The Influence of Manga and Anime on New Media Students' Creative Development

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ABSTRACT

Manga and anime are popular forms of entertainment that have had a significant impact on the animation and publishing industries. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of manga and anime on new media students in their studies as an educational tool and creativity development. By using a qualitative method, an online platform such as Google Meet was used to conduct an in-depth interview with six (6) new media students. The thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data. This paper argues that Manga and anime provide several benefits to New Media students, including the ability to generate ideas or storylines for animation, improve judgement in their work, and serve as a reliable source of reference in their studies. Furthermore, the study finds that manga and anime have sparked a strong desire in some of the informants to pursue animation or a New Media course as a major. This research helps to a better understanding of manga and anime's impact on the lives of New Media students and how it is viewed as a useful tool in their creative thinking growth.

Keywords: New Media students, manga, Anime, education, animation, education

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of manga and anime has been seen as a part of the global culture industry, especially in the entertainment industry. Manga and anime refer to a form of entertainment from Japan, which consists of comic books and animation series. To be specific, in Japanese words, manga refers to comic books or graphic novels, while the term anime comes from the English word "animation" which refers to all animation styles that come from Japan (Aeschliman,2007). The earliest anime can be traced back to 1917, while manga emerged in the late 19th century. Both media have since evolved to become one of the most popular storytelling platforms. Although manga and anime are technically comics and animation from Japan, they are very different from the typical Western cartoons and comics, which result in debates on whether the former should be categorised in the same genre. For instance, the USA uses the term anime broadly to describe Japanese cartoon moving pictures but also to distinguish them from the cartoon products made in the USA (Odell, 2013). Although anime and manga carry different meanings, both are seen as popular culture and have a large following among young Americans (Maniod,2005; Levi 1996; Hubka 2002, Lamerichs, 2013).

In the late nineties, anime had gained popularity and was widely recognized among American children with the success of animated series such as Pokemon, Dragon Ball Z and Sailor Moon (Draper, 2015; Katsuno and Maret, 2004). Besides anime, manga aesthetics are well-known and have inspired consumers around the world, which include Asian countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Lent, 2015). Lent (2015) explained the interesting ways through which manga has been established in the local comic industry in these three countries. It all started with illegally translated manga from Japanese into Mandarin in Taiwan and Hong Kong, which were subsequently pirated and brought into

Malaysia. As a result, manga stylisation has influenced the local narratives of comic production among Malay artists by portraying their real-life experiences (Iman & Eriko, 2019). Manga is perceived as the main entertainment among youngsters due to its unique narrative art forms. Johnson-Woods (2010) asserts that manga uses a variety of methods, styles, and genres to convey a tale, creating tension and capturing the reader's attention.

Thus, it is undeniable that the influence of Japanese popular culture (anime and manga) has successfully gained popularity from the global audience, which warrants a study by scholars (Lamerichs, 2013). Apart from establishing new forms of identity, Chen (2006) asserts that members of the manga club believe manga is preferable to western comics in terms of connecting readers' inner feelings via the visual characteristics of its graphic style, According to Almusharraf and Khahro (2020), the variety of genres in manga and the high-quality artwork also contributes to its popularity. Following its worldwide popularity and importance as a form of everyday entertainment for people of all ages, there is a growing body of research on manga and anime in the field of education (Chan Yee Han& Wong Ngan Ling, 2017; Hendrik van der Sluis, 2021; Ikue Kunai. & Ryan, 2007).

New media students are mostly creative people who create content in multiple fields and primarily focus on animation and games. Most new media students enjoy watching anime or reading manga during their free time. Schodt (1996, p 26) notes that "Japanese manga is a visualised narrative with a few words tossed in for effects-what can be called "cinematic techniques". This is supported by Tezuka, who claims that meaning in the manga is expressed through hyperbole, abbreviation and deformation (as cited in Takeuchi, 2005). By this definition, it can be seen that one manga or anime series can bring a lot of value throughout the story.

