coding TripAdvisor mentions within my interview transcripts using temporal categories, but additionally required that I conduct extensive internet-based research into the development of HPT in Edinburgh in an effort to develop and verify these temporal categories. I pursued this endeavour by marking down the ‘emergence dates’ of each of the touristic objects and services which I had mapped and which had become one of my field sites. The emergence dates of objects and services that had emerged between 2012 and 2020 I was confident about and could easily verify online and via interview transcripts. However this wasn’t the case for objects and services that had emerged before 2012. Even my participants were not always entirely sure about these dates, and generally I began recognising even those interested in history sometimes had flawed temporal memories. For these objects and services then I had to track down their earliest digital self-representations (via The Wayback Machine to access earlier versions of their websites, and via scrolling way back through their social and locative media profiles), news media depictions (via Google News), and visual touristic depictions (via tourist-generated content on Flickr and Instagram) in order to generate and verify their emergence dates. After doing this I re-ordered my mapped objects from earliest to latest emergence date so that I could turn my map into a timeline (see Figure 2) and begin visualizing things, creating temporal clusterings, and developing a narrative about these temporal clusterings.
However, what was missing here was a sense of what exactly had inspired or initiated the emergence of some of these earlier services and objects. Next I needed to develop an understanding of the events which had created more awareness about Edinburgh as a HP-related destination between 2003 (when the first HP service emerged) and 2012 (when the first HP tour emerged). To pursue such an awareness I used Google Trends data related to the search phrase “Harry Potter Edinburgh” to identify a couple spikes in interest within this time period (including the biggest spike which was in July of 2005). Using the dates associated with these spikes (see Figure 3) I made related Google Search queries and in doing so identified a number of corresponding events which had clear ties to either the emergence of these objects and services (which had also been mentioned in my interviews), and/or which had introduced language which then started being used in the promotional efforts by services who had already or had begun associating themselves with HP. This research together with the interview data I had assembled enabled me to begin developing a narrative about the development of HPT in Edinburgh as it corresponded with changes in how my participants had discussed their relationships with TripAdvisor. In this way, the language of orderings additionally helps me historically situate my fieldwork and findings and write them up in such a way that they will be useful for future attempts at sense-making related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but
more broadly for developing an understanding of how locative media platforms like TripAdvisor order and govern, and how this ordering and governance evolves overtime and varies across different cultural-economic settings.

*Figure 3: Significant spikes and changes within worldwide interest in search phrase “Harry Potter Edinburgh” between 2004 and 2021 (via Google Trends)*

It is the Foucauldian notions of pastoral and environmental governance which have enabled me to illuminate and make sense of the specific qualities of my participants’ relationships with TripAdvisor -- namely it being conceptualised as a ‘promotional partner’ and used as a ‘thinking partner’. These relationship qualities emerged most noticeably in my interviews with participants associated with two organisations (out of the four) who prioritised TripAdvisor -- including The Potter Trail tour and the Department of Magic Escape rooms -- and in particular within their discussions about how they managed increased demand and competition associated with the emergence of a HPT scene between 2017 and 2019. I will be centring these two organisations moving forward and detailing these discussions in the next chapter in an effort to explore what their working relationship with the TripAdvisor platform enabled and made possible during this pivotal moment in the development of Edinburgh’s HPT ordering.

It is my interview data and engagement with scholastic literatures that elaborate on Foucauldian notions of governance then that informs my working conceptualisation of TripAdvisor as a ‘geo-pastoral’ technology. Significant to the first part of my conceptual formulation is Michel Foucault’s work on and transition from a focus on biopolitics to governmentality between 1976 and 1984. Important to the ‘geo’ dimension is an interview which Foucault engaged in with the geographers of the radical French journal *Herodote* in 1976 and which was later translated into English and included in the collection *Power/Knowledge* (1980) as ‘Questions on Geography’. This piece steadily became the most cited piece by geographers concerning Foucault’s relation to questions of space and power (Elden and Crampton, 2007, p. 1). Also important to the ‘geo’ dimension are some
of Foucault’s lectures at the College de France between 1977 and 1979 including *Security, Territory, Population* (2007) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008). These courses of lectures marked a shift from Foucault’s emphasis on territorial control to a more nuanced notion of territorial governance (Elden and Crampton, 2007, p. 7). A number of geographers have built on this work and have demonstrated how 19th century populations began being known by their spatial dispersion, giving rise not only to statistics (as Foucault had shown) but also to new forms of cartography (Crampton, 2004; Hannah, 2000; Rose-Redwood, 2006). This line of work in addition to Foucault’s course of lectures are what Carlos Barreneche (2012a; 2012b) builds on and who I borrow from and extend in my formulation of the ‘geo’ dimension of ‘geo-pastoral’ governance as it is mobilised through locative media platforms.

Important to the ‘pastoral’ dimension of my conceptual formulation is Foucault’s (1982) essay ‘The Subject and Power’ which he wrote towards the end of his life and which summarizes the previous 20 years of his work as it relates to these two central themes. Throughout this essay, he provides a description of power relationships, the creation of subjects, and a historical sketch of how the primary modes of power in the modern world came into being. Here, he introduces the notion of ‘pastoral power’ which is rooted in ancient antiquity and early Christianity (also Foucault, 2000). This notion was also elaborated in Foucault’s course of lectures at the College de France between 1977 and 1980 including *Security, Territory, Population* (2007) and *On the Government of the Living* (2012). Additionally, this notion was further contextualised in some interviews and shorter pieces of writing which Foucault assembled during this same time (Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 1989). A number of scholars have built on this body of work and have demonstrated how ‘pastoral power’ or ‘governance’ operates in a number of diverse contexts. The ‘pastoral’ dimension of my conceptualisation of locative media platforms builds on and extends Foucault’s own work, but also borrows from Trent Newmeyer’s (2008) application of this concept to thinking about touristic governance and Rosalind Cooper’s (2020) use of it to theorise algorithmic governmentality.

Importantly though, I do not assume ‘technology’ in the way that many who interpret Foucault use it (including the scholars I have drawn from in order to assemble this working conceptualisation). For example, Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham (2001) note that Foucault (unlike many Foucauldian scholars) does discriminate carefully between ‘technologies’ and ‘techniques’. For example, in his writings (Foucault, 1986) and seminars (Martin et al., 1988) on the self, he was often referring to ‘techniques’ (practical instances) and not technologies (practical systems). Even when he was referring to the latter in his
writings on governmentality (Foucault, 1991), it is important to recognise that while there were certainly unique, and more-or-less systematic arrangements of non-human and more-than-human things -- ‘apparatuses’ or ‘dispositif’ (Foucault, 1980) -- which enhance and maintain the exercise of power, there were “really no technology in them” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 152). Indeed, Foucault paid very little attention to “the routinized chains that connect the human and the non-human” (p. 152).

As a work around then, I combine these two Foucauldian-inspired descriptors with a Latourian conceptualisation of ‘technology’. First, because Latour (1993; 1999) imagines humans as existing in the ‘socio-technological’ -- or rather “the realm where humans and non-human (technological) actors live and work together” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 151). Whereas for Foucault, his conceptualisation of the self is “purely human and purely social” (p. 152). Second, because Latour (1992) positions technological artefacts as “the missing masses that serve in the reproduction of social order” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 153). In this way, adopting a more Latourian conceptualisation makes it easier to “inject technology more forcefully” (p. 153) as an actor -- or ‘social partner’ (Valkonen, 2010) -- into the process of ‘governmentality’ and ‘caring for the self’. While my analysis isn’t concerned with ‘the self’ per se, and instead with cultural-economic organisations, I suggest that both can be conceptualised as ‘orderings’ and analysed accordingly as technological achievements.

3.3 Describing & Analysing ‘Techniques’ as ‘Algorithmic Navigation’

Together then, these ontological and theoretical frameworks enable me to position the ‘social partnerships’ (Valkonen, 2010) which HPT-related touristic organisations have with TripAdvisor as ongoing accomplishments and as something which requires work to develop and/or maintain. Towards the end of the previous chapter, I noted how I would be using another Latourian inspired concept -- that of ‘collective’ -- as a “methodological guideline” (Valkonen, 2010) for investigating this very work, and how I would pursue such an investigation by attending to the different abilities, skills, and practices working in Edinburgh’s HPT scene requires.

In Chapter 4, I will be focusing our attention on two HPT-related touristic organisations who prioritise TripAdvisor and have developed approaches and strategies intended to get the platform working in their favour, as opposed to something which “happens to” them. Because of this focus, the thick descriptions I will assemble -- with the help of my ethnographic field notes and qualitative interview data -- will be positioned as ‘techniques’. Here I understand ‘techniques’ in the way Foucault did and as “any skill or
ability” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 151) or “ad hoc method” (p. 152) “possibly isolated or possibly integrated with other techniques” (p. 150). These techniques though should be understood as being developed and mobilised within the realm described by Latour as the ‘socio-technological’. In this way, and in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I will be grappling with a ‘collective’ of ‘socio-technological’ ‘techniques’ aimed at accommodating tourists and/or managing the TripAdvisor platform by two HPT-related organisations in Edinburgh who prioritise the platform.

In this context then, this ongoing work and management may be thought about as attempts at living with and thriving in a competitive context in which the TripAdvisor platform governs, and in being so conceptualised as attempts at algorithmic navigation. In David Beer’s (2009) article that grapples with power in the age of software sinking into and sorting out aspects of our lives, he makes some suggestions about how scholars might attempt to research algorithms by outlining three layers of analysis. The analysis I pursue in this thesis addresses the third layer -- or rather it is concerned with how the other two layers of analysis that he recommends (those that centre on the platform economics and its operationality) play out in the lives of those who use the platform. As he hypothesised, spotting these ‘generative rules’ was a challenge. While I am in no position to speak to what resistance looks or feels like in the context of TripAdvisor (or geo-pastoral governance more broadly), and thus cannot say with confidence whether or not the touristic organisations which I centre in my analysis are “resist[ing] the impulsions written into the code” (p. 998) of the platform by mobilising strategies meant to prevent the platform from “happening to” them. I can argue that they are indeed attempting to “reflexively play with algorithmic power” (p. 997) in order to maintain their touristic services in time and space. As stated in the first chapter, this endeavour -- which I refer to as ‘algorithmic navigation’ -- is not pursuable through their own inputs of information, but instead through their customers’ informational inputs. In the context of locative media then, it’s not so much about their crafting or “having the right profile” (p. 997), but about how they as an organisation mapped on the platform order a multitude of non-digital and more-than-digital encounters, things, and importantly affects which come to have implications for these profiles. The clusterings of socio-technological techniques which I will describe and grapple with in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will elaborate on these encounters, things, and affects which they attempt to manage, and will be reflected upon further in Chapter 7 before I conclude this thesis.
Chapter 4:  
The Emergence of a Harry Potter Touristic Scene & TripAdvisor as a ‘Social Partner’

The story I will be rendering moving forward about Edinburgh’s HPT ordering and TripAdvisor must be anchored within the time period between early 2018 and mid 2019. This is when I was systematically assembling data for this project and marked one year after when: the UK had celebrated the 20th anniversary of the first HP book being published with a number of high profile events including one in Edinburgh; Visit Scotland decided to leverage its HP film and literary associations for the first time ever; a number of news articles, blog posts, and social media content about Edinburgh as a HP touristic destination began proliferating and being used to participate in self-guided HPT; and when a number of new HP-related services began to emerge within Edinburgh. The proliferation of these new HP-related services not only brought more attention to Edinburgh as a HP touristic destination, but also increased the net size and scope of Edinburgh’s HPT ordering and created a context where visitors now had a number of options at their disposal for observing this relationship between the city and the popular book series.

As noted previously, I conceptualise these happenings as marking the emergence of a HP touristic ‘scene’ (Straw, 2004) within Edinburgh. Together, these associated unfoldings marked an instance where there was a surge in demand for HP related information and touristic services within Edinburgh, as well as when some types of services -- especially HP tours and HP-themed services which aren’t historically unique writing locations -- developed competitive relationships with touristic organisations which had either just emerged or who had decided to start offering similar HP-related services. In this way, I entered the field and began learning about things at a moment when a number of changes were occurring and when many who worked in this domain were in the process of learning how to manage these new dynamics. Within my encounters with cultural-economic actors involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene during this moment it became increasingly clear that TripAdvisor was a key resource for navigating and managing these dynamics, and for maintaining ones’ touristic service in time and space.

In this chapter, I will pick up the story I began rendering in the first chapter. I will do so by focusing our attention on two HP touristic organisations from the four I mentioned in the previous chapter who prioritised locative media platforms over social media platforms during the time I assembled interview data for this project. This includes the Potter Trail tour and a magic-themed escape room organisation called the Department of Magic, which
additionally houses a bar called the Magic Potions Tavern. I am focusing on these two organisations in particular for practical, ethical, and theoretical reasons. In terms of research practice and resulting data, these two organisations were more easily accessible to me through the connections I was making in the field and this enabled me to assemble more data points and as a result quality data about them. Whereas the other two organisations who I learned also prioritise TripAdvisor – including the Balmoral Hotel and the Potter Tour -- were harder to reach, get to know, and thus assemble quality data on.

Related to this, there was also an ethical issue which arose with this second HP literary tour organisation who prioritised TripAdvisor – namely, its owner had been photographically featured in the Vice media article without his consent and it became clear in our interview that this had left him feeling very targeted and vulnerable. As mentioned before, he had been previously mistreated by an extra-local tour company who set up shop in Edinburgh in 2017, and in this way it seemed that he had already been having a tough time even before this article was published and I began this research. He was sceptical of my research intentions at first, and even when he eased up (as I directly addressed his uneasiness in our encounters), he still appeared somewhat anxious in my presence. Additionally when it came to analysing his interview data and figuring out how to include it, I came to recognise that its inclusion would require providing a lot of context that didn’t feel like my place to share, but also didn’t feel productive for the analysis I was pursuing. Importantly though, I also came to recognise that his experience was similar in some noteworthy ways to another newcomer organisation – the Department of Magic escape rooms – and that there was an alternative, more ethical way to include this data without centring him in the ways that these other two organisations felt more comfortable with.

As I began de-centring these two other organisations and more so centring the Potter Trail and the Department of Magic though I also began recognising how their discussions of TripAdvisor could not only illuminate the necessity and uses of TripAdvisor within this context of increased popularity, demand, and competition (related to the development of a HPT scene), but that their discussions also represented two important positionings within the Edinburgh HPT scene -- including ‘pioneers’ and ‘newcomers’. Exploring the platform through such positionings enables us to perceive how algorithmic configurations may generate slightly different felt experiences and working relationships with the same platform. Whereas their both prioritising the platform and developing and mobilising techniques meant to help them manage it can provide useful insight into the complexities associated with exercising agency in a context in which this agency is digitally
entangled and by extension governed by the algorithmic operations of locative media platforms like TripAdvisor.

In what follows, I will highlight how TripAdvisor acted as a ‘social partner’ (Valkonen, 2010) to both the Potter Trail tour and the Department of Magic escape rooms between 2018 and 2019 when a more robust HPT scene began developing. While the former organisation can offer us insight into this ‘socio-technological’ (Latour, 1993; 1999) partnership from a position of being already established, the latter organization provides us insight into this partnership from the position of a newcomer to the HPT scene. Within these two narratives, I will emphasise two qualities of this social partnership with the platform that emerged in my participant’s discussions of the TripAdvisor platform, including it being used as a ‘thinking partner’ and its functioning as a ‘promotional partner’. These qualities are important in that they help me specify what I mean when I discuss the platform as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’ and ‘social partner’, but additionally provides the foundation for understanding this partnership not as a given but as an ongoing accomplishment which requires work on the part of the organisations depicted on the platform. This work and in particular the ‘techniques’ developed and employed by these organisations to maintain this partnership with the platform will be the focus of the two following chapters. In this way, while this first findings chapter is meant to demonstrate what getting the platform working in their favour (and as a ‘social partner’) enabled and made possible during this pivotal moment in the development of Edinburgh’s HPT ordering, the following chapters will more so delve into what exactly had to be done for these partnership qualities to be realisable and utilisable in their pursuit of maintaining their touristic organisations in time and space.

4.1 The Potter Trail Tour: Preservation & Maintenance of Reputation/Ranking

The Potter Trail tour was the first HP-related touristic organisation I attended to during my one year in the field, and is who I additionally came back to near the end in order to conduct a couple more interviews. Here I went on the tours of each individual I interviewed (with the exception of the creator/owner). Within the first five interviews I conducted with this organisation in 2018, I learned how within the last year (2017-2018) they had been making a number of adjustments in terms of their management of the tour service. These adjustments were a direct response to increased demand for their tours, as well as to the emergence of new HP tours of Edinburgh -- and thus their first instances of serious competition.
4.1.1 Managing Demand

In regards to the increase in demand, there was a sense that people from all around the world had suddenly become more aware of Edinburgh's relationship to the HP series. For example, Richard Duffy (current Manager and Tour Guide) noted:

*I mean, the past year, just the amount of people who have known about us and [the] amount of people who will come on the tours has just exploded. I don't know, maybe it was always gonna happen that way, in terms of just like, the way Edinburgh was going, or, I don't know, it just seems like in the past year, Edinburgh has become woke to Harry Potter (laughs), that's all I can really say.*

This 'wokeness' or *increased awareness* of Edinburgh as a HP touristic destination directly impacted their tour. Here they began receiving larger volumes of people showing up for the tour on the days it was being offered. This created a situation where their Tour Guides became responsible for guiding these larger groups around the city and for ensuring that the majority had the best experience they could possibly provide them with. Additionally the administrative load associated with producing the tour increased and they began reorganising how they paid their two managers -- where instead of them getting preference on private tours to work, they actually started getting paid 2.5% each of the total income of the business each month.

It was within this time that they as a group became more aware of the operational issues and challenges associated with performing for and guiding such large tour groups. For example, Olivia Kashti (Tour Guide) noted:

*It was like unmanageable with that big of a group, and I have actually decided that at this point that I actually like smaller groups better anyway, because with a big group, you have to talk really loud, you have to be responsible for a lot of people, you have to make sure everyone hears and is engaged. Whereas a small group is a lot easier. I also find that you don't make, I mean with a big group like, if you get a big group, and they all tip, than you can make like double the money, but like say with a middle to big group, or just a middle sized group, I think that you make the same amount of money really anyway, because people feel more like, if there are loads of people than they will be like oh I didn't need to tip because like lots of people are going to tip, whereas with a smaller group, it's like well there aren't that many people, you feel more responsibility I guess.*

Within my discussions with other Tour Guides, many of them discussed similar dynamics. In this way, these bigger groups were experienced by tour guides as more challenging in a number of ways including in terms of the strain on their voices afterwards, emotional strain
of guiding so many people around and attempting to affectively engage the majority of them with the tour content, but additionally in terms of making a living from this work (which is entirely tip-based for public tours).

In an effort to manage this larger volume of touristic types now aware of and interested in their service, and to try and maintain the relational atmosphere which their reputation had been based on leading up to this shift within the environment, they did two things. First, they started offering more tours each week and assigning two tour guides (sometimes three) to each tour time on days which they came to recognise as busier days. Second, they hired and trained more Tour Guides from their different improv and sketch comedy groups to help them accommodate the increased demand for the tour.

Here, TripAdvisor appears to have acted as a ‘thinking partner’ in working out what needed to be done to be able to maintain the quality of the tour experience. For example, when I asked Becky Price (former Manager, current Tour Guide) about what it’s like engaging with TripAdvisor reviews, she remarked:

*Um, getting feedback always makes you sort of think. I mean if we do ever get [ambiguous] feedback or stuff that we ourselves agree with, like ’it was great but the tour size was a bit big’. [...] Sometimes, reviews say useful stuff about, uh. Like when there are other tour groups in the graveyard, like just making sure you have got like an appropriate amount of distance between them because sometimes they can hear bits of other people’s tours and stuff. So just practical stuff like that, which is all just, very logical and these sorts of things where you think, yeah, yeah, you’ve got a good point, yeah, we will take that on board. Um, and uh, and things like including other facts about historical Edinburgh, like, because some people will be like, ‘oh well my husband came on it and he is not really a massive fan of HP, um he still liked it but ya know, some other stuff would have been good’, and part of you is thinking, well we are a HP tour, so, um, but then the other part is like, well do you know what, actually yeah, because there is other stuff that connects like ya know the whole historical witchcraft thing in Edinburgh that, there is a way of trying to please multiple people at once. [...] We didn’t need to think about some of this stuff in the early days, so it’s like now, sometimes there is more practical stuff that you’ve got to think about.*

Here, we see how a number of more ambiguous reviews received once they started experiencing more demand for their tours helped Becky (but also other members of the tour) think back on their own experiences of conducting tours in this context, and helped them *identify* as well as begin to *re-theorise* the relationship between the various elements which make up an engaging tour. Within this reflecting and re-theorising is where Becky seems to also develop a sense of what might need to be differently orchestrated within this
new ‘woke-to-Edinburgh-as-a-HP-destination’ relational context they found themselves within suddenly.

Additionally, some negative reviews which they received earlier on within their tour’s development came to reify who they thought was right to bring on to help them accommodate this increase in demand for the tour. For example, in my interview with Will Naameh (current Co-Manager and Tour Guide) and when asked whether they’ve had to deal with many negative reviews he noted:

*We are very fortunate, we have never had a bad review [from someone who actually attended the tour] yet. On TripAdvisor for the Potter Trail, the only one star reviews we have ever had was when a guide hasn’t turned up, and that’s, either because of their own miscommunication or because [the tourist-reviewer] was actually waiting in the wrong place, and they couldn’t find Greyfriars Bobby (where the tour takes off from). But um, but that’s why we hire friends, because if you just hire someone they might let you down, but if they are your mate there is extra incentive to be professional.*

Here, we see how negative reviews that accumulated earlier on and before the demand for tours increased were repurposed and used as materials to think through how is best to manage this new touristic context in terms of the human social actors enrolled within their organisation. It is here where we also begin to gain the sense that the navigation of this digitally mediated context requires coordination with those working face-to-face with tourists/possible reviewers, and by extension that the navigation of the platform is a collective effort. Finally, there is also a subtle awareness here that their ordering of the various elements that make up a tour experience have implications for not just the touristic experience, but also their reputation on the TripAdvisor platform.

This subtle awareness was detectable within my interviews with other members of this organisation, and gives me the sense that not only does the platform help them identify and (re)theorise the relationship between the various elements which make up a successful tour performance, but is what additionally helps them theorise the digital platform (technology) in which these testimonies of experiences come to be translated onto itself, and as its apart of this wider collective of things which need to be considered and orchestrated in an effort to maintain their service in time and space. When I say (re)theorise, I don’t necessarily mean in a way that is verbally succinct, but that they have each individually and as an organisation developed an embodied and felt-sense of things over time which gets factored into how they think to navigate unfamiliar situations with these technologies and is evident in what they actually end up doing. In this way, this is a
kind of working-theorisation which informs their working practices, and which I suggest needs to be further prioritized within scholastic research on locative media platforms.

4.1.2 Managing Competition

When I first entered the field is also when the Potter Trail was in the earlier stages of grappling with the emergence of a number of new HP literary tours and their first instances of serious competition. For example, in my interview with Becky Price -- which followed my participating in one of her tours -- I learned about how her tour in particular had been the target of an emerging competitor tour company:

*BP:* You know how I said on the tour, please don't video stuff? That's for a specific reason because um because I have had this unfortunate thing of on my tour about a year ago a girl came on it, and she's, I think it was the Dictaphone or her phone to uh record it and then she essentially ripped off my entire tour and there's now another HP-style uh tour, and they have just copied, and taken all our material and its copy-written and stuff, Richard and Will tried to politely say, you can't just do that, because she was using my jokes and everything, and we were like you can't just do that, like, like there are legal things in place, but they didn't, and they were like 'oh surely you can appreciate a bit of friendly competition', right, well it's not friendly competition, and they were running their -- cause the guy who does the 3 hour long tours, he did his own research, has his own thing, runs separately, so we just mutually respect that we are both catering towards different people, so it's totally fine, but these people, um, took our material, ripped it off, and are charging 15 pounds per person for doing the tour, whereas we do it for free, so it's a just a bit like, you are totally splitting in the face of like everything that we have done. And like I said, when we started it we had to do the painstaking thing of doing a tour in the piss pour rain with 3 people for a 5 pound tip. So, ya know, we did all the hard work of building it up and then they just come along and have gone 15 pound a person, for something that is not even mine, so you are bit like, seriously? [...] And the thing is, it's just kind of weird because for years we were the only HP thing in Edinburgh, and then suddenly its exploded over the last year or so, and there are like four different tours that go now, and the annoying thing is, they all do, walk through the same route as us, they have copied our route as well and they were starting at the same time as us, we had to change our start times because we were all starting at 3pm.

*KB:* So you were running into them in the kirkyard?

*BP:* Constantly! and like, we would be standing in places they wanted to stand in, and they were standing in places we wanted to stand in and it was a nightmare, um, so, yeah, it was just a bit ugly really and it wasn't very pleasant and it must have looked quite weird for people who are on the tours to see like two other harry potter tours going past someone when they were on them and people were like but seriously how many tours are there? and we were like uhhh. So frustrating.
This excerpt not only captures the various types of competitive relationships which the Potter Trail began to develop (including those from bigger tourism firms as well as other local entrepreneurs like themselves), but additionally highlights the dynamics which their organisation began needing to be privy to, such as script plagiarisation and overlapping with these other tours in physical space.

This incident marked a change in how things were being thought about and how they began attempting to navigate these new and varied competitive relationships. For example, all current and previous managers I spoke with noted how they considered getting some of their legal and lawyer-trained friends involved and threatening the company who had plagiarized their script with a ‘cease and desist’ letter (seeing as their script was copyrighted by Stuart initially). However, ultimately they decided against this route of action. Instead they changed their tour time to ensure they wouldn’t be running into these tours within the kirkyard, continued to keep an eye on these new tours both within the city (casually and by going on new tours) as well as via their digital presences and traces. Additionally, they did an audit of sorts of their own organisation’s digital presence and appearance.

