

A Field Study on the Influence of Japanese Anime Culture on the Development of Comic Conventions in China: A Case Study of a Comic Convention in a Fifth-Tier City

Ruitong Xia^{1,a,*}

¹*School of Humanities and Foreign Languages, Qingdao University of Technology, Street, Qingdao, China*

a. xiaruitong@yeah.net

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Since the 1960s, Japanese anime has swept the world with its interesting and relaxing characteristics, gradually increasing its influence around the world. As a country with a long history of communication with Japan, China has naturally been greatly influenced by its anime culture. The comic convention industry, which developed as a derivative of anime culture, also has a fundamental relationship with anime culture. Based on the field study method, this paper will focus on the development process of A comic convention and explore the impact of Japanese anime culture on the development of China's comic convention industry at different stages, attempting to respond to the important issue of the relationship between Japanese culture and China's cultural industry development. The study found that the influence of Japanese anime culture on China's comic convention industry has shown a process characteristic of changing from a promoting role to a restrictive role.

Keywords: Japanese anime, field study, comic convention industry

1. Introduction

In contrast to the prevailing analytical and opinion-oriented approaches when assessing Japan's influence on China, this study adopts a perspective that focuses on how Japanese anime culture impacts the domestic comic con industry. Through real-life development cases, we aim to provide readers with a comprehensive view of this influence, drawing from objective research data and our firsthand experiences. The discipline of sociology encourages the cultivation of "sociological imagination" to explore and understand the society in which we are immersed. Drawing from my direct involvement and in-depth understanding, I have authored this paper to shed light on the challenges China faces while incorporating Japanese anime culture. Employing the sociological and anthropological research method known as field research, this study presents a nuanced analysis of the impact of Japanese anime culture on the development of a local comic con in a fourth-tier city in Anhui, China, hereafter referred to as "A Comic Con." This work aims to enrich the perspective on the influence of Japanese culture on modern China and inspire the development of the domestic comic con industry.

On July 21, 2014, several organizers from A Comic Con in a fourth-tier city in Anhui, China,

decided to establish a locally rooted comic con based on the interests of local Japanese anime enthusiasts. They initiated the inaugural A Comic Con as an offline gathering, marking the first comic con in this region and a pioneering effort within Anhui. A Comic Con shares inherent similarities with most domestic comic cons in China. Its journey from an informal, unregistered, offline gathering to a commercial, regulated, and organized comic con industry mirrors the common trajectory followed by many local comic cons. Like the majority of its counterparts, A Comic Con's development displays characteristics such as a strong influence of Japanese anime culture, early-stage non-commercial operations, service to local Japanese anime enthusiasts, a desire for expanded influence, and a need to transcend regional boundaries. The impact of Japanese anime culture on A Comic Con's development can be considered a fundamental factor that runs throughout its history, directly or indirectly shaping its progression through various stages.

This paper divides A Comic Con's development into three stages: incubation, growth, and recession. By examining the development from the perspective of subcultural group behavior and organizational evolution, we aim to uncover the intricate connections between Japanese anime culture and the development of China's domestic comic con industry.

2. Literature Review: Adaptation and Ambivalence of Subculture and Localization

A Comic Con was initially driven by the profound influence of Japanese anime culture during its establishment, yet this influence later presented limitations that hindered its continued growth. Drawing upon the research of scholars in the field of Japanese comic-con industry development and domestic comic-con development in China, scholars often make comparative conclusions between the two industries [1]. In this study, we attempt to elucidate the details of Japanese anime culture's impact at different stages of development by reviewing the entire development process of A Comic Con. This review aims to provide developmental and inspirational conclusions.

2.1. Analysis from the Perspective of Subcultural Group Behavior

Analyzing the impact of Japanese anime culture on China from the perspective of subcultural groups is a common approach when studying the influence of Japanese anime [2]. In this study, the majority of A Comic Con's organizers and attendees, whether as organizers or visitors, belong to the subcultural group heavily influenced by Japanese anime culture. Therefore, we examine subcultural group behavior as an analytical dimension to delve into the influence of Japanese anime culture on A Comic Con. We focus on elucidating the roles played by Japanese anime culture in terms of cohesion, differentiation, and conflict within this subcultural group, providing an in-depth analysis of the changes experienced by the support base for domestic comic cons. These changes are a result of the impact of Japanese anime culture, combined with complex factors such as the economic and political situation in China.

