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# Six case studies of contents tourism

Philip Seaton

## Introduction

This short series of research notes brings together some of the case studies that have been researched by members of the project ‘International Comparative Research on the Spreading and Reception of Culture through Contents Tourism’. This research has been funded since April 2014 by a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science grant (Kiban A, grant number 26243007). However, the project had its roots in a small group research project started in the Research Faculty of Media and Communication in 2010. The initial focus was sustainable tourism in Hokkaido, but as the international potential of the concept of ‘contents tourism’ emerged, the project switched focus. In the summer of 2011, three members of the group, Philip Seaton, Takayoshi Yamamura and Takeshi Okamoto, presented initial research results at the European Association for Japanese Studies Conference in Tallinn, Estonia. This panel presentation formed the basis of a special edition of the journal *Japan Forum* (Vol. 27 No. 1) published in 2015.

As the project gained momentum, other researchers joined, too. Three of those researchers have contributed research notes to this essay collection. Akiko Sugawa-Shimada (Yokohama National University) took part in the British Association for Japanese Studies (Japan Branch) symposium ‘Rethinking Cool Japan’ in May 2012 along with Takeshi Okamoto and Philip Seaton. Thereafter, she also published her research on *rekijo* (history fan girls) as part of the *Japan Forum* special edition. Clothilde Sabre joined the project after the EAJS conference in Tallinn, and then took up a JSPS postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Advanced Tourism Studies in 2013-4. Kyungjae Jang completed his PhD at the Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies before joining the project as a full-time researcher in October 2014.

The first half of this essay collection was in Japanese. Katsuyuki Nishikawa, who has provided the introductory essay in Japanese, has been a project member from the beginning. His introduction discusses how contents tourism references the world of ‘the idea’ and draws a parallel with European tourism in the eighteenth century. However, the centrepiece of this essay collection is a Japanese translation of the research group’s first major publication, the paper ‘The mediatization of culture: Japanese contents tourism and popular culture’ published in *Mediating the Tourist Experience: from brochures to virtual encounters* edited by Jo-Anne Lester and Caroline Scarles. This chapter was co-authored by Sue Beeton, Takayoshi Yamamura and Philip Seaton. Sue Beeton, whose 2005 book *Film-Induced Tourism* is considered the pioneering work in the field, joined the project in October 2012 when she came to Hokkaido to be keynote speaker at the symposium ‘Film/contents tourism and local communities’. Publishing our research in both English and Japanese (and in time, other languages too) is a vital step toward achieving our aim of cross-fertilising the literatures in various languages to create a truly international research project into the global phenomenon of travel induced by engagement with media. This publication of the Japanese translation of ‘The mediatization of culture’, therefore, is an important step in the development of the project.

The English term ‘contents tourism’ is probably unfamiliar to many. It comes from the loan words *kontentsu tsūrizumu* in Japanese. The broad research area of media-induced tourism has many different terms to describe the touristic behaviour of people who visit sites related to media, whether film locations, theme parks, celebrity residences, or other places made appealing as a

destination by their connection to media. However, the attraction of the contents tourism approach is that it focuses on contents - the narratives, characters and other creative elements - rather than the media format per se. This avoids complicated distinctions in the multimedia and multi-use age between whether it was the film, the manga or the computer game which was decisive in triggering the tourist behaviour. It also goes to the heart of what scholars across the field of media-induced tourism have long recognised: to understand why fans spend considerable time and money reaching a place related to media products that are important to them, we have to go to the contents to understand why one film, for example, is more likely to trigger the desire to travel in them than any other film.

Publishing major research articles is, of course, a key aim of this research project. At the same time, there are many case studies and issues which can be treated in a shorter article format. In these research notes, our collective aim is to provide some extra examples of the phenomena that have been treated in the group's major research articles thus far. In this way we hope to create a diverse range of case studies to help illuminate not only the conceptual and theoretical issues, but also the dynamics of contents tourism in Japan and beyond.

In the years since the project started in the Research Faculty of Media and Communication in 2010, it has grown rapidly. In 2015, a new academic journal will be launched called *The International Journal of Contents Tourism*. It is hoped that through this journal and the other activities of the research group the concept of contents tourism will take root in the international literature, and that the many interesting examples of fans traveling to media-related sites in Japan and beyond can reach a wider audience. This essay collection is one more step toward this ultimate goal.

**Philip Seaton** is a Professor in the International Student Center, Hokkaido University, where he is the convenor of the Modern Japanese Studies Program. He is the author of *Japan's Contested War Memories* (Routledge, 2007) and *Voices from the Shifting Russo-Japanese Border* (Routledge, 2015, co-edited with Svetlana Paichadze). His recent research is into heritage tourism induced by television dramas, and he has recently co-edited a special edition of the journal *Japan Forum* (with Takayoshi Yamamura) on the theme of contents tourism and Japanese popular culture. His website is [www.philipseaton.net](http://www.philipseaton.net)

シートン・フィリップ 北海道大学国際本部留学生センター教授。同センター現代日本学プログラム責任者。現在、テレビドラマによって誘発されるヘリテイジ・ツーリズムに関する研究を展開中。主著に、*Japan's Contested War Memories* (Routledge, 2007)、*Voices from the Shifting Russo-Japanese Border* (Routledge, 2015, Svetlana Paichadze と共編)などがある。また近著として、*Japan Forum* の「コンテンツツーリズムと日本のポップカルチャーに関する特集号」(山村高淑と共編)がある。ホームページは <http://www.philipseaton.net/japanese-top/>