Within this audit they decided to commission Alex Harwood, a Graphic Designer friend (also now a Tour Guide) to redesign their website and help them update their logo and visual brand. In my interview with Alex he talked about what considerations went into his redesign of the Potter Trail’s website:

Well like the original design was just like, super ugly, like Web 1.0 kind of thing. And it was just, and it was very much the idea of like sure we could update the website, but I see it is clearly not impacting our business because we are all doing great, so why should we? But then I think there became a point when they were like, no I think it would be good. At the time that we’d updated the website, it was the beginning of these copycat tours [including] the one who ripped off the tour, and the like first version of their website was also like on the same, uh, hosting service that ours is on now, but you can see that they’ve so clearly spent like an afternoon making a sort of, ya know, Bebo, MySpace-y looking, which has just got some thing, and added some things, and had the like HP font, and it just looked so bad. And we were like right well, like it or not they are competing with us now, the website should be better, so, it was nice to sort of take that as a second source of like, this is a crap website, and going, how can we make it better than this? Um, and yeah, just so that when people arrive on your website, cause the Potter Trail, I mean this is the thing, luckily the Potter Trail was super successful and, the first thing that comes up anyway [on Google], so what it was, was just [trying to] guarantee that when people did click, the link sort of looked like a 5 star organization. I feel like, the fact that people could just like steal our script and uh the fact that people can just ya know
set up shop and do an identical HP tour, over night, without any sort of work seemingly, I think that maybe suggests that kind of internet, steal images from Google aesthetic, which doesn't seem very bestowed, so I think one way to emphasise the fact that we are the original, authentic, and hardworking is to have this website where someone has clearly done a lot of original artwork for it, and where it's not just stock images and stuff.

Here we see how the redesign of the website had a number of intentions and how it was in many ways a means of distinguishing themselves from those who had just entered the HP touristic scene. What I find particularly intriguing here is their pursuit of congruence between their website and their TripAdvisor ranking/reputation (“trying to guarantee that when people did click, the link sort of looked like a 5 star organisation”). This was pursued implicitly via the original artwork and design work, but more explicitly by embedding the TripAdvisor ‘Certificate of Excellence’ (which they had been awarded each year since 2016) on their website.

It was within this ‘digital self-audit’ it seems that their TripAdvisor reputation/ranking was re-identified as a very important material in terms of maintaining their touristic service in time and space. For example, in my interview with Richard Duffy within a discussion about the significance of TripAdvisor, he noted: “It’s just a thing of like, we’ve got like a legacy now, [and] I suppose it is like the online presence as well, um, that you can copy, but you can’t start a tour and immediately have 900 reviews, like it’s just impossible”. In this way, their TripAdvisor ranking/reputation came to be understood as something which can’t be plagiarised nor emulated by those just starting up, and thus as a key material in distinguishing themselves from these other tours. Closely related to this, their reputation/ranking on the platform came to be understood as a potential signifier to “dedicated fans” who do their research before/during travel and are looking for the best quality HP literary tour of Edinburgh.

Finally, there was also a sense that this reputation/ranking, as well as their PageRank score/positioning at the top of related Google Search results, would enable them greater visibility and discoverability with this ever-evolving HP touristic scene. For example, in my interview with Olivia Kashti and when I asked her about her understanding of what brings people to their tours, she noted:

We get all different people from all different places, all different situations, which is cool. People from all over the world. I think it just like, I think they just like Google Harry Potter things to do in Edinburgh and we are the first thing that comes up. And that's why when these other tours started popping up, Will said that it's not actually bad because, when people even hear about Harry Potter tours and then they Google it or search on TripAdvisor, we are the first one that comes up, so even if they just heard about it, and
they want to go on a tour, then they will see this one first. So like, that helps as well, even if there are more.

In this way, their service being more established both on TripAdvisor and via their website within Google Search’s system came to be understood as somewhat redemptive digital materials which could help them maintain their place within Edinburgh’s tourism landscape. In addition to being used as a ‘thinking partner’ then, the platform is also conceptualised as a ‘promotional partner’ due to their understanding of how the platform is used in conjunction with other digital services by tourists to design and/or improvise their travel itineraries.

These working-understandings about the platform as a ‘promotional partner’ are important as they help to explain some of what contributed to the platform being taken even more seriously by this organisation over the span of my fieldwork and during when a couple other HP literary tours were added to the net size and scope of Edinburgh’s HPT ordering. For example, in my interviews with tour guides later on (in 2019) many of them were vividly aware of the importance of the Potter Trail’s digitally verifiable reputation in this new context and were doing all they could to uphold this reputation within their individual tour performances. Gemma Flynn (a Tour Guide and Postdoctoral Fellow in Criminology) captured this sentiment I was encountering in my interviews with other Potter Trail tour guides with a familiar metaphor -- that of the panopticon. She noted:

*It's like, this is like an annoying social theory thing, but it's like the uh Foucault self regulating thing, like, where you are just constantly just like okay like yeah we are being surveilled so ya know you've got to think about the worst possible scenario, and mediate yourself within that, right? Just like okay, what's going to be a problem? What do I have to do? Especially now that we've got competition, right, it's like we've got to keep being the best and keep a high standard.*

This excerpt highlights not only the subtle anxiety surrounding operating in this new competitive context, but additionally the anxiety surrounding how missteps on their part have the ability to manifest on the digital platform and come to bear on the tour’s reputation and by extension their visibility/discoverability. But additionally begins to give us a sense of the complex considerations tourist-facing workers think through in their attempting to navigate their tour interactions and maintain the Potter Trail’s privileged position on the platform within this same context.

Finally, this excerpt points to the fact that the partnership which the Potter Trail enjoys with the platform is an ongoing accomplishment. In other words, keeping the
platform working in their favour as a ‘promotional partner’ requires ongoing work. Before I discuss the more specific ‘techniques’ developed and honed by the Potter Trail to preserve and maintain their reputation/ranking on TripAdvisor in Chapter 5 and 6, I want to shift our attention over to another vantage point and positioning within Edinburgh’s HP touristic scene in an effort to describe how HP-touristic services who entered into things later on navigated a competitive context and managed the greater demand associated with Edinburgh becoming better known as a HP touristic destination with TripAdvisor as a ‘social partner’. This other perspective was important to my learning about the platform, because while the Potter Trail offered me invaluable insight initially into the platform as a ‘thinking partner’ and ‘promotional partner’, it was within my interviews with members of the Department of Magic (a magic-themed escape room) where I gained a clearer sense of the how exactly of getting the platform working in their favour. Before I address these issues in another organisational context though, I will first render a story about this organisation’s becoming involved in Edinburgh’s HP touristic scene.

4.2 Department of Magic: Development & Establishment of Reputation/Ranking

The Department of Magic escape rooms were opened in 2018 by Monkey Barrel Comedy club owners John Millar, Ben Verth, and David Bleese. Before they decided to bring their escape room venture into being, the basement-level venue it currently animates was being utilised to host comedy nights and performances which tended to have smaller audiences, while the main venue above it (on the ground floor) was used (and is still used) to host comedy events which tend to attract larger audiences. Between 2015 (when the club first opened) and 2017, both venues were being utilised in these ways regularly, as well as during Edinburgh’s annual Fringe Festival. Monkey Barrel Comedy is one of two main comedy institutions within the city that help to facilitate, produce, and showcase the performances of local and extra-local comedians. During the year, this includes a couple individuals involved with the Potter Trail who perform stand up, improv, and sketch comedy.

Starting in 2017, Will Naameh’s (current Co-Manager of the Potter Trail and a Tour Guide) improv group called the Spontaneous Players decided to expand their performance wheelhouse and began performing improvised HP fanfiction shows (‘Spontaneous Potter’), in addition to their already well-attended improvised Sherlock Holmes show (‘Spontaneous Sherlock’) at the Monkey Barrel. Their bi-monthly improvised HP shows in particular were an instant success and were selling out tickets for Monkey Barrel’s weekday shows consistently.
Spontaneous Potter at the Monkey Barrel Comedy Club, 2017 until present

It was within this time that John Millar (Principle Owner and a big HP fan himself) began noticing how “Potter mad” Edinburgh had become and started playing around with the idea of opening a magic-themed escape room as a means to maintain their Fringe Festival venue infrastructure during the regular year. In my interview with Iain Campbell (one of the Co-Owners and Head of Escape Rooms), he explained:

IC: So comedy in Edinburgh is difficult. Um, Monkey Barrel does very well, um, I don’t think that was the case within the first couple of years, I think, I know it wasn’t, we had to work incredibly hard to keep the doors open. Um, but it’s all about the Fringe. Uh, so, although the figures will look mad now, ya go, we are a comedy club with an escape room downstairs, but wow, the escape rooms are very successful, it’s pretty incredible. Come Fringe time, that turns on its head, more than a couple of times. Suddenly Monkey Barrel is this huge enterprise. I mean we are taking over the two, two floors across the road, just for Fringe, um. Which is amazing, but off the back of that, we’ve had to come up with a business idea for 11 months of the year. We’ve been trying to expand our Fringe footprint for quite some time now. KB: Fringe footprint, what do you mean by that?

IC: Um, so we’ve got two rooms, that’s it, we are one of two legitimate comedy clubs in town. Um, the Fringe is a weird beast, where, there is The Stand and us throughout the year, and then all these Fringe companies come along, give the performance artists and comedians a terrible deal, everyone has a tough time, we have a, we want to be, um, we’ve got a statement, or a manifesto on our website about making it a fairer Fringe, so we take a much lower percentage than anyone else, um, but we’ve only got two rooms, and that makes it really difficult to become, ya know, we also want to succeed as a company. So how can we, how can we all be maximising on this? We need to be taking over more rooms so we can work with more comedians. Um, but yeah, so the only way we found to expand that footprint is we have to buy a building (laughs), which is an incredibly expensive, labour intensive way, which means it has to be profitable for the next 11 months.
Here, we see how becoming involved with Edinburgh’s HPT scene via opening a magic-themed escape room provided Monkey Barrel Comedy with a means to expand their “Fringe footprint”. This doing so enables them to compete with big, extra-local Fringe companies when it comes to working with and providing more equitable contracts to comedians during the festival, as well as in terms of populating these performances and hosting visitors of the city during this time. Additionally though, their doing so enables them to provide a “second job” and source of income to some of the local comedy performers they showcase. In this way, we also begin to see how entangled Edinburgh’s comedy scene is with its touristic landscape and in particular its HPT scene. This direction made sense to their team given their all being HP fans, hosting ‘Spontaneous Potter’ improv shows, but additionally because one of their team members and now a Co-Owner -- Iain Campbell -- had worked in escape rooms within Edinburgh previously and had a sense of what had and hadn’t been done previously. They also had the sense that they would be able to draw from their pool of local comedians whose shows they host and who are often looking for part-time work to sustain themselves between gigs as potential employees (or what are referred to as Games Masters). After some deliberation, they decided to begin the process of transforming the “dingy” two-room basement space into a magical escape room (called ‘Prophecies Quest’) and bar (called the ‘Magic Potions Tavern’). They did this with the help of one of the set dresser’s from the television series Outlander with the hopes of making the latter space into a place which people would want to stay and hang out in before and/or after their escape room experience. It is here where visitors can order potion cocktails (which they mix themselves), butter-flavoured beer, and treats inspired by the HP canon material. Additionally, and later on they acquired a second space close by which they transformed into a second escape room (called ‘Dark Lord Resurrection’).

*The Department of Magic Escape Rooms & Magic Potions Tavern, 2018 until present*
The Department of Magic was one of the last HP-related touristic organisations I attended to during my time in the field (2019). When I began interviewing individuals from this organisation is when they as an organisation were celebrating their one-year anniversary and when they were finally feeling a bit more anchored. However, due to their entering into the escape room market after a number of more established escape room organisations began assembling magic-themed escape rooms, they were still very much feeling the pressure to further solidify their place within the escape room market and HPT scene. Central to this pursuit was getting TripAdvisor working in their favour as a ‘promotional partner’.

4.2.1 Managing Competition & Demand

Seeing as this organisation entered into things once other local organisations had already begun offering magic-themed escape rooms, awareness of their competition was something they pursued from the very start as a means to try and distinguish themselves from these other escape room experiences. As mentioned previously, part of this awareness was made possible through the lived experiences of Iain Campbell who had worked in escape rooms within Edinburgh previously. For example, in our interview, Iain explained:

So when I use to work in escape rooms, that's how I learned to compare. You've got an audience of 5 people for an hour, 5 times a day, how are you going to put yourself into the role of [Games Master], so you've got, so we've got actors and comedians who thoroughly embed themselves within the role, if you are trying to make a potion, they go (tone change) "careful that's going explode!" and that's amazing for the customers. Um, cause you don't get that anywhere else. You don't get that. Because escape rooms are typically built by nerds who are not outgoing people. [...] [Whereas we employ] live performers, who all want to have an affect, and to engage an audience. Um. When I worked at the last escape room, I think that I was the only person there who felt like that, everyone else goes, here's your briefing, in you go, make fun of them on the headphones, and all that kind of stuff. Whereas I was putting on voices, I was, and it's like, well no wonder you hate your job, you don't want to be here. Um, so, coming from that background to managing this place, like I am always trying to find other people who, who want to engage with their [escape room] teams. Another thing, it makes your day go faster, ya know, you are going to need to work, you want to be focusing and you want to enjoy it, because then you leave happy, and everybody wins, I think.
Here, we see how Iain’s past experiences of working in escape rooms gives him an awareness of the kind of experience typically encountered by customers in their interactions with the Games Master, but additionally an awareness of how managing the customer encounter differently can enhance that experience. In this way his past experiences inform his working-theorisation of the escape room customer experience and in particular his identifying and thinking through what needs to be done or to happen for this to be a reality within their own establishment. In this case, these theorisations based on previous experiences of working in this domain informs the criteria used when hiring Games Masters to facilitate the experiences of visitors in their escape rooms with the hope that this will help them distinguish themselves from their competition.

Awareness of their competition was also pursued through engaging with these other magic-themed escape rooms as customers. For example, Iain mentioned in our interview how he had visited and played both magic-themed escape rooms in Edinburgh, and how his doing so informed his sense of how exactly he wanted to elevate the customer experience at the Department of Magic:

There are some other places that just think you don’t care about their rooms, so there is, there are other, well, I won’t talk about other escape rooms. But when we built ours, we, we knew early on we couldn’t have any padlocks, this can’t be “find a combination for a lock, unlock it, that gives you a combination for the next padlock”, um, because in [the canon materials], there are spells that undue padlocks, so why wouldn’t, that’s what you want to be doing in a [magical] escape room, you want to be using magic. So the whole concept of the rooms are, there are no locks, it’s all, it still a puzzle, there is still riddles, but [the Games Masters] are encouraging you not to think about, ya know, the physicality of our possible world, what would this be in [the canon materials]. Ya know, we give you an hour in the [HP] books, rather than a puzzle room with a HP hat on it.

Here, we see how his experience as a customer of these other escape rooms informed his evaluation that they needed to elevate their room beyond being an escape room “with a HP hat on”. This experience then also informed his sense that they needed to get creative and allow themselves to be inspired by the HP canon and ultimately to integrate this into the design of the room and the customer experience, and thus how they train Games Masters to facilitate team thinking beyond the physicality of the room itself. In this case, these working-theorisations about the rooms importance to the customer experience were based on previous experiences of engaging with their competitors’ escape rooms and ultimately informed the design of their own escape room, the customer experience, and by
extension how they train their staff to manage both with the hopes that this will help them distinguish themselves from their competitors.

Finally, awareness of their competition was also pursued by familiarising themselves with their social and locative media presences. This was evident in the knowledge Iain often demonstrated about what their competitors were doing online and of their broader customer experiences (which would be hard to obtain without surveying their competitors’ customers themselves). This awareness by Iain reminded me of my interview with another HP tour organisation/Tour Guide who had entered into things later on and where in our interview -- and after he had demonstrated a similar awareness of his competition’s customer experience -- I had asked him if he had been on his competitor’s tours and learned these things there, to which he responded that he hadn’t, but that he had gone on their TripAdvisor ‘place page’ to try and “work out” what they were “doing poorly” and which he could try to “improve upon”. This subtle awareness of their competitor’s TripAdvisor customer reviews by Iain suggests then that similarly to this other individual I interviewed (who’s organisation occupies a similar positionality within the HPT scene) that initially TripAdvisor acted as a market research ‘thinking partner’. By this I mean that it helped them gain an awareness of who exactly they were up against, how these other organisations were being evaluated by their customers, and who they maybe wanted to investigate further (via engaging with the escape rooms as customers).

However, ultimately TripAdvisor was identified by Iain as most explicitly useful to their team due to it being the “most frequent way of finding out from customers as to what they find, or what they think of [the escape room] experience” that they, themselves, offer and facilitate. For example, when they first opened and were testing out all of these ideas and, in particular, their execution of these ideas, they used customer reviews to tune into the customer experience and ultimately used what they found to reorganise that experience based on this feedback. Iain explained:

*Um, so when we first opened, uh, we have been through quite a bit of change, this one here in particular, Prophecies Quest. When we first opened Prophecies Quest, it was, we didn’t really plan on opening an escape room, we wanted to do a, an experience, was the, it’s a term used a lot in all of our marketing stuff -- this is not just uh, a puzzle you are doing, it’s an experience. So when we first started, the game started in the tavern, there was a board game they had to complete, uh, and then you moved into the hallway, and you did a puzzle in there, and then you went through the four chambers in the room, and each, each section was timed. And the idea was that you would try and collect clues and things a long the way. And then by the end, you’d be able to solve the uh case thing. Um, the, the initial reviews that we got from that were absolutely terrible, uh people did not like*
it one bit. They wanted an escape room experience, so we billed it as 'like an escape room experience'. So escape room people came down and they can be quite cruel (laughs). Escape room people, they know what they like um, so we had some potter fans, they love us, think it's amazing, and escape room fans come down and are quite uh, pernickety about certain things, but we, we listened, we heard, we thought okay, that's not good, this needs to be more of an official escape room. So they were upset that we didn't have timers, so we had wanted to make it feel like you weren't up against a clock, that this was just, a thing you were going through. Um, so we had to put clocks up, because people wanted that, uh, so you get the full time in the final room, all that starts through here (pointing to space we are in -- the tavern-- and hallway), basically had to get binned. Uh, because people weren't engaging with it, they didn't think it was fun. Well, they felt like we were probably trying to uh con them or something -- make it look like a tourist trap, but genuinely we wanted it to feel like, it was more open and free, but people don't like that, people want, they want the door closing behind them, the experience of being -- so we did a lot of work in there to turn it into uh, more of a classic escape room experience, which it is now!

This excerpt highlights how TripAdvisor helped them become aware of the various types of people seeking out their HP touristic service, and especially their expectations and evaluations of that experience. In particular, we see how negative customer reviews which emerged when they first opened from “escape room people" were part and parcel of the redesign of the escape room itself, the rewriting of the Games Masters' scripts and reworking of their facilitation of this experience. Here it also becomes clear how the escape room experiential offerings already in existence within Edinburgh (and beyond) come to shape the evaluation of their experiential offering via the expectations of those who have played many escape rooms and “know what they like", and thus how their competitors’ experiential offerings come to set some limitations on their ability to innovate while also trying to stay digitally and financially afloat.

Due to their being “incredibly popular" when they first opened (associated with greater awareness of Edinburgh as a HPT destination and the local press attention they received), this “initial turn around” or re-ordering of the escape room experience required that these changes be made between 11pm (when they closed) and 8am (when prep for the day begins). In this way, these changes required “late nights coming in and staying up through the middle of the night”. Ultimately, these changes were made to try and ensure that their experiential offering would appeal to and be enjoyable to both "escape room people" and “Harry Potter people" alike, and thus succeed in the escape room market and within the HPT scene. Here, TripAdvisor acted as a ‘thinking partner’ in identifying and getting to know who exactly is interested in their experiential offering (their audience) and working out what needed to be done to try and better accommodate them in order to
establish their venue in time and space.

After this initial re-ordering, the reviews which emerged on the Department of Magic’s TripAdvisor ‘place page’ began to improve, which according to Iain helped them gain the sense that they were finally on the right track. In this context, the ambiguous reviews that accumulated were more so used as a means to further hone the escape rooms and the customer experience for these two main groups they were accommodating. For example, Iain noted:

Now there has been lots of changes and tweaks and things done, um, to make the puzzles more uh engaging and ultimately you want a puzzle that can be solved without any Games Master help. Um, we are, we have now done that, I think, uh, we’ve tweaked everything we possibly can, because you can do all the testing you want, um, but you kinda need like 1000 people to play the game before you get an idea of what your, on average, 20% of people come up to this puzzle and do the wrong thing every time. So now we need to make sure this is more clearly labelled, but if you clearly label it, now this other percentage do it way too quickly! So what’s the balance of doing it? [...] Um, so, you need to find a way of making accessible, interesting, and engaging without being too complex, without giving too much freedom. [So our rooms and experience are] continually upgraded, and we do a lot of our adjusting based on, basically the reviews that we are getting. If something is said more than once, we are pretty good at listening to that and changing it.

Here, we see how once they had established their overarching escape room architecture and formula, how ambiguous TripAdvisor reviews assisted their team and enabled them to reflect on their experiences of facilitating the escape room experience that didn’t go as smoothly. Doing so helps them identify as well as begin to re-theorise the relationship between the various elements which make up an enjoyable experience for both groups which they accommodate. It is within this routine reflecting and re-theorising of the customer experience with the help of the platform where their team is able to develop a more coherent sense of what may need to be differently orchestrated in order to differently and/or better affect the experiences of one group, while still maintaining the proper balance which contributes to the good experience for the other group they accommodate.

Their being able to maintain this delicate balance in terms of the design of the escape room itself and its facilitation by a Games Master is understood as key to their ability to deliver an affectively compelling customer experience overall, but additionally is understood as important to getting TripAdvisor working in their favour. For example, Iain noted:
Uh, the most important thing for marketing our business is TripAdvisor -- it brings us in the most customers. It's, if I went to a new city, I don't tweet things to do, I do, TripAdvisor! What are the top 10 restaurants, what are the top 10 places to go, um, so we know the power of it! We are, for Monkey Barrel, we are number one on TripAdvisor for uh venues and concerts, I think, and once that happened, there was a bit of a tipping point for the business. We are number 10 for this room, but it's tricky because the escape room market is solid, we are competing against escape rooms that have been open for 5 years, uh, who have got (tone change -- advertising voice) 1,000 reviews. Um, so we've, so we really emphasise that to customers, so we have cards, Games Masters write their names down, please leave us a review, um, that is, that is vital in making us successful. Um, which is brilliant because it keeps us on our toes. And I mean, it's a very direct link to, to all the feedback that we are getting. So it benefits everyone -- people, we see the same complaint come up more than, well, if it comes up once we address it, but if it comes up a couple times we are really all over it. Like this cannot happen. We literally cannot afford to have 3-4 star reviews, it needs to be 5 every time. Um, so we are set on having 5 star reviews, so.

This excerpt highlights not only how TripAdvisor is conceptualized as a 'promotional partner' by the Department of Magic team, but additionally gives us a sense of the subtle anxious energy and pressure which surrounds their pursuit of developing a reputation/ranking on this locative media platform when their competitors are more established. Similarly to the Potter Trail interview excerpt I concluded the previous section with, we also gain the sense that getting the platform working in their favour is an ongoing accomplishment. However, we additionally begin to gain a clearer sense of how exactly this endeavour is pursued within their working practices. Namely, this excerpt highlights how it is pursued by both prompting their customers for reviews and engaging with and using negative or ambiguous reviews to rethink and re-order their service delivery. Finally, and closely related to this, we start to gain the sense that getting the platform working in their favour -- or what we can begin to think about as 'algorithmic navigation' -- by touristic organisations is a more-than-digital endeavour.

4.3 TripAdvisor as a ‘Thinking’ & ‘Promotional’ Partner

In this chapter, I have highlighted how TripAdvisor acted as a 'social partner' to two HP touristic organisations between 2018 and 2019. In particular, I have described how the platform helped these organisations navigate and manage the dynamics associated with Edinburgh becoming better known as a HP touristic destination, including increased demand from tourists and competition from other cultural-economic actors who came to assemble the city’s HPT scene. Within these two narratives, I emphasised two qualities of
this socio-technological partnership with the platform that emerged in my participant’s discussions, including it being used as a ‘thinking partner’ and it acting as a ‘promotional partner’. In regards to the latter partnership quality -- that of being a ‘promotional partner’ -- this can begin to be thought about as the why of becoming involved with the platform, or the hopeful feelings invested into their engagement with the platform. Whereas, with the former partnership quality -- that of being a ‘thinking partner’-- this can begin to be thought about as one of the how’s of maintaining this promotional partnership with the platform.

However, importantly there are other how’s of maintaining this partnership with the platform which need to be described and highlighted which help us understand the platform as being usable in the first place as a ‘thinking partner’. For example, HP-related venues which didn’t prompt their customers for reviews had a much different experience of the platform. While these organisations similarly used the platform as an occasional ‘thinking partner’ for diagnosing more serious operational dysfunctions, much of the time they found the largely negative character of the reviews which had accumulated on their associated ‘place pages’ to be difficult to deal with and appeared to have to engage in more intense personal, emotion management processes before they found ways to decode what they were coming across and engage with the platform as a ‘thinking partner’. Whereas organisations which prompted for reviews had more positive reviews to balance negative reviews with. This balance of positive reviews though isn’t just what enables them to use the platform more intuitively as a ‘thinking partner’, but is additionally what helps the platform function as their ‘promotional partner’. On the other hand, organisations which didn’t prompt for reviews, didn’t tend to conceptualise the platform as a reliable ‘promotional partner’, and instead relied largely on Facebook (decreasingly so) and Instagram (increasingly so) for their promotional pursuits and everyday communications with their audience/customer base.

