

The Potential of Anime for Destination Marketing: Fantasies, Otaku, and the Kidult

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Abstract

While a substantial body of literature exists on film tourism, there is a lack of research attention bridging the potential of Japanese *anime* on real-world destination marketing. The implications of anime tourism can extend far beyond geographic boundary as the worldwide anime market is diversifying, providing novel opportunities for destination marketing organisations (DMOs) in other countries. To address this research gap, this paper first defines anime versus animated-films to clarify the definition of anime for the tourism literature, and then draws out theoretical differences between the two types of entertainment within a cinematic perspective to highlight their conceptual boundaries across place, protagonist, and production. This paper suggests that the ways in which these three aspects are manifested in anime versus films are very different: anime settings are more *fantasy*-orientated than most films; viewers develop their *self-identity* (i.e., as an ‘otaku’) during childhood and adolescence; and anime productions can be extended with new series to create more enduring engagement to develop the *kidult* segment. This paper contributes to the literature by connecting the aforementioned cinematic aspects as a basis for elaboration of how differences among the three dimensions could be directly related to potential destination marketing activities.

Keywords: film tourism; content tourism; anime; otaku; fantasy; tourism marketing

Introduction

Japanese popular (pop) culture content, including video games, manga, and animation, have gained attention from global customers. Japanese animation, or ‘anime’, in particular, is growing quickly in popularity and global events, such as the Japan Expo in Paris and Anime Expo in the United States, have attracted many visitors each year (Karavasilis, 2017). According to the Association of Japanese Animations (2015), the global value of the Japanese anime market reached approximately US \$13.5 billion (1.63 trillion yen) in 2014, growing from US \$10.3 billion (1.28 trillion yen) in 2009.

While the impact of Japanese anime has been examined from commercial and cultural perspectives (Okamoto, 2015), it is noteworthy that only until recently has the influence of anime been investigated in mainstream tourism research. For example, Yamamura (2015a) highlighted a successful case of local revitalization using anime-induced tourism: fans of the manga-based anime, ‘Lucky Star’, now visit the town of Washimiya in Saitama, Japan as an annual pilgrimage to a sacred place. From a consumer behaviour perspective, Kasai & Hsu (2012) found that people with higher anime involvement showed more favorable cognitive and affective images of Japan as well as a greater desire to visit Japan. From a destination marketing perspective, the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO) provides a Japan Anime Map for tourists on its website that introduces events, goods, and locations/attractions related to Japanese anime.

Despite the growing interest of anime in tourism, the subject of ‘anime tourism’ (also referred to as animation tourism), remains intermittent and deserves more mainstream attention in tourism research. There is a lack of research attention bridging the potential of anime or animations, oftentimes based on fictional characters with imaginary space-time physical and temporal boundaries, on real-world destination marketing. Furthermore, while references are commonly made to ‘Japanese’ anime, the implications of anime tourism can

extend far beyond geographic boundary as the worldwide anime market is diversifying, providing novel opportunities for destination marketing organisations (DMOs) in other countries such as China, South Korea, and the United States.

This paper seeks to address the above research gap through two objectives. The first objective is to define anime versus animated-films to clarify the definition of anime for the tourism literature. This distinction is necessary to define the boundaries of anime in tourism research, which excludes tourism induced by animated-films (e.g., tourism experiences at Disneyland could be induced by Disney's animated-film such as *Frozen*, which is neither considered as 'anime' nor 'anime tourism').

The second objective is to draw out theoretical differences between the two types of entertainment within a cinematic perspective to highlight their conceptual boundaries across place, protagonist, and production. Past research suggests that these three cinematic aspects can motivate anime and film tourists to travel to a destination (Pan & Tsang, 2014); yet, the ways in which place, protagonist, and production are manifested in anime versus films are very different. For example, anime settings are more *fantasy*-orientated than most films; viewers can develop their *self-identity* (i.e., as an 'otaku') during childhood and adolescence; and productions can be extended with new series to create stronger and more enduring engagement to develop the *kidult* segment (Lott, 2017). Taken together, this paper contributes to the literature by connecting the aforementioned cinematic aspects as a basis for elaboration of how differences among the three dimensions could be directly related to potential destination marketing activities. This paper concludes by proposing ways to integrate ideas in anime with other bodies of literature on impacts of tourism, branding, and branded entertainment for future research.

