博士論文

Niconico *Utaite*: Platformization of the Creative Culture in Japanese Social Media

（ニコニコ動画の歌い手：日本のソーシャルメディアにおける

創作文化のプラットフォーム化）

VINITPHOL Rujirat

論文の内容の要旨

論文題目　　　Niconico *Utaite*: Platformization of the Creative Culture in Japanese Social

Media

（ニコニコ動画の歌い手：日本のソーシャルメディアにおける

創作文化のプラットフォーム化）

氏名　　　　　VINITPHOL Rujirat

The creative culture of amateurs has existed for a long time in Japanese society. *Dōjin* culture, a collaborative creative culture existing among people who have shared the same interests, has been rooted in Japan for more than a century. Participants in the *dōjin* culture have created, shared and collaborated with others with regard to their creative work, using the existing distribution system (the postal service) or gathering at places in small groups. The *Dōjin* culture used to be considered a subculture when it was compared with the mass culture in the mainstream media. Those who adopt this culture may be perceived as adopting a grassroots movement, acting against the dominant commercial media which consists of small groups of professional people as senders in the communication process to a largely passive, compliant group of receivers.

After the advent of social media and mobile technology, however, which created novel digital platforms for people to access, anyone can now be both a sender and / or producer. Social media and mobile technology accelerate the possibility of a creative culture, as well as the potential to create new production practices and circulation processes within the emerging platforms.

I have selected *utaite*, Internet singers on Niconico, a prominent Japanese video-

sharing site, as my research subject. Using *utaite* as an example, this dissertation aims to examine how the existing creative culture in Japan has transformed its methods of production and circulation in the age of social media. I have adopted ethnographic fieldwork as my methodology and have conducted participant observation, both offline and online, which have included being a research intern on Niconico as well as acting as a staff member at the Comic Market. I have also participated in various *utaite*-related events from 2011 to 2019. Additionally, I have conducted in-depth interviews with three *utaite* as well as less formal interviews with *utaite* fans.

The main timeframe for analysis of this dissertation was from 2011 to 2014, and data collected from 2015 to 2019 was used to support my thesis. *Utaite* are regarded as one of the early adopters of Japanese social media, and the main timeframe for my research was the period when the creative culture of amateur creators in Japanese social media was formed in the emerging new media ecology. In this respect, therefore, the creative culture of *utaite* represents the early adopters of creative culture in the age of social media in Japan.

In Chapter 1, I have explained my theoretical and conceptual framework, and have proposed a conceptual model called the "Triangular Prism of Creative Culture." I have used this to show the creative culture of *utaite* in this dissertation. In Chapter 2 I have focused on the research subject, *utaite*, and have explained the terms and research methodology that I have used, together with the limitations that occurred during the qualitative interviews. In Chapter 3 I have examined the historical and cultural backgrounds of the social place, Comiket, and the digital platform, Niconico, on which *utaite* participate. From the results of the analysis I undertook, I found a different ethos in each of these two communities, which may lead to conflicts and compromises that *utaite* have had to deal with. Chapters 4 and 5 have comprised the core analysis part of this dissertation. Chapter 4 focuses on the production process of *utaite* singing clips on digital platforms, while Chapter 5 is geared

towards *utaite* themselves and their activities in physical and virtual spaces. In Chapter 6, I have summarized the findings of this dissertation, using a conceptual model to demonstrate the creative culture of *utaite* in the age of social media, and also how to adapt this model to other types of creative culture on social media.

In the production process of *utaite*, a collaboration between users has been found. The networked creative culture is one of the important findings in this dissertation, which confirms the strong impact of social media that both encourages and eases creative production in the digital age. Without the Internet and social media, people need to gather in one particular place to distribute what they had created, or send their work via postal services. This takes up much more time for amateur creators to produce, share, and distribute their creations than it does if they use digital platforms, and it is also more expensive.

My research has found that the creative culture of *utaite* does not stop with their use of Niconico. *Utaite* also engage with physical places (such as the Comic Market, *dōjin* stores, and live houses) to circulate and expand their activities outside the digital platform. The record industry has also participated in this culture when *utaite* culture became more popular on the Internet. Creators both move from, and expand, places and platforms for creating, collaborating, distributing, circulating, and exhibiting their creative work.