Next, students often spend their free time reading manga instead of studying or doing assignments. Some anime and manga have complicated plots and even use complex terms in the real world as scientific terms. However, several students have claimed that they can obtain the information easier than learning it from other people or media. According to previous studies, the memory becomes stronger when images or figures fit the verbal input and are encoded both verbally and non-verbally, rather than in the case of verbal or visual input separately (Satsuki Murakami & Mio Bryce, 2009). This can become a massive influence on the students' knowledge and cognitive thinking.

Yet, there exist many different perspectives towards manga and anime. From an audience perspective, entertainment is a big problem, because just like characters who have altered their life inexplicably, these various media aim to change the way the viewer lives, or at the very least encourage them to do more (Moonlitasteria, 2015). In our local communities, some claim that manga and anime are a waste of time, like watching a movie or playing video games. However, others have asserted that manga and anime are art. Its deep storyline, combined with powerful art drawing, should be considered more than just a type of entertainment media. It also provides an exciting and revolutionised approach for comic enthusiasts and publishers to deliver their masterpieces (Azman et.al, 2015) This claim shows that manga and anime can be a valuable medium for students, especially students in creative fields.

Thus, this research is interested to explore what values manga and anime offer that can attract new media students from the aspect of higher education and their cv. The values include story, character, art, animation, or simply entertainment. The sample used in this study consists of new media students who consume manga or anime. By focusing on the media students, this study contributes to the understanding of the value of reading manga and watching anime in creative development which has received less attention from scholars. Many people still see that reading manga and watching anime is unproductive, but this paper argues that there is much more to this type of medium than that. This paper also examined whether these media have influenced students in their studies and how it is applied through storytelling, art inspiration, or general knowledge.

The influence of anime and manga on education

Numerous studies focusing on the use of anime and manga materials to improve students' foreign languages competencies in a classroom have been conducted (Arikan & Taraf, 2010; Munir, 2016; Velez Gea, 2013, as cited in Chan Yee Han & Wong Ngan Ling, 2017). Some scholars argue that many English learners such as international students read manga in their English translation to improve their vocabulary, boost motivation and reduce stress when learning English (Ikue Kunai & Ryan, 2007, Kane, 2007).

Some of the contributions detailing the importance of manga and anime as an education tool are discussed. A study by Murakami and Bryce (2009) focused on manga as an educational medium. The authors suggest that manga is predominantly an educational medium rather than a kind of entertainment. It is because it is a combination of visual and spoken materials with stories, thus it helps readers to understand complex concepts better. This demonstrates that manga, which embodies the theory's features of making complex topics understandable, is a viable option (Murakami and Bryce, 2009).

Many studies emphasised the importance of manga and anime as a language and culture learning tool (Corpuz, 2020; Chan et al., 2017; Fukunaga, 2006). Another popular aspect of anime as an educational tool can be found in qualitative research by Natsuki Fukunaga (2006) in his study on the development of foreign language literacy through anime. In this study, the researcher applied PhOLKS (Photographs of Local Knowledge Sources) to explore the students' view of out-of-school lives, a model proposed by Allen et al. (2002). Three students were required to take photographs of items linked to Japanese popular culture and language study that they thought were significant in their daily lives. Each student told stories about the objects during a two-hour open-ended audiotaped interview. This study provides us with an insight into creative ways for data collection, and to understand the informants in the forms of foreign language literacy. This research suggests that the use of animation and other popular culture texts could increase students motivation in learning a foreign language, society, and culture (Fukunaga, 2006)

From the above literature, it can be concluded that using anime as a teaching tool may result in a variety of participatory activities that make the classroom more dynamic, creative, and entertaining. Active viewing, role play, and follow-up conversation help to create a more learner-centred learning environment, encouraging students to improve their Japanese language speaking skills while also engaging their minds.

The influence of anime and manga on students

Several studies have explored the effects of anime and manga consumption among students. Hassan et al. (2016) investigated the impact of anime on university students' behaviour towards anime televised in Malaysia. A poll of 247 university students revealed that female students are more likely to watch anime on TV than male students. The researchers also found a positive side to students' attitudes and behaviours towards anime. For instance, the students revealed that anime does not affect their lifestyle. However, this research is unable to provide sufficient reason why it is suggested to educate students on the risk of watching anime programmes on TV.