2.2. Analysis from the Perspective of Organizational Development

A Comic Con serves not only as a product of collective activities but also as a distinct form of organization. The resources and organization required for the operation of a comic con, including financial, human, and logistical resources, as well as the design of the event, promotional strategies, and venue arrangements, are beyond the capabilities of individuals or disorganized groups. Viewing a comic con as a form of organization provides insight into the specificities of Japanese anime culture's influence on its various developmental stages [3]. The development of an organization is influenced by multiple factors, with Japanese anime culture impacting both the content of the organization's development and the organization itself as a label. The development of Japanese anime culture and the status it holds in China deeply influence the growth of domestic comic cons.

3. Incubation Stage: Based on Pure Peer Groups with Shared Interests

In the early years of A Comic Con's establishment in 2014, there was a lack of a well-established system and structure, and organizers primarily relied on personal relationships to confirm arrangements. At this stage, the domestic comic con market was still in its infancy and unable to offer concrete guidance to A Comic Con [4]. Meanwhile, Japan's anime industry experienced a significant surge during this period, producing numerous high-quality anime works [5]. During this period, A Comic Con's main characteristic was a pure peer group formed based on a shared love for Japanese anime culture. Japanese anime culture laid the fundamental groundwork for A Comic Con's inception, primarily manifesting its influence in fostering the organization's development and building a sense of cohesion within the organizers and participants of the subcultural group.

3.1. Influence of Japanese Anime Culture on A Comic Con's Development

3.1.1. The Concept of Comic Con as a Derivative of Japanese Anime Culture

The concept of a comic con or similar gatherings belongs to an imported concept originating from Japan, evolving in parallel with the widespread dissemination of Japanese anime culture and evolving to cater to the Chinese population's evolving interests. In 1975, Japan initiated the Comic Market, currently the largest comic con globally [6]. It set a precedent for comic cons and imprinted the concept with characteristics closely associated with the anime culture. Although events similar to comic cons are held in regions like Europe and the United States, they often bear the imprint of Japanese anime culture due to the extensive propagation of this culture. The emergence of comic cons in the Chinese context, referred to as anime exhibitions, coincided with the dissemination and popularity of Japanese anime culture [7]. Therefore, one can assert that Chinese comic cons are essentially products of the influence of Japanese anime culture and a manifestation of the influence of Japanese anime culture in China.

3.1.2. Imitation of Japanese Anime Conventions on a Superficial Level

In the early stages of A Comic Con's development, it could hardly be termed a conventional comic con. It was more akin to a cosplay show or gatherings for Japanese anime enthusiasts. During A Comic Con's initial phase, most local comic cons in small cities in China were also in their infancy, characterized by underdeveloped operational and management models [8]. There were few precedents for cash-strapped, resource-limited local comic cons to draw inspiration from. While the organizers of A Comic Con recognized the maturity and economic and cultural benefits of Japanese comic cons, their limited funding and educational backgrounds hindered their ability to learn from Japan's established event management systems. During A Comic Con's formative years, organizers primarily relied on limited information available through reports and their own imaginations to piece together the necessary elements and processes. In this process, the portrayal of comic cons in Japanese manga and anime provided significant inspiration, leading to the formulation of essential elements for comic cons: cosplay, performances, and merchandise vendors.

3.1.3. Japanese Anime Culture as the Fundamental Content Source for Comic Con Development

For A Comic Con, its establishment was heavily influenced by the portrayal of Japanese anime in both its inception and the events it held. Japanese anime served as the primary promotional banner for the comic con's launch. Furthermore, Japanese anime-related content functioned as the most fundamental and relatable topic for communication among A Comic Con's attendees, akin to a

shared language within the community. At the inaugural A Comic Con in 2014, nearly all the content within the venue revolved around Japanese anime. Present-day common elements in comic cons, such as “Touhou Project” and live gaming experiences, were scarcely visible during that time.

In creating the initial event programs, A Comic Con drew inspiration from Japanese anime works to resonate with the audience. For example, the archery competition was inspired by a scene in the anime “Inuyasha,” featuring the female protagonist, Kagome, who was skilled in archery. According to attendees who visited the first A Comic Con, the organizers paused the program during lunch breaks, allowing attendees to watch anime films, which were still subject to fees at the time, in the venue. The range of activities anchored in various Japanese anime content laid the groundwork for a vibrant event atmosphere, simultaneously promoting community building.