It is important to note that the concept of *media-induced tourism* has recently emerged within the tourism literature to categorize various media formats, such as film-induced,

television-induced, and literature-induced tourism (Beeton, Yamamura, & Seaton, 2013; Larson, Lundberg, & Lexhagen, 2013). Meanwhile, a similar concept to media-induced tourism, *content tourism*, was introduced in Japan but with an increased focus on narratives, characters, and locations (Seaton & Yamamura, 2015) rather than media format. Contents tourism represents tourism based on signs and meanings, including the role of anime (Beeton, 2016). According to Yamamura (2011), contents tourism reflects today's multi-media mix, which is particularly relevant to anime as the same protagonists and stories may be sold as games, toys, and novels, with sequels and prequels by producing new series to existing franchises (as cited in Seaton & Yamamura, 2015). Furthermore, viewing anime within the broader context of contents could enable DMOs to better connect the cinematic aspects of an anime with the real-life aspects of the destination, covering both the past and the present of the destination from a temporal perspective (Yamamura, 2015b). While this paper focuses on anime, it should be noted, however, that anime is not, exclusively, the only resource for content tourism although content tourism focuses on tourism induced by anime as its primary resource (Yamamura, 2009). For example, DMOs have developed marketing strategies to promote their cultural content; for example, tourism organisations in Korea have utilized the *Korean Wave* with Korean drama and pop music contents to entice international tourists (Kim et al., 2008; Kim, Lee & Chon, 2010). In consideration of these different definitional approaches, this paper attempts to bridge the depth of location, character, and storyline (as per the notion of content tourism) through a review of the cinematic aspects of place, protagonist, and production with the characteristics of filmed-induced versus anime-induced tourism (as per the notion of media-induced tourism).

Defining Anime versus Animated-Films

The first objective is to clarify the definition of anime for the tourism literature. 'Anime', is comprised of two components: manga (i.e., with reference to the Japanese word) and animation. Manga, meaning recurring drawings in Japanese, are comic strips that employ an exquisite drawing style with descriptive formats and fluid strokes. Animation, similar to Western cartoons, is featured on television and videos with storylines and characters that are oftentimes based on manga. This paper defines animation or 'anime' as including both components (i.e., animation and manga) as animation represents the dominant format given the growth, evolution and development of cinematic (Niu, Chiang & Tsai, 2012).

The birth of animation, *anime*, could be traced back to the 1910s but it was not until the 1960s when modern anime took its shape to become one of the most important cultural exports for Japan. In its initial years, western animation exerted a strong influence and Japanese animators were heavily influenced by American and German artists (Patten, 2004). Due to the success and international popularity of American animation in the 1930s, most anime was drawn in the style of Disney cartoons. Visual elements from Disney were borrowed until Japanese animators gradually developed its serious themes, mature elements (i.e., the death of main characters) and distinctive style including the pervasive black lines and the ubiquitous 'big-eye' style of anime characters (Lewis, 2000). In this sense, anime's early cultural dialogue with the West ignited the internationalization of anime (Lu, 2008).

The release of the classic Japanese manga, *Tetsuwan Atomu*, in 1963 elicited fluid drawings based on camera-like movements and spurred the integration of anime and manga. In 1974, *Space Battleship Yamato* humanized animation based on the will of people fighting for survival, and in 1979, *Mobile Suit Gundam* opened a new chapter in animation by incorporating sophistication, technology, and robotics operated by characters that were more similar to the real world. At this time, organized anime fandom began in North America

(Leonard, 2004), and by the 2000s, the Japanese anime market had grown through language translations to every continent in the world (Patten, 2004). Popular international titles are not limited to *Dragon Ball*, *Sailor Moon*, *Doraemon*, and *Pokémon*, which have accompanied the childhood and adolescence of many generations of fans.

