The Relationship between Content Creation and Monetization by Consumers: Amateur Manga (*Doujinshi*) and Music in Japan

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Abstract: Amateur creations are one source of Japan's competitiveness in the content industry. This study summarizes prior research on amateur manga (comic), called *doujinshi*, in terms of its history and current status, overseas trends, gender aspects, and copyrights. This study then develops a research model with three hypotheses on the relationship between creation and monetization across multiple content categories. To test these hypotheses, an online survey of 2,593 individuals was conducted on the creation and monetization of manga and music. The survey's findings were as follows: (1) Consumers who create works in one content category tend to do so in other categories. (2) Consumers who monetize their own work in one content category

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tend to do so in other categories. (3) Consumers who create works in multiple content categories tend to monetize their own works. This study also shows the current status of creation and monetization in Japanese manga and music.

Keywords: user innovation, UGC, monetization, music, comic, *doujinshi*

1. Introduction

Japanese content is globally considered “cool” or “in trend” and a component of Japan’s advancement in the content industry. The industry is assumed, particularly in overseas markets, to have substantial growth potential (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2015). Japanese pop culture products not only represent a global phenomenon but also enter the realm of artwork (Nobuoka, 2010). The source of Japan’s competitiveness in the content industry is considered to be the large number of consumers who possess great creativity. It is difficult for corporate organizations to develop such creativity in employees; therefore, creative individuals must be sought out among consumers (Katsumata & Ichikohji, 2013). Some aspects of Japan’s competitiveness in the content industry can be found in the creative works of consumers.

This study focuses on amateur manga (comic), which is called *doujinshi*,¹ and the activities of the consumers who create them with reference to manga, which exerts a strong influence worldwide among Japan’s content industry. The study first surveys the aspects of *doujinshi* highlighted in prior research. These aspects are

¹ *Doujinshi* are printed amateur manga (Kinsella, 1998). Kinsella (1998) uses the alternative spelling of “dojinshi,” though later research uses the spelling preferred by this paper.

summarized into four areas: history and current status, overseas trends, gender aspects, and copyrights. Next, this study notes that prior research has not focused on consumers who create works across multiple content categories and suggests three hypotheses concerning the relationship between creation and monetization, which form the basis for a research model. To test the hypotheses, an online survey was conducted among 2,593 consumers, which generated the following results: 1. Consumers who create works in one content category tend to do so in other categories. 2. Consumers who monetize their own work in one content category tend to do so in other categories. 3. Consumers who create works in multiple content categories tend to monetize their own works.

2. Prior Research on Doujinshi

The study surveyed prior research on doujinshi and categorized this research into four areas. 1. Clarification of the historical development and current status of doujinshi in Japan (Kinsella, 1998; Nobuoka, 2010; Orbaugh, 2003). 2. Clarification of the current status of doujinshi outside Japan (Chen, 2007; Lamerichs, 2013). 3. Examination of the significance of doujinshi from a gender theory perspective (Bollmann, 2010; Chen, 2007; Chou, 2010; Orbaugh, 2003). 4. Examination of copyrights that impact Japanese doujinshi (He, 2014; Lee, 2009; Lessig, 2004; Mehra, 2002). The major studies in each of these areas are introduced below.

Doujinshi history and current status

Kinsella (1998) noted that Japan's amateur manga movement was the largest subculture in modern Japan and described the historical development of this movement as follows. With the rapid spread of inexpensive offset printing starting in the early 1970s, doujinshi sales conventions proliferated. During this period, companies

publishing or selling doujinshi emerged, and the doujinshi market has expanded since the mid-1980s. There were also qualitative changes to doujinshi produced during this time. In the early 1980s, parody manga became popular in addition to original works, and in the late 1980s, there was an increase in publications aimed at men rather than at women.

Orbaugh (2003) summarized the history of commercial manga and doujinshi development and noted that compared to commercial manga, amateur manga (or doujinshi) were unusual, experimental, and controversial. In addition, the author showed that female doujinshi creators,² such as Keiko Takemiya, CLAMP, and Rumiko Takahashi, were successful in breaking into commercial manga.³

Nobuoka (2010) examined the importance of Tokyo's Akihabara district in the competitiveness of Japan's unique popular culture. Nobuoka (2010) noted that while doujinshi targeting females were sold primarily in Ikebukuro, doujinshi targeting males were sold in such Akihabara retail stores as Mandarake rather than at conventions such as Comic Market (or "Comiket"). Moreover, Nobuoka (2010) argued that Akihabara, with its creative consumers, was driving innovation by mediating trends in the culture industry, where Japan is globally competitive.

Overseas trends

Chen (2007) discussed the influence of Japanese anime and manga in Taiwan, based on the percentage of Japanese product sales. Chen (2007) summarized the following four motivations for consumers to draw doujinshi and participate in *cosplay*⁴ in Taiwan. 1. To enjoy the

² While Orbaugh (2003) use "artists" instead of "creators", this study use "creators" following Lessig (2004).

