

From Screen to Reality: Travelling the World we Watch

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Abstract: As social media platforms are developing, it has begun to affect considerable numbers of individuals from various cultures and societies just as visual media that is popular in Japan with Japanese animation (anime) and comics (manga). Since the start of 20th century, new digital technique for the artists of anime and manga began developing in which they take references from real life images. Due to its expeditious growing fame at the beginning of 21st century, the connection of anime and tourism has become appealing topic and being studied by many researchers all across the world. It all started by a fandom called ‘otaku’. Over the years, the behavior of the fans of otaku culture started reshaping, creating a new phenomenon ‘anime pilgrimage’ in film tourism sphere. Anime pilgrimage includes visiting a location that was demonstrated in one of the scenes of series regardless of the fact that the destination itself is an ordinary place working as the most efficient way of marketing. To study the behavior of the ones who watch anime, open-ended questions were presented to people via internet. While, anime tourism and volunteer tourism have noticeable difference, there is actually a connection between them that was identified during the travels of anime motivated tourists. This article will examine not only anime tourism but also its necessity, how it affected touristic behavior with the help of small study and its role as advertisement for a destination.

Keywords: Japan, anime tourism, anime pilgrimage, otaku, volunteer tourism.



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INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 18th century, the critical event called “Industrial Revolution” happened resulting in technological development spreading from European countries to all over the world. Popular media such as social and visual media, became available almost to everyone having impact on them by reshaping their beliefs. This innovation of technology started new popular trends, such as movies and TV series. Since the last decade, the diversification of cartoons has started large number of production of anime movies becoming popular not only among the kids, but also with adults. The new term, anime pilgrimage, in tourism was created when tourists started developing potential to travel the Japan because of the anime and its artists using detailed art of real life locations since the start of 2000’s years. Therefore, this form of tourism is about traveling to a destination people saw in the series of anime. Most of the time the places are just ordinary places and barely known among travelers marketing the destinations almost for free. Because of

its popularity, numerous researchers from all across the globe are making studies about it. In the studies, it was observed that people want to travel not only according to their financial situation and needs, but also for their desire for emotional commitment. Hortol and Wohl (1956) examined that, people enjoy virtual reality more than the reality, just because they can change their life by making choices and it results them to be effected from virtual images, movie characters or destinations. This alternative of tourism is only becoming more and more common, outshining the regular mass tourism. While we think there is no considerable connection between anime tourism and volunteering tourism, actually they are strongly connected considering that anime motivated tourists act nothing as the regular ones, who harm the environment, but rather most of the time they are expected to engage in activities to protect environment at the location they visit. This paper will analyze anime no longer being only source of entertainment, but also, it having multi sided effects on society of the whole world by social and visual media, encouraging promotion of location and destination loyalty with the use of analyses of the small research in which was shared open-ended questions on internet and its connection with volunteering tourism.

Global effect of social and visual media on society

We have seen several posts in social media platforms where people took pictures with the background that look cinematic, with or without knowing the place was demonstrated in the background of Japanese animation that is also called anime. The reach of social media is so widespread that it can unconsciously have influence on people's mind, reshaping their behavior, beliefs (Powell, 2012). Japanese animation, anime, has been regarded as niche culture for anime otaku in Japan. Film-motivated tourism has been gaining large amount of fame in recent decades in tourism sphere and in Japan anime-motivated tourism had become the popular alternative mode of tourism. According to Beeton, there are two forms of the film motivated tourism, "on-location" and "off-location". Anime tourism is considered as on-location tourism as it includes visiting a location a movie was recorded, while in off-location tourism people have tours in production studios, film festivals, thematic parks and film themed attractions. Anime tourism was formed, when people who follow a fandom called otaku has begun to show changes in their behavior. Kinsella notes that, "The fandom otaku is so popular, if it is translated from Japanese it actually means "your home" referring to the people who spend all of their time at home by watching anime, reading comics (manga) or playing video games" (1998). However, since the recent years, the behavior of otaku has changed, creating new phenomenon "anime pilgrimage" in tourism sphere and attracting great deal of attention globally. Anime pilgrimage is a new alternative of film motivated tourism in which people visit a place that movie or drama was recorded (Riley, Baker & Van Doren, 1998). As since the beginning of 2000's, production companies are taking benefit of developing digital techniques by demonstrating destinations according to real life images and using them in the background (Jang, 2015). Moreover, according to Okamoto (2015) the travelers of anime pilgrimage are divided into two: "seekers" and "followers". Seekers are individuals who are enthusiastic to discover new locations and share about it online within their community, whereas followers just visit the destinations that is already discovered by seekers.