Anime and animated-films are different in nature although they may seem similar. The definition of anime excludes animated-films by Disney, Pixar, DreamWorks, and the like, as well as related tourism experiences at Disneyland, Disney World, Universal Studios, and other theme parks inspired by animated-films. Table 1 provides examples of important differences between anime and animated-films in the major areas of production, market, and influence.

----Insert Table 1 here ---

Production refers to the style, creation, budget, and running time of anime and animated-films. The style of anime depicts characters by black lines and moving only in the mouths while characters in animated-films are ‘usually delineated by darker colourful lines of different width around the shapes of light similar colour’ (Lu, 2008). Animated-films such as Disney-type movies are also major productions, employing hundreds of staff. According to research done by Film L.A. Inc. (2015), over 400 jobs were credited for the creation of the Disney animated-film, *Frozen*. In contrast, anime can be written and illustrated by independent artists or a much smaller team of producers compared to animated-films until they reach a level of readership that warrants more support from production companies. The budget for producing animated-films can match those of other Hollywood movies; for example, the budget for the animated-film, *Frozen*, was estimated at US \$150 million (Film L.A. Inc., 2015) with a running time of 102 minutes. This is in stark contrast to the budget

for an anime, which typically costs between US\$100,000 to \$300,000 per episode with a running time of 30 minutes (Anime News Network, 2015). Although animated-films can have sequels, the longevity of anime can be surprising as popular anime can run for over a decade.

Market refers to the media channel of distribution, intended audience, and market value. The traditional distribution channel for anime includes television networks and comic books (i.e., in the case of manga) while animated-films are directed towards movie theatres. In this regard, animated-films are perceived as “internationally-valid products, aiming generally at large audiences beyond the American national boundaries” (Di Giovanni, 2004, p. 217). This is different from anime, which are largely intended for local or regional consumption “for the enjoyment of one or more specific segments of the Japanese audience” (González, 2006, p. 261) with limited international distribution unless the anime becomes a major international hit. Anime targets broader audiences including children and adults (Kasai & Hsu, 2012) by portraying genre that live-action films may show including romance, comedy, adventure, even tragedy or explicit content that are hardly depicted in Disney-like animated-films. The worldwide market value for anime in 2014 was estimated at US \$13.5 billion, according to the Associations of Japanese Animations (AJA), with a growing audience beyond Japan towards other destinations including South Korea, United States, and Taiwan (Association of Japanese Animations, 2015).

The influence of anime and animated-films can have major impacts on the culture and industries, including tourism, at a destination. Animated-films often embed the values of American culture for children (Feng & Park, 2015). In comparison, a large number of anime are produced in Japan, creating a broader adolescent subculture called *otaku*, which represents a growing group of dedicated anime followers. While a large number of anime are voiced or written in Japanese, the worldwide phenomenon of the *otaku* subculture has led to

‘fan-subbing’, or translation, of original Japanese anime into other foreign languages. Furthermore, similar to dedicated fans of animated-films (e.g., Disney fans), dedicated anime fans also contribute to the entertainment, retail and tourism industries at a destination. For example, Disney Stores is an international chain that sells only Disney related items such as clothes, costumes, and toys, many of them collectibles and exclusive (Disney Store, 2015). For the anime, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, for instance, the franchise has generated a total of 80 billion yen in revenues with retail sales of toys and hobby items totalling 18.4 billion yen as of the fiscal year ended 2014 (Namco Bandai Holdings Inc., 2014). Finally, animated-films and anime can have significant impact on tourism at a destination. Disney World and Universal Studios are prime examples of the allure of animated-films towards a fantasy experience within a theme park setting (Connell, 2012). As discussed earlier, given the comparatively smaller scope of anime production, the vast majority of anime do not scale towards the level of dedicated theme parks that are exhibited by animated-films. Instead, anime-induced tourism focuses on site tours of destinations and settings, as well as museums, conventions and expositions (e.g., Comic-Con International San Diego). The overall nature of tourism products and experiences in anime tourism better mirrors experiences in film tourism than those inspired by animated-films. In consideration of the aforementioned differences (i.e., in production, market, and influence), animated-films are excluded for the purpose of clarity in the definition of anime tourism in this conceptual paper.