3.2. Cohesion of Domestic Comic Con Development under the Influence of Japanese Anime Culture

3.2.1. Formation and Expansion of Comic Con Organizing Teams

The formation and expansion of A Comic Con’s organizing team were significantly driven by the shared passion for Japanese anime culture and the desire to promote the spread of ACG culture. Japanese anime culture acted as a bonding agent in this context, bringing together organizers who shared a mutual affection for Japanese anime culture. This shared affection enabled these individuals to build friendships while sharing a common aspiration to establish more prominent comic cons. It’s worth noting that during this period, as Japan’s anime audience in China was not yet widespread, only a handful of Japanese anime works were well-known. This indirectly led to strong unity and the creation of hobbyist groups among fervent Japanese anime culture enthusiasts. Most comic con organizers, including those of A Comic Con, may have shared common experiences related to this era. They joined different hobbyist groups, such as the “Touhou Project” or support groups for characters like Hatsune Miku. The development and expansion of these hobbyist groups formed the basis for the emergence of comic cons. A Comic Con’s organizers, for instance, met through their shared involvement in the “Touhou Project” support group.

3.2.2. The “Sensational” Impact of the Inaugural Comic Con

As the first comic con of its kind, A Comic Con created a sensation in its host city during its inception. Initially, the event received limited and informal publicity, with information primarily disseminated verbally among the organizers’ close peers. Most of the earliest attendees were part of these peer groups. However, following the successful launch of the first A Comic Con, it drew large numbers of local residents who were initially unaware of the event’s existence due to its open-air venue and the absence of admission fees. This attracted considerable attention and participation from local residents. A Comic Con’s impact in the local area significantly increased due to the self-promotion efforts of attendees and the coverage of local television stations.

Furthermore, the inaugural A Comic Con served as a milestone, attracting numerous Japanese anime culture enthusiasts who, prior to the event, had limited opportunities for interaction. Using A Comic Con as a platform for mutual interests in Japanese anime and manga, these individuals gradually formed.

4. Development Stage: Imitation of the Japanese Model and the Path to Commercialization

After its initial events, A Comic Con entered a new phase of development with the increasing influence of Japanese anime culture in China and the refinement and expansion of the organizing team. During this stage, A Comic Con actively explored the institutional and commercial paths of

its comic con industry, achieving favorable economic and cultural outcomes in the local context. However, A Comic Con's core content remained largely unaltered, primarily relying on the promotion of Japanese anime culture and a complete imitation of the Japanese comic con system, which would later set the stage for stagnation and decline.

4.1. A Comic Con's Development and Crisis

4.1.1. Maturation and Standardization of Comic Con Formats and Mechanisms

During this stage, A Comic Con had established an economic foundation to initiate the upgrading of its comic con industry mechanisms based on the profits from previous events and additional funding from new organizers. Furthermore, due to the positive impact of previous comic cons and active collaboration between the organizers of A Comic Con, local television stations, and the district government, the event gained facilitation and support from the district government. The district government agreed to promote A Comic Con under the name of "Cultural Shopping Festival," providing preferential policies for publicity and event venue, gradually standardizing the conditions for hosting A Comic Con and making them more accessible to the public.

In the process of upgrading A Comic Con's industry mechanisms, the role of Japanese comic cons as a source of inspiration remained crucial. On one hand, through collective discussions within A Comic Con's organizing team, some organizers traveled to Japan to participate in the world's largest comic con, Comic Market, with collective economic support from A Comic Con's organizing team. They learned from the setup and features of Japanese comic cons, shared their findings upon returning to China, and engaged in collective discussions. On the other hand, with the development of modern information technology and the rise of online ACG culture video platforms such as ACFUN and Bilibili, the A Comic Con organizers had more opportunities for external exchange and learning. Moreover, this period witnessed the emergence of local comic cons in various small and medium-sized cities in China. Many local comic con organizers voluntarily engaged in mutual learning and exchanges with neighboring city comic con organizers.[9] They also shared resources such as performers, on-site photographers, and promotional artists. Organizers who had traveled to Japan for firsthand learning were particularly esteemed by the surrounding small and medium-sized city comic con organizers, and A Comic Con's reputation within the comic con community reached a notably high level during this period. This enhanced the influx of valuable resources.