Promotion of the location and destination loyalty

Anime seichi (sacred places) are usually average spot and gives no signs that it was the exact location that was demonstrated in the framework of anime, so fans themselves often go to find the location from a specific scene. According to Yamamura (2008), otakus who are used to stay in their home all day (Kinsella, 1998), had altered their past lifestyle and nowadays they have developed eagerness to go out and explore Japan in order to discover new places that was part of their favorite anime, resulting with them visiting it frequently and interact with locals, ordinary (non-otaku) people. This group of people who like to discover new sites are called "seekers" (Okamoto, 2015). Sacred places are often located in ordinary towns and barely known among tourists. As reported by Okamoto, the more people visit filmed place, the more they are likely to

interact with host communities, the more they are likely to develop destination loyalty. Destination loyalty can be described as a degree for people, who wants to come to visit a particular site again and again even after facing limitations or challenges in that exact place. Otaku community take part in relatively competitions among each other, to mark the destination they discovered as touristic site (Yamamura, 2015). Movies can be called as an important source of information, forming the viewer's beliefs of that place while marketing it at the same time. The effect of anime in Japan's tourism is just impressive. Despite advertising in tourism sphere is always being costly, series can attract people in particularly short amount of time with perfectly recorded scenes. As example Washinomiya Shrine can be taken which had approximately 90,000 visitors before the release of the movie "Lucky Star". But after the screening, the number of visitors flew to 300,000 in 2008, then to 420,000 in 2009 finally increasing to 450,000 in 2010. Kimball (2021) notes that Mount Kumotori is a destination that is not popular with tourists, became appealing site for foreigners after the release of the anime and the blogs that give information about this category of ordinary anime pilgrimages. To understand what is the factors that are fostering individual's loyalty to sites despite the limitations, it is essential to consider social influences. Regarding the facts that, the widespread rage of anime pilgrimage is not only about the destinations, but also about fan clubs where fans engage with social contents, do cosplays and share their experiences by blogs spreading it worldwide (Jenkins, 2006).

Analyses of small research of open-ended questions

Films have been one of the most interesting subjects in tourism research community, in the research that was carried by Yilmaz and Yolal (2018), the influence of anime on people's desire to travel, buy souvenirs that is only available on that location was studied. Factors such as advertisements, internet, TV series and films are essential to behavior of tourists. Modern individuals prefer to interact with virtual simulations at thematic locations including Disneyland, Hollywood instead of the reality that already exists (Avcikurt,2015). According to the words of Kabadayi & Alan, the post marketing process is all about creating goods which target not only physical, but also psychologic that can have effect on people's experience would be useful in personal operations (2014). The significant quantity of releases of anime has lead local community trying to capitalize anime pilgrimages by providing maps for that place, souvenir shops related to anime including local sake that is sold in the same bottles which appeared on screen (Khoikhina, 2021). Also theme parks, production studios, museums related to anime, collaborative events can be listed as example of producers and viewer's interactions providing emotional experiences to fans with their favorite animation. Shani (2009) notes that, according to the researchers that is related movie tourism, it is claimed that it encourages individuals to travel to places that was revealed in the series and enhance their desire to purchase. Fans are often interested in clicking photos of the destinations and comparing it to the one that was has appeared in counterpart of anime. According to Spinder (2008), "Anime viewers are developing intentions to learn Japanese". Yilmaz and Yolal (2018), used qualitative method of researching by presenting open-ended questions that can be answered freely and analyzed easily. Overall, 36 people have participated in the study. But, because of the improper answers of 5 people, replies of only 31 individuals were examined and factors that all of the participants agreed on was created. According to the study of Kotler and Armstrong (2012), there are 4: cultural, social, personal and psychological factors that have influence on buying intentions. The analyses of the answers were grouped based on these 4 factors. 27 people out of 31 wrote about anime creating curiosity about Japan. One of them said: "I wish I had chance to walk in the old streets of Kyoto and taste street food". Another on explained how his enthusiasm to travel to Japan has increased after watching anime. It is understood that anime changed their life styles. One of them noted that it helped him to communicate with others more easily, while another one said that after watching anime she started seeing the world from different point of view. It was noted that they expressed interest to Japanese culture driven by factors such as kimono, sakura, sushi.