Using my conceptual model, this dissertation has depicted the creative culture of *utaite* which is formed by a mixture of celebrity and *dōjin* cultures; professional and amateur producers; and utilizing mainstream media and User Generated Media (UGM). The current (2019) emerging creative culture is neither superior nor inferior to the former dominant creative culture in the mass media era of the twentieth century. It does not eradicate the previous creative culture; rather, it creates a new media ecology that includes both mainstream and alternative media, culture and producers.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Author's Note

The Romanization of Japanese words in this dissertation follows the modified Hepburn system found in *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* (Shinbun instead of Shimbun; Ichirō instead of Ichiroo). Japanese terms without any direct counterpart in English are italicized, except for place names and other Japanese words that have already been adopted by English speakers, such as "Tokyo," "Osaka," "otaku" "anime" and "manga," which are written without italics in their conventional English spelling.

Japanese nouns have no plural form, and therefore words such as *utaite,* otaku, anime and manga appear in the text as both singular and plural.

Japanese names are written with the family name preceding the given name (thus, Yamada Tarō rather than Tarō Yamada), unless the individual has demonstrated a preference for, or has been published, using the English convention of first name before surname.

U.S. dollars are included when monetary figures in Japanese yen are mentioned, at an exchange rate of approximately 100 yen per 1 U.S. dollar.

Chapter 1

Utaite: **Emerging Singers in Japanese Social Media**

Figure 1–A: Fans staring and taking photos of *utaite* at the 79th Comic Market (winter).
(This photo was taken by the author on December 31, 2010, at 3:30 p.m.)

The photo above is the reason why I decided to choose *utaite*[1] as the subject of this research.

In this dissertation, *utaite* are people who upload their songs onto a prominent Japanese

video-sharing website entitled *nikoniko dōga* (hereafter called Niconico). As an academic

and as a fan who has researched fan activities since 2008, I have participated in the Comic

Market (Comiket) [2] and I have been a buyer (ordinary participant), a seller ("circle*"*[3]), and

also a staff member there. Started in 1975, the Comic Market, or Comiket, the world's largest

comic convention, a biannual event in Japan, is well known as a place for amateur artists

---

[1] *Utaite* (歌い手), a Japanese Internet slang word, refers to Internet singers, especially those on
Niconico. Its usual meaning relates to people who sing, who are professional singers, or who are
musicians. When referring to professional singers, however, people usually use the word *kashu* (歌
手) rather than *utaite*.

[2] For more information about Comic Market, please see Chapter 3.

[3] Sellers in the Comic Market and other *dōjinshi* conventions in Japan are called *sākuru* or "circles" in
English. See Chapter 3 for further details.

and other creators where they can distribute their original and derivative works. Although the name of this convention includes the word "comic," in fact all genres of self-published works are allowed. At the Comiket, most are derivative works of popular comics or anime, but some are original. Moreover, not only amateurs but also professional creators participate in the Comiket. Corporate organizations, including publishing companies, attend as they are on the lookout for new stars.

Figure 1–A on the previous page was taken on the last day of 2010 when Japan was in the middle of winter. There were people on the bridge staring at something down on the left-hand side of the photo. They were mostly girls from the age of ten to their late twenties. Although it is difficult to see clearly, most were taking photos using their mobile phones, while some were chatting with friends, saying how happy they were to see their favorite *utaite* in real life. When I followed what they were looking at, I saw the "shutter" circles[4] of two well-known groups of *utaite.* Since the previous summer I had known that *utaite* were receiving a lot of attention from Japanese young people.

What is remarkable about this photo? People who don't know, simply see this photo as a moment when fans are looking at, and taking photos of, their favorite Internet singers. However, from the perspective of Comiket participants, what was happening here was astonishing. Usually, Comiket's main focus is on creative works (*dōjinshi*) from the circles. Participants visit Comiket to purchase goods or take cosplay[5] photos, or talk with circles if they are available. However, the time this photo was taken was 3:30 p.m., which meant that the Comiket would end thirty minutes later. Nevertheless, there was still a long line of people queuing to purchase goods. And there were other participants who had already made

---

[4] Very well-known circles are placed in front of the convention hall shutter; hence, "shutter circles".