Asymmetries of Film versus Anime

The second objective of this paper is to explore the conceptual differences between film and anime within a cinematic perspective across place, protagonist, and production. These three cinematic aspects are connected to the concepts of fantasy, self-identity (i.e., as an ‘otaku’), and ‘kidult-hood’ as a basis for elaboration for potential destination marketing activities.

To begin, film tourism is defined as visitation to a site that is or has been used for or is associated with filming (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010). Film-induced tourism is tourism influenced by both television and cinema that attracts and motivates people to travel to a film location (Croy, 2011). There are also other terms that map this domain; they include screen tourism (Connell & Meyer, 2009; Kim, 2010; Kim, Long, & Robinson, 2009), cinematic tourism (Karpovich, 2010), celebrity-induced tourism (Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008), television-induced tourism (Connell, 2005), media-induced tourism (Iwashita, 2003), and movie-induced tourism (Im & Chon, 2008; Jewell & McKinnon, 2008; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998). In this paper, animation tourism, or anime tourism, is defined as visitation to a site that is or has been portrayed in, or associated with an anime (as per this paper's definition of 'anime').

Past research suggests that three cinematic aspects can motivate tourists to travel to a destination: place, protagonist, and production (Macionis, 2004; Pan & Tsang, 2014). For example, Macionis (2004) divided a film into three components: place, personality, and performance, which were reorganized by Pan & Tsang (2014) into place, protagonist, and production in order to be operationally measurable and more associated with film analysis. Place interacts with protagonists to shape the "world" (or universe) of the film or anime while production includes the techniques used to frame the interaction between the place and protagonist into a fantasy. These dimensions have been considered in a number of recent studies related to the role visual media in tourist's experiences (Terzidou, Stylidis, & Terzidis, 2017) and travel motivations for film tourists to destinations in China (Meng & Tung, 2016) and Spain (Oviedo-García, Castellanos-Verdugo, Trujillo-García, & Mallya, 2016).

Place

In film tourism, the place is the ‘landscape’ of a destination where the film is filmed and revealed (Macionis, 2004; Pan & Tsang, 2014). Film destinations are identifiable and accessible by tourists, and relevant to the success of the story (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2002). Research indicates several important variables for place in films that attract tourists: beautiful and natural scenery, wealth of countryside, uniqueness of flora, weather, history and culture, friendly people, attractiveness of towns, and length of time the location is on screen (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Pan & Tsang, 2014; Son & Pearce, 2005).

In mainstream films, natural and exterior spaces function as the setting (Lefebvre, 2006). Film tourism is largely based on these special places for which the scenery and storyline will happen. As Pan and Tsang (2014, p. 408) fittingly described: “A film that can induce tourism will need to have a storyline that smoothly intertwines with locations so as to create settings that will entice viewers to relive or recount the vicarious cinematic fantasy or *déjà vu*.”

In film tourism, destinations could be potentially recreated for tourists to experience the fantasy of the film and gain first-hand experiences related to the film. Fantasy refers to one’s imagination of being close to the characters, the actions that took part in the storyline, as well as the location of the set (Oviedo-García et al., 2016). Fantasy in film tourism also represents a journey to fulfil an experience and the urge to wander about to fulfil a dream (Pan & Tsang, 2014). Consequently, film locations associated with storylines have become special places for viewers to develop memorable tourism experiences (Butler, 2011).

