



Japanese Tourism Persuasion Through Content Tourism in Anime Films: A Mass Communication Perspective of Anime Fans

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the persuasive role of anime as a medium of mass communication in promoting Japanese tourism destinations. It specifically explores how visual, narrative, and emotional elements in anime influence viewers' interest in visiting real-world locations featured in the films. The study uses descriptive qualitative design and applies Mayring's content analysis method. Data were collected through detailed scene observation in two anime titles, *Your Name* and *Detective Conan*, which were selected for their use of real-life Japanese tourist settings. The scenes were analyzed thematically by identifying visual aesthetics, narrative structures, and emotional appeals that may influence tourist perceptions. The analysis reveals that *Your Name* relies on visually rich and emotionally resonant depictions of destinations, while *Detective Conan* integrates iconic landmarks within its storyline to evoke nostalgia and familiarity. Both anime titles effectively shape a positive image of Japan and stimulate viewers' desire to visit the featured locations. This research provides an original contribution by linking anime content with tourism behavior through a mass communication framework. It demonstrates the potential of anime as a soft power strategy for tourism promotion, offering insights that may be adapted in other countries, including Indonesia.

Keywords: Anime, Content Tourism, Japanese Destinations, Mass Communication, Tourism Promotion

1. Introduction

Mass communication plays a crucial role in shaping public attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, as well as in introducing various cultures to a broad audience (Sari & Basit, 2020). One of the primary functions of mass communication is persuasion, wherein media is employed to influence audiences to act in accordance with the messages conveyed (Gamble & Gamble, 2013). As a globally popular medium, anime not only provides entertainment but also serves as a significant vehicle for promoting culture and tourism destinations, particularly in Japan.

Mass communication serves several important functions, one of which is persuasion. In this context, anime functions not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for disseminating information and shaping positive perceptions of Japanese culture. As noted by Akbas (2018), anime contributes significantly to the Japanese economy; in fact, in 2018 alone, anime sales reached 21.624 trillion yen, underscoring its substantial impact on the economy, particularly within the tourism industry. Naturally, mass communication utilizes mass media as a vehicle for message dissemination.

Anime is a term commonly used by the Japanese to refer to all animated films, regardless of their origin. However, outside Japan, the term *anime* specifically refers to animated films



produced in Japan (Nugroho dalam Adevy Vanie & Zahra Javiera, 2023). According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), anime is defined as a television program consisting of a sequence of drawings or images that are mechanically or electronically animated, creating the illusion of motion on screen (<https://kbbi.web.id/animasi>). Anime is characterized as a distinctive form of Japanese animation, typically recognized by its colorful illustrations featuring characters in diverse settings and storylines targeted at various audience groups (Aghnia & Isdianto, 2012).

Anime is a distinctive form of Japanese animated film that features narratives rooted in Japanese culture and language, and it holds significant appeal among international audiences (Yoga, 2018). Several well-known anime series—such as *Doraemon*, *Dragon Ball*, *One Piece*, and *Detective Conan*—have achieved widespread popularity, with *Doraemon* even being appointed as Japan's anime ambassador to Indonesia (Hatami, 2017). Beyond its entertainment value, anime frequently incorporates real-world settings, which can stimulate viewers' interest in visiting the locations depicted in the stories. This phenomenon underpins research into the appeal of anime in promoting Japanese tourism, particularly as anime functions as a persuasive medium for attracting visitors to specific destinations.

In the early years of Japanese anime, Western animation exerted a significant influence, with Japanese animators being heavily inspired by American and German artists (Patten, 2004). As a form of Japanese popular culture, anime has been strategically utilized to reinforce Japan's soft power on the international stage, particularly following a decline in its global influence over the past two decades. It also serves to counterbalance the cultural rise of other East Asian countries, such as South Korea and China. Anime, being an integral part of Japanese culture, represents a subtle form of cultural resource—soft power—wherein the Japanese government does not impose its culture on the global community, but rather adopts an open approach that fosters attraction and interest toward the nation's cultural heritage.