³ However, this trend declined in the 1990s.

⁴ *Cosplay* is an opportunity for anime and manga fans to dress up as their favorite characters (Chen, 2007).

experience of being a successful creator. 2. To enjoy free imagination and fantasy by drawing or engaging in cosplay. 3. To fulfill the urge to perform and the sense of curiosity. 4. To participate in social interaction.

Lamerichs (2013) identified ethnographic differences in Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, and the US with regard to cosplay and doujinshi, based on art styles, distribution, and creator signatures. For example, in Japan, the principal style is parody while in Germany and the Netherlands, the focus is on original works. With respect to distribution, distribution in Japan occurs through circles (clubs), whereas individual creators in the US handle their own distribution.

Gender

Bollmann (2010) noted the significant role played by doujinshi in the spread of *shonen-ai* themed works.⁵ Unlike other genres in the 1990s, manga creators creating shonen-ai works often came from doujinshi, such as Shungiku Nakamura, who drew *Junjo Romantica*. Many doujinshi were made depicting shonen-ai among characters from commercial manga and anime, and writers of shonen-ai works who got their start commercially also continued creating doujinshi.

Chou (2010) examined the meaning of *Yaoi*⁶ in Taiwan, where many Yaoi works were introduced via Japanese comics. However, doujinshi produced in Taiwan were also important resources. This situation caused Chou (2010) to note the following points regarding

⁵ This term was used in the past to describe material targeted toward girls that portrays romantic feelings between two or more men, but is no longer used. However, the term “Boy’s Love” is too easily confused with “Boy Love” (Bollmann, 2010).

⁶ Yaoi is a Japanese phrase that describes a group of females who enjoy creating and reading male homosexual comic books or novels (Chou, 2010).

the significance of Yaoi: 1. Practicing the doubts stemming from established gender conventions. 2. Enjoying freedom from gender constraints through the stories without any gender differences. 3. Gaining joy and satisfaction by crossing standard gender norms through fictional homosexual love stories.

Copyrights

Lessig (2004) discussed the significance of the freedom to use older works without permission in creativity and innovation. The recent increase in problems concerning intellectual property rights has limited the abilities of creators and innovators. Lessig (2004) referenced Japan's doujinshi as an example of this effect.

He (2014) stated that the content industry practices in Japan differ from those in countries such as the US. The US standard is to emphasize strict copyright protection, whereas Japan takes a more lenient view of fan activities that may infringe on copyrights. This is because the cost of strict copyright enforcement is greater than the potential revenue and because fans are potential consumers, not commercial offenders or free riders. In addition, doujinshi are a significant source of revenue for commercial manga creators. However, He (2014) argued that this strategy is not effective because Japanese content companies are unable to differentiate among commercial offenders, free riders overseas, and fan communities. They also do not have any plans to obtain revenue from these groups.

3. Research Model

Each of the prior studies on doujinshi is useful, although some points remain ambiguous. This could be the case because individual creations have spread to categories beyond doujinshi. By expanding into global markets, Japan's game industry has benefited from the

creative foundations of manga and anime, which contributed attractive characters and graphics (Aoyama & Izushi, 2003). In other words, creations that extend beyond categories have become sources of competition. Some analysis at the level of commercial works has assumed the form of media-mix strategy (Ōtsuka & Steinberg, 2010; Steinberg, 2012). However, the game industry's early days often had one creator managing multiple tasks. For example, during the development of Super Mario Bros., programmers and designers were also responsible for music.⁷ For content requiring a large number of people for development, a media-mix strategy can be pursued through organizational division of labor; however, content that does not require a large number of people requires individuals with multiple skills. However, prior studies do not show how each amateur creator is involved in multiple categorical contents creation. Consumers with creative foundations at the individual level can leverage their skills in multiple content categories. Therefore,

Hypothesis 1: Consumers who create works in one content category tend to do so in other categories.

At the corporate level, adopting a media-mix strategy assumes the goal of expanding earnings. At the individual level, earnings expansion implies that rather than simply creating works in multiple areas, monetization must be accomplished by an individual or through those close to the creator. Therefore, successful monetization requires a broader scope in activities. For example, creation and monetization by consumers using doujinshi conventions has created a system for developing an industry that is external to corporations. The Comic Market (Comiket) is an event that typifies this idea. Since 1975, the Comic Market is held twice a year, and in recent years, it has lasted three days, drawing in some

⁷ From an article citing on the Nintendo official website: <https://www.nintendo.co.jp/n10/interview/mario25th/vol5/index.html>

550,000 attendees, 35,000 fan clubs, and 20,000 cosplayers.⁸ However, the relationship between creation and monetization in multiple content categories has not been sufficiently identified,⁹ which leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Consumers who monetize their own work in one content category tend to do so in other categories.

Hypothesis 3: Consumers who create works in multiple content categories tend to monetize their own works.

Figure 1 illustrates a research model that incorporates the above hypotheses.