Facilitating place fantasies, however, is a critical challenge for anime tourism: the imagination of many anime contains no physical/place boundaries. For example, *Pokémon*

was created in 1996 and left a legacy on popular culture. Despite its dominance, tourists cannot pinpoint a destination as the set for ‘Pokémon World.’ Tourists cannot experience the scenery, weather, fauna, culture and people in many other animations either (e.g., Space Colony in *Mobile Suit Gundam* or various planets in *Dragon Ball*). This is a stark contrast to film tourism in which tourists can fulfil their desires to visit the destination even in a fantasy such as ‘Middle Earth’ in *Lord of the Rings*.

Nevertheless, there are still opportunities for tourism marketers to bridge the gap between an anime’s ‘fantasy’ setting and real-life destinations based on inspirations from film tourism. At the preproduction stage, DMOs can also be involved in location scouting (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). The goal is to provide animators with inspirations that *resemble* real-world destinations to create their fantasy worlds. For example, the anime, *Naruto*, the most representative landmark where the protagonist grew up resembles Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the United States. Fan interest in this resemblance has generated discussions in online forums since 2005 (Naruto Forums, 2015). Furthermore, anime producers often create a short, humorous version of an animation that is unrelated to the main storyline either with new characters or existing characters. In *Naruto*, the protagonist is often shown at a ramen noodle restaurant. In animated films, many viewers have seen short video clips before a movie from Pixar (Simon, 2015). DMOs can take advantage of these unique opportunities by negotiating the making of short films, and ensuring media coverage of their destinations. Indeed, destinations are already witnessing fans visiting places depicted via anime (Beeton, 2015).

For developing a successful anime tourism destination, a cooperative relationship between local DMOs and the production company is critical (Yamamura, 2015c). In the case of Yuwaku Onsen in Kanazawa city in Japan, the town was chosen as a model location for an anime, *Hanasaku Iroha*. Although the town was portrayed as a made-up name, Yunosagi

Onsen, in the anime, the local DMO and the anime production committee had established an executive committee to develop a regional festival called *the Bonbori* (paper lantern) *Festival*, which was inspired by the fictitious festival portrayed in the anime. The results were successful and the festival has been recognized as a genuine and authentic event by visitors. What could have been one-time event for the town has now become an important annual festival for the local tourism and hospitality business (Yamamura, 2015c).

Protagonists

People act in films, and the protagonist component includes the cast and characters in a movie (Macionis, 2004; Pan & Tsang, 2014). Contrary to common expectations, research suggests that the halo effect of celebrities does not always influence film tourists to visit a location (Shani, Wang, Hudson, & Gil, 2009). As Shani et al. (2009) found, the ‘characters’ and ‘actors’ in the film, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, were least influential in stimulating tourists to visit South America. This notion was supported by recent research by Pan and Tsang (2014) who contrasted the celebrity effects of actors Paul Hogan and Linda Kozlowski in *Crocodile Dundee* with Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman in *Australia*. Similar to Shani et al. (2009), the authors concluded that the celebrity effect in attracting viewers was not as influential as expected.

Paradoxically, this lack of human-actor influence could bode well for DMOs seeking to promote characters in anime at their destination. Anime characters do not exhibit physical traits, in the strictest sense of attributes such as human age and health issues, which could limit the extent of real-world actors’ growth and popularity. Without physical human limitations, destinations can capitalize on the long-term popularity and relevance of anime characters from a temporal perspective; for example, the anime, *Naruto*, began as a manga in 1999 based on a young ninja and followed his development from childhood to adolescence.

The anime and the characters remain hugely popular through 15 consecutive years until it ended in 2014. Furthermore, highly popular anime are oftentimes rejuvenated with human actors and reproduced with a human cast (e.g., *Ranma ½ Live Action Movie*, and *Attack on Titan*), which re-extends the duration in which anime characters could remain relevant for viewers.

