

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Following the Detective: Investigating Detective Fiction-Induced Literary Tourism by Italian Readers

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Abstract:

Geographers have long acknowledged the contribution of fiction to the increase in popularity of some localities as tourism destinations. However, while detective novels are one of the most successful literary genres in the book market, detective fiction-induced literary tourism is still a relatively unexplored phenomenon. This research aims to determine whether and to what extent detective fiction can promote tourism and affect readers' attitudes and behaviours towards narrated localities. To fulfil this aim, we have carried out empirical research based on a quantitative method, through the analysis of the answers to a questionnaire shared in Facebook groups. Questions aimed to identify the readers, their motivations for reading different types of detective fiction and their interests and expectations, as well as the push and pull factors behind potential detective fiction-induced tourism. We have examined a *corpus* of 330 answers from Italian readers. The survey has pointed to the existence of various types of reader-tourists, whose choices depend on the settings of the novels they read, which the detective's gaze is able to mediate. Despite what previous literature has claimed, the analysis of the questionnaire shows that dark and uncanny atmospheres are not major pull factors. Instead, readers of this particular genre declare that they are more interested in visiting the actual places that have inspired fictional ones, and in immersing themselves in the local societies represented. In conclusion, it appears that the preferences of detective fiction readers not only affect their destination choices but also their approaches to those destinations.

Keywords: Literary Tourism; Tourism Geography; Detective Fiction; Questionnaire; Italy; Tourist Gaze.

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Introduction

In October 2021, Steve J. Haywood, a passionate reader of detective fiction, self-published a book named *The Crime Fiction Tour of Britain: A Reader's Guide to British Crime, Mystery & Detective Novels*. The volume takes into account several works, from 19th-century pieces to more recent detective fiction¹, and contains over one hundred literary references to existing locations. This recent book fits into a long Anglo-Saxon tradition of similar experiences within the field of tourism publications, such as the four 'Sherlockian' travel guides to England published by Hammer between 1983 and 2001 (McLaughlin 2019). The geographic location of such cases of cultural tourism promotion related to detective fiction is not casual. One of the best-known examples of literary tourism, and one of the most longstanding ones worldwide, are the visitor flows towards 221B Baker Street, London, the home of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. This address was already famous at the end of the 19th century and has since become one of the most renowned destinations for a specific type of cultural tourism, elsewhere directed towards the birthplaces of famed writers such as Walter Scott and William Shakespeare (Watson 2006).

After more than a century, investigation stories are a narrative phenomenon that can characterise given locations, attract people and structure themed itineraries (Wheeler 2003; McLaughlin 2016). Given the close connection between plot and space, detective fiction constitutes a powerful tool for building geographic images and can represent an important vehicle for putting a destination on the map, thus increasing the popularity of narrated spaces. Indeed, to this extent, *The Guardian* has written about an actual global 'Crime Grand Tour' (Lawson 2012), in which, for instance, visitors get to see the projected and invented crime and murder sites described in detective fiction.

In spite of this success, which has become global, scholars have not yet thoroughly investigated the phenomenon of literary tourism related to noirs. One of the reasons for this is that it is hard to circumscribe and measure it in terms of its extent.

Van Es has recently urged researchers to shed light on the purposes, means and offerings of different types of literary tourism. He recognises a multitude of genres and narratives, each of which with a different way of developing sense of place and of characterising the tourist experience (van Es 2020).

Following in the wake of this suggestion, this paper aims to assess the potential of detective fiction as a factor in tourism and, in particular, its ability to influence readers'

behaviour towards represented destinations. In order to do so, we have adopted a quantitative approach, analysing the outcomes of a questionnaire administered to a sample of Italian-speaking readers. The aim has been to open up the study of literary tourism to more rigorous methods than those adopted in most qualitative studies.

Accordingly, this empirical and quantitative research explores the reading preferences and attitudes of a selection of detective fiction readers, and investigates the prospect of their engaging in literary tourism. It thus introduces new sources, voices and methods to the investigation of the phenomenon with respect to a specific genre.

The first part provides a review of international literature on the practices of literary tourism relating to detective fiction, while the second part presents the case study and the chosen methodology. Finally, the third part offers an analysis of the motivations and interests that turn readers of detective fiction into tourists. In this respect, the results of a questionnaire administered to Italian readers of detective novels will be presented and discussed.

Based on the assumption that detective fiction plots seem to affect the tourist gaze, i.e. the way ‘we look at, or gaze upon, particular objects’ of local societies (Urry 1995: 131), the paper will investigate the main pull and push factors of detective fiction-driven tourism (Macionis 2004). The results of the survey suggest that detective novels promote forms of literary tourism based on the interaction between authors, readers and places, and increase the popularity of specific localities, by identifying their unique traits connected to a given fictional work.

Detective Fiction and Literary Tourism: An Overview

The crucial role played by some cultural products in determining the perception and the attractiveness of tourist destinations is by now well-established (Squire 1994; Butler 1999). Individuals tend to form specific images of a given place in their minds, which affect their perception of it as a tourist destination, as well as their satisfaction during the visiting experience (Beeton, Bowen and Santos 2006; Urry 1990). Such personal or shared images are the result of representations and narrations performed by cultural or marketing products (Butler 1999; Kavaratzis and Hatch 2013; Lund and Jóhannesson 2016; Todaro, Giampino and Lo Piccolo 2021).

Among the various communicative forms participating in the construction of geographic imaginary, literature, in the sense of a ‘public legacy expressed in emotional as well as spatial terms’ (Robinson and Anderson 2002: 26), contributes to attributing value and meaning to places. Hence, it influences their perception, enjoyment, consumption and material transformation (Hones 2008; Thurgill and Lovell 2019), shaping positive or negative images, both individual and collective, of destinations, and activating or discouraging visitor flows (Hoppen, Brown and Fyall 2014; Jenkins and Lund 2019; Liao and Honggang 2016; Mansfield 2015; Watson 2006). Geography has long identified literary tourism as a specific category of broader cultural tourism (Robinson, Anderson 2002) that includes forms of travel linked to literary works, author biographies and the book market,

as one of its research objects (Çevik 2020; Arcos-Pumarola, Osacar Marzal and Llonch-Molina 2020).