In the next two chapters, I will delve into how exactly organisations which prioritise the platform and have developed organisation strategies for managing their relationship with TripAdvisor do this, and get the platform working in their favour. Here my evaluation of their getting the platform working in their favour -- and thus my attunement to the ‘techniques’ which appear to be contributing to this -- is based both on their conceptualisation of things, what I observed them to be doing in practice, but is additionally evident in their high ranking on the platform and in particular their both being recipients of TripAdvisor’s ‘Travellers’ Choice’ awards (formerly known as the ‘Certificate of Excellence’) which is algorithmically awarded to touristic organisations who have
received consistently high customer ratings over the span of their tenure on the platform\textsuperscript{25}. It is this ability to learn first hand from individuals apart of these organisations about these approaches to the platform and observe how affective these techniques are on the platform itself which enables me to speak to the \textit{affectivity} of these techniques to their getting the platform working in their favour. A capacity which is both mundane (as evidenced by the use of these platforms as market research ‘thinking partners’) and makes my ethical compass a bit weary at times.

\textsuperscript{25} TripAdvisor’s ‘Travellers’ Choice’ Award
Chapter 5:
Facilitating Harry Potter Touristic Experiences & Prompting for TripAdvisor Reviews

In this chapter, I will attend to the first clustering of socio-technological ‘techniques’ developed and mobilised by two organisations which comprise Edinburgh’s HPT scene in an effort to manage the TripAdvisor platform. Here, I conceptualise ‘techniques’ as “any skill or ability” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 151) or “ad hoc method” (p. 152) for managing the HP touristic experience and/or the locative media platform. This first clustering of techniques is concerned with providing tourists with a memorable and “good experience”, as well as attempting to translate the affects generated within their encounters with tourists onto the platform. Important here, this pursuit of providing tourists with a good and memorable experience by tourist-facing workers isn’t done solely for their organisations reputation/ranking, but it is a necessary precondition to their attempting to translate these affects onto the platform. In this way, it is more so this latter facet of the encounter which is specifically aimed at the platform itself.

However, I will first discuss this coordination of the HP touristic experience on the part of tourist-facing workers within Edinburgh in an effort to highlight the work that comes before and which sometimes will be edited and honed based, in part, on the content that emerges on the platform. Doing so additionally enables me to demonstrate how touristic work is a ‘collective’ of tasks which exceeds scholastic accounts that position it as mostly human-oriented work. Such an understanding is important for appreciating the complexity of this work and by extension the complexity of getting the platform working in their favour. Here, I will draw mostly on my interviews with Tour Guides from the Potter Trail and Games Masters who work at the Department of Magic to describe how this endeavour of providing a “good experience” and getting the platform working as a ‘social partner’ is pursued in practice by tourist-facing workers.

5.1 Attempting to Transform the Tourist through the Experience of the HP Service

In Jonathan R. Wynn’s (2011) sociological work on tour guides working within New York City’s vast tourism landscape, he depicts them as “educators and cultural translators”(p. 2), and as “offering a sort of magical urbanism” (p. 7) via using the “vast, heritable genome of physical artefacts, slogans, typifications, and catch phrases” (p. 7) or ‘collective representations’ to alter a city’s fabric. In their doing so, Wynn contends that they may be conceptualized as ‘urban alchemists’ which use “the free matter, the hidden
and supplementary cultural goods produced by the city and refashion them into something significant for the metropolis and for themselves” (p. 8). What I appreciate about this conceptualisation is its attention to the ways in which this work is embedded in, uses, and makes the environment in which it takes place, and in being so how it is intimately entangled with a whole world of urban objects and cultural materials, in addition to people (both visitors and residents).

This is certainly the case for the work of the HP literary Tour Guide’ and to a certain extent for the magic-themed Games Master. For example, the Potter Trail educates visitors about JKR’s life in Edinburgh mostly between 1993 and 2001 and the various experiences and places here that were relevant to and/or inspired her writing of the first five HP books, as well as her completing of the seventh and final book in 2007. This is done via guiding visitors around Edinburgh’s Old Town and highlighting (via storytelling) some of the public, physical manifestations within the city relevant to these real life and fictional trajectories. Whereas, the Department of Magic provides visitors with an hour inside an escape room reminiscent of the settings and situations the main characters of the HP books came in contact with. They do this by drawing on some of the themes and aesthetics of the HP universe, but importantly they also localise these themes and aesthetics by depicting Edinburgh specific HPT objects (such as Thomas Riddell’s grave) in their escape rooms. In this way, both the work of the Potter Trail Tour Guide and the Department of Magic Games Master utilises the cultural material objects and history of the city and refashion them into something significant for the city, its visitors, and for themselves.

Thus the pursuit of the Potter Trail to “transform their participants through the experience of the walking tour” (Wynn, 2011, p. 159) and the pursuit of the Department of Magic to do the same, but through the experience of the escape room, is not merely human-oriented work but a ‘collective’ of tasks which involves humans, but also the management of non-humans and more-than-humans. This ‘collective of tasks’ became apparent within my participants' discussion of the responsibilities and goals of their work, as well as what makes their work more challenging versus easier. It was within these discussions where the bundlings of skills and methods important to this work were revealed and where I became able to trace these within touristic encounters during my field work. These techniques for managing the touristic encounter had been learned over time and as a by-product of their facilitating these experiences with a diverse array of touristic “types”, and are developed and mobilised in an effort to smooth the encounter and provide a “good time”.

But what does it mean to provide a “good experience” or “good time” within the setting of the city and within the setting of the escape room? Such an understanding on our part is important because it is exactly these types of subjective evaluations of the work of Tour Guides and Games Masters by tourists, which when translated online, come to shape the visibility and discoverability of the touristic organisations they work for and represent. In what follows, I will detail what providing a good experience means and what it entails according to the tourist-facing workers I interviewed.

5.1.1 Assembling a “Good Experience”

5.1.1.1 The Potter Trail Tour

In the case of the Potter Trail tour guide, assembling a “good time” means providing tour participants with an experience of the city which is both educational and entertaining, and which ultimately helps them locate and appreciate the HP literary touristic objects embedded within Edinburgh’s Old Town. In terms of educating and entertaining -- or what many tour guides refer to as “info-tainment” -- this involves making the tour script “[their] own” by elaborating on tour content which relates to their own areas of interest or expertise, as well as creating their own jokes. During my interview with Alex Harwood, he noted how it was only overtime and based on in-person audience feedback that he came to realise the proper balance of informational content and humour to assembling an engaging and enjoyable experience. In this way, info-tainment not only requires making the script one’s own, but also tuning into and feeling out their audience and sometimes improvising parts of their tour based on the response of tour participants. Closely related to this balance, Gemma Flynn spoke about the importance of really emphasising what is fact and what is fiction within her tour delivery. She does this to ensure that her tour performance represents these literary connections truthfully and in a way that promotes engaging with the city in a respectful and conscientious way. In her case then, this balance between education and entertainment is pursued not only for their tour participants, but also for the other inhabitants of the city.

In terms of fostering an appreciation of the relationship between the city and the book series, this involves weaving in imagery from the books and highlighting some of these features within the landscape. In doing so, Tour Guides attempt to position the city itself as a character in the imaginations of their tour takers. In the case of Charlie Hindley -- who takes this facet of the tour experience especially seriously -- he discussed the importance of getting into character himself and becoming a “conduit” for something much bigger than himself in order to add local “texture and colour” to a fictional world which
means so much to so many. This requires infusing his tour performances with emotional energy, passion, and care. He emphasised how as he is transporting himself to work how he will begin getting himself into a particular mind-set and how putting on his cloak after he locks up his bike and walks to the starting point of the tour is important to his transition into his role as Tour Guide.

While Charlie tends to maintain a high level of energy and passion throughout, other tour guides like Alex Harwood spoke about how he will always start the tour out on a “high note” (energetic and passionate), but how he will also adjust throughout and based on the feedback he is sensing from his audience. Within this discussion, he spoke about the importance of not trying to “push people” out of their “emotional comfort zones” and working with whatever they give back throughout. While there are a number of things which contribute to these differences in emotional approach, it seems that those who maintain higher levels of energy throughout are generally aiming their tours at the children in attendance whereas those who take the latter approach certainly aim parts of their tour performance and activities at children but more often appeared to be aiming their tours at the adults in attendance.

Also related to fostering an appreciation between the city and the book series, Charlie spoke about the importance of attending to their tour participants themselves in such a manner that acknowledges that some come to these books through “personal experience and emotional vulnerability”. This was something that Becky Price had also spoken about in our interview (earlier on), and is pursued more practically by both her and Charlie by making themselves available right before the tour starts. Both do this in order to begin developing a feel for their audience, but also to ensure that they are available for anyone in attendance with mobility concerns or any kind of disability (and who is comfortable making their concerns known to them). Charlie in particular spoke about how this helps him manage the pacing and rhythm of his tour. Here he applies the essentials of improv comedy -- eye contact, listening, and flexibility -- to his interactions with participants before the tour even takes off and in order to try and make his tour as accessible as he can.

After participating in many HP and non-HP tours during my fieldwork, I can say with much confidence that the various HP tours in Edinburgh -- especially the Potter Trail tours -- are more diverse in terms of nationality, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexuality, class, and ability comparatively to most other non-HP tours (ghost tours are a close second though). This demographic composition of their audience wasn’t often spoken about directly by tour guides, however I noticed that it seemed to be implied within their pursuit of
making their tours a “nerd safe space” (as Charlotte Leandri referred to it). This pursuit involved staying attuned to their audiences throughout and adjusting their performances to make sure their tours were legible and relevant to diverse peoples. For example, both Alex and Charlotte spoke about how when they notice that families on the tour are translating the tour to their family members or friends that they will rethink how they are presenting things and attempt to say things more simply so that it can be more easily translated. In some cases this means dropping some of their jokes from their tour delivery. These instances also made them realise the importance of their “verbal pacing” and “diction” in terms of making the tours as accessible as they can.

Additionally, Charlotte spoke about the importance of some of their tour content to her emphasizing a message akin to “girl power” and how she always tries to aim her delivery of this part of the tour at the diverse composition of female-identifying individuals in attendance. The tour stop she was making reference to in our interview is where they use a road overpass/tunnel and area near Edinburgh University called ‘Potter Row’ as a visual point of reference to discuss: when and where exactly JKR came up with the idea for the name of her young male protagonist (which was before she moved to Edinburgh); how JKR has discussed her experience of being a single mother and her experience of depression when she first moved to Edinburgh in 1993 (and how these experiences inspired her creation of ‘Dementors’ i.e. soul-sucking, magical creatures); the career route JKR was pursuing (with the help of the University of Edinburgh) before the HP books were picked up by Bloomsbury in 1997; and finally how the author was asked by the publisher to modify her pen name in order to appeal to the target audience that they had in mind (which was young boys), but how it was actually the young daughter of a Bloomsbury executive who’s love of the first couple of chapters of the manuscript led to JKR being signed by the publisher. This stop thus takes on a number of gendered issues within JKR’s life and is where Charlotte -- as well as the other female-identifying guides interviewed -- tended to infuse noticeable feminist enthusiasm into their tour performances in an effort to make their tours a “nerd safe space” and foster an appreciation between the city and the book series.

When I attended one of Charlie’s tour’s later on in 2020 (right before the second lockdown of the pandemic and after when JKR had made her problematic views about sex, gender, and the transgender experience explicit within her Twitter activity and around the time the BLM movement had begun to really take off), he appeared to be experimenting with his management of this stop. For example, he was still telling these gender-related stories about the author like he had before, but at the end he paused for a
moment, and then thoughtfully and in a somewhat humorous tone noted how “clearly the author has a very, very complicated relationship with gender” before beginning to direct us onto the next stop. This bit of patter garnered an uncomfortable but also appreciated laugh from the diverse, physically distanced, and mostly local tour audience. These efforts within their tour -- as well as their now donating a portion of their total tour income to the Scottish Trans Alliance -- demonstrates how making a “nerd safe space” in their effort to foster an appreciation of the city’s connection to the book series is a complex and ever evolving endeavour which requires taking on (to a certain extent) the author’s disappointing and uncomfortable cultural trajectory -- what ethnographer Sharon Macdonald (2008) refers to as place’s ‘difficult heritage’ -- in their creating a relational space and tour which localises and celebrates the books. In sum, it appears that tour guides attempt to foster an appreciation between the book series and the city through both energetic and passionate delivery of the tour content, as well as through culturally conscientious and even caring engagement with the diverse composition of tour participants in attendance.

Importantly, their pursuit of “info-tainment” and fostering an appreciation between the HP book series and the city is all done while also attempting to navigate and guide tour participants through Edinburgh’s bustling Old Town in both good and bad weather. For these reasons, a number of guides emphasized the importance of “crowd management” to their work. What this means is attempting to bond together their groups into a “temporary community of HP enthusiasts”, but also attempting to “get them on [their] side”. What this latter aspect means is attempting to garner respect so that tour participants will be engaged with the tour content as it progresses, but additionally and maybe more practically so that tour participants will trust and listen to them when they are navigating the unexpectedness of the city once they leave the quieter Kirkyard (where the tour begins). Here, Alex and Charlotte both emphasized the importance of facilitating activities at the beginning of their tours which make tour goers aware of one another (such as a “who travelled the furthest” game where people raise their hands when their portion of the world is named), as well as using cute similes and metaphors to communicate to tour-takers what they need them to do together at different points within the tour (such as asking their tour group to “huddle together like penguins” when they stop on the city’s sidewalks). In this way, tour guides balance being both “commanding” and soft in order to manage their tour groups and safely guide them around the city.

This work, many noted, was what enabled them to provide a “good time” even when the weather was trying and/or when the social atmosphere of the city was felt to be more hostile to their tour. In this way, both the natural and social atmosphere of the city is
perceived by tour guides as potential obstacles to their pursuit of fostering an appreciation between the city and the book series, as well as assembling a “nerd safe space”. Due to this perception, many of them had developed and honed a number of techniques meant to manage both.

In terms of the weather, its dynamics were acknowledged by every single one of the HP and non-HP tour guides I interviewed. However, it wasn’t until my interview with Alex that I began appreciating its relevance to what they referred to as “crowd management”. For example he noted:

*I think the weather helps a huge amount. Um, the, it can help in like a weird way as well because sometimes if it’s a really miserable day, but people, because it’s a free tour, people aren’t obligated to come, so the only reason they have stayed is because they want to do it, so normally we say like on a really horrible windy, rainy day, we will be like "only the true fans come out on days like this", and that’s a good way of making people feel like yeah, I guess we wouldn’t be here unless we liked it, so, it’s kind of self selecting in that way. Um, but then obviously on like a nice day like [today’s tour], everyone is in a great mood.*

Here it starts to become evident how the weather also becomes a character of sorts that accompanies them on the tour. When the weather is especially windy and rainy, it is imagined by tour guides as having the capacity to put a damper on the mood and energy of their tour group, and because of this and their wanting to assemble an enjoyable experience for tour takers, they have developed a number of techniques to manage it throughout the tour. As Alex notes, at the beginning of his tour this might include expressing admiration for the tour group as he is walking up to them by mentioning how it is only the “true fans” who come out on days like these. By doing so he is attempting to lift their moods and bond them together as a group through speech in an effort to neutralise the bad weather’s impact on their enjoyment of the tour. Whereas on nice weather days, the sunshine appears to free Alex of having to engage in this same kind of work right off the bat.

Alex also noted how on rainy days he will perform a “more functional, not soulless, but not over the top” tour as a means to “not drag out” how long he is subjecting tour-takers to the natural elements. He emphasised the importance of this to keeping the energy up on the part of his tour takers, but also importantly in regards to himself. For example, he expressed how he too is affected by the weather and how if he is already in a less than ideal headspace how the rain and wind can make it harder to conjure up the emotional energy he typically exudes and uses to keep people engaged throughout. In this
way, it appears that this strategy is also aimed at managing his own weather affected mood, feelings, and dispositions. Meaning that it is both his own feelings and the feelings of his tour participants which are considered and which he attempts to manage in his reconfiguration of the tour on rainy and windy days.

A couple weeks after my interview with Alex, I attended Charlie’s tour on one of these “miserable days”. Here I observed how the rain and wind not only required more work in terms of verbally expressing admiration for the tour group early on and often, but additionally how Charlie adjusted his tour route ever so slightly. Doing so required significant improvisation not only in terms of where he led and had us stand (under nearby trees, coverings, and underpasses) but also in terms of his delivery of the tour content. For example, after the ‘Potter row’ stop (which I discussed earlier) where he had the group huddle under a tree, he explained how to keep them as dry as possible, how he was going to lead them over to and under a sky bridge to the left next instead of to the right and near Spoon Cafe (or what was once Nicolsons Cafe) next. After explaining this and as his body language was communicating to us that we were soon going to be on the move again, he assembled a detailed and colourful description of the building (and especially the features he would be drawing attention to next) and encouraged us to try to “catch a glance” of the building on our way to the next covered area. In this way, the weather also required that he engage in more verbal priming between stops and that he conjure up thick description of the physical features relevant to the tour in hopes that this could make up for the lack of interfacing us directly with the building itself -- and as it is perceived to be part and parcel of assembling a good experience for tour participants.

In terms of the social atmosphere of the city, this was also discussed in the majority of my interviews with HP and non-HP tour guides, as well as was something I began attuning myself to and taking notes on while participating in these tours. However, again, it wasn’t until I interviewed Alex that I was able to more fully appreciate its relevance to their work. For example, he noted how another thing that sometimes makes HP tour guiding hard is the “vibe of the city”. To illustrate this point he described to me what it was like facilitating these tours on St. Patrick’s Day weekend (a couple months prior). He explained:

_There was just this like, um, what’s the word, like this sort of macho-frightening electricity around the city, and like, it’s that feeling where like you can feel that there are like massive groups of drunk people, lurking out of sight, they are there, and so everyone is kind of like tense, ya know, there was like an animal near by that like. And we did a couple of tours like that, and everyone was on, like ready for something to happen, like you are ready for a confrontation almost. Not in a direct way, but it’s really, everyone_
is like tapping into this like thing of like, lads, lads, lads. It's always them, ya know, you might get like a drunk hen party but they are never going to like harass you in the same way that a group of lads is going to just feel like they have the right to interrupt your tour, and especially maybe because I'm very small, and I'm not like this commanding, I think Charlie is the only sort of like, ya know, identifiably, sort of like masculine entity on the tour, and even he is super, like an impish nature to him, everyone else is sort of, not like that.

Here, we gain a sense of how not only the weather but also the social or relational atmosphere of the city comes to shape the moods, feelings, and dispositions of both the tour guide and the participants they are guiding around. This is not only something which makes up the broader setting the tour exists within, but as Alex notes can more directly impede on their facilitation of the tour. All tour guides for example, noted how it was always groups of white heterosexual men and often times intoxicated white heterosexual men who gave them the most trouble. In most cases, this involved heckling from afar but in rare, more severe cases involved verbal confrontation and physical intimidation. These types of experiences by both male-identifying and female-identifying tour guides has inspired their development of a number of techniques meant to manage these instances.

For example, when I asked Alex how he attempted to manage this situation, he noted how he tried to be as “forthright” as possible at the beginning of this tour about the fact that it goes through the city and how he joked about how “as gentile and quaint as Edinburgh seems, it is full of horrible people at the moment” and that they “might see a couple” during the tour. In this way he tried to prime tour participants for the St. Patrick’s weekend induced atmosphere of the city in hopes that this would make any potential disruptions “less surprising” and thus less emotionally “disruptive” for tour participants. Whereas, while Charlie didn’t discuss any kind of affective priming that he engages tour takers in on days where the social atmosphere of the city is felt to be more hostile, he did note how he had developed a particular way of attuning himself to the city and guiding participants. In particular, he noted how when his back is to his tour group that he will purposefully make eye contact with and smile at men who he thinks might be intent on causing problems in an effort to diffuse the potentiality of these disruptive instances.

Gemma also spoke about attuning herself to these types and holding herself in a particular way. However, unlike Charlie, she described how when her back is turned away from her tour group how she tries to make herself look “more tough” in an effort to communicate non-verbally to these potentially disruptive types to not “step up to [her]”.

When disruptions did inevitably occur though, tour guides generally try to direct their tour groups away from these confrontational “lad” or “older man” types, and then once they
are out of earshot will try to diffuse the tension via HP-inspired humour. For example, tour guides who have dark hair and don eyeglasses will often get “Harry Potter!” shouted at them. In these cases, Will Naameh will often turn his head to the side and say “maybe that's my dad” in a hopeful tone to his tour group. Whereas Alex will typically give them a thumbs up and then turns to his group and says something like “for legal reasons I merely resemble Harry Potter, but am in no way affiliated with Harry Potter, JK Rowling, or Warner Bros”. Another common occurrence is drunk older men stumbling towards them and often accusing them of “peddling lies” to tourists. In these cases, both Will and Charlie noted they will say something like “ladies and gentleman, a real life Slytherin”. Whereas Charlotte tends to say something like “there goes Uncle Vernon again" when this happens.

In managing disruptive occurrences in this way, tour guides attempt to make these “disruptive characters” (as Gemma referred to them) or themselves into recognizable characters from the HP cannon in the minds of their tour takers with the hope that doing so will help them diffuse their power to negatively impact their tour's flow and the experience of tour participants.

In my interview with Charlotte, she told me about one of the first times she had an older white man yell obscenities at her. She noted how she had to try really hard “not to cry” in this situation. She explained how it was actually a tour participant who -- once they were out of earshot -- said loudly “do you want us to put a hex on him?”, which made her laugh and helped her dissolve the “heart in her throat” feeling and continue on. Gemma noted in passing how dealing with these “angry old man” types (as well as other people who decide to outwardly express their unhappiness that they as a tour exist) seems to have become more prevalent since the “Harry Potter Tourism is ruining Edinburgh” article was published by Vice Media in January 2018 (five months before I started my fieldwork).

When I asked Gemma about the learning curve for managing these types of interactions and expressions of hostility, she noted:

*It's just really like a 10,000 hours type thing, isn't it? Where you just do a million of these and then you've like, experienced everything and then you are never worried about anything, ya know, so. But yeah, I think I was really nervous at first, but I think just over time, you learn little techniques and stuff like that to try and keep people interested and keeping them moving and all of that, and little jokes [to deal with these sorts of situations], you just build up your own patter over time.*

Both Charlotte’s experience and Gemma’s discussion demonstrate how their ability as tour guides to diffuse these sorts of disruptive situations with well timed, HP-inspired humour
takes time, practice, and becoming more familiar with these different disruptive situations. Together, all of these examples demonstrate how humour is mobilised to manage the sometimes-hostile atmosphere and unexpectedness of the city in an effort to ensure their tour participants have a good experience of the tour and encounter with the city.

In the case of the Potter Trail tour guide then, it becomes apparent that providing their tour participants with a “good time” is an extremely complex endeavour and ‘collective of tasks’ which involves: making the script ones own and tuning into and feeling out their audiences reactions to it and sometimes improvising and personalising the content; making sure to emphasise what is fact and fiction in order to ensure participants are engaging with the city in a respectful way; getting into character and infusing performances with emotional energy, passion and care to add local texture and color to a beloved fictional imaginary; attempting to create a “nerd safe space” and temporary sense of community via “crowd work” and ever-evolving, culturally conscientious practice; being both commanding and soft in an effort to safely guide tour participants through the city; and oftentimes improvising and attempting to manage the non-human and more-than-human things and dynamics which are outside of their control but which nonetheless can negatively impact the experience of their tour taker -- such as bad weather and the sometimes hostile social atmosphere of the city. Here, all of this is coordinated in an effort to provide tour-takers with an experience that helps them develop an appreciation and curiosity about the HP book series as it relates to the city of Edinburgh.

5.1.1.2 The Department of Magic

In the case of the Department of Magic Games Master, assembling a “good time” means providing participants with an escape room experience that feels reminiscent of an hour inside the HP universe and challenging them with a series of puzzles and challenges. This involves: attempting to transport escape room teams imaginatively into this setting; priming them for the puzzle/challenge which they have paid for and are enrolled within; coordinating the challenges, obstacles, and in some cases special effects which participants encounter; and providing clues and encouraging thinking beyond the physicality of the room (when prompted or when participants appear to be stuck or struggling). In my interview with Iain Campbell, he compared the role of a ‘Games Master’ to that of a Dungeons and Dragons, ‘Dungeon Master’ by noting how ideally the Game Master’s organising, officiating, moderating, and narrating makes escape room participants feel as though they are the “stars” of this encounter. In other words, it is a performative role, but not one where they are supposed to be the main character but where they co-
create and mobilise the environment in which the teams of players interact and try to solve the puzzle challenges within.

According to the four Games Master's I interviewed, this requires “making the script [their] own” and developing their own style of facilitating games. For example, Adam Ramirez who I interviewed first described his approach as “sarcastic” and “laid back”. Elliot Wright on the other hand described his approach as “performative” and “sometimes campy”. Whereas Olivia McAdam described her approach as “playful” and “a bit tongue and cheek”. Finally, Miray Kaya described her approach as “nerdy” and sometimes a bit “trickster-y”. These broad approaches though are always adjusted slightly based on the “types” of teams they are engaging with and guiding through the escape room.

In the previous chapter, I highlighted aspects of my interview with Iain where he discussed how their escape room mostly appeals to two main types including “escape room people” and “Harry Potter people”. These two types were also acknowledged by all four Games Masters I interviewed. In particular, they all spoke about how they will “structure” their introductory health and safety speech in such a way -- including asking particular questions and mobilizing particular jokes -- which enables them to feel out and gauge how familiar the group in front of them are with escape rooms and whether or not they are HP enthusiasts. Acquiring this social information early on within their interactions is essential because it helps them figure out how they are going to “tailor” their performance, explain things, and importantly how they will attune themselves to and support them when they enter the escape room and once the clock has been started.

