

COMPLETION REPORT

This research is an ethnographic study on the fans of *manga*, *anime* and games in Japan and Vietnam. The generous funding from the Sumitomo Foundation has made possible a study that contributes potentially to a more critical understanding of fans' creative and communicative practices.

This research is grounded on a series of interviews with 18 fans in Hanoi in May 2012, and 15 fans in Kyoto and Tokyo in June and December 2012. These fans conduct a variety of activities, such as cosplay, creation of *dōjin* publications and games, and *manga* scanlation. In addition, I interviewed representatives from a *manga* publisher and an organization promoting Japanese popular culture in Vietnam. These interviews are supplemented by fieldwork, including participant observation at the Comic Market 83, a 3-day event held 29 – 31 December, 2012. I presented a preliminary analysis of my research findings at the Mechademia conference held in Seoul in November 2012. I am currently working on a journal paper that will incorporate my latest data, and I intend to publish it in a special journal issue examining the critical potential of media consumption.

I would like to summarize my findings in this report. This research has been concerned with fans' sense of value, especially what they deem as important. I observe that fans in both Japan and Vietnam negotiate, and sometimes even enforce, values through their creative and communicative actions. Certain values become hegemonic due to their proponents' positions within their fandoms (e.g. forum administrators and prominent cosplayers) but there are more often conflicts and antagonism due to differences in values. Interestingly, one such manifestation of antagonism in both Vietnam and Japan is generational conflict, even when the generational difference at issue is merely a few years.

Another focus of this research is fans' communication. I observe that social media (Facebook in the case of Vietnam and Twitter in the case of Japan) play a vital role in shaping fans' communicative practices and even their identities. Offline meetings, however, remain important to fans. This is especially the case for cosplayers and arcade game players, but in general events, such as Comic Market, serve as sites where fans could reaffirm their connections to one another.

Lastly, this research seeks to pay more critical attention to the peculiarities arising from the locations of fans. Tokyo has been the primary site of investigation for studies on fandoms in Japan, and similar studies in Southeast Asia have only just begun. This research has successfully examined not only fans residing around Tokyo, but also those residing around Kyoto. It also extended fandom studies to Vietnam, where such research is lacking compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. Two aspects about fans in Vietnam are noteworthy. First, fans relate their own and others' consumption of *manga* and *anime* in relations to Vietnam's development and increasing level of affluence, which perhaps account for their perceived 'generational' differences amongst fans. Second, unlike many other youth subcultures, fans in Vietnam face little parental objection; paradoxically some fans see this as parents' ignorance of 'harmful' content, and seek to act as cultural regulators.

This research has laid a basis for a bigger project on the network of media fandoms in Japan, which I hope to begin in the near future.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Kam, Thiam Huat. 'Active Consumers and Capital: Limits and Possibilities of Participatory Consumption'. *Third Mechademia Conference on Anime, Manga and Media Theory from Japan*, Seoul, 30 November, 2012.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Kam, Thiam Huat. 'Critical potential of fan practices', *Cultural Studies* (Intended for publication in a special journal issue 2014/2015).

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)