Several studies have highlighted the potential of literature-related tourist offerings, while also shedding light on some problematic aspects. In particular, scholars have argued that these offerings are often associated with the elitist enjoyment of a destination by cultured people belonging to a ‘micro-niche’ (van Es 2020; van Es and Reijnders 2016; 2018). However, mass-circulation forms of literary production also exist, and these are able to reach a vast number of readers. Among them, detective fiction, one of the most commercially successful genres, seems capable of reaching all levels of society (Worthington 2011). Indeed, since the so-called ‘Classic Age’ of dark novels in Victorian England (Roth 1995; Callois 1983), until the most recent representatives of the genre, such as Scandinavian Crime Fiction (Bergman 2014) or Mediterranean Noir (Gabellieri 2022), detective fiction has kept and consolidated its place within mainstream culture, in spite of considerable changes in plots, settings and underlying messages (Erdmann 2009).

The ease with which the genre can explore characters’ psychological introspection, social dynamics and the places and landscapes where crimes and actions have taken place has also contributed to its great success (Dubois 1992; McCullough 2014; Gabellieri 2022). In particular, within the detective genre, setting is one of the key aspects to a book’s positive reception (Erdmann 2011). Indeed, especially in the above-mentioned Mediterranean and Scandinavian Noirs, which are deeply rooted in place or regionally based, the strong characterisation of local, social and cultural contexts and landscapes is a shared feature, regardless of authors’ nationalities.

Van Es has drawn attention to the potential of crime and detective fiction for attracting literary tourists, thanks to their ability to provide both detailed and realistic descriptions of urban spaces and insight into the ‘darker sides’ of society. Indeed, after interviewing twenty participants of literary tours in London, Stockholm and Los Angeles, he stressed that these tourists hoped to rediscover material signs of the noir society in which fictional crimes and investigations are set (Van Es 2020; Van Es and Reijnders 2016). Accordingly, destinations should offer such visitors some local ‘colour’, a taste of the atmosphere and the landscape in which narrative plots have unfolded (Reijnders 2009; 2010), so as to be able to attract, in some cases, so-called ‘dark tourism’. Indeed, numerous tours aimed at offering direct experiences in the settings of famous detective novels are available on major international tourism sites (Alen 2012) and on literary critics’ websites (Bijman 2017).

In some cases, the strong links between plot and space and detailed topographic descriptions have enabled the construction of specific tourist offerings, often thanks to the use of Geographic Information Systems and the development of tourist itineraries also using literary GIS. For instance, this is the case of Marseille, as depicted in Jean-Claude Izzo’s three novels, *Total Khéops*, *Chourmo* and *Soléa*. Frequent references to street names made it possible to ‘mettre en cartes’ (Troin 2019) detective Montale’s whereabouts and to create geo-literary maps (Rosemberg and Troin 2017).

As noticed by Reijnders (2010) and van Es (2020), literary trails are a very common format. They draw from the descriptions of the movements within a geographical context during fictional investigations, which are often set in accurately described real-life scenes (Saretzki 2013). In addition to the aforementioned itinerary through Izzo's Marseille, similar experiences are also available in other cities. For instance, the Barcelona tourist board has created an itinerary that directs visitors from the city centre towards the less known and more peripheral neighbourhood of Vallvidrera, where Montalban set the house of detective Pepe Carvalho.² Moreover, given the latter's love of cuisine, food-wine-literature tourist offerings have emerged, which include tours of the city and meals at the detective's favourite restaurants.³ Literary tours based on detective stories are also available in Sherlock Holmes' London (McLaughlin 2016), in Philip Marlowe's Los Angeles, in Lisbeth Salander's Stockholm (van Es 2020), and are often promoted by prestigious cultural institutions, such as, for example, the City Museum of Stockholm. The chance to visit and experience the same places in which investigations are set, thus reliving the detective's adventures, appears to be a very common formula. Indeed, a tour represents an opportunity to combine storytelling with the description of real spaces, thus 'informing and educating participants of the tours in terms of the actual history of the city' (van Es and Reijnders 2018). In certain cases, games and interactive activities in which participants can test their abilities in solving logic problems enrich such experiences.⁴

Forms of tourism based on events connected to noir literature are another, different, case of participatory tourism. There are examples all around Europe; one is the *Semana Negra*, a festival related to hard-boiled detective fiction, conceived by Paco Ignacio Taibo II, which has taken place in Gijón, Spain, since 1988⁵. As advertised on the page 'Noir and detective events' of the specialized Italian-language website thrillercafe.it, over 20 literary festivals were held in Italy between 2019 and 2021, in a period that saw very few public gatherings due to the pandemic. Place-based noir books have also boosted tourism development in Italy, especially those by Andrea Camilleri, which follow the investigations carried out by Inspector Montalbano. Indeed, Italian economic scientists have acknowledged the 'Montalbano Effect', with reference to the strong popularity of certain tourist destinations in Sicily, due to the huge success of both the books and TV adaptations (Asero and Ponton 2021).

Nonetheless, despite the number of relevant tourism offerings and the significant number of research papers on the topic (Mansfield 2015; McLaughlin 2016; 2019; Marques 2019; Reijnders 2009; 2010; van Es and Reijnders 2016; 2018), tourism related to crime and detective fiction remains a still relatively unexplored phenomenon within the field of geography.

Case study

The research is based on a questionnaire distributed through Facebook to a sample of Italian readers of detective fiction. The choice of this specific target was made for two main reasons. Firstly, given the fact that the research aims to examine the relevance of

detective novels to the promotion of tourism in given locations, Italy represents an interesting case study because of the great success of the genre in this country. Recently, two specialized Italian online newspapers have defined detective novels as ‘the genre that attracts the largest number of readers’ (Merlino 2021: 1) and as the only successful genre in the ‘difficult and unstable [national] publishing industry’ (Bolondi 2017: 2). Such success not only includes renowned international detective novels, such as English classics and more recent American, French and Scandinavian works, but also dozens of other authors whose literary pieces share some common traits. These include: the serial nature of publications – each book has its own ending but is part of a series with the same characters and setting; a strong regional characterisation of the protagonists and settings through the use of dialect; culinary references; descriptions of local identity (Pezzotti 2012; Gabellieri 2022).