For example, all four Games Masters discussed how their enactments of their different approaches were typically heightened for as well as honed within their encounters with touristic, HP enthusiast types. For example, Adam, Miray and Olivia all talked about how they will assemble more HP-inspired jokes and references within these interactions. Olivia and Miray also noted how this information enables them to more seamlessly build rapport with these groups, since they can ask them things like what “house” they belong to and what “books, films, or characters” are their favourite. In this context then, it seems to be easier for them to build rapport with their groups when there is already a shared pop cultural vocabulary that can be drawn upon and improvised. Elliot on the other hand noted how with those he came to recognise as HP enthusiasts how he will “ham up the acting”.

However, Elliot and Miray also acknowledged how this categorisation is diverse and how there are many different “Harry Potter people” subtypes. For example, Elliot explained how if his group is a “hen party” how he will also “dial up the camp”. Whereas Miray noted how if her group is made up of children how she will allow her nerdy tendencies to shine
through more and how she will also typically try to maintain higher energy throughout. All four Games Masters noted how HP enthusiast groups were some of their favourites because they provided them with the opportunity to exercise their performative muscles and/or nerdy tendencies and to try out new material and creative methods of managing the experience if they wanted to. In this way, these groups are who enable them to use their professional backgrounds, training, and/or passions in a meaningful and fulfilling way.

Whereas in encounters with the former -- “escape room” types -- Games Masters tended to distil their approaches down to their most essential form in order to provide these groups with a “more classic escape room experience”. Every individual I interviewed noted how these types were oftentimes the trickiest because of the seriousness to which they tended to approach the endeavour. For example, Elliot noted how if the group in front of him appears to be “really conservative and quiet” and the type who has done a bunch of escape rooms previously and is “there to get another notch on their bedpost” how he will still try and transport them into the escape room scenario and prime them for the puzzle, but how once the clock begins how he will communicate to them that he “is there” if they need him and then how he will do what he can to give them the space they seem to prefer via “patter[ing] about” and occupying himself. Adam noted how these individuals tended to also “be short” with him during his explanation of the rules and how they would sometimes try to “hurry [him] along” within their verbal feedback and body language. He noted how when this happened how it communicates to him “these people do not want anything from me” and how he will make sure to “hold off [giving them clues and support] until [he] knows it’s the last chance to still possibly complete” the escape room.

Miray and Olivia additionally noted how these types tended to be the most “dismissive” of their attempts to build rapport, create a relational space where they were comfortable asking them for clues, and of their attempts to lighten the mood when things got tense. For example, Miray noted how in these interactions she will sometimes feel like “the weird person who said something absolutely ridiculous and then laughed at [herself]”. Whereas Olivia noted how she has to be careful with how she explains the rules and gives directions and clues to these types, because she gets the sense sometimes that they find her style of managing things to be “a little patronising”. In an effort to manage this dynamic -- which can sometimes make her feel “embarrassed” and “self conscious” -- she explained how she won’t “interject unless they ask [her] to”, but how it's also challenging sometimes because “if it’s gone on really long where [she] thinks they should be asking questions” and she is starting to worry that their aimlessness is going to “negatively affect their experience”, how she will start to hover. This tendency is also something that she
feels she has to manage with these groups. For example, she noted how she has even started priming them at the beginning about her approach to managing games and telling them “I might start to hover, but that’s just me being available to you, um, don’t mind me”. She noted how she does this so that hopefully her addressing her tendencies before they happen will decrease their “annoyance” with her methods.

Whether or not the groups they are Games Mastering for are touristic, HP types or escape room types though, the nature of the experience for participants -- namely, it being a timed challenge (tense) which requires thought, problem solving, communication and coordination (complex). This creates a situation in which Games Masters must navigate interpersonal dynamics and often mostly unspoken tensions unique to that unit of people in front of them. This includes friends, family, and work units who could be doing this “just because” or in acknowledgment and/or celebration of any number of events or transitions within their lives, units, or organisations. These different dynamics create a situation in which Games Masters have to come up with in-situ methods for smoothly interjecting themselves into these group dynamics - whatever they are -- to do their jobs. This includes routine interactions meant to keep people engaged with the puzzle and to not “drop interest” when things get frustrating, but also in some cases drawing boundaries to ensure the room isn’t being mistreated and/or to ensure that participants weren’t putting themselves, others, or the Games Master at risk of physical harm and discomfort on their watch.

In terms of providing support throughout and attempting to keep people engaged, Olivia noted how sometimes within her interactions with older millennial white male gamer-type groups how there will be someone who doesn’t want any clues and will be giving her the “cold shoulder”, but how often their mates will want some clues and how she navigates this dynamic by giving very vague clues via humour. Whereas, Miray noted how sometimes in games she facilitates with children and their parents how often times it will be the parents who take the lead and whose assumptions about the challenge at hand will become prioritised, but how it is the kids who are often able to think more intuitively within imaginative and creative contexts likes these and who are actually getting them closer to solving things. In these cases, she spoke about how within her narration of the game how she will emphasize what the children are doing which is helping the team, and occasionally how she will use humour to make adults aware that they aren’t on the right track yet. In both of these cases, Olivia and Miray had to attune themselves to and read to the best of their ability the group dynamic and then attempt to smoothly interject themselves within it
in order to ensure that their teams are not stuck for too long and are making progress -- since this has come to be understood as key to assembling a “good time” for everyone.

In terms of enacting boundaries in an effort to protect the room, reduce the possibility of physical harm, and sometimes guard their own personal boundaries, this was often necessary as a result of whole teams or specific people on those teams not taking the game seriously and oftentimes related to inebriation. For example, everyone noted how it was usually when teams were drunk that the physical features of the room were at the greatest risk of getting broken. In these cases, Games Masters often had to joke about “how magic isn’t about brute force” and do their best to encourage them to try and engage with the challenge and physicality of the room differently. Olivia spoke about how during one part of the introductory speech where she is going over how the room works she uses this same humorous language to see who everyone in the group laughs towards, names, or nudges and will then proceed to keep an eye on them in an effort to manage these types of situations before they occur. She additionally noted how it was often these sorts of groups which tended to have at least one person in them who jokingly asks if they can put their male-associated appendage in something, somewhere, or if they can smoke some feature. She explained how in these cases, and in order to communicate her own boundaries how she will either say something like “nope” or in other situations how she wilfully ignores the joke and will adjust the direction of the conversation so that it isn’t given too much space to shape the dynamic and so that she can “get on” with facilitating their journey through the room.

While particular group dynamics were spoken about frequently when I asked Games Master’s about what made providing a good experience harder versus easier, what was also frequently spoken about were the actual physical conditions of the escape rooms themselves. In terms of making their roles easier, both Olivia and Miray noted how the rooms themselves are important to their task of transporting people into the scenario and keeping them engaged throughout. For example, when I asked Miray about how hard she tries to get someone engaged if they appear to be uninterested or losing interest, she noted:

*That is the thing, unfortunately, you can’t really do much to make them more enthusiastic about it because, the room is actually supposed to do it itself, the room is really, both of them, they are very exciting. If you are going to enjoy that, you are going to enjoy that from moment A. If they are not enjoying it, um, it could be, obviously it could be a momentary thing when they can’t figure out a certain puzzle, but if they are people who are just like going through the motions unenthusiastically...*
In this discussion, it becomes apparent that the design and aesthetics of the escape rooms themselves are involved in this work of transporting participants into this scenario, getting them excited, and keeping them engaged throughout. In this way, Games Masters are working with -- not just within -- the room in their attempt to provide a good and memorable experience to those playing.

However, similarly the physicality of the escape room can also work against their efforts and in doing so can make their roles as Games Masters feel harder. In particular, every Games Masters spoke about how when features of the escape room did inevitably break and/or malfunction, how they had to develop temporary “workarounds” in these situations in order to manage its impact on their teams’ experience of the room. If this issue was unknown previously and breaks within their session, they usually have to think on their feet, try not to look too surprised, improvise, and weave this into their narration and performance. Then after this group, they are encouraged to tell the next Games Master running a game in that room about the malfunction/break and sometimes letting them know what line or joke they assembled to smooth the malfunction/break within their encounter. Additionally, Games Masters are encouraged to report the malfunction/break in the appropriate Slack channel so that other Games Masters know about the break and what lines/jokes have been affective in smoothing the encounter.

This system and way of managing room breakages/malfunctions is done in an effort to ensure that Games Master’s have what they need to minimise the impacts of these breaks/malfunctions in their coordination of the challenge and their facilitation of a “good time” until the break/malfunction can be patched or fixed in a more permanent capacity. But importantly, this system has also been developed so that Miray (who works some shifts as a Head Game Master) knows to coordinate future repairs. In some cases she will make the repair herself, whereas in other cases will notify and coordinate with an electrician or with the company who made and assembled the escape room.

In the case of the Department of Magic Games Master then, it becomes evident that their providing escape room participants with a good experience is an elaborate endeavour and ‘collective of tasks’ which involves: making the escape room script their own and developing their own style of facilitating and managing games; tuning into, feeling out, and attempting to get a read on their audience so that they can personalise the encounter based on this social information; managing their own energy, moods, and dispositions within these encounters; attuning themselves to the energies, moods, and dispositions of their teams and figuring out ways to inject themselves into this dynamic in order to provide
them with clues/support when things start to get tense and in an effort to keep them engaged with the challenge; sometimes needing to establish boundaries within these interactions to protect the room and themselves; working with the physicality of the escape room itself to transport participants into an alternative reality; and sometimes needing to manage breaks/malfunctions in the physical escape room via verbal workarounds, material patchwork, and inter-organisational digital communication and coordination. Here, all of this is coordinated in an effort to provide escape room teams with an experience that hopefully bonds them together as a team of critical thinkers and problem solvers, and which transports them for an hour into a magical world which resembles the one encountered in a book series which was written into being within Edinburgh.

5.1.2 The ‘Social Life’ of Touristic Service Performances & Environmental Coordinations

It becomes apparent within the thick descriptions I have assembled about what providing a “good experience” or “good time” entails on the part of touristic-facing workers who work for either the Potter Trail or the Department of Magic, that the task of transforming the tourist through the experience they facilitate means, looks, and is pursued quite differently. However, what both encounters have in common is their focus on the experience of multiple touristic types within the environments in which they as a service assembler mediate and attempt to enhance. This work then is certainly aimed at tourists, but additionally requires the enactment of all different types of relationships with other humans, but also non-human and more-than-human entities, forces, and dynamics to bring this “good experience” to fruition (Valkonen, 2010).

Additionally though, both the service performance and environmental coordination work of the Tour Guide and Games Master have become subject to customer evaluation and platform measurement, and in being such are capable of taking on a ‘social life’ which exceeds their original, performative context via being recorded, posted, and broadcast via digital platforms such as TripAdvisor. In this way both the work of the Tour Guide and Games Master has the capacity to also transform their organisation’s ranking, visibility, and attractiveness on the digital platform itself. Awareness of the ‘affectivity’ or real and potential ‘social life’ of tourist-facing workers’ service performances and coordinations was implicit in both Richard Duffy’s (Head Manager and Tour Guide at the Potter Trail) and Iain Campbell’s (Head of Escape Rooms at the Department of Magic) observations that it is this work which makes their organisation successful, and made more explicit in their observations that it is their work which also garners them the most positive attention on TripAdvisor.
5.2 Prompting for TripAdvisor Reviews as Attempts at Affective Translation

Importantly though this translation between a service encounter -- especially a successful one -- and the generation of content on TripAdvisor depicting this encounter by tourists is not automatic nor is it consistent. This was most apparent in my interviews with organisations who did not prioritise the TripAdvisor platform within their working practices and who were often disheartened by the over representation of unsuccessful encounters/under representation of successful encounters on their TripAdvisor ‘place pages’. This was also something which was addressed in my interview with Olivia (who, like Miray, works some shifts as a Head Games Master), but in a different fashion. For example, she explained:

*I mean it is kinda the nature of the beast. I mean when people first started being introduced to TripAdvisor and Yelp and those kinds of things, a lot of businesses to my knowledge did not want to partake in them because of the fear of something being said publicly and, there being very little they can do about shaping their public reputation. I don't know if I have enough knowledge from like the management side about how they manage that um, those decisions were made before I joined the office team. But there is a, there is a concentrated effort to garner as many reviews as possible. I think that is to kind of give us a fair shake, because if you have a lot of reviews, then everyone can see ahh they’ve got 200 reviews and they have like 4 and half stars, that's a pretty solid acceptance of a business. If you've got 30 reviews and 30% of them are bad, that's like anyone's game. It's like, what's gone wrong, like that company is not promoting itself very well, and a lot of people who have gone there feel the need to like, cause that's the thing, I think if you don't go proactively about it, if you just let TripAdvisor and Yelp happen to you, then you don't have control. If you go out and try to get people to leave reviews, cause if you think about it I suppose, people who want to leave reviews rarely are people who had a pleasant time or even a great time. They are galvanized to leave a bad review only, because they want to make a message, so if you have a concentrated effort to garner good, positive reviews online and embrace TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google reviews, all that, then you have more control over the narrative of your business in the public space.*

This excerpt highlights not only the sentiments and observations about TripAdvisor that emerged in my interviews with HP-related organisations who do not prioritise the platform, but importantly also highlights the logic behind why some organisations have decided to try and manage things differently and “garner as many reviews as possible”. Namely, they do so in an effort to counteract this dynamic of customers being typically “galvanized” to leave reviews when something has gone wrong within these encounters and to try and give their organisations “a fair shake” in the public eye.
5.2.1 Affective Translation

In both the case of the Potter Trail and Department of Magic, this facet of trying to get the TripAdvisor platform working for them -- instead of something that “happens to” them -- requires enrolling their tourist-facing workers into their efforts to manage the platform. In this way, tourist-facing work also involves -- in addition to the collective of tasks I described in the first half of this chapter -- attempting to translate the affects generated from their service performances and environmental coordinations into something more.

For the Potter Trail, their public tours are free to attend, so at the end of the encounter Tour Guides attempt to garner both tips/income and TripAdvisor reviews. In terms of income, tour guides keep 85% of what they generate for public tours, and 90% of what they generate for private tours. Whereas at the Department of Magic, customers enrol in games and pay for the experience online and before they attend. In this way, Games Masters are not responsible for bringing money up within these encounters, but they are given a stack of coupons that they write their name on and are encouraged to mention and hand to their escape room teams at the end of the encounter. If and when their prompting for reviews is successful (i.e. they are named in a 5 star TripAdvisor reviews) they receive a £5 bonus on their next pay check. In other words, being named in positive TripAdvisor reviews is incentivised by the organisation via giving Games Masters the opportunity to be paid slightly more than minimum wage each month.

In theory then, tourist-facing workers enrolled in both organisations have/are given the task of doing something more with the affects generated within their encounters. Namely they attempt to translate these affects into (more) income for themselves and/or user-generated content for their organisations’ TripAdvisor ‘place pages’. Importantly though, these affective-digital translation attempts occur differently depending on the context and with different encounter-specific dynamics to attend to, challenges to overcome, rewards, and resulting intra-organisational dynamics.

5.2.1.1 The Potter Trail: Prompting for Tips & Reviews

In the case of the Potter Trail Tour Guide, prompting for tips and reviews at the end of their tours was discussed as something which is quite “tricky” and has taken them a while to “get right”. The trickiness of this task is partly to do with the nature of the experience they assemble. Namely, that it is something they do after guiding their tour groups approximately a mile and a half through the busy city. For example, both Alex and Charlie mentioned how it is typically on their way to and at the last stop of the tour where
they notice that some people in their audience are showing signs of wear and tiredness. Here, the design of the tour helps them some in the sense that it is designed to end with a story meant to inspire wonder and further curiosity about the city’s relationship to the series. Additionally this facet of the encounter is tricky because it is where they, in addition to managing a more tired audience, bring money and TripAdvisor up and into the encounter. Because of this, every tour guide spoke about the work and especially the “trial and error” which went into honing this bit of “patter” and making it right for them.

For example, in my interview with Alex and when I asked him about how he manages this facet of the tour, he noted how prompting for tips and reviews is something which he goes about delicately and how “you can change the wording ever so slightly and immediately feel like that was too forceful, or that was too beggy”. He went on and told me about how earlier on in his tenure as a tour guide how he would feel like he had facilitated a “really good tour”, but then how the way he was asking for money at the end would “kinda betray the tone” that he had established within the tour and make this part feel even more uncomfortable and awkward. He explained how after stumbling with this aspect of his tour for a bit, how he decided to ask Charlotte (who has a longer tenure as a tour guide) about how she handles this part and how she helped him make it more “succinct” and “appropriate for the sort of tone that the tour was ending on”. He commented on how these changes have not only helped him “feel more confident” delivering this facet of the tour, but additionally how its reordering seems to have additionally increased how much he is tipped at the end -- which gives him the sense that the way he was doing it previously was maybe “putting people off”.

Alex then proceeded to provide some background on how he had handled this facet of the encounter on the tour that I had participated in that day and before we sat down for a coffee and interview. He explained:

*I like feeling like the way I ask people for money at the end is sort of humble enough [...] For example, I like feeling that I've said it in a way where it's like, I've loved taking you around the city today, I hope that you've enjoyed it just as much, um, here is where uh ask that if you really enjoy it you might consider leaving some money, it's fine if you don't, but ya know, it's that kind of, uh, humble way of saying ya know, if you think that what I've done for you is worth something, than um ya know, whatever way you'd like to show that would be absolutely fine. But there is a sort of, yeah, way of asking that doesn't seem too like I'm doing this for the money, but it's also like, I'd like some money (laughs). But I do also like saying that if you can't, or don't want to, then maybe just leave us a review, because it is free, because that is the least I would expect I guess.*
In Alex’s case then, he attempts to manage this facet of the tour humbly in an effort to communicate that he has enjoyed their time together/does not do his job just for the money, but similarly which communicates that he would appreciate money for his efforts. Within this bit of patter he additionally positions TripAdvisor as an alternative to donating money for those who can’t or maybe don’t want to pay for the tour.

Charlie and Gemma additionally spoke about the importance of sharing “bits” about themselves throughout the tour and how they do this not only as a means to connect with their audience but also as a way to position themselves in the minds of their tour groups as deserving of both money and reviews for their efforts. For example, Charlie explained:

So I mention a couple things, um, as part of my script, which hopefully prompts people to recognize that there’s more than just me standing there. Um, so I mention uh very early in the tour about the daughter of the head of Bloomsbury who demands that her father publish the book, and so here I will mention that I have a 4 year old who also has me wrapped around his little finger, which is true, but it also suggests I am not just doing this for fun, I am doing this for my family. […] [Then at the last stop] I normally first, during the story about the uh children going back with their families on their horses and carts, back to their hotels [after the launch of the 6th HP book at Edinburgh Castle], and what must have seemed like a dream. Um, and I say it's a heart-warming story, it's a humbling story, and I hope a fitting story on which to end your Potter Trail experience. And there is often a round of applause, and then I say please give yourselves a round of applause, and I ask, have you enjoyed yourselves? If you have enjoyed it, um, please do go on to TripAdvisor and leave a little review and mention my name as Charlie, if you have hated the tour, please go onto TripAdvisor and mention my name as Barbara, either way, please leave a review! So I do that, um, and I fit it in there and then I normally speak about cash after that. [Here] I make it quite clear that I don't want money on behalf of the children, and I mean that, um, and I think actually that sometimes means people are perhaps a little bit more generous when they are adults. So those are the things that are embedded in what I do, um, which hopefully nudges people to recognize that it's not just for the good of my health, it's an experience that we are all sharing.

In Charlie’s case then, he has “made the tour script his own” in ways which enables his social identity as a father to be known. He does this in an effort to connect with the families within his tour audience, but also as a way to position himself in the minds of his tour takers as someone who is “not just doing this for fun”. This revealing of himself more personally throughout the tour then is also what helps him manage the last facet of the tour with confidence. Similarly to Alex he attempts to handle this last facet of the tour humbly. However, unlike Alex he mentions TripAdvisor reviews first. Here he uses humour to mitigate any awkwardness associated with such an ask. After this he will bring up money. During his actual tour performance (which I had attended beforehand), he
additionally mentioned TripAdvisor again and as an alternative to donations if his tour audience wasn’t in a position to give financially.

Similarly to Charlie, Gemma also uses one of her social identities as a means to connect with her audience and to position herself as deserving of money and reviews for her performance/ coordinations. For example, within her tour she emphasises that she is a postgraduate student both verbally at the tour stop near the University of Edinburgh campus, but also by carrying around a ‘University of Edinburgh Law School’ canvas tote bag. In our interview, she explained how she started tour guiding initially when she was a PhD student, but how she is actually now a postdoctoral fellow. For a while this academic position enabled her to stop working as a tour guide and to sustain herself as a “single woman without a partner”. However, after the UCU strikes of 2018 which left her without two months of income she had to ask Richard about coming back on in order to sustain herself. She explained to me that she keeps this narrative of being a student up in her tour because her university work feels just as precarious as it did then, but also because it “works much better than having to explain the problems of early career academia” and how she thinks that this helps her tour audience “invest in [her]”. Her case demonstrates how revealing one’s self in this context is most affective for garnering respect and attempting to translate that respect into something more when these facets of ourselves are ‘simplified down’ (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 156) and performed as inter-culturally legible, social identities.

Finally, both Charlotte and Gemma spoke about the importance of tour props to this endeavour. For example, Charlotte noted how because she is “really shy” how it is really helpful for her to be able to “draw out and hold up” the sorting cap (used at one of the first stops) to emphasise her call for tips and reviews. However, it wasn’t until I interviewed Gemma that I more so understood its relationship to another prop and function beyond being just the place where cash tips were placed. For example, Gemma noted how at one point she had expressed her worry to Richard about her not making as much money comparatively to other tour guides. Within this interaction, he asked her if she had made and was handing out wands at the beginning of her tour (which she wasn’t). She explained his advice:

*A really important thing is, I am going to start making my own wands at home because people always steal the wands, but, also wands are a great way to compel people to put money into the hat, because they have to come back to you. So I am going to make more wands cause I’ve noticed actually a marked difference when they have to come back to the hat and put in a wand in at the end, because then they are trapped (laughs), like sometimes*
Here then we see how tour props also assist Tour Guides with the task of prompting tour takers for tips, but additionally for reviews which make mention of them on TripAdvisor. Tour Guides thus attempt to both emotionally (via humbleness and respectability) and physically (via making use of tour props) compel tour takers to translate their experiences of the tour into something more.

In the case of Tour Guides, affective translation is a complex endeavour which requires: keeping the tone of this facet of their tour consistent with the rest of their tour; being humble and using humour; sometimes revealing aspects of themselves and performing facets of these selves as legible and respectable social identities; as well as making use of the tour props. In the case of the Potter Trail, mentioning TripAdvisor appears to provide them with a means to make their prompting for tips feel less demanding due to it providing an option to tour takers for how they express/translate their appreciation for the free tour and their performance/coordinations into something more, but also for more directly translating these affects online where these evaluations are measured and assemble their digital reputation/ranking. It is because of these efforts by their tourist-facing workers that the Potter Trail is able to rely on TripAdvisor as a ‘promotional partner’.

5.2.1.2 The Department of Magic: Prompting for Reviews & A Bonus

In the case of the Department of Magic, prompting for reviews at the end of the encounter was discussed by Games Masters as something which is a bit “awkward” and sometimes even difficult; something which requires gathering further social information and employing appropriate humour; and as a facet of the encounter which they don’t all consistently engage in. In terms of being a difficult task, this is because sometimes -- and especially after teams do not make it through the puzzle/challenge in time -- groups will be noticeably disappointed in themselves. For example, Adam and Olivia both spoke about how sometimes people’s shoulders will be slouched and how they will be a bit quiet. In these cases, Games Masters often make one last attempt to conclude the session on a “high” and/or “positive” note. For example, Adam explained how often it will be small teams (typically two people) who will have this experience of the challenge/puzzle and who will walk out of the room like this. In these cases, he will remind them verbally that it’s a really
challenging escape room, especially for groups made up of four or fewer people and how he will emphasise that they still did a really great job. In this way, he attempts to console them with the hope that they will perk up and won’t leave disappointed with themselves, but potentially disappointed with their time together in the escape room.

All Games Masters noted though, how these types of situations are rare and how the majority of the teams they help guide through the rooms (even the ones who don’t make it all the way through) show embodied and verbal signs -- such as shoulders up, and chatting with their other group members excitedly -- of enjoying the game and experience. In these cases, this affective disposition of the group after the game appears to free Games Masters from feeling the need to engage in this same kind of work to lift their energies and end on a “positive note”. This more positive and energetic type of concluding interaction though is also what makes Games Masters feel as though they have more to work with in terms of attempting to translate these affects onto the platform (and into a £5 bonus on their pay checks).

However, even this evaluation on their part of a good time had, still requires that they gather more social information in order to establish whether this is an appropriate ask for the group, and where this social information assembled has implications for how they go about mentioning the platform and prompting for reviews. In Elliot’s explanation in our interview of how he proceeds when the game goes well, he detailed what sorts of social information are pertinent to this task for him. He explained:

At the end of the game, we just talk, and I will ask them what they are doing next, I’ll ask them if, if they are tourists, I will ask how long are you here for, I will make sure I am doing all of that, I always get them, I always take photos for them, and I always make a joke out of doing all the angles and things, and a lot of people really appreciate that. And then, when I am doing that, um, I’ll mention TripAdvisor. I’ve got a couple of lines that I use, like, like um, I sometimes will tell them, if it’s a family, I’ll sometimes say “if you’ve got TripAdvisor, I would really appreciate it, because I do get a little treat, if you mention my name”. Um, if it’s like a fun group, if it’s a young group I probably won’t, I’m like “so if you’ve got TripAdvisor love a mention”. But if it’s going to be an older fun group, or, tourists, um, I’ll say something like um, “remember to say that you had a great time with Elliot, if you didn’t have a great time, my name is Stuart”. Um, stuff like, just gauging who they are as well, because I only started using TripAdvisor a couple years ago, and I’m in my late 20’s, so, uh, it’s not something that everyone is going to have.