[5] People who "cosplay" are called costume players or "cosplayers." "Costume play" ("cosplay") is one-way fans express themselves, by wearing costumes and accessories to represent specific characters. They let other participants at Comiket take photos for free, but if they want to publish and sell their photos albums, they have to apply to Comiket as circles.

purchases, but who were still waiting around to watch the circles. From time to time I heard the Comiket staff shouting, "Don't stop on the bridge and don't take photos of the circles." After the Comiket had finished, there were hundreds of comments on the Internet criticizing both the *utaite* and their fans. The *utaite* were criticized for their idolatrous behavior, such as shaking hands with fans. Most commentators, however, were angry because of the bad manners of the *utaite*'s fans, the majority of whom were high school and university students. Some of them did not know about, and had never joined, the Comiket beforehand; therefore, it was not surprising that they might have thought that this was the usual type of commercial event for buying goods and meeting famous *utaite*, and that they were "customers."

When an existing culture encounters an emerging culture, several conflicts and reconciliations usually occur. This particular phenomenon had triggered my curiosity about *utaite,* and I started to observe them from a number of perspectives: as an audience member, as a fan, as a Comiket staff member, and as a researcher.

1-1 Previous Research Regarding *Utaite* and Niconico

Although a significant number of *utaite* have made successful singer debuts with major record labels, and have appeared on mainstream media from time to time, only a very few people know about their origins. *Utaite* are significant, not only because some have become famous on account of social media, but also because of their methods of producing and circulating their work, both online and offline. However, apart from studies that have analyzed *utaite* as being one of the creators of derivative Vocaloid songs, an in-depth analysis focusing on these singers has rarely been undertaken until now.

A great deal of previous research has focused on Niconico, a prominent Japanese video-sharing service and a platform where *utaite* and their creative culture have emerged. Niconico started in December 2006, and became famous after the burgeoning of the famous virtual idol Hatsune Miku, a Vocaloid synthesizer, following its release at the end of August

2007. Hatsune Miku's fame generated thousands of derivative works posted on Niconico, including works created by *utaite*. This phenomenon triggered a number of Japanese researchers to re-examine User Generated Content (UGC)[6] on the Internet.

In Niconico's early days, fans usually shared videos from other websites such as YouTube or created "fanvids"[7] (so-called "MAD" in Japanese). However, after fans started to follow Hatsune Miku, Miku-related creations have been posted on the Niconico website, ranging from music, illustrations, 3D models, to novels. Other users also borrow, remix and collaborate to create derivative works, using materials available on the Internet. One creation can become material for other creations. Usually, fans' derivative works are typically called *nijisōsaku* (literally, "second creations"), which show that they follow the original work, such as in the creation of a comic parody derived from a favorite novel. In Niconico, however, one work can be created using materials from multiple users, regardless of the order of creation. For instance, a dancing clip of Hatsune Miku can be created by using a song from A (A having used lyrics from Z) and a 3D Model from B (B having used an illustration from Y). Hamano (2012) named this network of derivatives as the "N-th Order Derivative Creation" (490-91).

Scholars, especially in the engineering field, have tended to analyze the functions of the architectural system of the Niconico website, and have explored the possibility of improvement. For example, there was research on, and recommendations made, in relation to the search engine (Aoki and Miyashita 2008; Tsukuda, Nakamura, and Tanaka 2011), and research on the tag system on Niconico (Nakamura and Yamaguti 2010; Murakami and Ito 2010). Some studies have examined collaborative efforts based on the derivative works of Hatsune Miku on the Niconico platform, such as Masahiro Hamasaki, Takeda, and

---

[6] User Generated Content (UGC) refers to several types of media content created by users. For more information about UGC, please see 1-3-2-1.

[7] A "fanvid" is a video or music video, consisting of clips from a film, anime or television series.

Nishimura (2010) or Shiori Hironaka et al. (2017).