A second reason for the choice of Italian readers as our target is the fact that, among the latest literature reviews on international literary tourism, we can notice a ‘clear predominance of so-called Anglo-Saxon researchers’ (Arcos-Pumarola, Osacar Marzal and Llonch-Molina 2020: 188). In addition, the majority of case studies involve Anglophone and north-European readers, while little internationally recognised research has been carried out on Italian readers and potential literary tourists. Samet Çevik (2020) mentions three papers by Jordi Arcos-Pumarola, Eugeni Osacar Marzal and Nayra Llonch-Molina (2020). Narrowing the field down to detective fiction-induced tourism, related studies are even rarer, in spite of the success that this topic has had in the United Kingdom, in the United States or in Scandinavian countries (Reijnders 2009; McLaughlin 2016; van Es Reijnders 2016; 2018). In this sense, this work allows investigations on the motivations and inclinations behind practices of literary tourism, and, in particular those related to detective fiction, to broaden their scope and consider the mostly neglected segment of Italian readers.

Methodology

As Çevik (2020) and Arcos-Pumarola, Osacar Marzal and Llonch-Molina (2020: 191) point out, ‘research on literary tourism to date has mostly used qualitative research methodologies.’ Many contributions focus on particular case studies and specific themes, often relying on direct experiences, personal interviews and fieldwork or content analysis. Investigations based on quantitative methods are less frequent, even though these can enable researchers to develop models for interpreting different types of offerings, motivations or behaviours (Herbert 2001; Macionis 2004). Indeed, the use of questionnaires to collect large amounts of quantitative data can help determine the characteristics, motivations, expectations and degree of satisfaction of literary tourists (Busby and Klug 2001; Liao and Honggang 2016). Such is the case with the statistical analyses carried out on the responses to the questionnaires administered to visitors of the Anne Frank House (Busby and Devereux 2015) and of Newstead Abbey (Busby and Shetliffe 2013). In both cases, it has been possible to identify the potential role of certain

cultural products and literary personalities in motivating a particular form of tourism. While for these studies the data were collected on site, in our case the questionnaire was shared online through the Facebook platform. As in a study by Felicité A. Fairer-Wessels (2010), the survey, which was addressed to a restricted pool of readers, was intended to determine whether detective books might influence travel preferences and destination choices. In particular, the aim was to understand readers' potential interest in traveling to places that play a significant role in fictional stories. Reaching the specific target of detective fiction lovers constituted a methodological challenge, especially during a time – autumn 2021 – in which literary festivals and other in-person regular events were still limited due to the pandemic. For this reason, we created the questionnaire online, through a Google Form, and shared it in specific Facebook groups of readers of detective fiction, or books in general. The use of this platform poses some issues that should be addressed. For instance, people who have not registered to Facebook or do not actively engage with social media, those who are not members of the selected groups, and those who were not interested in participating in the survey represent some 'grey areas.' These need to be taken into account when analysing the composition of the sample (Kosinski et al. 2015; Hargittai 2020).

The questionnaire was shared to sixteen Italian-language Facebook groups and pages about literature and detective fiction, between November 1st and November 30th, 2021. Each of these groups contained posts or discussions on detective stories. Sixteen administrators from as many groups allowed us to publish the questionnaire. Other groups, whose admins did not consent to the publication of the questionnaire, were not considered. Such a high number of groups testifies to the enormous success that the detective genre has in Italy.

The semi-structured questionnaire included closed and open questions regarding 1) Interviewee profiles; 2) Their interest in literature and detective fiction; 3) Their interest in renowned detective fiction settings; 4) Their evaluation of the elements related to detective literature that are attractive from the point of view of tourism; 5) A final open comments section (Table 1).

In order to develop the questions and analyse the answers, special attention was paid to some analytical categories identified by Macionis (2004) with reference to film-induced tourism.

Table 1. Structure and Questions of the Survey Posted in Facebook Groups of Detective Fiction Readers.

N.	Question	Possible answers
Part I – Personal information		
I.1	Home country	
I.2	Province of residence (if Italian)	
I.3	Gender	M; F; Other
I.4	Age	Under 18; 18-25; 26-35; 36-45; 46-55; 56-65; 66-75; over 75.

I.5	Level of education	Primary or middle school degree; high school degree; Bachelor's degree; Master's degree/PhD
Part II – Interest in literature and detective fiction		
II.1	How many books do you read on average per year?	None; 1; 2; 3-4; 5-10; more than 10
II.2	How many detective books do you read on average per year?	None; 1; 2; 3-4; 5-10; more than 10
II.3	Who is your favourite detective fiction writer?	Open answer
II.4	What are your main reasons for reading detective fiction?	Studying the clues and guessing the culprit
		Discovering the social and cultural context and the landscape in which the investigation takes place
		Observing and experimenting deductive reasoning
		An interest in murders and crimes
		Discovering characters' psychology and the society in which the investigation takes place
Part III – Book-induced tourism		
III.1	Have you ever visited or would you visit a city or region mainly because of its representation in a book?	Yes; no
III.2	Would you visit a city attracted by a fair or a festival about detective fiction?	Yes, no
III.3	Have you ever visited or would you visit a city or region mainly because of its representation in a detective novel or story?	Yes; no
Part IV Crime book-induced tourism (only if the answer to the previous questions was yes)		
IV.1	If you answered 'yes', which of these choices do you find the most attractive?	Conan Doyle's London
		Montalban's Barcelona
		Chandler's Los Angeles
		Läckberg's Fjällbacka
		Camilleri's Porto Empedocle (Vigata in the books)
		Camilleri's Scicli (Vigata in the TV series)
		Other
IV.2	Which other city or region where detective novels or stories were set would you like to visit?	Open answer
IV.3	Which of these aspects captures your interest the most?	Visiting the places where novels were written or author's homes
		Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places
		Looking for novels' noir and dark

		atmospheres
		Tasting food and local dishes described in novels
		Immersing oneself in the local culture represented in novels
		Exploring urban and rural landscapes narrated in novels
		Taking part in detective fiction fairs and festivals
Part V - Conclusion		
V.1	Is there anything you would like to add?	Open answer

Findings and discussion

The Pool of Respondents

In three weeks, 330 people answered the questionnaire. By targeting the questionnaire, we were able to narrow down the participants to individuals who are more likely to engage in literary tourism practices. In addition, we only considered the responses of those who declared an interest in detective novels.