Figure 1. Research model

⁸ From the Comic Market website: <http://www.comiket.co.jp/>

⁹ In their study of comics, Katsumata and Ichikohji (2014) classify user innovation into three levels.

4. Method and Data Collection

The entertaining segments of the content industry include movies, games, anime, manga, music, and so on. In investigating these multiple content categories, this study focuses first on manga, as was the case in prior research. The study also focuses on music because unlike movies, games, and animation,¹⁰ it is possible to produce works individually or with a relatively small number of people.¹¹ In addition, both manga and music can be distributed and monetized at the individual level (Katsumata & Ichikohji, 2013). Thus, manga and music are appropriate subjects for analysis in this study.

To test these hypotheses, the researchers conducted an online survey of consumer activities in the content industry in February 2013. The sample consisted of 2,593 people with an average age of 40.0 and of which 54.0% were female. The online survey consisted of the following types of questions. To determine whether the respondents were personally creating either manga or music, they were asked, “Do you personally draw manga?” and “Do you create music or lyrics on your own?” The respondents could select either “yes” or “no” as a response. To find a connection between creation and monetization, the respondents were asked, “Have you ever sold any manga that you created?” and “Have you ever earned any income from music you composed and performed?” These questions were also answered with a “yes” or “no.” The results showed that 85 consumers (3.28%) had experience creating manga, 85 (3.28%) had experience creating music, 21 (0.81%) had both created manga and monetized their creations, and 21 (0.81%) had experience creating

¹⁰ For more information on organizational structures in animation production, see Ichikohji (2013). For information on open-source software development efforts, see Ikuine and Fujita (2014) and Fujita and Ikuine (2013, 2014).

¹¹ Ichikohji and Katsumata (2014) analyzed music to determine the relationship between user innovation and consumption.

music and monetizing their works.

Next, Fisher's exact test was used as a methodology for an analysis of manga and music creation experiences with respect to Hypothesis 1 and monetization of manga and music creation with respect to Hypothesis 2. Fisher's exact test was also used to analyze experience in both manga and music creation and experience in monetizing individual works after first filtering respondents and identifying the 151 consumers (5.82%) who had experience in manga and music innovation. Fisher's exact test was used because some cells had expected frequencies of less than five in all the analyses, causing a chi-squared test to be inappropriate.¹²

5. Results and Implications

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the results. All hypotheses were supported ($p < 0.001$). For Hypothesis 1, there were differences in the percentage of those who had experience creating music, depending on whether those individuals had experience creating manga. In other words, "Consumers who create works in one content category tend to do so in other categories." For Hypothesis 2, there was a difference in the percentage of those who had monetized their musical creations, depending on whether they had monetized their manga creations. In other words, "Consumers who monetize their own work in one content category tend to do so in other categories." For Hypothesis 3, there was a difference in the percentage of respondents who had experience monetizing their creations, depending on whether they had experience creating both manga and music or just one of the two categories. In other words, "Consumers who create works in multiple content categories also tend to monetize their own works."

¹² See Tables 1 to 3

Table 1. Result of hypothesis 1 testing

	Non-music creator	Music creator	Total
Non-comic creator	2442 (2425.8)	66 (82.2)	2508
Comic creator	66 (82.2)	19 (2.8)	85
Total	2508	85	2593

Note: The expected frequencies appear in parentheses. $p < .0001$

Table 2. Result of hypothesis 2 testing

	Non-music artist & Non-monetized music creator	Monetized music creator	Total
Non-music artist & Non-monetized comic creator	2559 (25551.2)	13 (20.8)	2572
Monetized comic creator	13 (20.8)	8 (0.2)	21
Total	2572	21	2593

Note: The expected frequencies appear in parentheses. $p < .0001$

Table 3. Result of hypothesis 3 testing

	Non-monetized content creator	Monetized content creator	Total
Creator in one content category	110 (102.3)	22 (29.7)	132
Creator in two content categories	7 (14.7)	12 (4.3)	19
Total	117	34	151

Note: The expected frequencies appear in parentheses. $p < .0001$

In addition, the survey illustrated the following three facts. Among Japanese consumers, the percentage of those with experience drawing manga and the percentage of those with experience creating music or lyrics were approximately the same at 3.28% (66 people). Among consumers with experience creating manga or music, the percentage of those who had earned income from doing so was also similar at 19.7% (13 people). Simultaneously, among the individuals with experience creating both manga and music (19 people), an extraordinarily high percentage (42.1%, or eight people) had earned income from both.

In summary, the significance of this study is the following. As its first discovery, this study identified the percentage of consumers who have created manga or music and, among them, how many consumers have monetized that content. Analyzing the types of individual activities that support the competitiveness of the content industry is important. Second, the study showed the transversality of creation and monetization. In other words, consumer activities are not simply affected by a preference for a particular work or having a high degree of involvement with a work, but consumer activities are also influenced by the attribute of a preference to engage in creation and monetization and a high level of involvement in such activities. Although Ichikohji and Katsumata (2016) suggest that creative transversality exists across categories, this study clarified the existence of monetization and transversality across categories.

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