Tourists are also inspired to travel to relive the dreams and past experiences of actors and characters at a destination; for example, Japanese tourists visited the set of the Korean drama, *Winter Sonata*, to experience the pure and unconditional first love portrayed by the actors (Kim et al., 2007). While anime is based on non-human protagonists, the concepts of fantasies, aspirations, and experiences could still span across generations of anime viewers because humans can distinguish between realities and fantasies (Buchmann et al., 2010).

Fantasies associated with the non-human protagonists (e.g., robots and mythical creatures) have stood through time. In contrast to human actors in films, the non-human nature of anime protagonists provides an opportunity to arouse anthropomorphism among viewers, enabling them to treat non-human objects (i.e., animal, car, brand, computer, etc.) as their friends or family members and give these meanings and personalities (Fournier, 1998; Guthrie, 1997). For example, the anime, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, brings out fantasies from robotics, space, and technology. The allure towards *Gundam* robots has not abated since the franchise began over 30 years ago. In the anime, *Pokémon*, the main focus is mythical creatures that bring out notions of childhood, purity, persistence, and friendship. By watching and growing up with anime, individuals potentially develop deep emotional connections and relationships with characters that affect their later self-identities.

Research in developmental psychology suggests that humans develop their cognition of society during childhood and develop their world-view during adolescence (Havighurst 1953). Anime can influence the development of adolescences' self-identities, shaping their

values and formation of self-concept as well as their behaviours and decision-making as a consumer/tourist (Isaksen & Roper, 2008). Furthermore, changes during adolescence can influence their subsequent responses to communication, branding, and advertising patterns (Kim, Lee, & Tomiuk, 2009).

The distribution of anime throughout multiples generations has led to the growth of a global adolescent sub-culture called *otaku*. An *otaku*, is typically seen as an obsessive collector of anime and pop culture toys and books (Steinberg, 2004). Today, the *otaku* sub-culture is prevalent among cohorts of adolescences beyond Japan due to global marketing strategies of Japanese pop culture over mass media (Niu, Chiang & Tsai, 2012). For example, the manga-based anime, *Lucky Star*, is mainly set in Kasukabe City in Saitama Prefecture, a suburb of Tokyo. The anime was released in many countries, including South Korea, Canada, the USA and Thailand, and *Lucky Star* became an international hit (Japan National Tourism Organisation, 2014). A significant setting for this anime is ‘Takanomiya Shrine’ which was derived from Washinomiya Shrine in Washimiya, a neighbouring town of Kasukabe. When the anime was broadcasted in 2007, fans started to visit the shrine and the town, and the economic impacts to Washimiya represented one of the most successful cases of animation tourism brought by an *otaku* subculture (Japan National Tourism Organisation, 2014).

Production

Production in cinematic development refers to the attributes and tools that are available to a director to tell a story (Pan & Tsang, 2014). These include photography, editing, sound, drama, story, writing, plot in a variety of different shots, scenes, narration, costumes, makeup, dialogue and tones (Giannetti, 2008). In addition to these elements, the production nature of anime allows producers to create spin-offs to extend the timelines of a franchise.

For example, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, has been revitalized over three decades. Since its origin in 1979, it evolved into *Mobile Suit SD Gundam* in the late 1980s, and became even more popular as *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* in the mid-1990s. The extensions continued and it became *Mobile Suit Gundam SEED* in the 2000s and *Mobile Suit Gundam AGE* in 2011.

The extension of new anime series over multiple generations of viewers have led to strong engagement from childhood and adolescence to even adulthood. This has helped develop the *kidult* segment, representing adults who seek to act and/or behave like children by choice (Lott, 2017). This could include purchasing toys, anime, and figurines. For some individuals, it represents a chance to escape the hardships and hassles of adulthood, while for others, it is a chance to recapture childhood memories (Kelly, 2017). In this regard, nostalgic effects will continue to resurface as long as individuals continue to reminisce about their childhood memories (Bernardini, 2014).