Another research on the impact of anime and aggressive behaviour was conducted on school children by Sallehuddin and Omar (2011). This quantitative study involved 135 primary school children in Selangor. The result shows that although these students found watching anime fun, they also agreed that watching anime can cause aggressive behaviours. Particularly, the study indicated that aggressive behaviour can be done through imitation of aggressive behaviours from the anime programme they watched. However, these students believed that watching anime will not change them into someone else which requires further explanation and exploration.

Although manga and anime could enhance students' competency in a foreign language (Chan Yee Han & Wong Ngan Ling, 2017), the stereotype that they can influence their audience in negative ways

persists. This stereotype is rooted especially among the older generation, who simply take the negative press surrounding manga and anime to be true. Some parents claim that reading manga and watching anime affect their children's studies. Moreover, anime and manga are also associated with hentai, or anime porn (Chambers 20212), as well as child pornography that involves sex and violence (Mahaseth, 2018). Due to the prevalence of these misconceptions, some people still think that people watch anime simply because of the cute girls and the "soft porn" they provide, which has reflected badly on the audience that enjoys anime and manga. Although there has been an attempt in the anime and manga industry to separate themselves from hentai, the nudity portrayed in a notable number of anime and manga titles has continued to repel communities and institutions (Mahaseth, 2018).

This paper does not focus on the role of manga and anime from an entertainment perspective, and how it affects students' aggressive behaviour or improves their language competency. To date, there is a dearth in the body of literature on anime and manga consumption that focuses on their relationship with new media students and their creative aspects. Building on the same education focus, however, this paper aims to explore to what extent the role of manga and anime can positively influence the creative development of new media students. Additionally, this study is interested in exploring the ways through which manga and anime inspire these students in their thought processes in creating creative work.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Uses and Gratification Theory was introduced in the 1940s to help scholars understand the factors underlying consumers' consumption of various forms of media. Essentially, the theory focuses on the gratifications that media consumers seek. However, in the 1970s, researchers began highlighting the outcomes of media uses and the social and psychological needs that media provided. Scholars Jay Blumbler and Elihu Katz have been credited with this theory since their seminal work in 1974 (Vinney, 2019).

According to Vinney (2019), the theory has five assumptions. First, media use is goal-oriented, meaning that people consume media because they are motivated. Second, media is selected based on the expectation that it will satisfy specific needs and desires. Third, media influence on behaviour is filtered through social and psychological factors. Thus, personality and social context impact the media choices one makes and one's interpretation of media messages. Fourth, media compete with other forms of communication for an individual's attention. This means that people might prefer a face-to-face lesson compared to watching videos on YouTube to learn. Fifth, consumers are usually in control of media and therefore are not particularly influenced by it.

A paper by Erika Junhui Yi (2018) entitled "Anime Fandom in Convergence Culture: A Uses and Gratification Approach to Chinese Fan Producers" concludes that fan producers contribute to the growth of their anime fan community by publishing fan works. This paper shows that people can find their gratification in publishing fanfic, which refers to creative work based on anime. Also, other scholars suggest gratification from consuming new media comes from people's inner needs and thus propose that new media can be shaped accordingly to the user needs, thus resulting in new gratification (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Both of these studies can be further related to the research by Salma Medhat (2014) from Cairo University. The author found that people are motivated to draw manga, which led to the author concluding that people are aware of their needs, and thus leading them to choose anime among other animations to help them gratify these needs (Salma Medhat, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method, in particular, in-depth interviews to answer the research questions. The samples were selected via purposive sampling, an approach selected because the researchers wanted to achieve specific information to meet the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample criteria must be students who are studying or have studied new media

communication courses, and have read manga or have watched anime. In this research, six informants were interviewed, consisting of current, as well as graduated students of new media in UiTM. The total number of informants was obtained after the saturation point was reached, whereby the researchers found no new ideas or themes emerging. Besides, there were only fewer than twenty students currently enrolled in the programme.

The interviews were conducted by using semi-structured questions to allow the informants more flexibility and to allow the researchers to go in-depth with their investigation of the research problems (Neuman, 2011). The interviews were done online via video call to avoid unnecessary face-to-face meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the session was recorded for analytical purposes. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 60 minutes. The informants were asked for their consent beforehand to allow data to be published, and their identities were kept anonymous. The researchers analysed the data by using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The role of manga and anime in creative development

Manga and anime as an educational medium

For some, manga and anime might not be considered educational media. This might be true for people in the advanced knowledge industry or people with no use for creative skills. However, the same cannot be said for a New Media student in a creative industry.