In 2012, the Information Processing Society of Japan published a special issue on "The Present and Future of CGM: The World Opened up, by Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga, and PIAPRO,"[8] in the *Journal of Information Processing (JIP)* Volume 53, no. 5 (464-94). It comprises five articles which describe the immense collaboration that occurred on Niconico, focusing on Hatsune Miku and meeting at Piapro, a creator-based SNS community (Goto and Okuno 2012). The first article describes how those three stakeholders (Hatsune Miku, Niconico and Piapro) have profoundly affected CGM in Japan. Each stakeholder had different roles, but they are all connected: 1. Hatsune Miku's popularity as a character urged the creators to make Hatsune Miku sing; 2. Niconico was described as a place for exhibiting and receiving comments; 3. Piapro was described as a place for licensing application and creator community (Goto 2012a). In the second article, the developer explains the history of Vocaloid and the future of singing synthesis (Kenmochi 2012). The third article considers Hatsune Miku as an interface, and also discusses the preparation of the copyright issue and SNS for the creators, Piapro (Goto 2012b); while the fourth article looks back on five years of Niconico and considers how it differs from other video-sharing sites (Koizuka 2012). The fifth article examines the previously mentioned work of Hamano, including the concept of "fluxonomy"[9], that is, of the "tag war" on Niconico (Hamano 2012).

Other researchers have focused on Hatsune Miku as their research subject (Greenwood 2013; Kenmochi 2013;) and the book *Supercell's Supercell Featuring Hatsune Miku* by Yamada Keisuke (2017) provided an insightful account of the Vocaloid producer, with a focus on Supercell, a famous Japanese music *circle*, and a group of *dōjin* creators.

---

[8] See Chapter 3 for more details about Piapro.

[9] Fluxonomy is a portmanteau of fluxion and taxonomy, coined by Hamano (2012). Niconico users can create up to ten tags for a movie. If the tags are accepted by users, they will last for a long time. However, most tags are deleted. Hamano stated that tags usually changed a lot before becoming stable and become the metadata.

Although much important work has been carried out on network and platform analysis, as well as on analysis of original creators and characters, a number of questions remain. To begin with, the creative practices of derivative creators, apart from Vocaloid producers such as *utaite*, have received little attention in the literature. Utilizing the quantitative approach, previous studies have discovered how new content has been created through networks, but the means of production, including structure and function within each collaboration, remains unexplored. For example, how materials were selected to remix, or how users started to collaborate with other users, or how users made contact with other users and what tools they utilized, are as yet unrecorded and remain to be explored.

1-2 Research Aims

The creative culture of amateur creators has existed in Japanese society for more than a century (Barubora and Nonaka 2017, 17). These amateurs have produced and circulated their creative works with people who share the same interests through available distribution channels. When new technologies emerged, they sometimes created new "places" for expression, or made the production process easier and cheaper than before. Those amateur creators usually adopted and adapted their creative culture to new technologies. Although *utaite* seemed to be a novel Internet slang used for Niconico users who uploaded their singing voices on websites, nevertheless, before the advent of social media, there were already amateur singers who uploaded their singing voices and shared on the Japanese Internet web forum.

Not only did the birth of social media create ubiquitous platforms for everyone to express and exhibit creative work to the world; but it also eased the accessibility for consuming, producing, sharing and collaborating for both creators and their audience. Consequently, through the adaptation process, the creative culture of *utaite* occurred, together with the unique functional and structural forms of production and circulation

processes, both offline and online.

This research aims to examine how the creative culture of *utaite* has changed and transformed in the age of social media. Note that the word "creative culture" used in this dissertation refers to the cultural production and circulation of *utaite* creations across both offline (social places) and offline (digital platforms).

In order to analyze how the creative culture of *utaite* was formed and expanded, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, including in-depth interviews with *utaite* from 2011 to 2019, both offline and online, to collect qualitative data. The main timeframe for analysis of this dissertation was from January 2011 to December 2014, while data collected from 2015 to 2019 are used to support my thesis. The latter was the period when smartphones started to become important adjuncts to people's lives, and when Japanese people began to become familiar with social media. *Utaite* were significant as one of the early adopters of these emerging technologies.