4.1.2. Diversified Yet Cohesive Community Building

As A Comic Con continued to expand, its influence extended to an increasingly diverse community with shared interests. Building upon the foundation of pre-existing hobbyist communities, a more diverse yet cohesive community emerged. This community included not only Japanese anime culture enthusiasts but also cosplay enthusiasts, video game aficionados, film enthusiasts, photography enthusiasts, and other groups within the broad ACG culture community. Although A Comic Con did not immediately respond to the needs of these newly incorporated groups by introducing specific new programs, the high recognition of Japanese anime culture within the broader ACG culture community meant that the new participants were generally familiar with Japanese anime to varying degrees. The newly formed communities retained strong cohesion, united by their shared interest in Japanese anime. The establishment of diversified communities is indicative of the expansion and driving force provided by Japanese anime culture during this stage. Japanese anime culture inherently possesses significant extensibility and connectivity, and the development of new communities linked to it provided further momentum for the dissemination of Japanese anime culture.

The establishment of diverse yet unified communities at A Comic Con signified an expansion of the event's audience and also stimulated innovation in the format and design of event content in subsequent editions. New individuals with professional expertise and resources emerged as organizers from within this community, injecting fresh energy into A Comic Con's organizing team.

4.1.3. Crisis Induced by the "Ticket Agent" System

The "ticket agent" system, a popular ticketing system at Japanese comic conventions, involves a contract between the convention organizers and ticket agents, where the organizers provide a sufficient number of convention tickets to the ticket agents. The ticket agents then sell the tickets on behalf of the organizers and receive cash commissions or benefits from the organizers based on the number of tickets sold. Japanese comic conventions, such as Comic 1, have utilized this system by delegating ticket sales to bookstores.

In an effort to expand its influence and enhance economic gains, the organizers of A Comic Con adopted the ticket agent system, following the practices popularized by Japanese comic conventions. They initially reached out to loyal attendees from previous editions through Shanghai-based promotion or direct contact with former convention attendees to establish ticket agent contracts. These ticket agents, often based around schools, were responsible for selling convention tickets.

While this system initially yielded positive outcomes, it later led to a series of crises due to its lack of regulation. For instance, Ticket Agent A, upon receiving a sufficient quantity of convention tickets from the organizers, gifted them to their friends and later claimed the tickets were lost, thus making them irretrievable by the convention organizers. Similarly, Ticket Agent B conducted ticket sales within their school through various means, selling nearly 30 tickets, which subsequently led to reports from the parents of other students to the school authorities. The school authorities confiscated all tickets and instructed Ticket Agent B to reimburse the organizers for the tickets' purchase cost. These two crisis events shared a common conflict, where the parents of the ticket agents exhibited a lack of understanding and support for their children's enthusiasm for Japanese anime culture during ticket sales. After these crisis events, the convention organizers found it challenging to recover their losses through existing contracts with ticket agents who were still students. The parents of Ticket Agent B even threatened to report the organizers for corrupting the growth of young individuals.

The crisis induced by the "ticket agent" system revealed the limitations of A Comic Con's learning and implementation of Japanese comic convention systems, as well as the inherent limitations of Japanese anime culture's dissemination in the Chinese market. These crises left an unfavorable impact on A Comic Con's reputation and development.

4.2. Indirect Influence of Japanese Anime Culture

4.2.1. Prosperity of the Japanese Anime Industry and the Expansion of the Comic Con Audience

Between 2016 and 2019, the Japanese anime industry experienced prosperity with the emergence of highly popular anime series like "Your Name," "Demon Slayer," and "Violet Evergarden." These anime garnered substantial viewership and had a significant cultural impact, attracting many previously uninterested teenagers to become anime enthusiasts. Concurrently, platforms such as Bilibili, a video-sharing website, gained prominence, further extending the reach of Japanese anime culture in China by broadcasting Japanese anime series. [10] This expansion in influence contributed to the creation of a larger community of anime enthusiasts. The growth of this community led to an increased audience for A Comic Con. The event experienced a peak in attendance during this period, with heightened societal recognition and a reduced backlash against

Japanese anime culture. A Comic Con's reputation reached its zenith, and the event cooperated with platforms like Bilibili to open ticket channels for Bilibili members. Promotional posters featured on the Bilibili homepage, extending the promotion nationwide.