> *Informant 3: "For me, it is educational because I love to learn a new language and manga and anime do teach me how to speak Japanese, how to write Japanese."*
>
> *Informant 4: "Uhh yes. I think some of them is educational, instead of just entertainment. Because in this era, we have multiple of edutainment... It is an anime that tells us about certain cells and how it works in your body."*
>
> *Informant 6: "...there is also an anime that highlight the importance of science such as Dr Stone... For example, if you mix up carbon dioxide with, for example, sulphur, they can produce anything."*

Surprisingly, despite being new media students, half of the respondents have acclaimed to have brief gains in science and biology knowledge from reading manga and watching anime. For instance, informants 4 and 6 mention the anime series, Dr Stone using real-life science as their central theme. Informant 3, however, focuses more on the culture and language aspects of anime and manga. Thus, the responses suggest that manga and anime can be considered as a medium for education.

Manga and anime as references

When making an animation, games, comic books, or any creative work, the most important thing to do is to find a reference for a better understanding of the content before the creation and development process even begins.

> *Informant 1: "...when I have to do some creative writing, I did take inspiration from manga and anime. And sometimes the idea that you got from that is something refreshing, something new?"*
>
> *Informant 2: "Actually, oftentimes, I do refer to manga and anime aside from other references like Western movies and all. Because I think there, how they portray the emotion, the colour script, the design itself is, I'm more interested in that rather than anything else."*

> *Informant 4: "Usually, just for works, and when I'm drawing for fun. Because I always like, take the advantage of new art styles, like the art style that I haven't learn. Because it's like an adventure for me to try to draw a new style."*

According to Informants 1 and 2, they both take inspiration from watching anime and reading manga when they are using them as references. Informant 2 states that they are more interested in the portrayal of anime and manga rather than Western movies. However, Informant 4 seems to be focusing on the artistic aspects and states that they use it as a reference when drawing and trying a new style. The responses suggest that anime and manga are reliable sources of reference for New Media students.

Shaping student's motivation

Manga and anime are both global phenomena and affect not only many people, but also the animation industry in numerous ways. Whereas previously anime used to be disregarded by the common public, it is now considered as providing high-quality content:

> *Informant 2: "...manga and anime are the reasons why I further my studies in new media, and then I further my studies even more in animation."*

> *Informant 4: "Manga actually, influences me to learn how to draw... I want to learn to draw, and as well as learning the Japanese language..."*

According to informants 2 and 4, reading manga and watching anime have pushed them to pursue their interest in animation and drawings, which is the core of New Media students. The finding shows that reading manga and watching anime have affected New Media students' perception and motivation in their lives. This finding in the study also contributes to the study of motivation especially in the creative development of anime and manga in education which predominantly focus on learning a foreign language by previous scholars (Ikue Kunai & Ryan, 2007; Kane, 2007)

Developing creativity from manga and anime

The storyline and graphics of the manga and anime

This theme explains the main reasons these students find the selected genres of manga and anime as interesting, and what aspects of creativity they respectively provided.

> *Informant 2: "...it is interesting because the plot is one of a kind... What interests me asides from its plot is just, its artistic value. I like how the drawings look like."*

> *Informant 5: "...for me, I love to watch it because the storyline is very nice... and the art, the cinematic of the anime is very nice."*

> *Informant 6: "...what is interesting about that manga is that they have a solid storyline and for me, I like to watch an animation that is, that has great graphics."*

According to the above statements, most informants choose storytelling and visuals as the positive factors that make anime and manga interesting. The visuals include the graphics, art style of manga and the anime's cinematics. This is supported by Chen (2006), who argues that the graphic style in the manga is the main reason why a fan of manga clubs prefers Japanese manga to Western comics. This shows that manga and anime have many positive factors that attract these students to read or watch them. These factors are very important and relevant to them especially as new media students, as their academic projects or assignments require creativity and graphics skill.