Here, we see how Elliot eases out of the game by striking up small talk with his escape room team about what’s next, offering to photograph them all together and managing any group awkwardness within this interaction creates with selfie humour, and then within this
interaction he tries to get a read on them so he can tailor how he mentions and even prompts for TripAdvisor reviews. For example, with families he will be a bit more direct and will even mention how he gets a “treat” for a mention. Whereas for younger groups, he doesn’t necessarily assume that they use the platform and so will more so just mention it in passing and just in case, but how if it’s an older group or group of tourists how he will also be more direct and will use the tried and true joke -- of, “if you enjoyed our time together, my name is [Insert real name], and if you didn’t my name is [insert another name] -- to make them aware that this is an establishment which appreciates reviews. Within his approach then, we begin to gain the sense that he tries to develop a feel for whether or not groups use or depend on this platform to plan and/or improvise their forays across the city of Edinburgh. He then uses this social information as a means to go about mentioning the platform appropriately and in a way which doesn’t make him feel like his prompting for reviews is too “forceful” or “beggy” (as he put it).

Adam also noted how he would sometimes mention TripAdvisor differently depending on whom the group is composed of, but how there is additionally still yet another task. Namely who exactly within this group he hands the paper coupon with his name written on it (the physical reminder of this ask) to. Adam explained what he asks them and the social information he uses to decide this:

AR: [After going through and explaining his patter for prompting for reviews] Now, whose the most responsible one for me to give this to?” [sincere tone] “Perfect, thank you so much for coming out here tonight, you guys have a great rest of your night”.

KB: Do you think the responsible person is usually the person who, like, leaves the review?

AR: Like, I will usually, as soon as I say the ‘most responsible’, everyone is like mehhhh [and points], so I will give it to this person. Sometimes that person also raises their hand. Um, usually I think they are the person who looks like they are like ‘oh yes, I can't wait to go home and like uh chronicle my night’.

Here we see how after mentioning TripAdvisor and prompting for reviews how he additionally attempts to pinpoint who is best to leave the physical reminder of his ask with. He does this by asking who is the “most responsible” and then based on the group’s bodily gestures and verbal feedback, he will entrust the person implied with the coupon with his name on it. Within Adam’s approach then, we gain the sense that he’s learned through trial and error that successful prompting on his part also requires targeting
particular types within these groups and then further personalising his ask to that person with the hopes that they will “chronicle” and translate their experiences with him onto the platform.

While both Elliot and Adam prompt for reviews in most of their escape room team interactions, this was not the approach taken by Olivia and Miray. For example, in my interview with Olivia she noted how she will prompt for reviews when she can tell that they have enjoyed their time with her, but how she may hold off on doing this if the interaction feels a bit more ambiguous. Drawing on an example from earlier that day, she explained:

> Sometimes, even if I think they, like today, I had a group, the grandparent/grandchildren group, they struggled a lot, they said they had a good time, afterwards, but during the game I felt like they were quite frustrated at times, so I did not offer them a review card, because I just don't, I just don't want to like, I just don't think it's worth it. [...] I guess there are men actually. I've seen their approach to it and they are very, and the way they lead the games is different as well, they are very loud, they are very like, sort of, all, they fill the space, ya know. They are shameless. I'm very self conscious about being like, uhhh, I'm worried that like if I overdo it then I will push somebody to a point where they didn’t have a good experience. And I don't know if that's, I don't even know if I am right in feeling that way, or like, doing it that way, but I don't, I almost have this feeling that like, I'd rather me be a bit too shy than too much. I think I can deal with them not having as great of a time because I wasn't enough than them saying she was too much.

In Olivia’s case then, she likes to ensure that when she prompts for reviews that she is already working with positive affects (both embodied and verbally expressed), because she worries that if her group didn’t have a good time (and are just being nice to her face) that if she prompts them for a review that she might “push” them towards a bad experience and that she might potentially “lead the team to a bad review”. She additionally notes how she has developed the felt sense that she can’t get away with managing these interactions in the same way that she observes her male colleagues to, and that it is best for her to operate more so below the radar, including when she prompts for reviews.

Miray, like Olivia, also takes a different approach to this facet of the encounter. For example, during our interview and when I asked her what it is like prompting for TripAdvisor reviews, she explained:

> MK: Um, I've actually stopped asking for them, like in the past month or so, just because I feel really self conscious doing so. So you have to, ya know, you've just spent a really good time with the family for example, and then, um, you just, have to wear a carpet clerk persona and be like: [sweet, professional tone] "if you like this, we always appreciate a nice TripAdvisor comment, uh, and don't put my name if you didn't like me hahaha". That bit
always takes things to a, less, uh, intimate, less personal level, which I absolutely hate. So, I just don’t do it.

**KB:** Does it feel a bit more transactional then?

**MK:** Yeah, completely!

In Miray’s case then, she has actually stopped asking for reviews. She has done this because she feels as though her more personal style of attending to her teams -- especially families -- isn’t as congruent with this more performative and transactional task of prompting for reviews. Importantly, her not asking for reviews doesn’t mean she doesn’t get named in reviews. For example, she mentioned earlier in our interview how she had actually been named the “Top Games Master” the month prior because of all the reviews naming her. In this way, she prefers to accumulate reviews more so organically.

In both the case of Olivia and Miray then, it appears they’ve both developed a felt-sense over time about how is best for them to “play” this part of the encounter and to translate affects generated within the encounters with escape room teams onto the TripAdvisor platform. Here the Foucauldian notion of a ‘technique of the self’ is useful for understanding these potentially gendered differences in prompting for TripAdvisor reviews in the context of the escape room. This is because, unlike “the modern idea of the reflective, intellectual self divorced from the realm of the body” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 151), a ‘technique of the self’ is “formed from the playing out of ways of comporting oneself in the bios politikos, public life” (p. 151). What I like about this understanding is the attention it enables to the ‘notion of uniqueness’, or rather an understanding that “every technique has its own conditions of possibility, every technique has its own specificity” (p.151).

Additionally though, Miray noted how she takes great pleasure/pride in working some of her shifts as a Head Games Master, and in particular being the one who coordinates material fixes, smooths dysfunctions, and who enhances the aesthetics and atmosphere of the rooms due to their centrality to both the experience of the escape room teams and the work herself and other Games Masters undertake. She noted in passing as well how these are the “types of things that bring us [positive] TripAdvisor comments” too. In this way, it is her environmental coordinations, not just her service performances which attract positive attention on TripAdvisor. However, this latter type of review isn’t rewarded in the same way that reviews which name her directly are. In this way, it is more so the performative work and not the environmental work that is financially incentivised and by extension valued by the organisation.
In the case of Games Masters, affective translation is thus an intricate endeavour which requires: sometimes making a last effort to make escape room teams feel better after not completing the puzzle/challenge in time; gathering more social information about their teams and using this information to appropriately mention and prompt for reviews; sometimes identifying and targeting the “responsible” team members and further personalising their ask to them; honing this facet of the script based on one’s felt-sense of what works best for their approach; and finally something which is additionally accomplished (but unnamed) via environmental coordinations and management. In the case of the Department of Magic, mentioning TripAdvisor is experienced as an awkward and sometimes difficult task, and because of this -- and potentially also the financial ordering of the business -- isn’t something which is as consistently engaged in by all. For example, all Games Masters I interviewed noted at one point or another how this work is very involved and how they didn’t feel as though they were being paid enough -- even when they did receive £5 bonuses for review mentions. Even still, its incentivisation does appear to be effective in terms of translating some of the affects generated in their encounters with escape room teams onto the platform, seeing as they as an organisation are able to rely on the platform as a reliable ‘promotional partner’.

5.3 Tourist-Facing Work, Affective Translation & Technological Management

In this chapter, I attended to the first clustering of socio-technological ‘techniques’ developed and mobilised by tourist-facing workers associated with two organisations which comprise Edinburgh’s HPT scene. These techniques have been developed and honed in an effort to provide tourists with a memorable and “good experience”, as well as in an effort to do something more with the affects generated within their face-to-face encounters, and namely to translate these affects in ways which helps them sustain themselves and the company they are working for. Within my thick descriptions of what it means and involves to try to transform their participants through the experience of the walking tour and escape room, I have positioned this work as a “collective of tasks” which exceeds scholastic accounts which position this work as mostly human-oriented. This work is no doubt aimed at tourists, but it also requires the enactment of all different types of relationships with other humans, non-humans, and more-than-humans to coordinate and bring into being. In this way, this work requires performing but also coordinating and mobilising the environment in which they as service assemblers mediate and work to enhance.
Importantly, both the service performance and environmental coordination work of tourist-facing workers has become subject to customer evaluation and platform measurement. This means that this work is capable of taking on a ‘social life’ which exceeds its original performative context. In this way, this touristic-facing work also has the capacity to transform the positionality and/or attractiveness of the organisation itself as it is represented on the TripAdvisor platform. Because of their awareness of the real and potential ‘social life’ of this work (‘affectivity’), and the awareness that customers more often translate their experiences and evaluations onto the platform when service encounters have been unsuccessful, both HPT organisations have developed strategies to garner as many reviews as they can in an effort to manage these dynamics and exercise more control over their reputation in the public eye.

These strategies aimed at getting the platform working for them as a ‘promotional partner’ as opposed to something which “happens to” them involves enrolling tourist-facing workers into their efforts to manage the TripAdvisor platform. This means that tourist-facing work involves -- in addition to the complex array of tasks associated with assembling a “good experience” in the natural, physical, and social environments in which they facilitate touristic experiences -- attempting to translate these experiences of a good time had onto the digital platform itself. In other words, this work also involves enrolling tourists themselves into the organisation’s efforts to manage the platform and maintain themselves within time and space. Because of this, I suggest that the work of cultural-economic actors who comprise the Potter Trail and Department of Magic be conceptualised as a ‘collective of tasks’ which involves local and popular cultural knowledge and translation, the coordination of their audience and their experience, and management of the natural, physical, social, and technological environment in which they operate.

However, managing the digitally and technologically mediated environment that TripAdvisor comprises doesn’t end here. It additionally involves engaging with and sometimes responding to the content that is translated onto the platform. In the next chapter then, I will attend to another clustering of socio-technological techniques aimed at managing the content, and in particular the real and potential ‘social life’ of this content. It is here where I will expand on how HP touristic organisations use the platform as a ‘thinking partner’ in an effort to develop/maintain their reputation/ranking on the platform and by extension, how they attempt to affect their visibility, discoverability, and attractiveness within the city of Edinburgh itself.
Chapter 6: Managing & Utilising Tourist-Generated Content which Accumulates on TripAdvisor

In this chapter, I will describe and grapple with another set of socio-technological ‘techniques’ (skills, abilities, and ad hoc methods) which are important to maintaining a working relationship with the TripAdvisor platform in the context of Edinburgh’s HPT scene. This second clustering of techniques is concerned with responding publicly to unhappy service participants who translate their experiences onto the platform, as well as, and in some cases, using this content to rethink and potentially adjust their management of the things and factors that reveal themselves to be preventing them from assembling a “good experience” or “good time” for some. While the former facet of this work is aimed at previous customers and potential-future customers who use the platform, the latter facet of this work is aimed at their actual, future customers. Importantly all of this work is concerned with the ‘affectivity’ or potential and real ‘social life’ of the content that accumulates on the platform.

In what follows, I will discuss how the Potter Trail tour and the Department of Magic escape rooms approach, respond to, and utilize the content which accumulates on their organisations’ TripAdvisor ‘place pages’. It is here where I will elaborate on my conceptualisation of the TripAdvisor platform as a ‘thinking partner’ that enables these organisations to identify, as well as begin to re-theorise the relationality between the various elements that make up an engaging, and “good experience”. I will do this by drawing mostly on my interviews with the managers of these two HPT-related organisations. This is because these two individuals are the ones who are the account administrators for their organisation’s associated TripAdvisor ‘place page’, responsible for keeping an eye on things more broadly, and who tended to be the ones initiating changes at the organisational level in response to the customer-generated content which emerged on their ‘place pages. However, in one case we will see how tourist-facing workers may also come to shape these types of changes too.

Related to this, I will also sometimes draw on my interviews with those who work in tourist-facing roles (and whom you were introduced to in the previous chapter). Importantly though, I also draw on these interviews in an effort to illustrate how the differential management of the platform by these managers comes to shape the distinct professional cultures of these two HPT-related organisations, and to demonstrate how these professional cultures may also come to affect this work of attempting to get the platform
working in their organisation’s favour. All of this together with the narrative rendered in the previous chapter, enables me to demonstrate how attempting to *live with* and *thrive* in a context wherein locative media platforms like TripAdvisor govern -- or what I suggest we think about as algorithmic navigation -- is a complex, collective, and more-than-digital endeavour.

6.1 Engaging with & Responding Digitally to TripAdvisor Reviews

Richard Duffy (head manager and tour guide) of the Potter Trail and Iain Campbell (head of escape rooms) at the Department of Magic are each the members of their teams who act as the “voices of” their touristic organisations on TripAdvisor and beyond. What this means in practice is that they are both the ‘account managers’ of their organisations’ TripAdvisor ‘place page’, it is their email accounts and mobile devices which receive and/or notify them when new tourist-generated content emerges, and importantly it is them who respond -- on occasion -- publicly to the specific content of these reviews.

TripAdvisor -- unlike locative media platforms like Google Maps -- does not notify account managers of new reviews immediately. This is because TripAdvisor subjects traveller reviews to both an algorithmic and manual vetting process to ensure that the content that accumulates on the platform aligns with their ‘review guidelines’ and is something which travellers will find “helpful and relevant”\(^\text{26}\). This means that there is a “time delay” (as Richard referred to it) and that whatever content has just emerged (and that they have been notified of) could be depicting a service encounter that occurred anywhere from 24 hours ago to a couple weeks prior (in the case of reviews posted during busier travelling seasons). In terms of affordances offered to account managers to affect the impression they are giving off via the platform, TripAdvisor enables service providers who enrol the opportunity to respond once to each customer review. This feature was referred to by a research participant from a HPT-related organisation which doesn’t prioritise the platform as assembling their digital “right to response”, and is how I will also make reference to this affordance throughout this chapter as a means to emphasis the extent to which TripAdvisor *orders* and *governs* this type of digitally mediated interaction.

In what follows, I will describe how both Richard and Iain encounter and respond to notifications of new TripAdvisor reviews -- including positive, ambiguous, and negative reviews alike. Additionally I will describe the intra-organisational ‘social life’ of these reviews in an effort to highlight how these reviews shape their professional thinking and

\(^{26}\) TripAdvisor *‘Review Guidelines’* & *‘Vetting Process’*
feeling, and how they as an organisation attempt to intervene in the potential and real ‘social life’ of this content on and beyond the platform. In doing so I will highlight the situations in which both Richard and Iain exercise their digital “right to respond”, as well as how this digital content may come to inform their working practices. In this way, I will also demonstrate how organisational ‘impression management’ (Goffman, 2004) involves the coordination of digital materials and the ordering of a collective of things and factors.

6.1.1 Engaging with & the Resulting Intra-Organisational Social Life of Positive Reviews

In the case of positive (4 or 5 star) reviews which emerge on their organisational TripAdvisor ‘place pages’ after service encounters, neither Richard nor Iain exercise their digital “right to respond”. In the context of the Potter Trail then, and when Richard is notified of new positive reviews, he will click into the review from the email notification, read through it, and will make a mental note of the review (and occasionally might make mention of it to the tour guide who has been named). In most cases though, Richard will get back to whatever he was up to before. Even though Richard doesn’t engage extensively with positive reviews, their accumulation nonetheless gives him the sense that things are running smoothly. In this way, TripAdvisor sets his mind at ease and enables him to carry on with his current future plans without adjustment, and in doing so the platform acts as a more mundane ‘thinking partner’.

During our interview together and when I asked Richard about why he doesn’t respond to positive reviews, he noted how he had observed how another independent HP tour provider in Edinburgh does, how he thought that this was a “really nice thing to do”, but how in their case it would be too “time consuming”. In other words, Richard doesn’t feel the need to intervene within the ‘social life’ of positive reviews and prefers to allow them to speak for themselves. Here, it also becomes apparent how TripAdvisor also functions as market research ‘thinking partner’ to Richard in the sense that what he finds beyond their own ‘place page’ gives him a sense of who they are up against now, occasionally inspires him to reflect on his own style of management, but ultimately in this case informed his decision to continue managing their ‘place page’ in the same way he had been before.

While Richard is certainly the one who is most aware of when new content emerges on their TripAdvisor ‘place page’, Tour Guides also keep an eye on reviews -- both those which name them, but also the ones which make mention of their colleagues. In regards to the former dimension of tour guides’ engagements with the platform, every tour guide I interviewed mentioned how being named in a TripAdvisor review was a very rewarding experience, an occasional “ego boost”, and something which tends to reify to them that
how they perform and manage their tours is “working” for them. This content then helps them understand what tour participants appreciate about their approach and gives them a sense of what they should continue doing. In this way, the platform also acts as a mundane ‘thinking partner’ to them and inspires routine reflections on their performances and coordinations, as well as enables them to hone them in ways where these qualities are maintained and in some cases even highlighted further.

In regards to the latter dimension of tour guides’ engagement with the platform, every tour guide I interviewed also mentioned how they read through the reviews of their colleagues, how they enjoy seeing how each other are doing, and how they feel that they also learn a lot from each other by doing so. In some cases too, Potter Trail tour guides will “screenshot” one another’s’ positive reviews and send them to one another in an effort to lift their moods when they are observed to be “feeling down”. For example, both Charlotte Leandri and Alex Harwood (who were dating at the time I interviewed them) mentioned how they would do this when they could tell the other is having a “hard time” in an effort to remind them that their work is appreciated. They additionally both mentioned how their families keep an eye on reviews that make mention of them and how they use this content as “bragging” materials in their communications with their respective family friends. In the context of the Potter Trail then, positive reviews which name tour guides appear to also be informally transformed into materials which can be used within their mundane personal, interpersonal, and organisational ‘emotion management’ (Hochschild, 1983) practices and processes, and in particular in cases where they might be feeling temporarily less confident in the context of their lives. It is within Alex and Charlotte’s discussions then that we also gain a sense of the ways in which ‘thinking’ and ‘feeling’ are entangled and inseparable from one another, and how the platform acts (synchronously) as an ‘emotional partner’ which can help them build up and develop confidence within their tour performances/coordinations.

In the case of the Potter Trail, the accumulation of positive reviews that name specific tour guides certainly creates particular intra-organisational dynamics. For example, the majority of members of the Potter Trail I interviewed commented on, in passing, how one colleague in particular is a bit of a “superstar” when it comes to the qualitative content of his reviews. In this way, there was certainly a recognition that someone within their organisation was particularly skilled at translating affects onto the platform, and this may very well highlight to some members of the Potter Trail some of the gendered dynamics at play which they find themselves managing on occasion. For example, when I asked female-identifying tour guides about whether or not the
organisational focus on TripAdvisor privileged some members over others, most of them noted how splitting tour groups (on days where there was more demand) with their male-identifying colleagues was sometimes a bit daunting and how they feel as though they have to exert more emotional energy initially in order to “convince” tour participants that coming on their tour will be “just as brilliant”. This dynamic was something which they noted that they wished their male-identifying colleagues were more aware of and helped them manage since there is a sense that it’s easier for them to gain the respect and enthusiasm of their tour audience more so right off the bat.

However, ultimately these gendered dynamics weren’t something which they noted carried into their individual tours nor was it something which they noted impacted their own ability to translate positive evaluations onto the platform. Indeed, they all agreed that there wasn’t any clear privilege here and how everyone had numerous positive reviews which made mention of them. Additionally, some of them noted how seeing their colleagues mentioned motivated them to ensure that they were also keeping a steady stream of TripAdvisor reviews mentioning them accumulating on the platform after their tours. In this way, while the specific qualities of this one Tour Guide’s reviews and his approach to tours was certainly something which made them aware of gendered dynamics which they had to individually manage in an effort to keep things equitable, these dynamics didn’t appear to become anything which made any guide feel like they were less appreciated by their tour audience, their colleagues, nor something which seems to cascade and generate more serious hostilities within their organisation. For example, in the female-identifying guides’ discussions of these gendered dynamics that they all encountered/managed on occasion, there was also mention of their awareness that it is all of their positive reviews that enables them as an organisation to continue operating and comfortably sustaining themselves financially. Here, the financial ordering of the tour company -- namely their each keeping 85-90% of what they each earn from their individual tours -- appears to be a significant factor in positive reviews having a mostly positive ‘social life’ within the organisation in addition to having a positive ‘social life’ beyond.

In the context of the Department of Magic, when Iain is notified of a new positive review, he -- similarly to Richard -- will click into the review from the email notification, read through it, make a mental note of the review, and then will get back to whatever he was up to before. Also similarly to Potter Trail tour guides, Games Masters also keep an eye on reviews which make mention of them and their colleagues. In terms of the former dimension of their engagement with the platform, every Games Master I interviewed mentioned how being named in reviews was the “highest form of compliment” from
customers, how being named gives them an “ego boost”, and tends to reify their more embodied sense that the way they “play things” works. In terms of the latter dimension of their engagement with the platform, they also noted how they look through their colleagues’ reviews and how they enjoy seeing how others “play things”. In this way, and similarly to the Potter Trail, TripAdvisor functions as a mundane ‘thinking partner’ to both Iain and Games Masters in the sense that it communicates to them that things are operating smoothly, that how they are managing things is working, and that they can proceed forward without feeling the need to change up how they are doing things. In sum, similarly to the Potter Trail, the influx of positive TripAdvisor reviews mobilises an informal accounting process within their organisation that makes them as individuals and as an organisation feel a particular way and informs how they proceed.

However, unlike the Potter Trail, the positive reviews which accumulate on the Department of Magic’s TripAdvisor ‘place page’ are also embedded within a more formal accounting procedure. For example, twice monthly upper management will tally up each of their employees’ named five star reviews, calculate them and add £5 per review to that Game Masters’ pay check, reward the top review earner with an ‘employee of the month’-like award, and will announce this awarding within their intra-organisational Slack communications. This is done with the hopes that the financial bonus will motivate other Games Masters to try and accomplish this too. But additionally is enacted to try and ensure that they as an organisation keep a steady stream of positive reviews accumulating. This after all is what enables the organisation to improve their ranking and compete with the other escape rooms organisations who have a longer tenure on the platform. Put another way, all of this is done in an effort to maintain the platform as a ‘promotional partner’.

This more formal accounting process, which positive TripAdvisor reviews are objectified within, also creates particular intra-organisational dynamics. For example -- and similarly to the Potter Trail Tour Guides -- the Games Masters I interviewed all mentioned in passing a few Games Masters (mostly male-identifying) who are considered to be “superstars” when it comes to the quantity of reviews they each accumulate after when they work. In this way, there was also a recognition that certain individuals in their organisation are particularly skilled at translating affects onto the platform. However, while for the Potter Trail this was a more informal observation, for the Department of Magic this understanding was also a product of seeing them recognised and praised formally by upper management for these accomplishments at the end of each month. In this way, positive review mentions are transformed into a more formal status material for those
recognised by upper management and I think may partially explain some other dynamics I encountered within my interviews with Games Masters.

For example, both individuals mentioned by their colleagues spoke about how their status as top review earners was beneficial not only because it communicates to them that how they perform/coordinate things works, but additionally noted how this could be used -- if necessary -- to defend themselves against micro-management by upper management. Additionally, one of these individuals noted in our interview how because he accumulates a lot of reviews and knows that this is applauded by upper management, how he uses this as an unspoken rationale for not engaging in some facets of his job responsibilities -- such as being present in the intra-organisational Slack channel and fixing features of the escape rooms when they break. As mentioned before, most Games Masters mentioned how they didn’t feel as though they were being fairly compensated for their work (even when they received the £5 bonus for review mentions). In this way, it appears that when good reviews are subject to a more formal accounting process and transformed into formal status materials, how these materials can be further transformed by some participants subject to this accounting process and made into other types of informal materials which can be used to their benefit and to make the work they do suit them and what they feel is appropriate for how much they are being paid for what they are contributing.

In other words, it appears that the incentivisation of performative work (named reviews) over environmental coordination work (unnamed reviews) by this organisation may contribute to a similar privileging by some of their tourist-facing workers. What this might mean in the context of the Department of Magic is that there becomes an unequal and even gendered division of work within their organisation and that some of the environmental coordination work falls more so to some than others. If this becomes the case, then such a formal accounting process may very well be entangled within the expression of more serious intra-organizational hostilities and could potentially contribute to increased employee turn-over. If this does occur, then good reviews may take on a more ambiguous ‘social life’ within this organisation even while they have a positive ‘social life’ on and beyond the platform itself.

In sum, neither Richard nor Iain respond publicly to positive reviews which accumulate on TripAdvisor and in this way don’t feel the need to intervene in the real and/or potential ‘social life’ of this content on the digital platform itself. Even though neither individual intervenes in their social life on the platform, this content nonetheless acts as ‘thinking’ and ‘feeling’ materials in the sense that it sets their minds at ease and communicates to them that how they are managing the collective of things and factors
which contribute to a “good experience” for their customers is working in the ways they intend them to and that they can carry on as they were. However, in both organisational contexts we see how this isn’t the only ‘social life’ which matters, and how this digital content may additionally take on an informal and/or formal intra-organisational ‘social life’ which may complement or complicate their positive ‘social life’ on the platform and in terms of improving their organisation’s ranking, visibility, and attractiveness within the city of Edinburgh.

6.1.2 Engaging with & Responding to Ambiguous and/or Negative Reviews

In the case of ambiguous (3 star) and negative (3 or less star) reviews, both Richard and Iain will -- on occasion -- respond to these and in doing so will exercise their digital “right to respond”. In the context of the Potter Trail and when Richard is notified of ambiguous or negative reviews, he will click into the review from the email notification, read through it, and then will decide if it warrants a digital response on his part. When I asked some follow-up questions over Facebook Messenger, Richard explained how he mostly only responds digitally on occasions where there have been “big factual inaccuracies” or “when a guide legitimately didn’t show up” and the tour didn’t occur.