MacWilliams asserts that anime constitutes a key component of popular visual culture. Amid the influential role of mass media (*masukomi*) in Indonesian society, anime and manga have become inseparable elements of a highly visual contemporary life. Anime plays a significant role in shaping the global mediascape, both in print and electronic forms (MacWilliams, 2014). Mass media has now become the dominant source for acquiring, interpreting, and evaluating images of social reality. Mass culture or popular culture tends to become dominant due to its continuous reproduction by mass media (Ruslita & Seran, 2024). Through media channels, anime has grown, evolved, and established enduring trends over time. As a form of popular culture, anime is heavily reliant on mass media, which facilitates its dissemination across Indonesia. This dissemination aligns with the process of diffusion. Diffusion refers to the geographical spread of cultural elements, often driven by the movement of peoples across the globe (Koentjaraningrat, 2011). In the modern era, the diffusion of cultural traits emerging in one location can occur rapidly, even without direct contact between individuals. This acceleration is largely enabled by highly effective broadcasting tools such as newspapers, magazines, books, radio, film, and television. Television,



in particular, has played a crucial role in the spread of anime as a popular culture in Indonesia, as it has become a major medium in the creation of popular culture itself (Sumarwan, 2003).

Tourism has become a highly potential commodity in the era of globalization. The Japanese government has begun to recognize the substantial economic potential of this sector. In response to this opportunity, the government has undertaken various initiatives to promote tourism in the country. One such initiative is the “Visit Japan” campaign, launched in 2003, with the aim of increasing the number of international tourists visiting Japan. This campaign has yielded positive results, as evidenced by the consistent annual growth in the number of foreign visitors to Japan. According to the *White Paper on Tourism in Japan* (2019), Japan ranks third in Asia for international tourist arrivals and holds the 12th position globally (Rachmawati & Subagjo, 2023).

Content tourism is closely related to film tourism. Heitmann (2010) explains that films can serve as a motivating factor for travel, especially when a film acts as a trigger that reinforces pre-existing motivations. Tooke and Baker view narrative plots as providing contextual experiences and attractions for tourists, with many travelers seeking to experience at least part of what is depicted in films, rather than merely observing sites or landscapes (Tooke & Baker, 1996). According to Philip Seaton in his book *Contents Tourism in Japan: Pilgrimages to “Sacred Sites” of Popular Culture*, contents tourism refers to a form of tourism inspired by popular culture. In 2005, a policy document issued by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (2019), the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and the Agency for Cultural Affairs defined the essence of contents tourism as the addition of narrative stories or themes to a region or destination, enhancing the atmosphere or image associated with that place. This is achieved through content creation and the use of narrative as a tourism resource.

Okamoto Takeshi (dalam Rachmawati & Subagjo, 2023) defines content as information that has been produced and edited in various forms, and which brings enjoyment when consumed. A key to the development of popular culture lies in maximizing the function of narrative, characters, settings, and other creative elements across multiple media formats. Fans of a particular content are likely to visit related sites, leading to the emergence of content tourism.

Anime has been proven to increase the number of tourists visiting locations featured as story settings. For instance, the anime *Yuru Camp*, which aired in 2018, had a direct impact on tourism in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan, resulting in a significant increase in visitor numbers—up to 17.2% compared to the previous year (Rachmawati & Subagjo, 2023). This indicates that anime holds substantial potential in promoting tourism through pop culture-based promotional strategies, commonly referred to as content tourism. Such promotional activities through anime generate effects not only for Japanese citizens but also internationally. Indonesia, for example, is one of the countries that has experienced such effects. Theddy (2015) found that anime served as a motivating factor for consumers in Surabaya in purchasing games featured in the anime. Similarly, Ngurawan et al. (2016) discovered that anime, as part of Japanese popular culture, significantly influenced the decision-making processes of young consumers in Manado, North Sulawesi. These studies suggest that anime-based promotion exerts a significant influence on Indonesian audiences.



Imaduddin (2019) study titled *Settings in Anime from 1993 to 2018 as a Means of Promoting Tourist Destinations in Japan* serves as the basis for the novelty of the present research, which focuses on content tourism through two anime films: *Your Name* (2016) and *Detective Conan* (2024). These films play a significant role in popularizing real-life locations in Japan as tourist attractions. Both films depict settings that have since become popular travel destinations among global anime fans. The existing research gap lies in the limited focus on how specific anime titles influence tourism. Therefore, this study concentrates on *Your Name* and *Detective Conan* as case studies and explores the extent to which these anime impact tourists' decisions to visit the featured locations. Previous studies have shown that anime utilizes engaging narratives and compelling visuals to portray the beauty of Japan, as exemplified by titles such as *Your Name* and *Detective Conan*, which have contributed to the popularity of specific locations in Japan (Hatami, 2017). This phenomenon presents an opportunity for anime fans to visit and experience these locations firsthand.