Application of manga & anime in the informant's study or work

New Media students can utilise manga and anime in numerous ways in their own work:

> Informant 3: "as the reference in doing the character. Such as their eyes, their faces, their figures… Because of that style, the Western style is very complicated whether than the anime style. Anime style is much simpler for me."

> Informant 4: "the art style helps me because I can use multiple art styles from multiple anime and manga"

> Informant 5: "I learn many things about character development in one piece. For example, how the character from a weak boy become a pirate king, which is like Luffy. So, I learn how he struggles in his life. So based on them, apply it to my assignment which is the animation right now, I apply it to my current main character."

As seen in the above statement, informants mostly apply the value they see from manga and anime when they are making characters and art. Informant 3 specifically states that the anime style is easier to be learned and copied from compared to Western-style like animation such as in Marvel comics. Informant 5 also states that the same character development values in manga and anime can be applied in their work. This suggests that many values in manga and anime can be applied to the works of New Media students.

The influence of manga and anime in creative development

In the animation industry, manga and anime play an important role in changing the shape of the industry. For a New Media student, manga and anime hold significant influence in their process of content creation:

> Informant 1: "…sometimes I have to do let's say script or some creative writing and sometimes I get inspiration from the anime that I watched or the manga that I read."

> Informant 4: "It makes me think about how to make the story, how to make the plot, and how to make the character as well. So, for me, this year assignments should be making characters and making animations so it really helps me a lot."

> Informant 6: "I mostly use anime or manga as a reference. So, for example, if I'm drawing a character, I use manga as a reference to create that which is most of the manga character have big eyes, things like that la."

According to all the Informants, most of the answers are split between helping them to write better stories and to obtain inspiration for drawing. These two elements are crucial to create quality content for New Media students in their creative development thinking process. A study by Zakaria Dalil (2015) also shows that manga and anime help stimulate their viewer's minds and help to foster their creative talents. Furthermore, these two media not only influence their work but also inspire them to improve on their quality of work. Simply put, manga and anime help these students in learning art and drawing, making better judgments on their own work, besides being reliable references for New Media students. We can consider this and recognise manga and anime as a reliable source of knowledge not for just New Media students, but also children.

Many anime and manga now use knowledge as their central theme, such as Dr Stone and Cell at work. Both series use real-life science as a plot and explain it to them so that the audience will understand. Based on previous research by Murakami and Bryce (2009), manga helps their readers to understand a difficult topic using verbal and non-verbal input. On the other hand, research by Hassan et al. (2016) found that anime can have a significant impact on university students' lives. While these research findings are similar to previous research, this study also provides a better insight into how both media can be beneficial both in New Media students' life and work. This can help more people to recognise

the benefit of media and anime and use them for future research and study material, as they can become an educational medium for people in the creative industry

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the findings, this paper argues that despite the popular aspect of manga and anime as an entertainment tool, many positive values can be obtained, especially in the creative thinking development of New Media students. While some consider reading manga and watching anime as time-wasting and non-beneficial, findings from this paper found that both media have provided beneficial values to these students in many aspects. Specifically, our findings show that manga and anime provide many artistic values in storytelling such as on the plot, characters and graphics, which are beneficial to New Media students' assignments and work projects. Besides, the informants in this study also stated that manga and anime have inspired them to pursue their interest in animation and drawings and enrol in New Media courses. Lastly, manga and anime were seen as educational media for New Media students as it helps them to create better quality content in animation or games.

Thus, this paper suggests that future researchers should consider using manga and anime more in their research especially in the higher education sector. These media are proven to be a valuable source of edutainment for many people, especially people in the creative industry. Next, other industries such as secondary and primary education can consider using manga and anime as their platform. For example, teachers in school can use anime like Cell at Work to teach their students about biology and how the body works. This might prove beneficial because younger generations can be more interested in such topics. Lastly, Malaysia's industry can adapt the style of anime and manga by making more animations or comics that are Oscar-worthy, for instance, building on a beloved local product such as Upin *& Ipin* the movie while staying true to Malaysia's value and culture, much like Japan. The findings in this paper also hope to shape people's perspectives on the manga and anime industry more positively.

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