In the case of the former types of reviews, Richard will respond in an effort to correct glaring informational inaccuracies and noted how on occasion his response may border on being read as “perhaps sassy”. For example, in our original interview he noted how occasionally customer-reviewers will express disappointment via ambiguous or negative reviews about how the tour seems to be more so about the author (JKR) rather than about HP. In these cases, Richard will highlight in his digital response how on both their website (advertising) and within their tour introduction (service) that they make it explicit what Edinburgh’s relationship to the HP series is (a literary location, and not a filming location) and will reiterate how this relationship was therein accounted for within the tour content and route itself. In these cases then, he responds in an effort to demonstrate that the reviewer is evaluating their service based on unrealistic expectations about what they advertise and can experientially assemble in terms of the history of the city. In doing so his response is an attempt to interrupt the impression their organisation is making via their customers’ reviews.

Whereas in the case of the latter types of reviews which emerge after the rare occasion when a tour guide hasn’t shown up, Richard will respond digitally in an effort to apologise “sincerely” and “profusely” for their mistakes and missteps. Interestingly, he noted how in the majority of “no show” cases, how he has been made aware within “20
minutes” of the incident either by tour participants (via Facebook Messenger) and/or by the tour guide themself (via their private Facebook Group communications), and how he will be mostly prepared for the possibility that this incident will be translated onto the TripAdvisor platform. In this way, he generally has had all the information he needs already (from the customer and the tour guide) in order to confidently exercise his digital ‘right to respond’ if/when the incident becomes translated onto the platform. It is very rare then that Richard has felt wholly blindsided by these types of negative reviews and because of these communicative-organisational dynamics then, negative reviews which emerge on the Potter Trail’s TripAdvisor ‘place page’ don’t tend to trigger any kind of intra-organisation information gathering on Richard’s part afterwards/before he responds, meaning that he can for the most part respond immediately to the review when it emerges and then move on.

Also important to note, in addition to using his digital response to apologise, Richard will also use his digital response to vaguely explain what happened on that day. He does this in an effort to contextualise the incident to the reviewer, but also to other potential platform users engaging with their ‘place page’. This latter facet of Richard’s response to reviews appears to be an attempt to temporally situate the review and account for the possibility that potential, future customers may be filtering and viewing their reviews by rating (instead of reverse chronologically), and where there is by extension a possibility of further temporal context collapse. In this way, his digital responses also seem to embody an understanding of how the platform affordances may be used to differently order/make visible their ambiguous and/or negative reviews and thus is also an attempt to shape the impression given off in diverse instances of platform use by potential, future customers.

In sum, Richard -- who acts as the “voice of” the Potter Trail on TripAdvisor -- assembles a digital response in an effort to annotate ambiguous or negative reviews that have the potential to misinform about the tour service itself and/or give off an inaccurate impression about their professionalism as an organisation. In doing so, he attempts to intervene in the potential and/or real ‘social life’ of some types of negative or ambiguous reviews in the minds of past customers who translate their experiences onto the platform and potential, future customers who use the platform to design and/or improvise their travels to Edinburgh. In other words, his digital responses are aimed at platform users themselves, and not at the performative infrastructures of the platform itself (even though his digital responses certainly demonstrate an understanding of the potential uses of the platform affordances).
In the context of the Department of Magic escape rooms and when Iain is notified of ambiguous or negative reviews, he will -- similarly to Richard -- click into the review from the email notification and read through it. However -- unlike Richard -- Iain has to gather more information before he decides if and how he will respond digitally to the specific content of the review. For example, in our interview, he explained:

*I get all of the emails straight to my phone, as soon as there is a TripAdvisor or a Google review, or anything like that, straight on it. Someone said they had to wait 20 minutes last Saturday, why did that happen? Was that, did we not have enough staff in? Or this broke again, how can we make sure that never breaks again? So yeah, often we talk to the Games Masters, I will talk to the bar staff, if it’s a busy Saturday, why is it busy? Why is it moving quickly? We need to sort that out because this causes a backlog of problems for the bar, and then, customers can feel that, so. The more relaxed and fun it is here, everyone benefits. The bar staff has a better time, the Games Masters get to run their games the way they want to, um, and the customers get to genuinely feel like they are having a good time. [...] We are still a small company, so, ya know there’s, there are a couple people between me and the Games Masters, so like some of the feedback we get, is talking to people, um, but yeah, I suppose my, my day to day engagement with the customers has dropped a lot, so [TripAdvisor] is where I would personally find stuff that is going on.*

Using the affective information provided by the customer in their ambiguous or negative TripAdvisor review as a starting point, Iain attempts to pinpoint what exactly has gone wrong by touching base with both Games Masters and Bartenders. Within his interactions and communications with their customer-facing workers then he tries to gain a sense from them about what felt off during the time the review depicted, as well as what dynamics and factors they think are at play when things are running smoothly. Here it becomes apparent that information gathering on Iain’s part is synonymous with attempting to diagnose the incident the ambiguous or negative TripAdvisor review depicts. This information he attempts to assimilate then is not only useful for deciding if or how he will respond digitally, but is additionally useful for potentially reorganising how things are managed and attempting to prevent the same situation from occurring again in the future. In Iain’s case then -- and partially to do with his positionality within the organisation -- the emergence of ambiguous or negative reviews requires that he engage in more information gathering before he feels he has the appropriate understanding of the situation required to confidently assemble a digital response.

Comparatively to Richard, Iain did not seem to have developed as concise of a ‘rule of thumb’ for what types of ambiguous or negative reviews warrant a digital response on
his part (yet). However, it did become evident within his discussions of reviews that communicated to him that past customers might have felt “slighted” that the intention behind his digital responses differed comparatively. For example, when I asked Iain about the opportunities and challenges of having their organisation’s reputation tied to the platform, and after he discussed how positive reviews are “brilliant” because people generally trust customer-generated content over their organisation’s own promotional content on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, he also described the challenges associated with the emergence of negative reviews and how he attempts to manage these dynamics via his digital responses:

IC: Because we know that [TripAdvisor] is such a impressive digital space, ya know, someone leaves us a 1 star review, we will contact them um and apologise, ya know this is our ethos, we are genuinely not trying to uh scam anyone, if you had a tough time, ya know if you didn't enjoy, there was something wrong, please have a refund, that's important, ya know, we want to be a cool place to hang out, and if someone thinks we are terrible, we will a) do everything we can to make them feel better about it, and b) everything we can do to get them to take the review down. And to be fair [TripAdvisor has] got a really good system where you comment, uh, we are then able to reply, and then that's it! They are then not able to reply to our reply. Uh, if they want to reply, they have to delete their original comment. Which is good because it means you don't get massive arguments between people, [but] it does mean our reply has to be pretty concise as well, we are not able to uh leave it open ended. Um, you have to say we've listened to you, we've heard this, if you want to contact us, please use our details and then often people will contact us separately.

KB: Okay, and have people taken down their reviews when you have handled things in this way?

IC: Absolutely, yes, see you go up and ya know, say we are sorry you had a terrible time, this is obviously, ya know, things go wrong in any business, ya know, some things breaks and it's taking an hour for someone to get their drinks, or something awful like that. Um, contact them, apologise, give them a refund, um, and then most of the time they then take the review down.

Here, we not only gain more of a sense of how the platform affordances order and govern account manager’s “digital right to respond” to reviews and thus their interactions with their previous customers on the platform, but additionally how Iain’s response is differently aimed and intended comparatively to Richard’s utilisation of this affordance. So while Richard certainly directs his apologies at the original reviewer, he is also writing his digital response under the assumption that the review will persist, which is why he also uses his response as a means to annotate the review in an effort to intervene in how it is therein
made sense of by potential, future customers. Whereas in Iain’s case, he more so directs his response at the original reviewer with the hope that if he handles the interaction properly and makes them feel differently about their organisation through his response that they may consider taking the original review down entirely. In other words, he doesn’t necessarily assume that negative reviews will persist after he responds to them. In ordering his digital “right to respond” in this way, Iain is aiming his digital response at past customers who have the option to delete their response after his response, and in doing so is also aiming his response at the performative infrastructures of the platform itself.

This difference in approach to the digital “right to respond” afforded by the TripAdvisor platform by the Department of Magic comparatively to the Potter Trail may be partially explainable by their different positionalities within the HPT scene, service-specific markets, but importantly also on the platform itself. This is because statistically speaking negative reviews are more detrimental to a newer organisation due to their typically having fewer reviews contributing to their overall average/ranking. This creates a situation in which individual customer reviews have more power to affect their reputation and ranking on the platform -- and by extension their visibility, discoverability, and attractiveness in the city. In the case of the Department of Magic then, their having a shorter tenure on the platform may very well create a situation in which Iain feels the need to be even more vigilant (comparatively to someone who has been operating longer) towards negative reviews in an effort to ensure that he is doing all in his power to keep the platform working for their organisation as a ‘promotional partner’.

What both organisational approaches demonstrate then is how digital responses to customer reviews are largely attempts to intervene in the meaning-making processes of both past customers and potential future customers who use the platform. These digital responses though don’t just have an affect on how human social actors think about their organisations though, but additionally -- and in cases where their responses prompt the original author to remove their review -- also have the capacity to alter how the platform therein calculates, ranks, orders, and makes their organisation visible on the platform. Digital responses thus can have both cosmetic and algorithmic intentions and/or resulting affects. It is not just the qualitative content of their profile then, but also how this content is measured and calculated and how it shapes the positionality of their ‘place page’ comparatively to other ‘place pages’ which gives off an important impression too. In other words, their place pages’ positionality is what makes them discoverable -- or rather gives them the capacity to be known and considered in the first place by visitors without their needing to conduct extensive research via the platform. Digital responses then are
attempts at intervening in the real and/or potential social life of TripAdvisor reviews on and beyond the platform, and thus can be conceptualised as techniques of organizational ‘impression management’ (Goffman, 2004), and as artefactual embodiments of a context in which digital media comes to stand in for them and plays a part in their capacity to attract an audience and make a living for themselves. In other words, ‘impression management’ involves enrolling and managing other materials -- and in this case, digital materials.

6.2 Responding within Working Practice to TripAdvisor Reviews

However, importantly the potential and real ‘social life’ of some ambiguous or negative TripAdvisor reviews are not merely managed digitally, but importantly are also sometimes managed within the working-practices of the organisations subject to these customer evaluations and depicted on the TripAdvisor platform. Managing reviews in this way is done in an effort to combat the possibility that such an evaluation of their service performances and environmental coordinations will occur again and thus an attempt to ensure that a similar review doesn’t emerge. In this way, these ‘impression management’ techniques are directed at their actual, future customers but additionally have implications for their ranking/ordering on the platform. For example, in my interviews with members of both the Potter Trail tour and the Department of Magic escape room, many of them spoke about reviews that had prompted their team to change up how things were performed and/or how they coordinated the environment in which they operate.

In the context of the Potter Trail tour, they had once collectively included a number of jokes about the fictional Hogwarts house Hufflepuff within their tours. These jokes were -- by definition -- never intended to be taken seriously and were based on their own deep readings of how JKR and the directors of the HP films depict this house in the canon materials. In my original interview with Richard, he mentioned how his reliance on this humour had occasionally inspired humorous push back from their tour audience, and even how one time some members of his tour audience had organised a “Hufflepuff rebellion” to try to win the most house points on his tour. In other words, these jokes appeared to them to be acting within their tours as they had always intended them to. However, a couple months after our interview together (when I was conducting participant observation and interviews with other HPT-related organisations) an ambiguous review emerged which made everyone involved with the Potter Trail aware of one tour participant who did not interpret these jokes in this same way, had taken them very personally, and notably was
using this as the rationale behind the 3 star rating of the tour experience which they authored and uploaded onto their ‘place page’ afterwards.

It was when I came back to this organisation and was interviewing some more of their tour guides later on then, that I learned about this TripAdvisor review, and in particular its affectivity -- or potential and real ‘social life’ -- and how it came to inform their collective thinking and affected their working practices. For example, in my interview with Charlotte Leandri, and when I asked her about what it's like engaging with reviews, she shared with me how this “Hufflepuff review” had actually been verbally brought up to Alex Harwood after one of his tours. She noted:

CL: Sometimes if I feel like a tour has not been good or something bad has happened, I'll kind of maybe keep an eye out to see if everything is okay. Thankfully most of the time it has been, it's been fine, but yeah. One lady, she went on the tour and then posted a very angry review and was just like -- this woman who was like 42 first off -- and then was like I went on this tour expecting to have so much fun and there was so much Hufflepuff bashing, I was so insulted and it's like, granted I'm very timid so I've taken all the Hufflepuff jokes out. But normally there are like two jokes, where at the beginning you are like “you'll notice that the wands are house colours, but we don't have yellow because no one ever wants one”. Which is fine. And then the sorting, you will go, “and Hufflepuff for all of the (pause) other children”. And everyone is like haha. And that was it, and this woman got so angry and was like this is my house and I am proud and all of this, and it's like oh my god.

KB: That seems like a testament to the fandom, like it can be so intense I’ve learned.

CL: Yeah, it really can be. It was so weird, but it was also really concerning because it was written in such an impassioned way, um that if people see that, basically we were worried that people would see that and then think like oh I actually don't want to go on this tour. And actually that almost happened, where um, so Alex had a tour where a woman came up to him at the end and was like thank you so much, this was so much fun, um, I just wanted to say like I read this really angry Hufflepuff review online and he was like yes, and she was like, I'm a Hufflepuff as well, and she had like worn a jumper and stuff, had like all the gear, and was like but I almost didn't come on this tour because it sounded so angry, but I am really really happy I did because that was such a ridiculous review. Like it was fine basically. Online can be so weird! People can post anything and then that's, thankfully nothing horrible has happened, and nobody has said like a really horrible thing, but it can like maybe, that was an example of just like ya know, sometimes people read it and we don’t realize how it can affect someone’s choice. And maybe that simple thing would have turned people away, so thankfully they decided to take a chance on this tour, and she was like actually you guys didn't bash Hufflepuffs so it's fine, and we are like, we know, thank you.
Here again we see how it isn’t only Richard who keeps an eye on their TripAdvisor ‘place page’, but how it is also monitored by tour guides -- and maybe especially after tours where they have developed an embodied sense that things didn’t go as well in an effort to ensure that they are aware of whether or not this has been similarly felt by tour participants and therein translated onto the platform. However, what I more so want to draw our attention to is how this specific review -- which Richard responded to digitally -- was also responded to by Charlotte and all of the Potter Trail’s Tour Guides within their tour coordinations and performances.

For example, when I posed some follow up questions to Richard, he noted how after this review emerged how Olivia Kashti (tour guide who also identifies with Hufflepuff) encouraged their team to start making yellow wands to distribute at the beginning of their tours. This material intervention not only helped them ensure that tour participants who identify with this Hogwarts house feel represented within their tour, but also did away with the material conditions which this joke relied on. All tour guides whom I interviewed do still continue to refer to Hufflepuff as “the house for all the [pause] other children”, however I also observed via participant observation how many tour guides now deliver this line with more care to ensure that it is registered by their tour audiences as a joke and not a “slag”. For some this means monitoring their tone, ensuring they get the timing right, and sometimes even smiling afterwards. In Charlie’s case (who like Olivia identifies with Hufflepuff), he too makes this joke, pauses, and then afterwards says how he is “allowed” to make this joke since he, himself, belongs to and identifies with this house. In this way, all Potter Trail Tour Guides now approach this one remaining Hufflepuff joke more cautiously.

As evidenced by the original excerpt from my interview with Charlotte, these modifications to how they coordinate and perform their tours since this “Hufflepuff review” emerged have been largely successful. This was made apparent to them via the in-person, verbal feedback from another Hufflepuff-identifying tour participant who mentioned how initially she was worried about coming on the tour and even considered going on another HP-related tour, but how she was glad she gave them a shot and how she came to recognise this review as “ridiculous” given her own experience of and evaluation of their tour. The success of these modifications though have also been reinforced to them by the fact that no similar reviews mentioning being “alienated” by these jokes have emerged on their TripAdvisor ‘place page’ since.
In this way, this “Hufflepuff review” enabled them to recognise the possibility that a minute facet of their tours were not consistently being interpreted by all tour participants in the way they intended, and played a part in how they went about mending this impression in their future tours. This ambiguous review then acted as a ‘thinking material’ to their team in the sense that it enabled them to reflect back on their own experiences of facilitating their tours and allowed them to identify and re-theorise the relationship between the various elements of their performances/coordinations -- in this case, physical tour props and their delivery of certain jokes -- which subtract from a “good experience” or “good time” had for certain segments of their tour audience. Such reflecting and thinking on their part then enables them to modify their management of this collective of things within their tours and allows them to attempt to differently affect and hopefully better accommodate their diverse customer base moving forward. The enactment of these modifications then are aimed at their actual, future tour audiences, but additionally have algorithmic affects in that they help them as a tour group prevent similar incidents from occurring and by extension customer reviews from being translated onto the platform. In other words, their re-ordering of these things and factors also has the capacity to affect how they are rated and ultimately ranked on the platform itself moving forward.

In their case, these algorithmic affects are certainly registered to a degree, but it didn’t appear to me that algorithmic navigation was exactly the intention behind their handling things in this way. By this, I mean that they as a tour group seemed to be more so concerned with the impression they are giving off and the experience they are providing to their actual future tour participants. In other words, they likely wouldn’t conceptualise these modifications to their tour performances/coordinations as algorithmic navigation attempts (as I am). However, importantly intentions are only one facet of our ability to affect things, and as evidenced here, how even without them, what they do within their working practices can mitigate the possibility that similar negative and/or ambiguous reviews will emerge again and by extension have the capacity to positively affect their reputation, ranking and positionality on the platform moving forward.

In the context of the Department of Magic escape rooms, some of the members I interviewed also spoke about reviews that had inspired their team to change up how things were coordinated within their working practices. For example, when I asked Iain about how he had learned to approach and engage with TripAdvisor reviews in the way he was presenting to me, he discussed a recent negative review that had emerged and had motivated them to make an environmental change within the context of their Magic Potions Tavern:
KB: Do you feel like you have had to develop any sorts of coping strategies or uh, is there ever like, do you have to just take some reviews with a grain of salt? or um, how has that been?

IC: Um, yeah, I think, ya know, I do genuinely think it’s really important not to get complacent, because sometimes you can, sometimes we get a review in, and we had one review that was: "we came in, we sat down, and no one talked to us, 1 star, awful, no one came to give us drinks, no one came to do anything" and, well ya know, it's not table service, but, ya know, that's not our system. So you are like, well that's mad, you literally just came in, sat in the corner, and waited for 20 minutes, and then left and gone 1 star. No one treated him like a king. Um, so, as a result we've put that sign on the door (points to sign) that says 'order at the bar'. So it's, ya know, you can't get complacent -- as in, you read that review, and you go this is mad, why would you ever think that? (deep breath) but I suppose, yeah, I guess we haven't made it as specifically clear, let's do, let's make a sign. So there is a placeholder sign there until we get another more permanent one made. So yeah, sometimes you have to take it with a grain of salt.

KB: So some reviews are maybe also telling in a way of something that needs to be signposted, kind of thing?

IC: Yep, absolutely.

KB: Okay, so it sounds like you have a really positive outlook on this, whereas I’ve also encountered people working in this same sector who get really frustrated with the kind of cultures around reviewing and stuff. Do you ever, uh, or, are there other times where it is harder to kind of be like this?

IC: Oh, yeah, like if I take it personally, ya know if I take off my professional hat, if I did, its abhorrent the amount of people who believe they are experts on our crafts. Like, that's mad. Um, but also, as a performer, well I find that mad as well, ya know people, if someone came and reviewed my comedy show the way they review the tavern, cause then it's like, when was the last time you performed comedy? ya know or when was the last time you worked in a bar? Obviously we are trying really hard, but if you are not going to pay attention, then whatever. So it’s going, okay, no hold on, that's not what’s going on, ya know, and you try to take back reviews, you are able to listen to the criticism, and go and sift through what is your emotional reaction, and what is, ya know, maybe actually something, some advice (laughs). Um, so yeah, I think, it depends on my mood in a day, typically I hate it, but then you have to stop and think, okay, can we avoid this? So ultimately, we can turn this from being just "people are the worst" to "they are the worst, but we still gotta do it".

KB: yeah, it sounds like another avenue where you are putting your creative cap on and problem solving.

IC: Yeah, and I think all those little, I genuinely think those little bits, ya know, attention to detail works! The original reviewer, they might not notice it, but, the next person that comes in doesn't have that problem. The person
who obviously leaves the one star review, I think is probably, and I know it sounds very rank-y, but they are a 5 star review that we could have had. Ya know, people only ever leave a 1 star review if they feel they have been slighted, so, goodness knows what happened that day when that person left that review, but it probably wasn't the thing that they were talking about, probably, I don't know, someone wasn't paying attention to the bar and then they, maybe they tried to catch someone's attention and it, I don't know what it was, but, let's not (laughs). Almost if you just think about it like a TripAdvisor review, it becomes much easier to handle. If you try to think about the motives behind people, you could be here all day.

KB: Just don't go down that rabbit hole?

IC: Yeah, exactly. (tone change) why do people? why? why? Like it was the weirdest review, we were all flabbergasted in the office, and then yeah, eventually, after all moaning and shouting about them, well okay, well, let's just put a sign up. Let's just move on and try and fix this problem, and ultimately let's be sure that this review doesn't happen again, cause we all know this is mad, but it's that numbers game. 1,000 people come in the door, if 2 of them leave you 1 star reviews, how can we stop [these same reviews] from coming in? Ya know, make it clear with a sign.

Here we gain insight into how this negative review was processed by Iain and his team over a short period of time. For example, at first this review made them all feel really annoyed that someone would leave a review like this instead of trying to resolve the issue with their bartenders during their visit. However, after they as a team allowed their more “personal” reactions to surface within their interactions with one another in the privacy of the office, they also managed to eventually locate and put on their “professional hats” and approach the review as “some advice” in disguise. However, ultimately what I want to highlight here is how this specific review -- which Iain noted he didn’t respond to digitally -- was nonetheless something which upper management responded to within their working practices.

In particular, they responded to this review by hanging up a temporary hand-written, paper sign reading “order at the bar” and by commissioning a sign-making company to make them a more permanent, metal one which would communicate the same message. Additionally, Iain was considering altering the signs nearer to the bar so that they would more clearly highlight to customers how their bar service works. In other words, they responded to this negative review by adding and altering some of the physical materiality which animates the tavern area of the venue and which has the capacity to direct the attention and behaviour of their customers. Such “signposting” is particularly important in cases where their bartenders are tied up with other customers and/or tasks and don’t get the chance to promptly inform and direct customers verbally about how things work.
Here, this negative review enabled them to recognise the possibility that they weren’t making how the bar service works as explicitly clear as they could, and in this way played a part in how they went about amending things for future customers. This review thus acted as a ‘thinking material’ to their team in the sense that it enabled them to re-examine the relationality between the materiality animating the space -- in this case, the tables used by customers, the bar area, and the lack of clear signage -- which subtract from a “good experience” or “good time” had for some customers. Such reflecting and thinking on their part then enables them to modify their management of this collective of things and allows them to attempt to differently affect customers who visit their Magic Potions Tavern in the future. These environmental modifications then are aimed at their actual, future customers, but additionally have potential algorithmic affects if/when they prevent similar incidents from occurring and by extension customer reviews from being translated onto the platform. In other words -- and similarly to the Potter Trail’s modification of some of the humour within their tours -- their re-ordering of these things and factors has the capacity to affect how they are rated and ranked on the platform itself moving forward.

However, unlike the Potter Trail, these algorithmic affects are more so explicitly registered and even hoped for. In other words, Iain’s environmental response also has algorithmic intentions. This is made implicit in his comment about how the customer who left them the one star review initially is “a 5 star review that [they] could have had”, and more explicit in his hoping that by putting up this sign that this will prevent a similar review from emerging again and by extension will help them succeed in the “numbers game” which assembles their ranking on the platform. In other words, it appears that Iain is more sharply attuned to the relationality between modifications they make within their working practices and algorithmic navigation, and likely would agree with my referring to these practices as such. However, again intentions are only one facet of our capacity to affect things, and can additionally come up short when it comes to mitigating the possibility that similar negative and/or ambiguous reviews will emerge again in the future, and by extension may not be enough to positively affect their reputation, ranking, and positionality on the platform moving forward. For example, when I checked in with Iain later on he spoke about another review which had emerged which was very similar to this one.

Here -- and similarly to my discussion in the previous section -- it isn’t so much ‘algorithmic intentions’ in and of themselves which I think are important to highlight in addition to ‘algorithmic affects’, but more so Iain’s sharper attunement to the algorithmic processes of the platform. This is because Iain -- in addition to other newcomers to the HPT scene whom I interviewed -- appeared to have distinctive ‘felt experiences’ of the
platform comparatively to those who were more established. This became evident to me within the anxiety they expressed about both potential and real negative reviews, their all being more aware of their competition who rank above them on the platform, as well as their discussing the importance of not becoming “complacent” towards the actual feedback which emerged. While Potter Trail tour guides certainly harboured some anxieties about the possibility that bad tour days would be felt by tour participants and potentially translated onto the platform, Richard didn’t appear to share these same anxieties exactly. Indeed, when I followed up with him after our initial interview and asked more directly about any “uneasiness” he experiences related to their dependence on TripAdvisor as a ‘promotional partner’, he didn’t seem very worried about their ratio of negative and/or ambiguous reviews to positive reviews, but instead noted how his anxiety is more so related to how TripAdvisor can change the performative infrastructures and thus the “rules of play”, and in doing so how the company can add ever-new criteria which they have to fulfil in order to maintain their organisation’s visibility and discoverability on the platform and within the city. In this context then, it may be wise for us to consider “how systems and formations of power lead certain people to feel certain things more acutely than others” (Beer, 2016, p. 203).