This research focuses on *utaite* as a phenomenon rather than on the individuals concerned. It is hoped that it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the creative culture of amateur producers during the dawn of social media in Japan. It sheds new light on the time before capitalism, commercialism and professionalism invaded the amateur sphere. This was a time when most users[10] focused more on their productions rather than on gaining financial benefits or fame, and it resulted in fruitful collaborations between *utaite* and other creators.

1-2-1 Platformization of Niconico

Before the Internet boom, there was a small group of professionals in the mass media industry who were both powerful, and dominant with regard to methods of communication.

---

[10] The word "users" here refer to Niconico users.

They controlled the distribution tools in the media ecology, as well as a largely passive audience. Media production from small groups of active audiences was largely ignored and disregarded. However, after the Internet became ubiquitous, proliferation of amateur creators such as *utaite* were empowered by the seamless space and ease of communication, distribution, and production.

The word "Platform" is a buzz word, and has been from about 2015 until now. Nowadays the word might mean anything, ranging from a platform in a train station to a social place such as a pub. However, we now usually associate the term with the word "digital" to signify emerging places on the Internet such as social media like Niconico, Facebook or YouTube. Digital platforms usually convey images of mediated places that open up for everyone in which to participate. Marc Steinberg in his recent book *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet* stated that a "platform" is not just a simple word; it includes "technological and managerial constructs that mediate our relationship to our worlds, that create habits, addictions, and impulses (like the drive to check notifications), and just generally vie for our attention and shape our lives." (2019, 3). Steinberg further reviewed the history of the word and discovered that the word "platform" has replaced the word "network" which was widely used during the 1990s (2019, 8). Unlike "network," however, which conveys a sense of freedom, "platform" suggests a sense of "definite closure of the network" (ibid, 21-22). "Network" indicates individuals are connected. Therefore, to begin with, the word "platformization" or "to become a platform" did not imply a sense of openness to the public.

David Nieborg and Thomas Poell, together with Mark Deuze (2019), suggested that the media industries progressively depended on digital platforms to distribute and promote their work on account of the digital transformation of media. Nieborg et.al. posited how to examine the influential role of platforms in media production, and defined "platformization"

"as the penetration of economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems, fundamentally affecting the operations of media industries and production practices" (ibid., 85). It is also clear from Nieborg et.al. that the platformization of digital platforms effects changes to the media ecology inside the music industry.

When Niconico was established in 2006, it was a time when the word "platform" was not widely used to indicate types of digital ecosystems. I am certain, however, that nowadays, or rather after 2015, most people will not hesitate to call Niconico a platform after seeing how it has affected the media industries. However, given the main timeframe of this research is during the first half of the 2010s, few people would have then recognized the effects Niconico was having on media practices. I have argued that Niconico since its beginning became a digital platform of the creative culture for amateurs. In other words, the platformization of Niconico has formed the creative culture of *utaite* in the age of social media.

1-3 Examining *Utaite*: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Studies of the sociology of culture have traditionally employed the cultural diamond (Figure 1-B on the following page) posited by Wendy Griswold [1994] 2013 to conduct a cultural analysis. In the figure, there are four elements: cultural object, social world, creator, and receiver, and six linkages within the diamond. Griswold contended that her cultural diamond is not "a theory of culture;" rather, it is "an accounting device intended to encourage a better understanding of a cultural object's relationship to the social world" (2013, 15-16). She focused on the existence of relationship rather than what it should be, and that "the texture of that relationship lies as much in the links as in the four points" (ibid., 16). She differentiated "cultural object" from "culture," and referred to the cultural object as "a way of grasping some part of the broader system we refer to as culture and holding up that part