The theory of persuasion in mass communication refers to the use of media to influence audiences to accept or change their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors in accordance with the message being conveyed. In the context of anime, this theory is highly relevant, as anime functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as an effective medium for promoting culture and tourism, particularly in introducing various locations in Japan to a global audience. Gamble & Gamble (2013) assert that persuasion is one of the primary functions of mass communication, wherein mass media is employed to influence audiences to act in line with certain appeals or ideas. The theory of persuasion emphasizes that effective communication must take into account several key elements, such as the message source, the content of the message, the communication channel, and the target audience. For instance, anime titles such as *Your Name* and *Detective Conan* incorporate real-life locations in Japan as their narrative settings, enabling audiences to not only enjoy the storyline but also gain visual information about places they might wish to visit. This study focuses on how anime serves as a persuasive tool in shaping audience perceptions of specific tourist destinations in Japan.

The central issue addressed in this study is how anime can serve as an effective medium of mass communication in promoting tourism destinations in Japan, thereby influencing tourists' interest in visiting locations depicted in anime. This research aims to analyze the role of anime as a persuasive tool in tourism promotion, evaluate the impact of anime on tourists' desire to visit places popularized through such media, and provide insight into anime's contribution to shaping global perceptions of Japanese culture and tourism. In line with these objectives, the study also explores how specific elements—such as visuals and narratives—within the selected anime contribute to influencing audience perceptions of tourism destinations in Japan. Ultimately, this research is expected to offer a deeper understanding of the role of anime in shaping audience perceptions of Japanese culture and tourism, as well as provide insights into similar potentials that may be applicable in other countries, including Indonesia.



2. Research Method

Methods contain the design, size, criteria, and method of sampling, instruments used and collection procedures, processing, and data analysis. When using a questionnaire as an instrument, explain the contents briefly and measure which variables. The validity and reliability of the instrument must also be explained. In experimental research or interventions, it is necessary to explain the intervention procedure or treatment provided. In this section, it must explain how research ethics approval is obtained and the protection of the rights of the respondents imposed. Data analysis using a computer program does not need written details of the software if it is not original software. For qualitative research, this section needs to explain how research safeguards the validity of the data obtained. The method section is written briefly in two to three paragraphs with a maximum of 600 words.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore phenomena experienced by the research subjects—such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions—in a holistic manner. The data are presented descriptively in the form of words and language within a specific natural context, utilizing various naturalistic methods. The research procedure yields descriptive data in written form through content analysis of selected texts. This analysis aims to generate an in-depth understanding aligned with the contextual reality of the examined phenomena. The focus of this study is on anime that have successfully promoted tourism destinations in Japan, such as *Your Name* and *Detective Conan*.

The content analysis method is employed to examine the visual components found within the material, specifically in relation to elements previously outlined in the literature review. This method involves the processes of coding and categorizing texts based on emerging themes or concepts identified during the analysis. The analytical model adopted is Mayring's Inductive Category Development Model. The selection of this systematic inductive research model is based on the nature of the study, which aims to investigate several episodes of an anime in detail and explore the sociocultural codes embedded within them, ultimately formulating broader thematic categories of sociocultural elements. In content analysis, the researcher collects and selects the documents or texts to be analyzed, followed by an in-depth and iterative analysis of the selected material. Accordingly, the framework of the content analysis method applied in this study is presented in Figure 1.

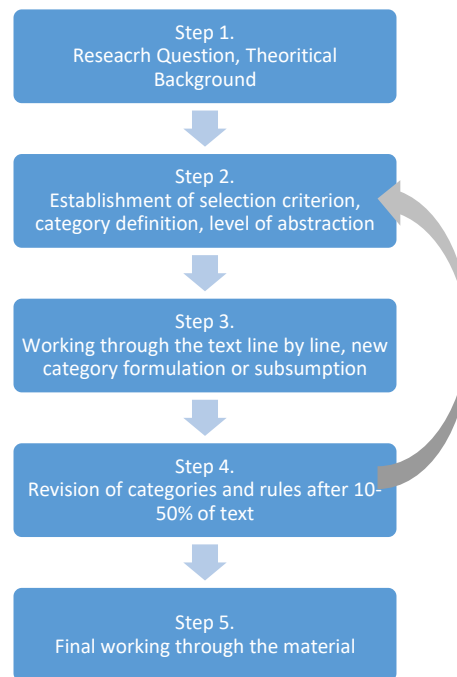


Figure 1. Model of Inductive Category Development Steps
Source: Mayring (2014)

Step 1. Research Question

The first step is to formulate a research question that focuses on how anime functions as a form of mass communication in promoting tourism destinations in Japan. This study aims to investigate how anime depicts specific locations in Japan, influencing audience perceptions of these destinations, and how anime impacts tourists' decisions to visit those locations. An inductive approach is employed to explore the relationship between themes presented in anime and their effects on tourism in an exploratory and descriptive manner.