The first part of the questionnaire aimed to characterise the respondents' profiles (Figure 1).

Unsurprisingly, given the language of the groups, 97.3% of participants live in Italy. Other participant home countries are Germany (three answers), Switzerland (two answers), Brazil, Egypt, Australia, Portugal (one answer). Within Italy, the majority of interviewees come from highly populated urban areas in northern and central Italy, mostly the provinces of Milan (9.7%), Turin (7.9%), Rome (7.3%) and Florence (4.2%). The question concerning the age of participants identified a majority of middle-aged people, between 46 and 55 years old (32.1%) and a very low percentage of people under 35 (11.9%). As concerns the level of education, over 40.6% of interviewees possess a university degree and 15.4% a postgraduate degree or a PhD (Table 2).

The information retrieved concerning participants' gender is interesting; most respondents are female, and only one person identified as 'other'. The gap between female and male readers documented by the questionnaire is much wider than the one traditionally detected through demoscopic surveys on Italian readers in general, which, for 2019, registered 44.3% women and 35.5% men ((Istituto Nazionale di Statistica 2021).

Such results are surely related to our platform of choice being Facebook. At the same time, however, the data collected on geographic origin and age confirm the general profiles of Italian readers, as shown by the demoscopic surveys by the National Institute of Statistics (*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*, Istat) published in 2021 and referring to 2019 ((Istituto Nazionale di Statistica 2021). On this basis, we can hypothesise that our sample is highly representative of Italian readership, at least regarding origin and age. The only

discrepancy lies in the level of education: 56.1% of the respondents to the questionnaire have at least a university degree, whereas the average Istat percentage between 2000 and 2019 is 77.4%. We can attribute this difference to the different use of social media among people with lower and higher education levels, but it could also indicate a higher interest in this particular literary genre at all levels of education.

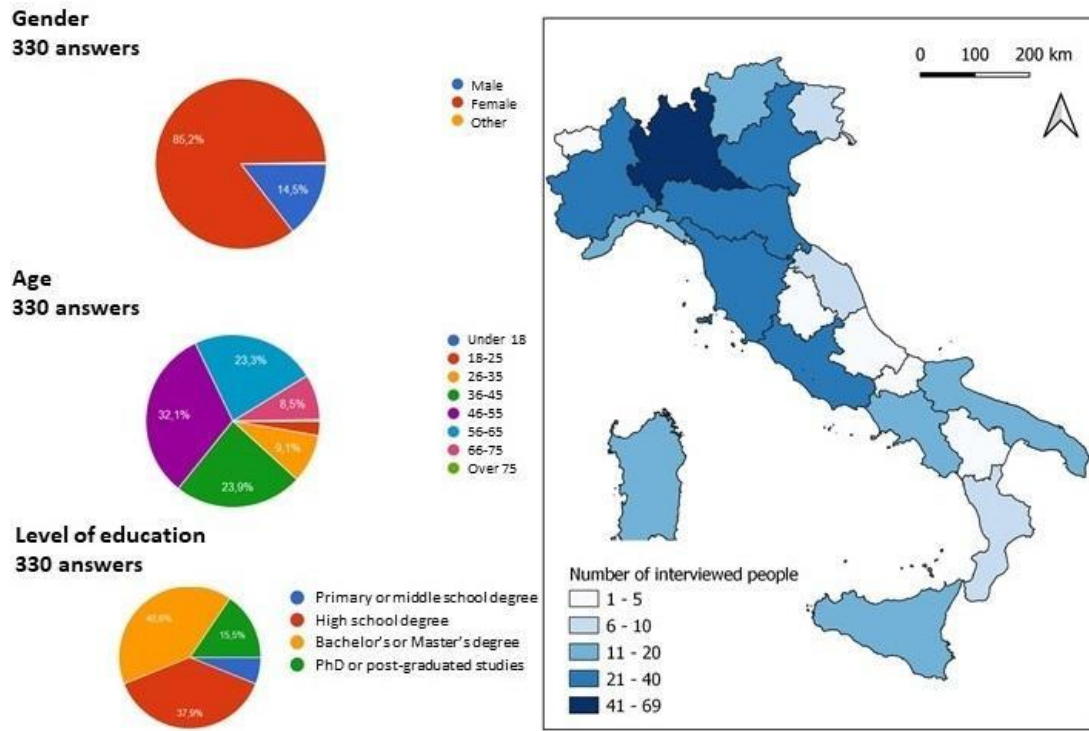


Figure 1. Answers to the questions aimed at characterising the sample.

Table 2. Answers to the questions about the readers' profiles and reading habits (values expressed in percentage): A = total number of respondents; B. People who have answered 'yes' to the question 'Have you ever visited or would you visit a city or region mainly because of its representation in a detective novel or story?'

