

City Promotion via Heritage & Media Collaboration: Mishima City and Emerging Female Audiences

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【問題・目的・背景】

【問題】 Regional institutions such as museums, heritage sites, parks, etc, are vital in the cultural life of towns and cities. There is a need to encourage not only new visitors to regional institutions, but to ensure that these visitors return. By nurturing a returning audience, regional areas can cultivate steady income of both financing and people, and further support the continuation of local community. One way by which new visitors can be encouraged to engage with regional areas is through examining previously overlooked and emerging audience groups. This presentation will discuss one such emerging audience group: that of young women. This group is described as ‘emerging’ due to the increasing visibility of such women in history-focused museum and gallery spaces. By examining this audience, further questions can be asked of regional city promotion: primarily, how considering these audiences impact city promotion, how promoters themselves acknowledge and consider such audiences, and how this consideration may influence the effectiveness of actions to convert new/overlooked audiences to recurring visitors of regional institutions.

【背景】 This research considers the ways in which Mishima City has targeted this emerging audience of young women through annual media collaborations. This research will look at the collaborations between Mishima City and the media franchise ‘Touken Ranbu ONLINE’ (刀剣乱舞—ONLINE—). Touken Ranbu is a women-focused multimedia franchise, whereby named Japanese swords are personified and utilized to re-tell famous episodes in Japanese history. This franchise originated as an online game in 2015, with a current playerbase of over 80,000 people. Since then, it has expanded to a number of successful film and stage productions targeting a female audience. Mishima City has collaborated with Touken Ranbu

annually since 2016, combining artistic exhibitions of both locally owned and borrowed sword collections at the Sanno Art Museum and Mishima Shrine with promotional activities targeting fans of Touken Ranbu. These collaborations include promotional activities at Mishima institutions, such as the aforementioned Sanno Art Museum and Mishima Shrine, as well as the local history museum and park grounds. Stamp rallies encourage fans of Touken Ranbu to explore the city and its attractions, provide revenue to city institutions, and encourage visitors to engage with locals and businesses. Additionally, local residents and businesses are encouraged to participate, with self-produced artworks and collaboration material encouraging visitors to further interact with the local community and economy. These collaborations successfully connect new visitors to the city’s cultural assets, well as provides valuable arenas for interaction between audience and history, audience and city, and audience and local population. By showcasing Mishima’s attractions, visitors are encouraged to interact with the city in a deep manner. Additionally, it provides sites of interactions with locals, especially when visitors interests are tied to objects of the area’s local history. In this manner, the city has appropriated interest in historical fiction to facilitate its own internal promotion, to visitors from all over Japan. Finally, collaborative events also provide benefits for the local community, not only with the recreational benefits of the stamp rallies encouraging locals to explore their city, but also by providing events with mascot characters, which even families and those unfamiliar with Touken Ranbu can also enjoy. Through this small case study, a number of interesting avenues regarding audience interaction, city promotion, and the use of existing cultural assets can be explored.

【目的】 The purpose of this research is to consider

how collaboration with mass media, as well as the audience it engages, can be utilized for regional city promotion. It seeks to analyse the ways in which media focuses audience attention and how that attention can be utilized for city revitalization. In doing so, it considers not only the objects of 'media' and 'city', but the persons, experiences, expectations, and potential assumptions held by visitors and city promotion workers. Thus, the purpose of this research is as follows:

1) To explain the benefits of establishing collaborations with targeted audiences, the processes by which they can utilize existing city assets and infrastructure, and how they can be designed for city promotion.

2) To examine how such collaborations facilitate interaction between visitors and city through curation, planning, and the creation of areas of interaction between visitor and local. In doing so, I will also analyse how such interactions can benefit positive associations with place and people.

3) To argue for further developments in city/regional promotion that considers new, non-established voices in activities/planning. This is particularly important with emerging audiences, as established voices may continue to overlook their importance and validity as cultural actors.

【研究方法・研究内容】

【研究方法】 This research was conducted during the collaborative event held by Mishima City and Touken Ranbu for the 2019-2020 period, using qualitative methods. While similar research based around tourism marketing has been conducted in the past using statistical and data analysis (Ono, 2020), this project seeks to understand the ways in which internal subjectivities impact promotional/curatorial decisions on the side of organisers, and the sense of connection/positive associations with place on the side of visitors. As such, I have employed research methods that emphasise thoughtful response and observation of interactions between people and event space. These methods were as follows:

1) Free-form interview with organisers, discussing not only the processes behind event/exhibition creation, but to understand personal reactions to event activities and participants.

2) Social media evaluation of both official promotional accounts and audience interactions and recollections of Mishima during the event period.

3) Participant-observation of collaboration events, focused on observing visitors as they interacted with city assets and facilities. In addition, observing the movement and gathering activities of these visitors, how locals activities may impact the paths they take, and how such paths may increase opportunities for direct allowed for direct visitor/local engagement. This methodology has been designed in order to gain an understanding of organizational motives, as well as understanding of visitors perspective and experience, which is vital in evaluating the success of culture-based events.

【研究内容】 Interview data, including personal responses of curators and managers; record of community engagements and visitor/locals activities, including any influence to or temporary modification of the spatial arrangement of Mishima city; record of audience action, movement, conversation (between selves and with local residents), reaction to event activities and city space, and audience experiences undertaken during the collaboration event.