4.2.2. Differentiation of the Original Japanese Anime Audience Due to the Chinese Domestic Anime Industry

As the Japanese anime industry flourished and Japanese anime culture was widely disseminated, the Chinese animation industry, from 2016 to 2019, began learning and transforming itself in emulation of the Japanese anime industry. Chinese animation studios produced outstanding anime series such as "The King's Avatar," "Scissor Seven," and "White Cat Legend." With the inherent affinity of the Chinese language to Chinese youth, these excellent domestic productions gained a significant following, even among those who were previously fervent Japanese anime fans.

The emergence of this new audience segment resulted in a certain degree of differentiation among the original Japanese anime audience. It also created uncertainty regarding A Comic Con's original positioning. The inclusion of Chinese anime enthusiasts among the A Comic Con organizers further drove the diversification of the event's content. While this diversification did not lead to a complete overhaul of existing content and format, it subtly incorporated elements of both Chinese animation and broader ACG culture into the event's offerings. Nevertheless, the shift in the original positioning of the convention and the audience's segmentation indirectly led to the "unfandom" of some staunch Japanese anime culture enthusiasts.

5. The Great Depression Phase: Dual Pressure from the Nanjing "Summer Festival" Incident and the Crisis of Autonomous Development

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, numerous offline exhibitions have been canceled, significantly affecting A Comic Con's ability to conduct events. Planned conventions were also canceled due to the pandemic control measures. Simultaneously, the pandemic intensified public anxiety and discord, coupled with the rapid growth of new media platforms, enhancing the dissemination capabilities of online public opinion. This, in turn, amplified the influence of public sentiment across a wider spectrum. Faced with a dual pressure from the Nanjing "Summer Festival" incident and the crisis of autonomous development against the backdrop of the pandemic, the limitations of the impact of Japanese anime culture became evident. As a result, A Comic Con experienced rapid decline during this period.

5.1. The Impact of the Nanjing "Summer Festival" Incident on A Comic Con's Development

5.1.1. Background of the Nanjing "Summer Festival" Incident

The Nanjing "Summer Festival" incident generally refers to the controversy surrounding the A3-comicdawn convention in Nanjing in 2022 (hereafter referred to as A3 convention). The event was reported and subsequently canceled due to allegations of insulting Chinese culture. This incident sparked a major online public opinion uproar and led to a series of subsequent controversies in the comic convention industry [11].

The A3 convention, initially scheduled for July 17, 2022, at the International Exhibition Center in Nanjing, had heavily promoted itself using Japanese cultural elements such as a Japanese-style stage, a large torii gate, and a Japanese street food fair built by the organizers. They branded the event under the name "Summer Festival," attracting numerous visitors interested in Japanese culture to book tickets in advance. [12] However, a week before the event, an experienced comic enthusiast using the pseudonym "小 v" reported the A3 convention to the Nanjing municipal

government, citing reasons such as promoting Japanese culture and insulting Chinese culture.

The Nanjing municipal government swiftly handled the matter and issued a notice announcing the cancellation of the convention. The notice did not explicitly mention the “Summer Festival” or related Japanese anime culture elements but explained the cancellation in terms of weather conditions and safety. The A3 convention organizers subsequently refunded the ticket costs to all visitors. Upon hearing the news of the cancellation, frustrated visitors, who had planned to attend the event, expressed their grievances. After learning of “小 v’s” report, the uproar on online platforms intensified.

To date, the A3 convention had been successfully held for 18 editions, and “Summer Festival” had been used as a promotional name for summer editions of the convention. No prior incidents had led to its cancellation. As a convention with considerable influence in the East China region, A3 had a significant presence in the comic convention circuit. Each year, it attracted a large number of comic enthusiasts, and many small and medium-sized city comic conventions in the East China region maintained close exchanges with A3, often engaging in mutual learning and sharing of convention management experiences.

The public outrage stemming from this incident was primarily directed at the influence of Japanese anime culture on Chinese youth. Some netizens perceived hosting a convention with distinctly Japanese cultural characteristics in Nanjing, a city with a history of suffering and a testament to the Chinese nation’s past hardships, as a tarnishing of the city’s legacy and a disrespect to historical humiliations. Others viewed the organization of such conventions as a form of cultural invasion and a manifestation of the ideological erosion of Japanese anime culture on Chinese youth. Additionally, a faction of netizens suspected that this incident might be a result of malicious competition among conventions within Nanjing.