Age	18-25		26-35		36-45		46-55		56-65		66-75		Over 75	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
	2.8	2.2	9.1	9.9	23.9	22	32.1	37.7	23.3	20.2	8.5	7.6	0.3	0.4
Level of education	Primary or middle school degree		High school degree		Bachelor's degree		Master's degree/PhD							
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B						
	6.1	6.3	37.9	37.7	40.6	40.8	15.4	15.2						

How many detective books do you read on average per year?	1		2		3-4		5-10		More than 10	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
	2.1	2.7	2.4	1.3	14.0	10.3	29.1	33.7	52.4	52.0

Readers' Interest in Detective Fiction

The second part of the questionnaire revealed that over 80% of interviewees read more than 10 books a year, a rate that far exceeds the national average. Answers to the question concerning the number of noirs and detective books read in a year confirm people's great interest in this genre: 52.4% of respondents read 'over 10' detective books and 29.1% 'between 5 and 10' (Table 2). With respect to readers' favourite authors, this open-ended question received a range of different answers (mentioning 67 writers). Italian authors prevailed (130 preferences), followed by British (82 preferences) and American (51 preferences). French detective fiction writers (29 preferences) and Scandinavian authors (14 preferences) were mentioned less frequently but are still relevant. Agatha Christie, an exponent of classic detective fiction, is the undisputed 'queen', with over 50 preferences. Far behind her are three Italians: Donato Carrisi (26), winner of the important Italian Bancarella award, whose renowned novels focus on investigation; Maurizio De Giovanni (19) and Andrea Camilleri (14), both authors for whom setting plays a central role. Other novelists who received at least 10 preferences were the French Fred Vargas (14), the Belgian George Simenon (10) and the Briton Angela Marsons (10).

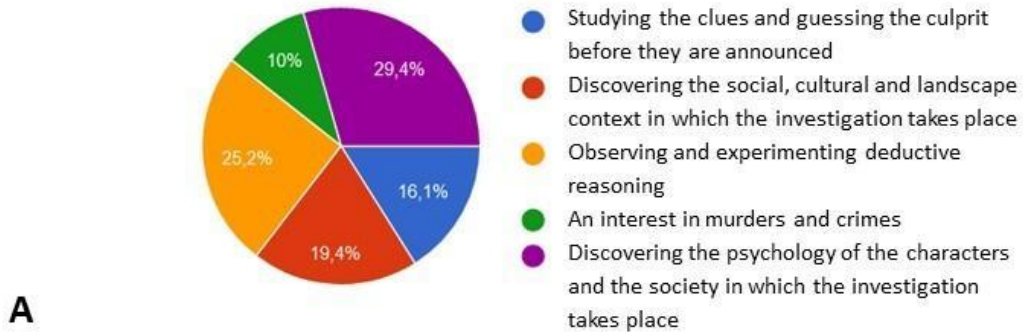
With respect to motivations, the collected answers form a complex picture (Figure 2A). 25.2% of survey participants read detective books in order to 'observe and experiment deductive reasoning', while 16.1% want to 'guess the culprits before they are revealed'. 'The psychology of the characters and the society in which the investigation takes place' captured significant interest (29.4%), along with the wish to 'discover the social, cultural and landscape-related context' (19.10%). Few participants have an actual interest in murders and crimes (10%).

Fiction-Induced Tourism: Who

With respect to the possible types of literary tourists, interviewees gave different answers to the related questions in the third part. While over 72.7% of them are attracted to places described in books in general, this percentage decreases to 67.7% in the case of detective books. Instead, the participation in festivals, fairs and other events connected to crime fiction seems to be much more of a pull factor.

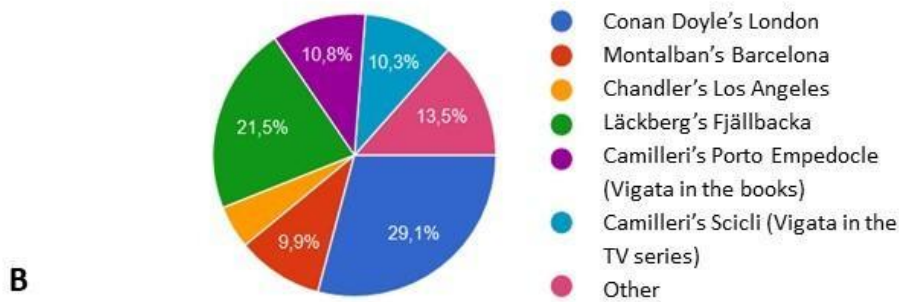
What are your main reasons for reading detective fiction?

330 answers



If you answered 'yes', which of these choices do you find the most attractive?

223 answers



Which of these aspects captures your interest the most?

223 answers



Figure 2. Pie charts representing: 1. Answers to the closed question about the motivations behind respondents' interest in crime fiction; 2. Answers to the closed question about tourist attractiveness of places represented in detective novels; 3. Answers to the closed question about the motivations behind readers' interest in crime fiction-induced tourism.

If we consider only the traits of readers who have answered ‘yes’ to the question about whether they were interested in visiting a place portrayed in a detective novel, the sample differs slightly from the general picture (Table 2). Their disposition to travel is higher in the 26-35 and 46-55 age groups and among those who normally read a significant number of detective books (more than 5). These profiles seem to be more inclined to visit the settings of detective plots, whereas there are no significant differences with respect to levels of education.

However, we can make some distinctions based on the motivations for reading detective books. Most respondents are attracted to psychological and social dynamics (31%) and by the cultural context and the landscape in which actions unfold (22%). 21.5% have stated their passion for deductive reasoning, 14.3% for studying the clues and guessing the culprit and only 11.2% show a general interest in murders and crimes.

Within the above-mentioned subsample, we can make another differentiation. An interest in visiting locations is predominant among those who had selected ‘Discovering the social, cultural and landscape-related context [...]’ (76.6%), ‘An interest in murders and crimes’ (75.6%) or ‘Discovering the psychology of the characters and society [...]’ (71.1%). It decreases significantly for the other two answers (Table 3).

Fiction-Induced Tourism: Where

The next part of the questionnaire was only for those who had given positive answers to the question about the tourist attractiveness of places represented in detective novels. Accordingly, we collected only 220 responses.

Two questions, one with limited options and the other one open, aimed to identify respondents’ favourite cities. The possible answers to the first question aimed to represent different sub-genres and geographic areas (Figure 2B).⁶

The highest number of respondents selected Arthur Conan Doyle’s London as their favourite destination. A strong interest also emerged for a lesser-known location, Fjällbacka, which has risen to international fame thanks to Camilla Läckberg (21.5%). The next choice, in order of preference, were Andrea Camilleri’s popular Sicilian settings (21.3%). The fourth option, also related to Mediterranean noir, was Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s Barcelona (9.9%).