The rise of the *kidult* segment is influencing popular art and entertainment. In films, a common strategy is to lead viewers to relive past experiences and regress once again toward previous life stages through remakes, sequels, prequels, and live actions of comics and superheroes (Bernardini, 2014). In gaming, mobile games derived from anime such as *Pokemon GO* have assumed a nostalgic function by connecting its world of fantasy with real-world settings to enable *kidults* to become the “Pokemon Trainer/Master” that they have dreamt to be (Larocca, 2016). In tourism, more destinations worldwide (e.g., San Diego in the United States, Calgary in Canada, Tokyo in Japan, Shanghai in China) are now seeking to host large-scale conventions and events to enable both *otaku* and *kidults* to participate, discuss, and even dress-up as different anime characters. For example, the San Diego Tourism Authority actively promotes its annual Comic-Con International, the largest comics and pop culture event in the United States with screening rooms devoted to Japanese anime that attracts over a hundred thousand attendees as well as thousands of artists and celebrities.

In 2014, Comic-Con generated \$177.8 million for the local economy from 130,000 attendees, which accounted for 60,960 room nights (Martin & Perry, 2015). At the San Diego Comic-Con, fans ‘cosplay’ (i.e., costume play) when they wear costumes and accessories to represent a specific character in an anime (Jenkins, 2012). Cosplay models at Comic-Con are highly recognized in similar ways as stars in the film industry (Okamoto, 2015).

‘Cosplayers’ can even attract tourists across Asia to promote a destination (e.g., Ani-Con & Games Hong Kong) (Discover Hong Kong, 2015). They are also considered as prosumers (i.e., both producers and consumers) of experiences when fans work to become part of the tourist attraction (Yamamura, 2011).

This phenomenon is not limited to only young otaku or male kidults. A study of over 2600 Comic-Con attendees found that 45% were females, with the largest age group between 30-49 years old (38%) while 7% of attendees over 49 years old (Macdonald, 2014).

Furthermore, 27% of attendees reported annual income of over USD 61,000 and 70% of attendees suggested purchasing goods as their primary motivation. Indeed, the spending power of the kidult segment is not negligible as they are willing to spend for nostalgic experiences, whether through collections of toys and figurines, entertainment from movies, or travel memories via tourism (Niu, Chiang, & Tsai, 2012). The behaviour characteristics of this segment are driving mainstream and international marketing (Burke, 2017), and there are opportunities for DMOs to collaborate with producers and tourism stakeholders to distribute anime-related products. For example, branding a destination, especially a small location that is not typically associated with tourism could be possible. After the second year of broadcast for the anime, *Lucky Star*, a restaurant at the destination in the anime renamed some of its menus items after the characters and introduced the restaurant’s souvenir items associated with the anime. Goods and food that were showcased in *Lucky Star* such as prayer plaques, fried noodles and sausages became popular items at Washimiya, Japan. The second floor of

the shop became a small museum that display *Lucky Star* mementos (Japan National Tourism Organisation, 2014). Hotels, guest houses, sets, and attractions could also be co-branded with anime franchises to target tourists.

Conclusion and proposed opportunities for future research in anime tourism

The final section of this paper proposes ways to integrate ideas in anime tourism with other bodies of literature such as tourism impact, branding, and branded entertainment for future research.

Future research could investigate the impact of anime tourism on local communities. Research suggests that film-induced tourism to an area can alter the mix of visitors and increase prices for rural communities (Beeton, 2001). Given the internationalization of anime and the enthusiasm of the otaku sub-culture, the impact of anime tourists could significantly impact the economic, social and environmental landscape of a destination. For instance, the town of Washimiya in *Lucky Star* experienced a massive influx of anime tourists for New Year's holiday after an article provided directions on how to reach the shrine from the otaku hotspot, Akihabara, in Tokyo. Local residents were divided on the influx of tourists as some considered the economic benefits worthwhile while others raised concerns (Tabuchi, 2008).