5.1.2. The Limitations of Japanese Anime Culture Reflected by the Nanjing “Summer Festival” Incident in A Comic Con’s Development

Most comic conventions in China are structured by imitating and emulating the format of Japanese comic conventions, adopting similar forms and content that are largely derived from Japanese conventions. Japanese anime culture serves as a fundamental factor influencing the development of A Comic Con. However, in the context of the Nanjing “Summer Festival” incident, Japanese anime culture became a major factor limiting the convention’s development.

Firstly, Japanese anime culture is an integral part of Japanese culture, characterized by strong Japanese cultural elements and contemporary cultural influences. However, it is also highly susceptible to the influence of international public opinion, as well as the domestic orientations of countries where it is disseminated. Japan, a nation with a historical record of grievous offenses against China, evokes sensitive and resentful emotions among the majority of Chinese people. In contemporary China, there is a high level of national sentiment against Japan, and the COVID-19 pandemic further amplified emotional instability among the public. Consequently, when an incident such as the Nanjing “Summer Festival” occurred, it quickly triggered significant public outrage. A Comic Con, which had consistently centered on Japanese anime culture, naturally faced extensive negative repercussions.

Secondly, both A Comic Con and various small and medium-sized city comic conventions have typically mirrored and imitated Japanese conventions in terms of form and content. In the process of learning and emulating Japanese conventions, they sometimes lacked self-awareness and initiative. Errors and misjudgments were common in adopting aspects of Japanese culture. A Comic Con, aiming to attract visitors interested in Japanese anime culture, erroneously used the term “Summer Festival,” which, in the Japanese context, typically refers to a traditional summer festival. Apart from a few appearances in Japanese anime series, the term is not directly associated with

conventions. The limited comprehension of their own identity and the constraints of Japanese anime culture as a form of transmissible culture contributed to misunderstandings, ultimately fueling greater public opposition.

5.1.3.A Comic Con's Response Strategies to the Nanjing "Summer Festival" Incident

A Comic Con's response to the Nanjing "Summer Festival" incident can be roughly categorized into three phases: the passive response phase, the emergency change phase, and the period of despair dissipation.

In the initial stages of the Nanjing "Summer Festival" incident, the organizers of A Comic Con adopted a passive approach. They considered it as an internal matter within the Nanjing comic convention community. Most organizers believed it to be a malicious report targeting the A3 Comic Con in Nanjing due to its success, driven by competition with other conventions. They perceived minimal impact on themselves. A Comic Con organizers continued with their original plans, engaging in discussions regarding contemporary Japanese anime culture, and estimating the level of audience interest. Having resumed the convention after the outbreak of the winter 2020 pandemic, the organizers were optimistic about the event, dedicating significant resources.

Subsequently, during the emergency change phase, prompted by criticism from a prominent Douyin video blogger, A Comic Con faced an escalation in criticism through various forms, including private messages, text messages, Weibo comments, and more, as the Douyin video blogger's content gained increasing popularity. Under immense public pressure, A Comic Con organizers urgently began revamping their content. They altered the convention's name from "Summer Festival" to "National-Style Comic Carnival" and canceled the planned Japanese song singing contest, Japanese anime trivia contest, and similar activities, replacing them with a series of activities related to domestic animation and domestic trends. They also announced a postponement of the convention within the convention promotion group.

Despite a series of urgent changes, A Comic Con was ultimately canceled. The cancellation resulted from the limited time available for emergency preparations, preventing a complete content replacement within the short timeframe. Additionally, following the outbreak of the controversy, TV stations advised the A Comic Con organizers not to proceed with the event. During this period, although the A Comic Con organizers had invested significant resources and effort, they faced insurmountable public outcry and the constraints of the existing situation, eventually leading to the decision to cancel the event. A sense of despair and despondency spread among A Comic Con organizers.