Based on these observations about their different ‘felt experiences’ of the platform, I think that it’s possible that those who pioneer particular touristic services within a city may also come to generate some of the norms and standards in terms of how similar services are therein evaluated on the platform, and may have a hand in generating -- in addition to algorithms -- some of the more informal “rules of play” which are significant to how newcomers attempt to bring themselves into being and navigate the platform. It isn’t just the mechanics of the platform then, but the standards and norms of the service-specific markets which have -- via customer evaluations/reviews -- become “embodied in a concrete, non-verbal manner in the network of relations” (Law, 1994, p. 20). Meaning that algorithmic navigation is likely a much more complex endeavour for those new to this realm.

Developing and establishing one’s organisational reputation/ranking -- comparatively to attempting to preserve and maintain one’s reputation/ranking -- then may involve or even demand more of an attunement to how the platform ranks and orders them, other similar services, and may very well create a situation where in order to continue operating they can’t afford to not have and use such an attunement of the ways that algorithmic navigation is intimately entangled with their ordering of the collective of things and factors understood to be important to assembling a “good experience” or “good
time”. In other words, more is at stake when they as an organisation don’t use the content which emerges as ‘thinking materials’ (and by extension the platform as a ‘thinking partner’) to mitigate similar incidents and reviews from emerging again. This may very well mean that positionality within the HPT scene, service-specific markets, and on the platform itself may very well contribute to different ‘felt experiences’ of the content which emerges and of the platform dynamics more broadly, and may very well be important to recognize and consider when we are trying to make sense of why there are slightly different attunements, intentions, and importantly techniques mobilised by organisations in an effort to affect their ranking, visibility, discoverability, and attractiveness on the platform and by extension in the cities where they operate.

Ultimately, what both organizational approaches demonstrate is how reordering their management of the collective of things and factors based on the specific qualitative content of ambiguous and/or negative reviews which emerge on their place pages are largely attempts to differently affect the experiences and evaluations of their actual future customers. These reorderings though don’t just have an affect on how human social actors experience their service though, but additionally -- and in cases where their modifications mitigate the potentiality that similar reviews emerge again -- also have the capacity to affect how the platform therein calculates, ranks, orders, and makes their organisational ‘place page’ visible on the platform. In other words, responding to reviews within their service performances and environmental coordinations can have algorithmic intentions and/or resulting affects. Re-orderings then are attempts at intervening in the real and/or potential social life of TripAdvisor reviews on and beyond the platform, and thus can be conceptualised as techniques of organisational ‘impression management’ (Goffman, 2004) and as practical embodiments of a context in which the impression they make in face to face service encounters can stick around and shape the impression they are giving off through other means. In this way, the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor involves also managing the ‘materially heterogeneous’ collective of things and factors which may come to be depicted ambiguously or negatively on the platform via the qualitative content of customer evaluations translated onto the platform. Meaning that as Iain suggests, “attention to detail” does indeed have the capacity to “work” or rather act on the performative infrastructures of the platform itself.
6.3 Algorithmic Navigation as Complex, Collective, and More-Than-Digital Endeavour

In this chapter, I attended to a second clustering of socio-technological ‘techniques’ developed and mobilised by two touristic organisations which comprise Edinburgh’s HPT scene in an effort to maintain TripAdvisor as a reliable ‘promotional partner’. These techniques are concerned with responding digitally and within working practice to reviews which are translated on to their organisational ‘place pages’ after face-to-face service encounters. Within my thick descriptions of how the Potter Trail and Department of Magic encounter, engage with, and respond to positive, ambiguous, and negative TripAdvisor reviews, I have demonstrated how this content takes on an intra-organizational ‘social life’ in the sense that it shapes all of their professional thinking and feeling, and may go on to inform how they attempt to intervene in and manage the affectivity -- or potential and/or real social life -- of this content on and beyond the platform, and as it relates to their reputation as an organisation.

In the case of ambiguous or negative reviews which prompt the “voices of” these organizations to exercise their digital “rights to respond”, these digital responses may be conceptualised as attempts at intervening in the meaning-making processes of both their past customers who translated these evaluations onto the platform, and potential future customers who use the platform to “make nuanced choices” (Hardey, 2007, p. 880) about where to go and what to do when they travel to and inhabit the city of Edinburgh. Whereas, in the case of ambiguous or negative reviews which prompt their organizations to rethink and reorder the materially heterogeneous collective of things and factors which they come to understand (via these reviews) to have contributed to such an evaluation/review in the first place, these modifications to their working practices may be conceptualised as attempts at differently affecting their actual, future customers’ experiences, and in doing so giving off a different impression of their service and organisation.

Both types of responses demonstrate how organisational ‘impression management’ is a more-than-human endeavour in the sense that its concerned with how they come across to human social actors via the platform and within their face-to-face service encounters, but additionally in the sense that their coordinations of one realm may come to have implications for the other. Importantly, and due to the ways that their coordination of both not only comes to shape how human social actors view them, but may additionally come to shape how the platform itself therein calculates, ranks, orders, and makes their touristic organisation visible in the city, this clustering of techniques may also be conceptualised as a facet of how they as organisations are able to live with and how they
attempt to thrive in a competitive context in which TripAdvisor governs and acts as a key "ordering force". In other words, these two types of responses to ambiguous or negative customer reviews may also be conceptualised as algorithmic navigation attempts.

As evidenced by the clusterings of socio-technological techniques I outlined in both this chapter and within the previous one, the algorithmic navigation of locative media platforms -- like TripAdvisor -- is a complex, collective, and more-than-digital endeavour for touristic organisations mapped on the platform. It is a complex endeavour in the sense that it is based largely on the subjective evaluations of the quality of their service by a number of different touristic types. Algorithmic navigation is additionally a complex endeavour in the sense that it requires that they attune themselves to both algorithmic rules and market-specific standards and norms. Whereas, algorithmic navigation is a collective endeavour in the sense that it requires organisation by managers and importantly the enrolling of customer-facing workers into things. This involves having them prompt customers for reviews, but also monitoring the emergence of new reviews and a willingness to occasionally adjust their working practices based on said reviews.

Here, the Potter Trail serves as a stand out example because the financial ordering of the organisation creates a situation in which Tour Guides are given a lot of autonomy, feel as though they are fairly compensated for their work, and because of this appear to be more attentive, caring towards, and invested in preserving and maintaining the organization’s reputation and ranking on the platform. Whereas at the Department of Magic, while Games Master’s are certainly given a lot of autonomy, few felt as though they were being fairly compensated for the variety of tasks and responsibilities expected of them. On top of this, it seemed that some of their pursuit of TripAdvisor reviews wasn’t as much to do with helping the organization develop and establish its reputation and ranking on the platform, but more to do with accumulating status in an effort to defend themselves against micromanagement by their superiors. In this way, and maybe another reason which makes algorithmic navigation a complex endeavour, is that its success appears to also be tied to how their employees feel about the organisation they work for and represent. And here, feelings towards their employer appear to be intimately entangled with the financial ordering of their work.

Importantly though, I don’t just mean collective in terms of the human social actors enrolled within touristic organisations, but also in the sense that it requires the coordination and management of a collective of non-humans and more-than-human social actors as well. This is evident not only when we recognise that touristic work isn’t just performative, but that it also requires coordination of the environment in which they as service
assemblers mediate and seek to enhance. But additionally is evident in the ways that reviews themselves are engaged with and decoded, and how both HPT-related organisations respond to some of them within their working practices by reordering the materially heterogeneous collective of things and factors which appear to be contributing to the conditions of such an evaluation/review, and as something which needs to be addressed in an effort to try and improve their reputation and rank on the platform.

Finally, the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor is a more-than-digital endeavour. By this I mean that it requires organisationally internalising the platform logics, market-specific norms, and feedback from one’s customer base, and mobilising these not only within their organisation’s digital response, but additionally within their management of face-to-face encounters with customers/potential reviewers and within their environmental coordinations. In other words, algorithmic navigation requires managing face-to-face encounters -- and what we would tend to consider being non-digital facets of touristic work -- which locative platforms come to depict, mediate, and govern.
Chapter 7:  
Platform Governance, Algorithmic Navigation & Touristic Work

In the last three chapters I detailed how between 2018 and 2019 -- during when Edinburgh became better known as a HP touristic destination and when a more fully fledged touristic scene emerged -- how the locative media platform TripAdvisor acted not only as a way of bringing one’s HP-related service into being as a touristic option, but additionally became a key site of and material for competing. For already established organisations like the Potter Trail tour, their digitally entangled reputation became something which they had to work to preserve in an effort to maintain their place in Edinburgh’s broader tourism landscape. Whereas newcomers like the Department of Magic escape rooms had to work even harder in order to develop their digital reputation and establish a place for themselves within this same cultural-economic setting.

Both pursuits required ongoing work on the part of the touristic organisations mapped on the platform, and in particular required that they engaged with the platform as a ‘thinking partner’ in their efforts to maintain it as a ‘promotional partner’. This observation informs my working-conceptualisation of TripAdvisor as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’. In what follows, I will elaborate on this working conceptualisation. After this, I will further develop my argument that the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor may be conceptualised as a form of ‘affective ordering’. Finally, I take stock of what both of these conceptualisations mean for our theorisation of touristic work, and reflect on the types of professional subjectivities locative media platforms appear to be shaping and propping up within this setting.

7.1 TripAdvisor as a ‘Geo-Pastoral Technology’

In an effort to elaborate on my working conceptualisation of TripAdvisor as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’ I want to focus our attention again on the Potter Trail tour, and in particular the trajectory of their relationship with the platform. I also include another organisation whose entanglement with TripAdvisor I have only alluded to so far, but who have also had a relationship with the platform spanning the time periods significant to the development of Edinburgh’s HPT ordering. This other perspective is important because it enables us to acknowledge the part played by wider contexts in shaping organisations’ working relationships with the platform. This other perspective though also helps me specify my conceptualisation and enables us to perceive its relevance beyond the type of relationality with the platform that I have centred in this thesis. After all, and as I mentioned...
in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, even touristic organisations who don’t prioritise TripAdvisor as a ‘promotional partner’ still came to engage with the platform as a ‘thinking partner’ at particular moments in their development. In other words, this particular quality of their relationship with the platform was consistent across all HPT organisations in my original sample -- even those who do not consider the platform to be a reliable ‘promotional partner’.

As described in Chapter 1, the Potter Trail tour’s working-relationship with TripAdvisor began in 2012 when its founder Stuart Young became ready to bring the tour he had assembled into being as a touristic option and as a means to try to promote it. Stuart knew that being retrievable on the platform wasn’t going to be good enough though, so after setting up their ‘place page’ on the platform he turned his attention to promoting the tour in person on Edinburgh’s Royal Mile. This was done in an effort to attract and develop an audience, and is something he engaged in a couple times each week for five months until TripAdvisor began being reliable to him (and the other guides he had brought on) as a ‘promotional partner’. Stuart then is who initially introduced TripAdvisor into the working-practices of the organisation (via generating their ‘place page’ and designing the tour script in a way where they were prompting for reviews at the end). More than this though, he mobilised the platform within his own working-practices by prompting his tour participants for reviews at the end. These efforts enabled the platform to begin standing in for them in similar types of touristic discovery interactions, allowing them to stop promoting their tours in person without sacrificing the number of tour takers in attendance. In other words, Stuart not only introduced the platform into their working practices, but also began establishing the tour’s reputation here before he stepped down and handed the management reins over to Becky Price.

In my Interview with Becky when I asked her about what it was like managing TripAdvisor when she was in charge between 2013 and 2014, she admitted that she was not exactly sure what to do with the platform then -- other than leaving it to “accumulate reviews”. She wasn’t giving herself enough credit here, because she was indeed still managing TripAdvisor by adapting this part of the script to her own tour and continuing to prompt her tour participants for reviews. Additionally she was managing the platform by training all of their new guides to do the same. During her time as manager, she consolidated the platform in their working practices and further developed their reputation on the platform before passing the management reins over to Richard Duffy and Will Naameh. They too maintained the platform within the working practices of the organisation and helped to further develop the tour’s reputation on the platform. However, they also had
to learn to use the platform a bit differently in an effort to navigate Edinburgh becoming better known as a HPT destination -- and in particular to manage increased demand and competition between 2017 and 2019.

In Chapter 4 I introduced my conceptualisation of TripAdvisor as a ‘thinking partner’ by drawing on an excerpt from my interview with Becky. In this excerpt she discussed some of the TripAdvisor feedback which they had received and which she had used as ‘thinking materials’ to adjust her facilitation of her tours when demand began increasing. Here, Becky noted how they didn’t “use to” have to worry about a lot of these same practicalities. Importantly though, she also implied that they didn’t also always have to engage with the platform in this same kind of way. This pattern also emerged in my interview with Richard Duffy. For example, when I initially asked Richard about whether any feedback they have received via TripAdvisor had informed changes to how they manage things since he took on management responsibilities in 2014, he noted how he couldn’t really think of an instance like this and how for the most part reviews mostly just confirm to them that how they are managing things is working and what to keep up doing. In their case then, it appears that between 2012 and 2017 that TripAdvisor acted mostly as a more mundane ‘thinking partner’ to the Potter Trail in the sense that it communicated and reinforced that how they were doing things was working, developing their confidence in their service performances and environmental coordinations.

However, when I posed some follow up questions to Richard and even re-asked this question about TripAdvisor informing changes within their working-practices, he noted that ambiguous reviews received when demand had increased had informed changes in how they were managing their tour sizes. Additionally, in our original interview he had mentioned (in regards to 2017 and on) how he had started using the platform to keep an eye on their new competition. In other words, the platform appears to have enabled Richard to keep an eye on their own organisation of things relative to their competitions’ organisation of things. Here, the emergence of more demand and competition associated with Edinburgh becoming better known as a HPT destination marked a change in their orientation to the platform and marks when the platform also began being engaged with as a more serious ‘thinking partner’.

In this way, the consistent feature of their relationship with TripAdvisor is that it acts as an ‘environmental technology’ (Foucault, 2008) and potential ‘promotional partner’ (Barreneche 2012a; 2012b; Rose-Redwood, 2006). However -- and as evidenced by my thick descriptions of two clusterings of socio-technological techniques in Chapter 5 and 6 -- this visibility and discoverability which the platform affords isn’t a one-time
accomplishment, and is something which they perceived to be at risk of not being accomplishable when new HP literary tours began emerging in the city. It was during this time that the more ‘pastoral’ capacities of the technology began to be realised and utilised by the tour organisation to grapple with the practical realities of this new context they found themselves in.

Here I use ‘pastoral’ as a descriptor to not only draw our attention to the personalised programme (Foucault, 1982; 2007) the platform aggregates and assembles for them via their dashboard and ‘place page’. But importantly because the turning point (as they each narrated it for me) in their interactions with the specific content of ambiguous or negative reviews -- from annoyance to engaging with this content as ‘thinking materials’ -- was almost always a second guessing of their original convictions and a ‘confession’ (sometimes on the platform and in response to their customers’ review, but always to themselves) that something was off in how they were previously managing things and that a re-ordering of things may be necessary (Foucault, 2012). For example, almost all members of this organisation had stories about how they were thinking about and approaching their tours before and after the ‘Hufflepuff review’. Their engagement with this review represented a pivotal moment in their management of things. In some situations then, the platform becomes something that they seek or receive counsel from and in doing so, the platform acts as a ‘pastoral’ technology which can be used in their processes of transforming their situations in ways which also improves their representation on the platform.

This transformation in the Potter Trail’s relationship with TripAdvisor is reminiscent of another relationship with the platform that I learned about when I was conducting my ethnographic fieldwork. For example, in my interview with the owner of the Elephant House cafe -- the first venue to claim HP associations -- he shared with me that before 2017 he hadn’t “claimed” his venue’s ‘place page’ because the reviews “just made [him] really angry”. A ‘place page’ for this venue had been generated and was accumulating customer reviews since 2008, meaning that for nine years he hadn’t enrolled in the platform and wasn’t acting as manager of their ‘place page’. In 2017 though, and when Edinburgh became better known as a HPT destination and his venue started receiving more demand, he decided to finally claim the page and enrol in TripAdvisor. However, it wasn’t until after the venue underwent a major renovation in 2018 that he decided to start exercising his digital ‘right to respond’. Interestingly, this renovation appears to have applied some of the critiques as well as highlights the features that were praised via customer reviews on TripAdvisor between 2008 and 2018. This observation -- which is
informed by the participant observation I conducted in this venue both before and after the remodel, as well as how he himself explained this remodel -- suggests that even when he wasn’t engaging with the platform as a manager of their ‘place page’, that this content still stuck with him and went on to inform how he went about directing the remodel of the venue.

However, the platform also acted as a more explicit ‘thinking partner’ within his own narrative of things. For example, in our interview he noted how since the increase in demand how the venue had been consistently receiving reviews which used its busyness and the sometimes 15 minute wait as a rationale for negative or ambiguous reviews. When these types of reviews first started emerging, he assumed that tourists were being unreasonable and would even sometimes exercise his digital ‘right to respond’ to say so. However, eventually someone left a review that shifted his thinking on things. This reviewer had described these same circumstances, but had additionally made a comment about how they were struggling to get the customer-facing staff to communicate to them about how much longer the wait would be. This elaboration on the situation helped him realise what wasn’t working about this situation previously and inspired him to develop a new, more communicative protocol for when a line forms in the venue. He reflected on this instance by noting how TripAdvisor can certainly be “a pain”, but how it can also sometimes provide him with some “advice in disguise” and thus with some of the materials necessary to prevent this same sort of situation -- and by extension a review -- from emerging again. A sentiment which isn’t so different from the one expressed by Iain Campbell of the Department of Magic escape rooms and which I highlighted at the end of the previous chapter.

As noted before, the reason I have not centred this other organization previously is because they don’t prioritise TripAdvisor as a ‘promotional partner’. However, I would like to suggest that the owner’s transformed orientation to the platform starting in 2017 and especially his beginning to engage with the platform as a ‘thinking partner’ demonstrates the power and influence of TripAdvisor as an ‘environmental technology’. In other words, even touristic organisations who don’t prioritise the platform still find themselves needing to attend to the content which emerges on it and have even learned that by doing so at important moments in their development they can benefit and even transform their situation on the platform for the better. Like the Potter Trail, we see again how the pastoral capacities of the platform are always present, but how they become more explicitly realised through ‘confession’ and mobilised through (Foucault, 2012) reordering their management of things.
In the context of my research then, I understand touristic locative media platforms as technologies that mobilize and make possible a style of governance that is both environmental and pastoral in nature. Put another way, I understand these technological interventions as governing ‘geo-pastorally’ in settings where they are mobilised. Here, I use ‘geo’ to denote how these interventions order social and territorial space and function as technologies of spatial production and management’ (Rose-Redwood, 2006). Whereas I use ‘pastoral’ to denote how the ordering of ‘user subjects’ and ‘mapped subjects’ is increasingly affective and personalized via profiling of users and social space. For the ‘user subject’, the ‘spatial ontology’ of the platform provides them with “a form of secured environment that delineates a horizon of possibility that frames experience” (Barreneche, 2012a, p. 340) via “a modulation of the relationship between [them] and [their] environment though ‘affective calculation’ and the modulation of affectivity -- perception of place” (pp. 336-337). Whereas for the ‘mapped-subject’, this ‘spatial ontology’ renders them (in)visible based on these algorithmic calculations, or rather whether or not interactions with their service “mobilises an affective response in the form of further acts of communication” (Barreneche, 2012b, p. 10) with the platform (i.e. ordered/ranked according to their affective claim to attention) by ‘user subjects’.

When cultural-economic actors become ‘users’ of these platforms, they are given access to data and information unique to their geocoded venue (a personalized programme if you will), as well as afforded tools which enable them to track and reflect on their encounters with visitors and the provision of their service. Additionally though, they may use what lies beyond their own ‘place page’ to keep an eye on those organisations they are competing against. In the case of cultural economic actors involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene, utilizing the platform to aid their thinking and using this service-specific information to alter or highlight particular facets of their service performances or environmental coordinations is experienced as important to their ability to ‘affect’ their positionality on the platform. In this way, these platforms provide avenues that facilitate their (supposed) empowerment as ‘mapped subjects’ by allowing certain actions while excluding others, and in this way shapes a field of possible choices and actions for touristic organizations by providing them with meaning for their activities and an understanding of themselves as ‘mapped subjects’. These ‘environmental technologies’ then represent a “permanent intervention in the daily conduct, in the management of lives” (Foucault, 2007, p. 154) for touristic ‘mapped subjects’ and have implications for how they bring themselves into being, manage their presence, as well as the user-subject generated content which accumulates on their associated ‘place pages’ on these platforms. In this
way, this governance is ‘pastoral’ in the sense that it ‘orders souls and lives’ and functions as ‘technologies of subjectification’.

In sum, touristic locative platforms may be usefully conceptualized as ‘geo-pastoral technologies’ due to the ways that they assemble the environment in which both tourists (‘user subjects’) and cultural-economic actors (‘mapped subjects’) move about and operate, but also in the sense that they provide each with affordances and tools for bringing themselves into being and understanding themselves as spatial and mapped subjects. Here combining these two Foucauldian inspired descriptors with a Latourian conceptualisation of ‘technology’ enables us to “inject technology more forcefully” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 153) as an actant -- or ‘social partner’ (Valkonen, 2010) -- into the process of ‘governmentality’ by touristic tech companies and of ‘caring for’ ones’ touristic organisations’ reputation and maintaining or improving its’ visibility, discoverability, and attractiveness within the touristic landscape.

7.2 Algorithmic Navigation of TripAdvisor as ‘Affective Ordering’

In Chapter 2 when I suggested that (pre)modern travel handbooks and guidebooks should be considered in a genealogy of locative media platforms due to the ways that they mobilised historically specific spatial ontologies, I demonstrated how TripAdvisor (and other locative media platforms) increasingly rank and order touristic objects embedded in the landscape according to their affective claim to attention -- or rather, whether or not interactions with this geocoded object leads to further interactions/acts of communication with the platform. As Carlos Barreneche (2012a) notes, the spatial ontologies of locative media platforms have implications for what becomes visible and what is hidden from sight. In this section I want to extend this observation and suggest that these spatial ontologies have implications for how exactly touristic objects become visible and for how exactly ‘mapped subjects’ may go on to exercise agency and attempt to navigate the performative infrastructures of locative media within this context of platformed, geo-pastoral governance.

At the end of Chapter 6, I argued that the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor is complex, collective, and a more-than-digital endeavour. I want to add another dimension to this by arguing that it is also an affective endeavour. I will do this by drawing out and bringing together the breadcrumbs that I have been laying down throughout Chapter 5 and 6 in my descriptions of the two clusterings of socio-technological techniques. Within these descriptions I have already begun to use the language of affect, however these socio-technological techniques may also be considered affective insofar as they have
contributed to both organisations being algorithmically awarded the TripAdvisor 'Travellers Choice Award' during and after the time I was systematically assembling data for this project. This award not only provides them with a badge that distinguishes them from those without the award, but also renders them more visible and discoverable on the platform. Next, I will elaborate on the affective dimensions of these socio-technological techniques by drawing on scholastic work that elaborates on ‘affect theory’.

The first clustering of socio-technological techniques which I grappled with in Chapter 5 were related to how tourist-facing workers who work for either the Potter Trail tour or the Department of Magic escape rooms facilitate and attempt to assemble a “good experience” or “good time” for service participants, as well as related to how they prompt for reviews at the end of these encounters. In regards to the former task, I described how both Tour Guides and Games Masters adapt the scripts provided to them and how they make them their own, but additionally how they will sometimes adjust them based on the in person feedback they are picking up on in their interactions with service participants. Additionally both types of work rely on improvisation and humour as a means to smooth the unexpected things and happenings which emerge within these encounters and/or within the broader environment -- and which they perceive as having the power to potentially disrupt the relational atmosphere they have begun establishing within their interactions and performances. Both of these observations inform my sense that this work isn’t only performative, but additionally requires the coordination and management of the natural, physical, social, and cultural environment in which these encounters occur.

Both of these observations also suggest that these touristic encounters may be usefully conceptualised as ‘affective arrangements’ (Slaby, 2019) which are comprised of an array of people, things, artefacts, spaces, discourses, behaviours, expressions, and other materials that “coalesce into a coordinated formation of mutual affecting and being affected” (p. 110). Here, and central to these arrangements is the tourist-facing worker who attempts to channel and modulate affective relations in a recurrent way. As I’ve noted though, this isn’t done through purely social means -- or through ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) -- but also through their management of non-human and more-than-human things, factors, and forces. Their arrangements of all of these heterogeneous materials can thus engender a ‘relational affect’ and may generate a particular ‘affective atmosphere’ (Anderson, 2014) which is “capable of expanding into their surroundings by incorporating new elements” (Slaby, 2019, p. 110). In this way, “there is always more going on than merely the affectedness or affective experience of an individual actor or an interacting dyad viewed in isolation” (p. 110).
The concept of ‘affective arrangement’ (Slaby, 2019) then also lends itself nicely to making sense of the unpredictable ‘social life’ of tourist-facing workers’ performances and coordinations, and in particular how the affective experiences of individual actors may go on to affect that organisations’ positionality on the platform. This unpredictable ‘social life’ may also help to explain why exactly some touristic organisations may attempt to intervene in and exercise more control over the ‘social lives’ of their touristic arrangements. For example, in Chapter 5 I described how both the Potter Trail and Department of Magic have enrolled their tourist-facing workers into their attempts to manage TripAdvisor by having them prompt their service participants for reviews at the end of these encounters. This involves their attempting to translate the fleeting nature of these affects generated into something more, and in particular into something which “leaves[s] a residue, a lasting impression” and can be “retained, to accumulate, to form dispositions and thus shape subjectivities” (Watkins, 2010, p. 26) of those who also use the TripAdvisor platform to design and improvise their travel itineraries. I have previously termed this process ‘affective translation’, but it may also be thought of as a kind of “actor-networking” of affects, where “actors, human and non-human, and their explicit self-interests, are encountered, redefined, aligned and enrolled, in support of a technology that is then adapted to uphold that support” (Sage et al., 2020, p. 348).