In fact, two options involved Camilleri: the town of Porto Empedocle, in western Sicily, where the writer set his novels, and the town of Scicli, in eastern Sicily, where the television adaptation was filmed. The almost equal percentage of participants who showed a preference for these two options, 10.8% and 10.3% respectively, supports the idea that films and TV series also appeal to readers, and can equally contribute to boosting tourism development (Asero and Ponton 2021).

A high number of people selected ‘Other’ (13.5%) as their favourite destination, which indicates that their interest in the detective fiction genre cannot be confined to one of the provided categories.

Table 3. Most frequent answers to the questions about readers' literary tourism preferences based on their motivations for reading detective fiction.

Main reasons for reading detective fiction	Have you ever visited/would you visit a city or region mainly because of its representation in a detective novel or story?	Which of these choices do you find the most attractive?	Which of these aspects captures your interest the most?
An interest in murders and crimes	Yes – 75.6%	Conan Doyle's London – 40.0%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 28%
Observing and experimenting deductive reasoning	Yes – 57.8%	Conan Doyle's London – 22.9%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 45.8%
Studying the clues and guessing the culprits before they are announced	Yes – 60.4%	Conan Doyle's London – 43.7%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 34.4%
Discovering the social and cultural context and the landscape in which the investigation takes place	Yes – 76.6%	Camilleri's Vigata – 28.6%	Exploring urban and rural landscapes narrated in the novels – 30.6%
Discovering the psychology of the characters and the society in which the investigation takes place	Yes – 71.1%	Conan Doyle's London – 30.4%	Exploring urban and rural landscapes narrated in the novels – 29.0%

In particular, over 33% of those who chose London as their favourite destination had also picked Agatha Christie as their favourite author. Among the motivations behind reading detective fiction indicated by this percentage of readers, discovering psychological and social traits (32.3%), guessing the culprit (20.9%) and following deductive reasoning (16.4%) were the most frequently selected options. For those who would like to visit

Fjällbacka, the reasons behind reading are, again, an interest in characters' psychology (35.4%) and deductive reasoning (22.9%), but also in cultural contexts and landscapes (14.6%). People who gave their preferred option as Camilleri's Sicily, meanwhile, explained their reasons for reading detective novels with reference to their interest in local culture and landscapes, in character psychology and in deductive reasoning, all of which answers obtained the same percentage (29.8%). Finally, for those who prefer the Barcelona of Montalban's novels, an interest in the cultural context and in landscape prevailed (40.9%) (Table 4). In fact, London was the first choice of all different reader profiles, with the exception of those who were most interested in discovering the social and cultural context and landscape, who chose the Sicily of Camilleri (Table 3).

The subsequent question was open and gave respondents the chance to indicate one further destination preference. Answers mentioned 42 different locations (Figure 3), both urban and rural. Recurring choices were Naples (14 times), the setting for the crime stories by the above-cited De Giovanni; Paris (13) as described by Simenon and Vargas; and New York, from the stories by Guillaume Musso, Jeffery Deaver, James Patterson and Mary Higgins Clark (11). Other European capitals and well-known cities that respondents frequently named are London, Rome and Stockholm (7), Florence (6), Athens and Oslo (5), Marseille (4). Interestingly, other regions and cities that are less known as cultural tourism destinations were also mentioned quite often: Aosta (5 times, setting of the novels by Antonio Mazzini), Catania (4, setting of the stories by Cristina Cassar Scalia) and Porto Empedocle (6, linked to the above-mentioned Andrea Camilleri), in Italy. General references to 'Agatha Christie's English countryside' also emerged (6).

Fiction-Induced Tourism: Why

The last part of the questionnaire aimed to identify the reasons that readers seek tourism experiences in the above-mentioned places. Interviewees could choose among different options selected to take into account the possible pull factors of different types of literary tourism (Çevik 2020; Macionis 2004).

Table 4. Most frequent answers to the questions about reading and detective fiction-induced tourism preferences based on the favourite destinations.

Favourite destination	Reason for reading detective fiction	Reason for visiting a represented destination
Montalban's Barcelona	Discovering the social and cultural context and the landscape in which the investigation takes place – 40.9%	Immersing oneself in the local culture represented in novels – 36.4%
Läckberg's Fjällbacka	Discovering the psychology of the characters and the society in which the investigation takes place – 35.4%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 35.4%
Conan Doyle's London	Discovering the psychology of the characters and the society in which the investigation takes place – 32.3%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 24.6%

Chandler's Los Angeles	Observing and experimenting deductive reasoning – 36.4%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 36.4%
Camilleri's Vigata	Discovering the psychology of the characters and the society in which the investigation takes place – 29.8%	Comparing real and represented spaces and looking for mentioned places – 40.4%
Other	Discovering the psychology of the characters and the society in which the investigation takes place – 33.3%	Exploring urban and rural landscapes narrated in the novels – 40.0%

Surprisingly, the option concerning the participation in detective fiction fairs and festivals, which in a previous part of the questionnaire had been marked as particularly attractive, was only selected by 3.6% of respondents (Figure 2C). An interest in visiting particularly significant places in authors' lives also seems to be quite scarce (13.5%). The majority of those who selected this option had previously registered their appreciation of novels by Christie and Carrisi, especially because of their general curiosity about crimes and murders and their desire to engage in deductive reasoning. They had also selected 'Conan Doyle's London' as their favourite destination among the different options.

Instead, most interviewees were particularly interested in interacting with local contexts, based on the elements they could find in the novels. Indeed, over 20.6% and 17.5% of the participants, respectively, wanted to 'explore narrated landscapes' and 'immerse themselves in local culture.' In this regard, settings and landscape descriptions seem to have played a central role. It is not by chance that the majority of respondents had already stated their interest in individual and social psychology (39.1%) or in cultural and landscape-related contexts (32.2%), and that deductive reasoning and the search for the culprit had attracted only 25.2%. The destination preferred by this segment of the participants was Läckberg's Fjällbacka (27.9%).