【研究・調査・分析結果】

【分析結果】 The results of this research have interesting implications for the use of collaborative events in city promotion, especially in regards to cultivating a returning visitor base. The conclusions drawn from these results are as follows:

1) Collaborations were successful in decreasing the gender gap in Sanno Art Museum's attendance for history exhibitions. While gallery managers emphasized that the number of young female visitors in the 2019-2020 period were less than when the media franchise was at its peak in 2016-2017, they nonetheless remarked upon how such events continued to increase the presence of women in exhibitions

previously dominated by male audiences. One in particular remarked that gender differentiations in audience were now more equally represented, as opposed to pre-collaboration male dominance. This reveals not only the potential such events have in cultivating new audiences, but also shows how attention to existing yet overlooked audience bases can provide immediate benefits for cultural institutions (as in Black, 2005, and Egberts & Alvares, 2018). That female audiences have been retained shows that exhibitions for Japanese history do not have to be geared to the traditional audience to find success, and connection with media can allow cultural institutions to utilize not only an overlooked audience (women) but a younger, highly interactive, and travel-conscious audience of media fans (Okamoto, 2015).

2) There is a need to reevaluate gendered boundaries in promotional practice - that is, to determine the impact managerial voices have in the successes or failures in creating appealing destinations for non-traditional audiences. This research considers the importance of organisers acknowledging the validity of non-traditional avenues of interest in history and cultural assets, and how that interest can be geared for new/emerging forms of city promotion. This point of validity is particularly important when considering the potentials of female audiences, as even in previous studies of 'otaku' travel (Ono, 2020; Okamoto, 2015), women have been largely underrepresented due to the way in which their interests are regarded on societal levels. As such, it argues for the importance not just for attracting new audiences, but in establishing new, non-traditional, or non-established voices in promotion and planning.

3) Collaboration events with public assets, such as Mishima Local Museum (郷土資料館), Mishima Shrine (三島大社), and Rakujuen Park (楽寿園), nurtures interaction between locals and visitors, creating positive experiences for both groups (Ono, 2020). Through the course of this research, visitors were seen to be interacting not just with prescribed exhibition space, but with other public assets of

Mishima City. In particular, events such as stamp rallies encouraged visitors to visit local parks hosting festivals, and to participate in cultural events at Mishima Shrine alongside locals during the new year period. The positioning of collaboration activities alongside normative social/event practice in Mishima city has a potential positive effect on how visitors view the civic life of the city, giving emotional resonance not just to the direct media collaboration, but to the setting (city and its assets) within which the collaboration occurred.

4) Local business involvement in events provides economic benefit, and promotes interaction/engagement which may reframe assumptions held by locals/visitors. Local businesses participated in the collaboration event through hand-made signage, as well as through selling or displaying official merchandise. These impacted the movement patterns of visitors, with many observed to deviate from the direct-most path of the event stamp rally to engage with participating businesses. Some businesses retained promotional material from previous years collaborations, indicating the long-term benefits, however small, remained across the entire collaborative period. In addition, these businesses provided space for locals and visitors to interact, sharing details of travel, recommended spots, and anecdotes surrounding the objects on display at the collaborative sites. This interaction follows with Ono (2020), which suggested a growing motive for media fan travel lies with the opportunity to connect with locals. This interaction may change not only visitors opinion of a regional city, but also impact how local business owners consider visiting fans and the value of their own city's cultural assets.

5) Results ③ and ④ are conducive to return visits and returning audiences (Black, 2005), benefiting long-term engagement with regional institutions and cities. Such engagement is not limited to those who directly participate in collaboration events, as word-of-mouth potential may encourage others to visit areas of their own accord. For cities such as Mishima, which are connected by Shinkansen and can operate as

a transfer point for travelers to other areas of Japan, such positive word of mouth of the city's own cultural assets may increase its visibility as a stopping point in larger travels, as well as becoming a site to visit in its own right. While such conclusions are at this stage merely a hypothesis, it is worth considering the knock-on and larger scale benefits to collaborative events beyond the direct in-the-moment impact, for the consideration of future development in regional city promotion.

【考察・今後の展開】

【今後の展開】 1) Observing similar collaborations in different settings, with differing organizing bodies: similar collaborations have occurred in other areas of regional Japan, from the nearby Odawara to institutions in Tohoku and Okinawa. Comparing the impacts of such collaborations with the (in this researcher's view) largely successful efforts at Mishima may reveal further points of consideration, especially in regards to the impact of organisational values and assumptions.

2) Further examine the audience reaction, especially with return visits. How do long-term opinions of Mishima and collaboration sites impact future audience/visitor engagement? How are these experiences discussed and promoted within media fan circles? This aspect of research will require the establishment of direct involvement with fan circles and communities.

3) Evaluate the role of media producers: are these forms of collaboration encouraged? Why/why not? What motives and benefits do producers gain from undertaking collaborative events? While this presentation has considered the collaborative event as promotion for regional cities, such events are also advertisements for media products. The motives of media producers, who they chose to collaborate with, and the extent to which collaborative partners are able to influence the direction of events, is an important aspect of future research as it determines how far such events can be guided by city managers.

【考察】 1) Organisers personal experiences may impact

event viability, and as such, there is a need to consider the impact of existing assumptions in established organizational groups.

2) This collaboration started during the 'rekijo' (歴女) boom. Further consideration needs to be given to the long-term viability of this particular collaborative event, and how the successful aspects can be replicated in other media contexts.

3) This research was conducted at a single expression of the event, largely from the view of an observer to the event itself. Further consideration should be given to organizational and behind-the-scenes actions, such as curatorship, that occur outside of the direct event period.

4) This collaborative process occurred in a city (Mishima) with existing cultural assets. Such activities may not be replicable by regional towns and cities that lack Mishima's established infrastructure and funding for promotional activities.

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