Step 2. Ensuring the Ability to Define Categories and Levels of Abstraction

At this stage, relevant categories for the research topic are identified, specifically in defining the promotion of Japanese tourism and culture through anime. These categories encompass visual, narrative, and emotional elements utilized in anime to portray tourist destinations. The determination of levels of abstraction focuses on selecting elements that range from general themes—such as natural beauty or narrative strength—to more specific components, such as particular locations that serve as iconic tourist attractions in Japan.

Step 3. Coding Process

The coding process began with an analysis of popular anime that promote Japanese tourist destinations, such as *Your Name* and *Detective Conan*. In this stage, each scene depicting tourist



locations or aspects of Japanese culture was examined to identify elements that represent tourism destinations. Coding was conducted to capture emerging social and cultural themes, such as representations of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and how these locations are portrayed within the context of the anime.

Step 4. Revision

After analysing the majority of the research subjects (comprising 50% of the selected anime), the previously identified categories will be reviewed. If any new relevant categories are discovered, the identification process will be repeated, and the new categories will be incorporated into the analysis. This revision aims to ensure that the formulated categories comprehensively capture all significant elements that influence audience perceptions of the tourist destinations depicted in the anime.

Step 5. Final Analysis

In the final stage, a comprehensive analysis is conducted using the categories that have been previously identified and defined. The data obtained from the coding process are analyzed to illustrate the extent to which anime influences audience perceptions of Japanese culture and tourist destinations. The results of this analysis are expected to provide insights into the role of anime as a persuasive tool in tourism promotion and how it may influence tourists' decisions to visit locations depicted in anime.

3. Results and Discussions

Mayring's Content Analysis of *Your Name* and *Detective Conan* Anime

Your Name and *Detective Conan* play significant roles in promoting Japanese tourist destinations through captivating visual representations and emotionally engaging narratives. Employing Mayring's Inductive Category Development Model, this study explores how visual, narrative, and emotional elements in both anime influence viewers' interest in visiting the depicted locations.

The first step in this analysis is to formulate research questions that focus on how anime functions as a medium of mass communication in promoting tourism destinations, how visual and narrative elements shape audience perceptions of Japan, and the extent to which anime can influence tourists' decision-making. Based on these questions, the study categorizes the collected data into three main themes: visual elements, narrative elements, and emotional responses.



Figure 2. Shintoshin Bridge in the anime *Your Name*

Source: <https://titipjepang.com/budaya/travel/10-lokasi-wisata-your-name/>

At the coding stage, the analysis of *Your Name* reveals that this anime heavily relies on the power of visual elements to capture the audience's attention toward tourist destinations. Several locations featured prominently in the anime include the Suga Shrine staircase in Tokyo, Lake Suwa in Nagano Prefecture, and Hida-Furukawa Station, which inspired the depiction of Itomori Station in the narrative. The visual representations of shrines, railway tracks, and rural landscapes in *Your Name* embed symbols of Japanese culture that can be interpreted by the audience as an explicit invitation to experience the culture firsthand. The meticulously rendered backgrounds create a strong visual appeal that fosters a desire among viewers to visit these locations. These signs are not merely decorative elements but serve as visual narratives that shape the audience's perception of the destination, reinforcing the message of tourism promotion. These findings indicate that the representation of locations in anime is not passive; rather, it actively constructs the audience's perception of a destination's appeal. This aligns with Tooke dan Baker (1996) notion that visual media can provide a context that motivates tourists to experience the places they have consumed visually.

Moreover, the narrative elements in *Your Name*, which intertwine time travel and romance with real-life locations, further strengthen the audience's emotional attachment to these destinations. Viewers not only engage with the storyline but also feel compelled to explore the actual places depicted in the anime. This reinforces the emotional connection between the audience and the destinations, transforming imaginative experiences into tangible actions through tourism visits.

Unlike *Your Name*, which emphasizes natural landscapes and urban beauty, *Detective Conan* highlights the use of tourist landmarks and historical sites to support its narrative. Locations



such as Tokyo Tower, the Asahi Group Head Office Building, and the city of Kyoto frequently appear in the anime as settings for the investigations carried out by the character Conan Edogawa. In many episodes, this character interacts directly with his surroundings, introducing various tourist attractions to viewers in a way that does not feel like overt promotion. Furthermore, as *Detective Conan* has maintained a loyal fanbase over the years, many fans are drawn to visit these featured locations due to nostalgia and a sense of emotional attachment to the story. This phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 3. It exemplifies the concept of "media pilgrimage" (Nuradi, 2024), in which viewers are compelled to visit real-life sites that are emotionally significant to their engagement with the narrative.