However, the most selected option was related to the action of 'comparing real spaces with described ones' (30.5%). This implies a critical relational approach (Jones 2009) to local contexts, leading to distinctions and comparisons between intra-textual and extra-textual spaces (Hones 2008). Indeed, among the motivations for reading detective novels, deductive reasoning (32.4%), social context (29.4%) and the analysis of clues (16.2%) seem to be particularly relevant. In this case, the greatest interest was expressed in Camilleri's Sicily (22.4%), as in his books the discrepancy between narrated and real places is especially strong. Indeed, the stories are set in the imaginary town of Vigata, whose descriptions are very much influenced by Camilleri's life experience in Porto Empedocle.

Finally, the option 'Tasting the local food', included due to the fact that in Mediterranean noirs cuisine often expresses locality (Bakhtiarova 2020), was little acknowledged (5.4%). The same applies to 'looking for dark and noir atmospheres' (9%).

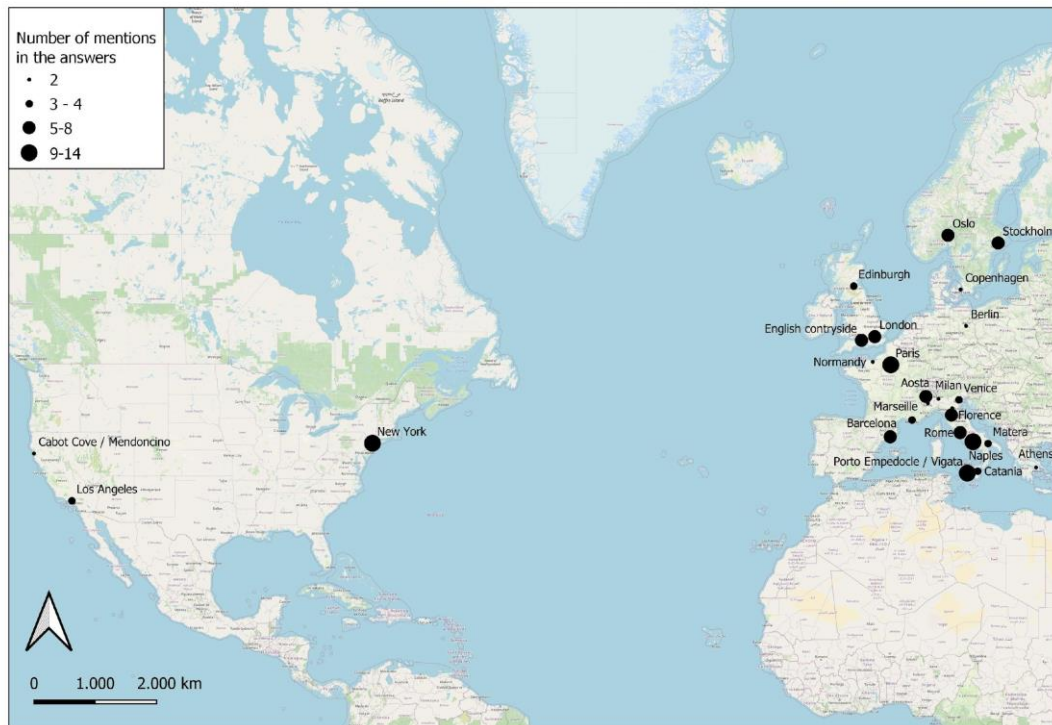


Figure 3. Cities mentioned in the answers to the open question about other preferred destinations of crime fiction-induced tourism. Source: authors; GIS elaboration on OpenStreetMap background.

Discussion

The aim of this work was to carry out an in-depth study of the literary tourism preferences of readers of a specific genre, detective fiction. Results included an analysis of respondent characteristics, of their literary preferences, and also their inclinations and choices with respect to tourism. The composition of our pool of respondents could be understood as indicative of the profile of the average Italian reader of detective novels, even though it is important to keep in mind the biases produced by the distribution of the questionnaire through Facebook. The majority of respondents were between 36 and 64 years old, were female and resided in towns in the centre-north of Italy. While this data was surely influenced by the decision to administer the questionnaire through Facebook, the information gathered on geographic distribution and age confirm the general profiles of Italian readers, as shown by the demographic surveys of the National Institute of Statistics. The only difference is in the level of education, which seems to be lower among the respondents to the questionnaire.

As concerns reading preferences, results confirmed the presence of two major factors determining readers' choices of detective fiction. On the one hand, an interest in the process of investigation and in the search for the culprit, which are the backbones of

'classic' detective fiction (Callois 1983); on the other, the social and cultural context and the landscape in which the authors set their stories, and which are described throughout the investigation. These aspects are typical of 20th-century crime fiction (Pezzotti 2012).

With regard to respondents' interest in visiting the settings of novels, the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire supports the assumption that detective fiction is a literary genre capable of drawing public attention towards given localities, which as a result have the potential to become tourism destinations.

Identifying the motivations at the origin of crime and detective fiction-related tourism experiences (in cities), van Es wrote that 'crime–detective fiction provides an initial opening to approach this 'grittier' and 'uncanny' side of urban place-identity' (van Es 2020: 174). Indeed, multiple tourism offerings in Europe are built around dark and noir atmospheres (Reijnders 2011; van Es and Reijnders 2018). However, for the sample of people considered in the survey, it is possible to detect two more motivations. The first one refers to experiential forms of tourism that enable self-identification with the protagonists of fictional stories and encourage the emotional experience of following in a detective's footsteps. The second interest relates to a certain curiosity about the social urban or rural spaces that readers have come to know through their literary travels, guided by their favourite detectives. When cross-referencing the answers related to reading preferences with those related to travel preferences, it appears that the only category of readers not interested in visiting the novels' settings is that of people attracted to the rational thinking at work in detective novels. On the contrary, those who were particularly inclined to travel to the settings of a novel were those who expressed a desire to go from reading to life experiences, with a special interest in the human and social environment surrounding investigations.