for analysis" and "a shared significance embodied in form" (ibid., 11-12).
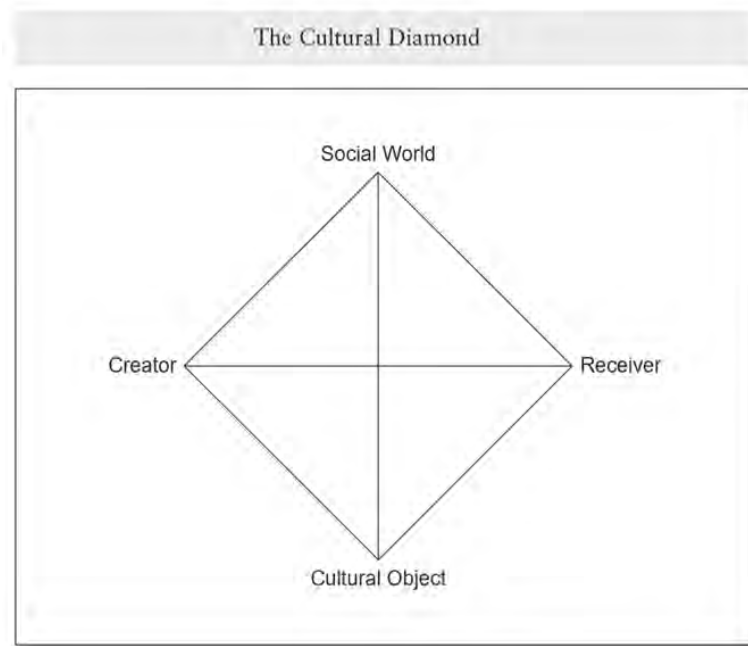
Figure 1–B: Wendy Griswold's cultural diamond in *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 4th ed. (2013, 16).

She distinguished both terms by exemplifying research related to a marsh: the cultural objects are the leopard frog, soil, and water, while the culture is the marsh (ibid., 12). Moreover, she included another two elements, claiming that there would be no cultural object without a creator and a receiver. Creators create and publish their work, while others receive it; both are connected in society or the social world (ibid., 14). Later, based on Griswold's model, Victoria D. Alexander (2003) proposed a "modified cultural diamond model" in her book *Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms*, by adding distributors to the middle of the diamond, arguing that they are essential in the art world. She contended that "art is communication" and that it is delivered via a distribution system which means that the creators and "the consumers"[11] are not directly related, and that they are affected by the distributors. For instance, authors do not directly distribute their work to their readers; they pass their work to publishing companies, which then print what the authors have written,

---

[11] Alexander called the receiver as the consumers in her modified model

and then send the printed version in book form to readers via online organizations such as Amazon and bookstores.

Both the cultural diamond and the modified model have demonstrated a heuristic conceptual framework in cultural sociology. Griswold's cultural diamond is of great value as a conceptual framework to enable people to understand culture in a given society. As an example, by applying the cultural diamond as an analytical template on the creative culture of *utaite*, I was able to examine *utaite* as creators; fans and other Niconico users as receivers; the entertainment industry as a social world; and video clips as cultural objects, and I consider all four factors to be important elements to examine in this dissertation. However, since this model is mainly for investigating the culture–society relationship, it does not cover a framework to explore how culture is collectively produced in creator networks, or how to analyze two elements that encounter each other. Thus, although I adopted Griswold's cultural diamond framework to analyze elements inside the creative culture of *utaite*, it would be difficult to examine the relationship of the same types of elements. For example, if there was a leopard frog, and a king frog inside the same marsh. I could examine them as cultural objects and see the pond as the social world. However, if the king frog was an arrogant frog who controlled the order in the pond, how could I describe the relationship between the pond and the king frog as well as the leopard frog? I therefore found I had to propose setting up a new conceptual model to examine the creative culture of *utaite* from cultural, economic and political perspectives. In the next three subsections (1-3-1 to 1-3-3), I shall describe each perspective, together with their elements and conclude with setting out a conceptual model in the final subsection (1-3-4) of this chapter.

1-3-1 The Cultural Perspective: Celebrity Culture and Dōjin Culture

There are two cultures that are closely linked to *utaite*: *dōjin* culture and celebrity culture.

1-3-1-1 *Dōjin* Culture

In Japan, *dōjin* culture was rooted in society before the advent of the digital media environment. Indeed, the *dōjin* culture and creative work, or *dōjinshi*, existed a long time before the emergence of radio and television.