5.2. The Deterioration Challenges Faced by A Comic Con During the Depression Phase

5.2.1.Emergence of Homogeneous Competition and Fragmentation of the Unified Community

Between 2016 and 2018, A Comic Con enjoyed stable development, as it had previously achieved good economic and cultural benefits, and there were no competing conventions in the local market. The unified community of A Comic Con remained stable during this period. However, from 2018 to 2019, owing to the ubiquity and replicability of Japanese anime culture, a new convention labeled "B Comic Con" emerged in the fourth-tier city of Anhui, sharing a similar focus on Japanese anime culture. B Comic Con managed to attract a portion of visitors from the original unified community by hiring notable figures from anime song circles, photography circles, and cosplay circles and introducing novel amusement facilities. They also implemented strategies such as reducing ticket prices. The emergence of B Comic Con cultivated an atmosphere of antagonism between its own supporters and the original A Comic Con supporters, effectively fragmenting the previously unified community. As a result, the fragility of the cohesion exerted by Japanese anime culture became

evident, eroding the unity of the community. During this time, A Comic Con aimed to diversify content related to Japanese anime culture, investing more in venue and facility development, and innovating programs to cater to a wider audience, all of which were driven by the competitive pressure posed by B Comic Con. This in turn increased the economic burden on A Comic Con and hastened its decline.

5.2.2. Global Pandemic Strikes, Prolonged Operational Challenges for A Comic Con

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the winter of 2020, operations nationwide came to a standstill, leading to a suspension of A Comic Con's activities. During this period, the various organizers of A Comic Con relied on their accumulated resources to maintain stability. As the nation gradually eased restrictions, A Comic Con aspired to return to its previous mode of operation. However, the convention faced stringent local pandemic control measures and global pandemic instability. As a result, it could neither secure event venues for gatherings nor invite artists and guests from outside the region, essential resources for hosting exhibitions. This prolonged period of inactivity caused operational challenges for A Comic Con.

Moreover, the global pandemic also impacted the development of the Japanese anime culture industry. Many anime production companies ceased operations, peripheral merchandisers paused collaboration, and entertainment facilities closed down. This had a considerable adverse impact on A Comic Con's operations. Meanwhile, among anime enthusiasts, the influence of factors like anime series production delays and news such as the "Akihabara closure" led to a subdued emotional atmosphere within the anime community [13]. As a result, both A Comic Con organizers and visitors lacked strong confidence in the convention's reopening.

When A Comic Con organizers were finally preparing for their first post-pandemic convention, the Nanjing "Summer Festival" incident occurred. The subsequent cancellation of the event resulted in significant losses for A Comic Con, making it challenging to organize future fee-charging conventions. The community of A Comic Con organizers, once united by their shared passion for Japanese anime, became divided. Consequently, the A Comic Con industry entered a rapid period of decline.

6. Conclusion

Based on the ethnographic investigation of A Comic Con's developmental history, this paper has analyzed the influencing factors of Japanese anime culture on A Comic Con's development from the perspective of subcultural group behavior and organizational development status. Throughout its incubation, development, and even the subsequent Great Depression phase, Japanese anime culture has had profound effects on A Comic Con's development. In the initial stages of the convention's development, Japanese anime culture provided fertile ground for its establishment and played a significant role in organizing the convention and enhancing the cohesion of the convention's audience. However, during A Comic Con's developmental process, it faced various limitations imposed by Japanese anime culture. A Comic Con's mechanical imitation of Japanese domestic conventions led to a lack of innovation in content and format, resulting in a lack of uniqueness and creativity. Furthermore, the political and cultural characteristics of Japanese anime culture conflicted with the national sentiments in China, rendering A Comic Con vulnerable and limited in the face of unexpected events and public crises, ultimately leading to its rapid decline and dissolution.

In light of the above analysis, to promote the development of domestic comic conventions and enhance international cultural exchange and collaboration, it is imperative to better explore and leverage the value of Japanese anime culture. Simultaneously, emphasis should be placed on

localization and innovation to maintain its long-term healthy development. Additionally, in the contemporary age marked by the high development of cultural industries, achieving mutual friendly exchange of international heterogeneous cultures and compatible adaptation to foreign cultures is a pressing real-world issue. In the present era of increasing cultural fusion between East and West, it is worth conducting in-depth research and exploration to determine if there exists a perspective or system that can assist cultural producers in transcending their inherent perspectives' limitations, facilitating the continual critical absorption and local innovation of foreign cultures. This is a common challenge worth investigating.

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