Figure 3. Asahi Group Head Office Building as depicted in the anime *Detective Conan*
Source: <https://www.kapanlagi.com/jepang/paling-terbaru-14-lokasi-anime-ini-ada-di-dunia-nyata-loh-dari-attack-on-titan-detektif-conan-339d3a.html?page=15>

After revising the categorization, it was found that *Your Name* is more effective in attracting tourists through its visual appeal and emotional elements, whereas *Detective Conan* places greater emphasis on narrative strength and the use of iconic tourist sites. One significant finding of this study is that previously underappreciated locations, such as Lake Suwa and Hida-Furukawa Station, experienced a surge in tourist numbers following their appearance in the anime *Your Name* (Shadaan, 2024). This indicates that anime has the potential to transform audience perceptions of a destination, even those that were previously not widely recognized. Another finding reveals that the degree of correspondence between the anime locations and their real-life counterparts is relatively high, although certain visual elements were slightly modified for aesthetic and storytelling purposes.

In the final stage of analysis, it was found that anime functions as an effective persuasive tool in Japan's tourism promotion strategies. Its influence extends beyond merely increasing the



number of tourists; it also plays a significant role in shaping a positive image of Japan as an attractive travel destination (Stegnienko et al., 2018; Strielkowski, 2017). Anime offers viewers an immersive experience through stunning visuals, compelling narratives, and strong emotional connections with characters and settings. In other words, anime is not merely a form of entertainment but also a strategic mass communication medium in enhancing a country's tourism appeal. With the right approach, anime can continue to serve as an effective instrument in shaping global perceptions of a nation and fostering the growth of tourism industries rooted in content tourism.

Content Tourism: Anime as a Driver of Japanese Tourism Destinations

Anime serves as an effective medium of communication in introducing and fostering interest in tourism destinations. Its visual elements play a pivotal role in capturing the audience's attention, followed by engaging narratives and compelling characters. Anime has the potential to inspire viewers to seek further information about featured locations and even motivate them to plan a visit to Japan based on the anime they have watched.

Research has shown that promotion through anime has significantly contributed to the growth of Japan's tourism sector. According to a Japanese economic report, anime sales in 2018 reached 21.624 trillion Yen, reflecting the substantial contribution of anime to the country's economy (Akbas, 2018). This indicates that anime, as a medium, serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as an effective economic tool in supporting Japan's tourism industry.

From a promotional strategy perspective, these findings indicate that content tourism through anime is an effective approach with significant potential for further development. Key recommendations include enhancing collaboration between the anime industry and the tourism sector, as well as exploring similar promotional models in other countries, including Indonesia. With the right approach, anime can continue to serve as a powerful medium for shaping global tourists' perceptions of Japan, while also offering opportunities for other nations to adopt content tourism strategies through culturally based entertainment media.

This phenomenon can be understood through Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. When media such as anime imbues a geographic space with cultural value, they enhance its economic and symbolic appeal. These findings affirm that anime functions as an agent of Japan's soft power, as articulated by (Nye, 2005). As part of the Cool Japan strategy, anime is not merely a form of entertainment but serves as an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy, shaping a positive image of Japan globally and strengthening the competitiveness of its national tourism in the global market.

This reflection also prompts consideration of how similar strategies could be implemented in other countries, including Indonesia. While anime may not be the most suitable medium for the Indonesian context, similarly creative approaches through film or digital media could be employed to introduce and promote the beauty and richness of Indonesian culture. By highlighting unique and lesser-known locations, Indonesia holds significant potential to enhance its appeal to



international tourists (Hanifah, 2020). Nevertheless, anime has broadened perspectives and enriched the experience of engaging with different cultures, thereby demonstrating that media can serve as a powerful tool in shaping and expanding one's worldview.

4. Conclusions

Anime serves as an effective medium of mass communication in promoting tourism destinations in Japan through the concept of content tourism. The main findings of this study indicate that visual elements in anime have the greatest impact in attracting tourist interest. Realistic and aesthetically appealing depictions of settings, as seen in anime such as *Your Name* and *Detective Conan*, have created a strong appeal for anime fans to visit the real-life locations featured in the stories. Anime-based content tourism strategies have proven effective in increasing tourist visitation. Therefore, such strategies not only contribute to shaping a positive image of Japan but also significantly boost tourist arrivals. This model may also be applicable in other countries, including Indonesia, as a means of promoting tourism destinations through culturally rooted popular entertainment media.

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