However, if this translation or ‘actor-networking’ work “fails to enrol an encountered new actor, or does not hold existing actors in stable alignment, the technology cannot travel, or will turn into something different” (Law, 2002, p. 93). In other words, not all affective translations are supportive, may feel disciplinary, and may require further work on the part of ‘mapped subjects’ to mend things in their attempts to maintain the support of the TripAdvisor platform. In the case of the two HPT-related touristic organisations whom I centred in Chapter 6 this took the form of assembling a digital response to negative or ambiguous reviews, and in doing so attempting to intervene in how the content of this review affects the impression they are giving off to both the past user subject who left the review and to potential, future user subjects who use the platform. These digital responses can be affective in the sense that they move the user-subject who authored the review to remove it, and in these cases can additionally affect how the organisation is ranked on the platform. Digital responses then may be conceptualized as attempts at ‘affective management’ in the sense that they are aimed at “smooth[ing] out the rough edges of digital life” (Stark and Crawford, 2015, p. 1), but may also have affects which extend beyond the digital realm.
In other cases this mending work involved using the qualitative content of the negative or ambiguous review to identify and re-theorise the relationality between elements of their service performances and/or environmental coordinations, and ultimately to mobilise re-orderings of these things. This work is aimed at their actual future customers but also has implications for how the platform ranks and orders them in cases where their re-orderings prevent similar reviews from emerging again. This is also a kind of ‘affective management’, but instead of being pursued digitally, it is pursued by adjusting their arrangement of the “multiplicity of elements in terms of how they coalesce locally into a concise formation of affecting and being affected” (Slaby, 2019, p. 110), with the understanding that these rearrangements can have affects which extend beyond the local realm.

In this context, TripAdvisor reviews can be thought of as ‘affective content’ -- not only in the sense that they are evidence of how they as tourist-facing workers and/or as an organisation have affected the experiences of user-subjects, but also in the sense that this content goes on to affect the organisation mapped on the platform. The qualitative content of reviews can, as I’ve demonstrated, affect how cultural-economic actors feel and think about, as well as how they go on to manage their performances and environmental coordinations moving forward. It isn’t just the qualitative content, but how this content is measured, calculated, and how it comes to assemble ‘affective measures’ (Beer, 2016) which may “lead individuals to self-monitor, to pre-empt the systems, to play the game, to act before being measured” (p. 210) in an attempt to shape the impression they are giving off within encounters with tourists, navigate the performative infrastructures of the platform, and maintain the support of the platform as a ‘promotional partner’.

I argue then that the working practices associated with attempting to live with and thrive in a context where TripAdvisor governs -- what I have termed algorithmic navigation -- can be understood as a form of ‘affective ordering’. In the case of the two organisations I have centred in this thesis, this ‘affective ordering’ involves: attempting to translate affects onto the platform; attending to the content which accumulates on the platform; and sometimes assembling a digital response and/or re-ordering the collective of things and factors which are understood to be preventing them from assembling a “good experience” and in doing so attempting to differently affect future touristic audiences. Importantly there are other ‘affective orderings’ of TripAdvisor, as evidenced by the other HPT-related organisations in my original purposive sample who don’t prioritize the platform and have different approaches and working practices when it comes to managing the platform. This term, ‘affective ordering’ then is intended to capture how digital locative media is managed.
“through and with affects” (Sage et al., 2020, p. 346), as well as how affects are managed by mapped subjects and how this management affects their positionality on the platform. In sum, the algorithmic navigation of locative media platforms by mapped-subjects appears to be a complex, collective, and more-than-digital endeavour that requires ordering affective relations in recurrent ways in support of a technology that is then adapted to uphold that support.

7.3 Touristic Work as Collective, TripAdvisor as a ‘Social Partner’ & ‘Mapped Subjectivities’

By using Bruno Latour’s (1993; 1999) concept of ‘collective’ as a “methodological guideline” (Valkonen, 2010, p. 165) for investigating the “shifting network” (p.169) where social practices, cultural things and objects, natural and social factors, unique circumstances, and technological devices and media “interact to make things possible -- or not possible” (p. 169) within the setting of the city and the escape room, I have illuminated which ways TripAdvisor is manifested in practices of accommodating tourists and how the platform becomes a part of that work. In particular, I have demonstrated how locative media platforms are intimately entangled within the provision of touristic services and the performance, coordination, and management of related work. More than this though, I have shown how locative media platforms are involved in the production of the environment within which these services are assembled and this work enacted. In doing so, the platform draws together and makes possible a number of interrelationships which help to establish some of the rules, norms, and conditions in which touristic organisations involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene bring themselves into being and make/maintain a place for themselves within the cultural-economic landscape of the city.

Clearly, TripAdvisor is not just a ‘theatrical prop’ or ‘instrument of expression’, nor is it merely a facet of the ‘backdrop’ which makes little difference to the conduct of touristic working practice. TripAdvisor should be understood as a ‘mediator’ (Latour, 2005) of touristic working practice, and in turn touristic work needs to be conceptualised as being tied up in a “whole world of tourist[ic] things for a considerable period of time” (Franklin, 2003, p. 97) and by extension as being enacted within “the realm where humans and non-human (technological) actors live and work together” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 151) as ‘social partners’ (Valkonen, 2010). As evidenced by both the Potter Trail’s and the Department of Magic’s reliance on the platform as a ‘promotional partner’, and their using the platform as an occasional ‘thinking partner’, these interrelationships between humans
and non-human technologies *matter* and “produce[s] effects” (Franklin, 2003, p. 98) -- and I would argue ‘affects’ -- that have consequences.

These interrelationships then ought to interest us, but more than this should be integral to our conceptualisations and theorisations of this work. While I cannot take credit for translating Latour’s (1993, 1999) concept of ‘collective’ over to tourism studies, after using it within this project I agree with Jarno Valkonen (2010) that its advantage does indeed lie in its enabling us to “earnestly” (p. 177) take into account non-human actors and in doing so allows us to “analyse the practical and material realisation of the discursive conditions regulating” (p. 177) touristic services such as literary walking tours and magic-themed escape room experiences. Touristic work is no doubt ‘interactive service’ and ‘customer service’ work, but it’s important to remember that it also involves physical and affective interactions with nature, culture, technology, and other types of unique circumstances and that these interrelationships come to set conditions and demands for this work, and in doing so shape it. Additionally, and in the case of the cultural-economic actors I came in contact with during my ethnographic field work, these unique coming togethers of non-human and more-than-human things and factors may also become translated onto their touristic organisations’ TripAdvisor ‘place page’ in the form of negative or ambiguous reviews, if/when they are *felt* by service participants and not handled with ease and professionalism.

For example, the Potter Trail has received ambiguous reviews in cases where they haven’t guided tour participants *close enough* to certain HP touristic objects embedded in the landscape due to the rain (and their wanting to keep tour participants as dry as possible), but also in cases where their tours have been staged *too close* to other tours and/or construction happening in the city. In this way, one of the pastoral affordances of the platform is its capacity to direct their attention as an organisation to the “shifting network” (Valkonen, 2010, p. 169) of social practices, cultural things and objects, natural and social factors, and unique circumstances which interact and “coalesce locally into a concise formation of affecting and being affected” (Slaby, 2019, p. 110) during their services performances. In doing so, the platform provides them with the materials to *identify* and *re-theorise* the relationality between various elements of ‘the collective’ (Latour, 1993; Latour, 1999) and to adjust their management and orchestration of these things in their efforts to *differently affect* future touristic audiences. Here then, we see how TripAdvisor comes to mediate and govern ‘the collective’ (Latour, 1993; Latour, 1999), but how it also becomes a part of it, and in its becoming so, an interrelationship which needs
to be orchestrated and managed (in addition to these other types of interrelationships) in order to maintain their touristic organisations in time and space.

These human, non-human, and more-than-human interrelationships which TripAdvisor makes possible, are important to understanding the types of professional subjectivities which emerge in and exist within Edinburgh’s HPT scene, Edinburgh’s wider touristic and cultural-economic landscape, and even beyond and in other regions where the platform mediates and governs. I am going to be cautious in giving the platform too much explaining power beyond Edinburgh’s HPT scene, since I can only assume that there are numerous other unique mediating factors and even “assemblages of relationships which have consequences” (Franklin, 2003, p. 98) for the formation of professional subjectivities in these other contexts. However, I argue that subjectivities are relational and hybrid (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 160), and in this way are formed through not only our interactions with other humans, but also non-humans and more-than-human social actors.

In the case of Edinburgh’s HPT scene, it appears that TripAdvisor and the socio-technological configurations of relations it makes possible may very well co-create, reward, and prop up mapped subjects who make their organizational interests as they relate to the platform more-or-less explicit via prompting their customers for reviews and/or via designing their services, experiences, and/or venues in ways which inspire customers to translate their affective experiences onto the platform. Additionally TripAdvisor appears to be rewarding mapped subjects who are sensitive, responsive, and adaptable to the data and content which accumulates on their ‘place page’. Easy access to the ‘place pages’ of their competitors may encourage mapped-subjects to be more attuned to, reflexive, and adjustable to what they learn beyond their own ‘place page’ and may inform their efforts to distinguish themselves from similar services operating in their same locality. In all cases, these socio-technological configurations of relations that the platform assembles don’t just shape the constitution of subjectivities, but also appear to shape in emergent ways their management and coordination of the physical, natural, and cultural environment. TripAdvisor as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’ then both shapes subjectivities (especially mapped-ones) and the environments in which both user-subjects and mapped-subjects move about and operate within.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

By analysing HPT’s “becoming and its biography as an ordering” (Franklin, 2004: 297), this thesis has shown how the locative media platform TripAdvisor was involved in the development, organisation, and provision of these related touristic services within Edinburgh, Scotland between 2008 and 2019. By drawing on ‘relational materialist’ histories of tourism, work which elaborated on Foucauldian notions of governance, ANT/STS and digital sociological scholarship, I forwarded an imagining of this genre of platform as ‘geo-pastoral technologies’ and ‘social partners’ to cultural-economic actors who accommodate tourists. This conceptualisation was specified by attending to how TripAdvisor was relied on as ‘promotional partner’ and engaged with as a ‘thinking partner’ by two HPT-related organisations who prioritised the platform between 2017 and 2019 in their efforts to manage the increased demand and competition associated with Edinburgh becoming better known as a HPT destination. I elaborated on this conceptualisation by comparing the broader trajectory of one of these organisations’ relationship with the platform, with the trajectory of another organisation who doesn’t prioritise the platform but still engaged with it in similar ways. In doing so, I argued that TripAdvisor can be conceptualized as a ‘geo-pastoral technology’ in the ways that it assembles the environment in which cultural-economic actors operate and by providing affordances and tools for bringing themselves into being and for developing an understanding of themselves as ‘mapped subjects’.

In conceiving of TripAdvisor as ‘promotional partner’ and ‘thinking partner’, I positioned these two qualities of their relationship with the platform as ongoing accomplishments involving the development of organisational strategies and the mobilisation of socio-technological techniques. Thick descriptions of two clusterings of socio-technological techniques were generated by drawing on ethnographic field notes and qualitative interviews with the owners/managers and tourist-facing workers associated with these two HPT-related organisations. By chronicling how both of these organisations assemble a “good experience”, prompt their service participants for reviews, attend to the content which becomes translated onto the platform, and sometimes digitally responding to and/or responding to this content within their working practices, I situated the ‘algorithmic navigation’ of TripAdvisor as a complex, collective, and more-than-digital endeavour. This conceptualisation of algorithmic navigation was then elaborated on as an affective endeavour that involves channelling and modulating ‘affective relations’ in
recurrent ways in support of a technology that is then adapted to uphold that support. Based on this analysis, I argued that the algorithmic navigation of locative media can be conceptualised as a form of ‘affective ordering’.

8.1 Contribution

Both of these arguments depend on an understanding and analysis of touristic working practice as being tied up in a world of touristic things and as being enacted within the realm of the ‘socio-technological’ (Latour, 1993; 1999). In this way, my research contributes to ongoing efforts within tourism studies to account for how the ‘social nature’ of tourism occurs with non-human and more-than-human objects, systems, machines, processes, times, sites, flows, desires, and so on in a “complex materially heterogeneous assemblage” (Franklin, 2004, p. 284). Additionally, this thesis is well positioned to inform digital sociological understandings, theorisations of, and future explorations of how these resources (and the interrelationships they make possible) ‘conduct the conduct’ of cultural-economic organisations within the localities mediated by these historically specific spatial resources.

As this thesis has demonstrated there is a long history of academic work concerned with how tourists and city dwellers conceptualise and use spatial resources to navigate localities. However, there are surprisingly few accounts that explore these same themes in regards to those who become represented within and mapped by these same spatial resources. This is especially the case with the historical literatures on (pre)modern travel writings and resources, but is also largely the case with the multi-disciplinary scholarship assembled to date on locative media platforms. While many analyses of the political and cultural economies associated with the proliferation of locative media certainly acknowledge that these platforms network together a whole mesh of end-users, developers, advertisers, partners, 3rd parties, and so on, these analyses are still mostly only focused on one type of end-user. Namely those who roam, navigate, and who are rendered increasingly visible to developers and advertisers through data analytics.

Few scholastic accounts of locative media then really acknowledge the end-users’ whose venues, service performances, and environmental coordinations are subject to these other end-users’ evaluations and now platform measurement and ordering. Even in cases where other types of end-users are acknowledged more explicitly, they are mostly only made reference to as those who have inherited an environment which is mediated in these ways and who have been compelled to figure out how to exist in such a context. According to these accounts, this existence demands they make use of complex digital
tools that require specialised knowledge. In doing so, these literatures not only represent locative media platform management as a mostly digital endeavour, but also only create space for perceiving the agency and subjectivities of this one set of users; in doing so they render cultural-economic actors as mostly passive, mapped-objects.

As evidenced by the narratives of some of the cultural-economic actors I came in contact with in the field (especially those who did not prioritise the platform), it’s not that some of them didn’t at one point align with this sort of view or understanding of themselves in relation to the platform, but importantly, their conceptualisations, interactions, and uses of the platform are also emergent. Their interrelationships with the platform are constantly changing and shifting, and in the majority of cases, in ways where they have even come to rely on this genre of platform as a ‘social partner’ in their navigations of various pursuits and/or unexpected circumstances. In doing so they have reinvented ways of engaging with the platform to benefit their situation and in some cases even their positionality on the platform. The organisations centred in this thesis who generated their own ‘place pages’, prioritised the platform within their working practices, and demonstrated that algorithmic navigation is a more-than-digital endeavour, illuminated practices that challenge generalisations like these which have been put forth by locative media scholars.

In both the case of cultural-economic actors who don’t prioritise locative media within their working practices and those who do, it is important to conceptualise them as ‘mapped subjects’ (Hultman, 2007). After all, “one can be subject while simultaneously being ‘subjected’ -- governed by a series of external rules and conventions” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001, p. 157). The ‘mapped subject’ then is both ‘governor’ and ‘governed’, subjecting others while at the same time being subject to others (p. 157). As I have demonstrated in this thesis, engaging with ‘mapped-subjects’ as key informants and conversation partners within ethnographic inquiry yields in depth insight into how platform governance plays out in specific cultural-economic settings and localities. It illuminates how algorithmic operations are differently felt, understood, and managed within working practice, providing insights into the wider domains of activity in which cultural-economic actors are involved and which these locative technologies coconstitute.

8.2 Limitations & Strengths

Ordering on the part of the sociologist is always partial by virtue of the fact that we take on particular foci depending on the methods and approaches employed. The implicit approach that gives shape to this thesis is that of ‘cultural economy’. This orientation guided my interest in exploring “the ways in which the ‘making up’ or ‘construction’ of
economic realities is undertaken and achieved; how these activities, objects, and persons we categorise as ‘economic’ are built up or assembled from a number of parts and how they interact” (Wilken, 2019, p. 14). I chose such an approach over a ‘political economy’ one for a number of reasons. First, because it more explicitly references considerations of end-users (‘user subjects’ and ‘mapped subjects’) of digital technologies like locative media platforms (Wilken, 2019, p. 15). Second, and closely related to this, it is more attuned to ‘working practice’ (Franklin, 2004) and enables a “better appreciation of the economy as cultural practice and of culture as economic practice” (Amin and Thrift, 2004, p. xviii).

While ‘cultural economy’ and ‘political economy’ approaches are far from oppositional, or even antagonistic seeing as both have an interest in the “formation and maintenance of power” (Wilken, 2019, p. 14), I similarly recognise that the type of analysis I pursue -- which makes uses of an ‘orderings ontology’ (which is partially ANT-inspired) and Foucauldian notions related to ‘governmentality’ -- tends to attract critical response from political economists. This is largely because of ANT’s reliance on a flat ontology and its anti-essentialist orientation which rejects the idea of ‘structures’ in place of materially heterogeneous ‘assemblages’ amongst other things (Madden, 2010; Brenner et al., 2011; Kvachev, 2020). Political economists tend to critique applications of this approach because they argue that it makes it hard for such work to situate itself within the capitalistic landscape and to develop sustained critiques of capitalism (on its own at least). While an orderings approach challenges ANT’s insistence on a flat ontology, it may not go far enough, and in the context of my own use of it, I recognise a couple of instances where my thick descriptions -- especially related to the development of the HPT ordering in England and Scotland, as well as how affect and affective relations come to shape the operationality and economics of the TripAdvisor platform -- could benefit from more acknowledgement of the “political-economic and institutional forcefields” (Brenner et al., 2011, p. 235) which animate the more-than-human interrelationships and dynamics which I describe and theorise. Adding in this important “context of context” (p. 234) is something which I wish to grapple with and carefully pursue moving forward (beyond this thesis) in an effort to better position my work in conversation with ‘political economic’ interests and concerns.

However importantly, the ways that many political economists go about assembling their analyses can also be troublesome and is something that I attempted to move away from in this thesis. For example, Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018) -- who elaborates on ‘racial capitalism’ which developed out of Black Marxist thought -- critiques many political
economic approaches for their making racism appear as a capitalist conspiracy, and capitalism as a racist conspiracy (p. ix). In an effort to do her political economic project differently she emphasises the importance of leaving room for “mystery” (p. xi) and of generating thick descriptions (p. 3) before utilising the tried and true political economic concepts, which can abstract things and lead to this impression of conspiracy -- or rather, explicit capitalistic or racist intent. This approach to political economic critique then questions how we insert ideas and ideology into the sociological stories we tell and proposes that we work hard to contextualise them with thick descriptions of “processes and actions” and especially “the materiality of racist exclusion” (p. 5) first and foremost.

Finally, Bhattacharyya’s approach highlights how capitalism isn't only coercive, but how it is also seductive (p. ix). In this way, she stresses how “tales of suffering” (p. 4) alone can’t capture the immensity of capitalism and how there is also “hope and hustle, and a constant stream of adaptations and new ways of being that emerge with capitalist restructuring across the globe” (p. 4). She notes how this sense of excitement too is part of capitalism and to ignore its pull is to misunderstand the ways in which capitalist restructuring “inhabits the psyches of its victim-participants” (p. 4).

From this perspective then, it actually seems like the empirical interests and methodologies associated with ANT and Foucauldian-inspired approaches can serve political economic approaches in important ways, and especially in regards to adding important nuance into the types of storytelling they attempt and use to develop their critiques of capitalism. These types of details are important because they can draw attention to how there isn’t just one logic guiding economic practices (Bhattacharyya, 2018, p. 7), but additionally can help us “stretch our ability to think imaginatively about the character of evil” (p. 5). With all of these things considered then, this thesis may not be able to make a sustained contribution to critical theory (as the agenda has been set by political economists), and in this way my contribution might be better thought about as being a methodological one -- or rather, one possible intervention into how we go about conducting digital ethnographic research on cultural economic formations, and conceptualising their development with and through locative media platforms in a context in which the capitalistic ‘forcefield’ isn’t only coercive, but also seductive.

Important to point out too in terms of limitations and strengths of this research project, the ethnographic account I have assembled in this thesis is not representative of the wider globalising tourism ordering (nor was this ever the goal). However, some of what I have explored, especially in regards to how the platform comes to intervene in the working practices of touristic organisations and especially my theorisations of these
entanglements, will likely be relevant to other touristic scenes, settings, localities, and regions where TripAdvisor acts as a key ‘ordering resource’ for both tourists who visit and for those who work to accommodate them. I think it is also plausible that the affective aims and goals of the clusterings of socio-technological techniques developed and mobilised to manage the platform allows us to make some inferences about the algorithmic operations of TripAdvisor between 2005 and 2019. This date range is important, because almost exactly one month after I exited the field TripAdvisor began changing the ‘rules of play’ for the touristic organisations who occupy the subcategory of ‘Tours’ within the broader ‘Things to Do’ category. I will touch on this more in the next section.

Due to the algorithmic changes which TripAdvisor mobilised, the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic starting in March of 2020, as well as my role as both researcher and research instrument, there is no guarantee that the findings I have assembled within this project would be able to be reproduced exactly if another person came along and attempted to conduct this same study again now. Much has changed since this project began and some insights assembled here are a product of having lived through these shifts and having remained in close contact with my research participants. While my findings cannot necessarily accomplish the positivist notion of reliability (nor was this ever the goal), my detailed account of my research process in Chapter 3 is an attempt to ensure a degree of replicability, while also “acknowledging that complete replicability is unrealistic and even undesirable” (O’Reilly, 2012, p. 228) within the context of ethnographic research.

Rather, what this thesis provides is validity via its focus on the ‘emic view’ or rather the ‘insider’s perspective’ (O’Reilly, 2012, p. 226). The digital ethnographic accounts assembled are the product of “direct and sustained contact” (p. 226) with cultural-economic actors involved in Edinburgh’s HPT scene over the span of three years (between 2018 and 2021). In the field, I made a concerted effort to create opportunities for my research participants to tell me when I misunderstood a situation, misrepresented them, or when I was pursuing a misguided line of inquiry. Based on this feedback I adjusted and refined my focus and sense making. The research presented within this thesis is valid, plausible, and credible as a result of its “collaborative, flexible, interactive and inductive” (p. 227) nature.

8.3 Future Research

As alluded to in the previous section, almost exactly one month after exiting the field TripAdvisor began changing up how it governed the subcategory of ‘Tours’ in its ‘Things to
Do’ section. For example, starting in the autumn of 2019 only tours that offer paid tours through Viator (a TripAdvisor company and booking platform) were rendered visible on the platform’s discovery pages and tabs. Additionally TripAdvisor began privileging the reviews which accumulate from tours sold this way within its rankings and orderings. So while a tour company still has a ‘place page’, they also now need to have a ‘service page’ to become visible and discoverable. Before the autumn of 2019 these ‘service pages’ would be visible at the top of the ‘Tours’ discover tab, but were clearly demarcated as paid promotions and ultimately they could be circumnavigated in order to find the best rated tours in the city being queried. Meaning that tour services which were not selling tours through Viator were still visible and discoverable in the ‘Tours’ discovery tab. This is no longer the case, and it appears that TripAdvisor has removed the filter that would enable one to view tours based on their original ranking system. TripAdvisor has not completely done away with this previous ranking system; all ‘place pages’ are still ranked comparatively to all those operating in the city being queried and who operate within the same ‘Things to Do’ subcategory, and this rank appears on their ‘place page’. This rank is an aggregation of the reviews ratings they have accumulated on this ‘place page’ and their ‘service page(s)’. While this original system still acts as a mark of distinction, it no longer governs visibility and discoverability on the platform and within the city.

As an illustrative example, I will draw on the Potter Trail tour. Within the original system their ‘place page’ is currently ranked “#1 out of 491 Tours in Edinburgh”. Which means that under the initial ranking system the Potter Trail tour appeared at the top of the first page of the ‘Tours’ discovery tab. This ranking still appears on their ‘place page’ and is something that they as a tour group take a lot of pride in. However, within the new ranking system formalised in the autumn of 2019, in order to be visible and discoverable the Potter Trail had to start offering a paid tour option since their free tours alone would no longer enable them to be visible and discoverable on the platform. In this new system their ‘service page’ is ranked “#36 out of 663 Tour [services] in Edinburgh”, meaning their tour service now appears near the top on the second page of the ‘Tours’ discovery tab. So while the Potter Trail was rather successful within the previous system, they now have to re-establish themselves within a new configuration. As things stand, this new configuration seems to be privileging bigger, extra-local tour companies such as SANDEMANs and a number of bus tour companies who were likely offering paid services via Viator before this new configuration was implemented.

While ‘place pages’ and ‘service pages’ are still ranked and ordered according to their affective claim to attention, the latter system operationalises an additional type of
‘affective measure’ (Beer, 2016) -- namely whether or not interactions with their ‘service pages’ leads to a booking and financial transaction, in addition to whether or not interactions with this paid service leads to further acts of communication with the platform in the form of a review. So while, my original conceptualisation of things is far from being null in this new context (and indeed is still applicable to those operating within the subcategory of ‘Fun & Games’ and ‘Nightlife’ like the Department of Magic), there may be an ever-expanding set of socio-technological techniques necessary for those who occupy the ‘Tours’ subcategory. While some of the specificities of my second main argument may need some revision and refinement in this new context (late 2019 and on), these specifics nonetheless capture the material conditions and practicalities associated with the algorithmic navigation of TripAdvisor within the time period which I set out to describe and analyse (2018-2019).

These algorithmic changes as well as the numerous changes within Edinburgh’s HPT ordering related to the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that future research needs to attend to both of these types of changes if it wishes to generate thick descriptions of the emergent relationships that touristic, cultural-economic organisations have with TripAdvisor. This seems to suggest that as Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham (2001) observe “social orderings and disorderings emerge in the space between instances and systems” (p. 160) -- or between ‘techniques’ and ‘technologies’. Here, longitudinal digital ethnographic inquiry and especially the generation of thick descriptions of clusterings of socio-technological techniques and ‘affective orderings’ can help us index the material histories and working practices associated with the algorithmic navigation of locative media platforms like TripAdvisor, and in doing so can help us anchor these technologies (and our research on these technologies) in time and space.
Bibliography