There is also potential to explore the influence of branding and framing research in anime tourism. In striving to deliver outstanding experiences to customers, organisations tend to focus on the 'facts' of what happens during an experience (Ritchie, Tung, & Ritchie, 2011). However, given the fictional aspects of place, protagonist and production in anime, tourism marketers may need to pay greater attention to the wording they use when they promote anime tourism at their destination (e.g., by labelling an experience as 'dream fulfilling' rather than 'realistic'). The implications of this could extend to branding, signage, and promotional messaging.

Future studies could also integrate anime tourism with growing research in branded entertainment. Branded entertainment is a term to describe a more contemporary use of product placement, and has been defined as ‘the integration of advertising into entertainment content, whereby brands are embedded into storylines of a film, television program, or other entertainment medium’ (Hudson & Hudson, 2006, p. 492). This technique blurs the lines between brand marketing and storytelling through increased use of video and a shift in emphasis to experiential content (CPMA, 2014). Tourism marketers are in a strong position to take advantage of this technique given the fact that they are selling fantasies and have the ability to work with animators to create short films that facilitate these experiences.

To conclude, the present paper defined anime versus animated-films to clarify the definition of anime for the tourism literature and drew out theoretical differences between the two types of entertainment within a cinematic perspective to highlight their conceptual boundaries across place, protagonist, and production. Compared to films, anime settings are more fantasy-orientated than most films; viewers develop their self-identity (i.e., as an ‘otaku’) during childhood and adolescence; and anime productions can be extended with new series to create more enduring engagement to develop the kidult segment. Overall, by integrating definitions and concepts with practical examples of popular anime within the discussion of fantasies, otaku sub-culture, and kidult segment, this paper hopes to inspire DMOs to truly consider opportunities for anime tourism that could benefit their destinations.

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Table 1. Examples of differences between anime and animated film

	Anime	Animated-films	Related references
Production			
Creation	Typically written/illustrated by manga/cartoon writers (e.g., Lucky Star by Kagami Yoshimizu; Attack on Titan by Hajime Isayama). Supported by television productions (e.g., Asahi, Fuji TV) when the level of readership warrants more support from production companies.	Major productions from large studios such as Walt Disney, Pixar, DreamWork (e.g., 426 credited jobs for the production of <i>Frozen</i>)	
Budget	US\$100,000-300,000 per episode for single 30-minute anime episode.	Matches level of major Hollywood movies (e.g., <i>Frozen</i> for US\$150 million; <i>Monsters University</i> for US\$200 million).	Film L.A. Inc. (2015)
Style	Characters depicted by black lines and moving only the mouths.	Characters “usually delineated by darker colourful lines of different width around the shapes of light similar colour.”	Lewis (2000) Lu (2008) Niu, Chiang & Tsai (2012)
Running time	20-30 minutes per episode. Can last more than a decade.	Around 100 minutes. Can have sequels.	
Market			
Media	Local or regional television networks Comic books	International movie theatres	Di Giovanni (2004) González (2006)
Audience	Not only target children, but also adolescence and adults.	Children and family	Kasai & Hsu (2012)
Market value	US\$ 13.5 billion Anime and manga audiences in Japan, Taiwan, US, Korea, and more.	<i>Frozen</i> alone with US\$1.27 billion gross revenue at the box office. Children and parents visiting theatres all around the world.	Association of Japanese Animations (2015) Sacks (2014)
Influence			
Culture	Otaku subculture Fan subbing	American children culture	González (2006) Okamoto (2015)
Industries	Entertainment Retail	Entertainment Retail	Disney Store (2015) Namco Bandai Holdings Inc (2014) Yamamra (2015)
Tourism	Anime sacred site tours Anime museums Conventions and expositions (e.g., Comic-Con International San Diego)	Theme parks (e.g., Disney World, Universal Studio); Disney Cruise Line	