Connection with volunteering tourism

It is appealing that, while large number of people do not see a connection between anime and volunteer tourism, anime induced tourism is the main driver of volunteering tourism because of the fact that anime fans like to engage in volunteering activities at the place they visit. But, why do they actually do volunteering during their trips instead of just sightseeing? Tourists of volunteering tourism travel mostly to do activities that can influence to solve some issues. Based on the words of Buchmann and Jobberns, aquatic tours as whale watching could have negative effect on nature at a movie's shooting location. While on the other hand Heitmann argues that this connection can bring huge success to the tourism of Japan. Wearing and McGehee (2013) admitted that "Almost all of the volunteers have the same encouraging idea to help people". The uniqueness of the motivations can effect tourist's beliefs and way of thinking. Participations of the volunteering tourists can be divided into two: "vacation-minded" and "volunteer-minded". The first variety is named as "shallow" tourists and the another one is called "deep" tourists. The relationship between travelers and hosts is essential as it is one of the factors that can leave positive impression on guests' minds. The "volunteer-minded" tourists can take part in volunteering activities resulting with them having low chance to have exchanges with hosts, while others who are "vacation-minded" often communicate with host communities. Tomazos and Butler (2009) admitted that, just like everything has two sides, there are also positive impacts of volunteering tourism that helps local communities to solve many problems, engaging in environmental protection, cultural recognition and medical assist programs. In the research of Shao and his colleagues (2011), discovered that, the fans of series visited the filmed places and engaged in financial assist activities just because they wanted to connect with the characters deeply. According to the comparison of Yamamura (2009) with mainstream tourism, anime induced tourism is the potential driver of volunteering tourism. Although, anime motivated tourism is all about enjoying the beauty of the destinations it is also being the source of solutions to many challenges thanks to the enthusiasm of the anime fans. At first glance, it seems as anime tourism and volunteering tourism cannot go together but there are multiple destinations that can encourage both of them, as even local communities know if the both tourisms can be mixed it will bring the only improvement creating a new phenomenon "Anime-induced voluntourism".

CONCLUSION

After the one of the greatest functions "Industrial revolution" happened, the availability of the social media apps spread to almost all of the population of the Earth. Japan created its own visual media by Japanese animation (anime) and comics (manga). The comfort that came from these platforms reformed the beliefs, behavior and the lifestyle of individuals creating a new phrase "otaku". Otaku refers to the group of people whose level of interaction with society had deceased considering the fact that they spend all of their time at home playing virtual games, reading manga or watching anime. They do not go out until the level of necessity is that high that it cannot be ignored. However, in the recent century they have created impossible changes in their lives and started a new trend "anime pilgrimage" in tourism sphere. People who are called otaku nowadays are eager to travel the places they saw on the screen. Nevertheless, the category of the destinations that can be named as anime pilgrimage most of the time are not famous among travelers and it is common for the production studios to not to reveal the very place. As a result, otakus determined to detect the sites they saw on anime by themselves. According to the researches, this manner is the main encouraging factor for the fame of that place and destination loyalty despite its limitations. While significant number of people consider, there is considerable differences between anime tourism and volunteering tourism, researches indicated there are great deal of factors indicating their linkage. This paper analyzed anime no longer just being a cartoon, but its influence in the tourism sphere marketing the site at the most efficient cost, motivating destination loyalty and supporting volunteering tourism.

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