In particular, the intersection between the various results presented in the 'Why' section referring to the reasons for seeking detective-fiction-related tourism experiences, has enabled the identification of three types of reader-tourists (Çevik 2020; Macionis 2004). Their motivations and preferences depend on three main factors: the personalities of authors or protagonists, the performance of the detectives and, finally, setting.

The first type are reader-investigators. They are mostly interested in the investigation-related plot and are passionate about detective fiction, from 19th-century novels to more recent works. These readers' predispositions towards visiting real spaces that inspired fictional settings is quite high, as they are keen to compare them with their representations. They are also curious about social contexts that are far away from their own, and pay special attention to the settings of novels by Agatha Christie or Conan Doyle, or more recent English-language works.

Reader-explorers form the second category; they are fans of newer noirs, in which the investigative storyline is also a key to representing and describing regional and place-based social and cultural contexts and landscapes. Their interest is in 'other places', which can be distant in both time (e.g., Christie's English countryside) and space (e.g., places represented in Scandinavian noirs). These can also be spatially close but characterised by strong local identities, as is the case in a series of successful works set in Naples or Sicily.

The third group of reader-visitors, whose traits are less well defined, are attracted to events such as festivals, detective novel fairs or meet-and-greets with authors. Although the questionnaire does not allow us to identify participants' precise expectations and preferred destinations, it is clear that these readers are interested in various subgenres,

With respect to push factors, i.e. those aspects that affect the choice of a destination, preferences for 'classics' or contemporary authors, and for their respective narrative traits, are significant. In some cases, reader interest in detective fiction lies not so much with the discovery of the culprit, as with the route leading to it. In this respect, the popularity of certain destinations can be due to their capacity of expressing local identities of the societies brought to light or developed by detectives' investigations. Such narrations constitute a way of shaping given images of reality, which are not based on noir atmospheres but on the willingness to portray local identities and distinctive social and landscape features with a claim to realism. In the words of Sherman (2017: 1), 'crime fiction novels make excellent travel guides.'

When defining authenticity as one of the most relevant factors motivating tourists (Hall 2003), the way readers see investigation processes as a medium of penetrating the local contexts that became settings is indeed highly relevant (Rejinders 2009). Detectives' favourite food, the elements of the urban landscape they admire, the daily practices of the inhabitants they investigate are all regarded as authentic and worthy of being experienced, as a consequence of them being described in realistic crime novels.

At the same time, the choice of some destinations expressed by respondents (such as the overtly fictional and non-existing Vigata portrayed by Camilleri, or Sherlock Holmes' 19th-century London) shows how authenticity is not always the main pull factor for this type of tourists. As it is used as the setting of an investigative plot, a given place becomes 'extraordinary' (Urry and Larsen 2011: 115) and attractive to tourists, albeit not entirely (or not at all) corresponding to its representation.

Conclusion and further developments

To conclude, we can claim that the preferences of detective fiction readers have an impact on their potential travelling motivations, on the destinations of such travels and on tourist practices. By highlighting the ways in which given factors and attitudes shape different profiles of readers and detective fiction-induced tourists, this survey has enriched the results of previous qualitative studies on the topic. It has shown how certain narrative mechanisms of detective fiction can contribute to the emergence of reader interest in specific elements of represented places. At the same time, it has also highlighted the direct impact that reading preferences can have on travelling expectations and on the perceived attractiveness of a location.

However, as is often the case with this type of research, the closure of one questionnaire leads to the opening of another. Further developments of this work will have to address the value attributed by tourists to factors such as perceived authenticity, or the willingness to take part in activities to honour the authors or characters of a fictional work.

After now having targeted potential detective-fiction induced tourists, it should be interesting to address the next questionnaire to those who have actually visited the settings of novels of this particular genre. This would allow us to analyse in more depth visitors' expectations and their satisfaction after the experience, while also determining their interest in repeat engagements with other similar experiences connected to the same or to different authors and detective novels.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the fundamental contribution of the people who participated in the survey at the heart of this research. We would also like to thank the admins of the following FB groups for allowing us to share our questionnaire: 'Libri Gialli, Thriller, Crime e Polizieschi'; 'Libri, chiacchiere, caffè e tè'; 'Il Libro Giallo'; 'Studiosi e collezionisti di Libri Gialli Anteguerra'; 'Un libro tira l'altro ovvero il passaparola dei libri'; 'Thriller psicologici'; 'Dieci righe per un giallo'; 'Leggo Letteratura Contemporanea'; 'Thriller storici e dintorni'; 'Il Giallista'; 'GialloeCucina Tv'; 'Thriller italiano'; 'Gialli e neri'; 'Passaparola Giallo Noir'; 'I thriller di Edvige e altro tra le righe'; 'Passione per i libri gialli'.

The article has been developed through common research and the collaboration of both authors. However, Carolien Fornasari is the main author of paragraphs 2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 5, and Nicola Gabellieri of paragraphs 1, 3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.

Notes

¹ This is an umbrella term that includes multiple sub-genres, such as hard-boiled, noir, thriller and crime fictions (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2010).

² See <https://www.catalunya.com/itinerario-manuel-vazquez-montalban-del-funicular-de-vallvidrera-a-la-ermita-de-santa%20maria-24-1-81?language=es>

³ See <https://www.catalunya.com/itinerario-manuel-vazquez-montalban-del-funicular-de-vallvidrera-a-la-ermita-de-santa-maria-24-1-81?language=es>

⁴ See <https://www.storytourist.com/tour/sherlock-blue/>

⁵ See <https://www.semananegra.org/>

⁶ The choice of 'Conan Doyle's London' stands for the settings of classic detective novels; the option 'Läckberg' Fjällbacka' for Scandinavian noirs; 'Chandler's Los Angeles' refers to hard-boiled novels and extra-European settings; 'The Barcelona of Montalbán' to one of the most renowned authors of Mediterranean noirs; 'Camilleri's Vigata' to the Italian setting of one of the best-known national writers of detective fiction.

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