Dōjin is a short word derived from the word *dōkōnoshi*, meaning "people who share the same interests," and it may also be a collective noun meaning a club or association. *Dōjinshi* is a creative work made by *dōjin*, which is derived from the mixture of two Japanese words, *dōjin* and *zasshi*, meaning "magazine." In the past, the words *dōjin* and *dōjinshi* originated from literature, fine arts and academic circles, but now both words are widely used among subcultures, especially with regard to anime and manga.

Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary defines *dōjinshi* as "a small (private) magazine (published by a group of like-minded people); a fanzine" (Watanabe, Skrzypczak, and Snowden 2003), while Hiroaki Tamagawa describes *dōjin*[12] as "self-financed, self-published works created by an individual or collaboration between individuals" (Tamagawa 2012, 108). The first Japanese *dōjinshi* was an autographed circulation magazine published in 1885 in the Meiji era (October 23, 1868 to July 30, 1912), when handwriting was the main media tool (Barubora and Nonaka 2017, 17).

Aida Miho (2005) analyzed *Manga ni ai o sakenda otokotachi* (Men Who Shouted Their Love of Manga), a book written by Nagatani Kunio (2004), which focused on the situation after World War II of "manga *dōjin*" (people who were interested in manga or "manga lovers") gathering together and creating "manga *dōjinshi*"[13] (manga created by amateurs). She described the situation in 1942 when the cost of reproduction technology (copying) was very expensive. Individual manga lovers connected through messages written

---

[12] Tamagawa (2012) used the word "*dōjin*" to mean the same as "*dōjinshi*."
[13] Today these people are usually called *dōjin manga*, with the word *dōjin* as the prefix and "manga" as the suffix.

in a manga magazine, thereby creating a group of manga lovers. (Later these individuals would be called "*dōjin* circles.") Within the group they gathered together their original material of handwritten manga, bound as a handwritten circular [14] and circulated it to registered members around the country by post. Aida said that manga *dōjinshi* was established as a medium for amateurs who draw manga to connect with their colleagues and to share their works (152-53). [15]

Later, Comiket was created by a group of manga lovers in 1975 to provide a place for the amateur manga creators separate from commercial-oriented events that were held at that time. Although the first *dōjinshi*, created in 1885 during the Meiji era, was original work, nowadays *dōjinshi* may refer to both original and derivative work. (For Comiket participants, most *dōjinshi* denotes derivative work rather than original work.) In Comiket, everyone, including the staff, is regarded as a participant, which means that everyone is regarded as equal. This ethos of the equality of every participant in Comiket has strongly shaped the present *dōjin* culture in Japan.

A) Dōjinshi and Otaku

Although born from the word "magazine," *dōjinshi* is not limited to only one media. Fans usually mix the word *dōjin* with genres of the media they create, for example, *dōjin shōsetsu* (novels), *dōjin manga* (comics) or *dōjin ongaku* (music), the latter being the research subject of this dissertation. In the past, creating *dōjinshi* was well established amongst people in the fields of literature, art, and academia. Now, however, the word is usually used for creative work created by enthusiastic fans called otaku and it is also appropriate to use the word to

---

[14] The circular was called *nikuhitsu kairanshi* (肉筆回覧誌) in Japanese.

[15] She further stated that at that time members of the *dōjin* group were people who dreamt of becoming professional manga artists, and that some of them subsequently succeeded. Then, in the 1970s when relatively cheap offset printing was prevalent, the number of comics (*dōjinshi*) also increased (ibid., 15).

describe work created by *utaite*.

Otaku is a Japanese term with its exact meaning in dispute. Some have translated the word to mean "nerd," "hacker," or "geek;" in fact, however, otaku has a broader meaning.[16] Azuma Hiroki, a prominent scholar of otaku culture in postmodern society, defined "otaku" as "a general term, referring to those who indulge in forms of subculture strongly linked to anime, video games, computers, science fiction, special-effects films, anime figures, and so on" (2009, 3).

Although otaku usually depicts people who display anti-social behavior, and immerse themselves in hobbies and fictional worlds, Azuma (2012) has argued that not every otaku is someone imbued with mental health problems, and that otaku choose to keep themselves to themselves because they consider it is "more effective for their human relations" which indicates they think they should be regarded as leading lights of postmodern society. Mizuko Ito, et al. wrote in the Introduction of *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World* that "otaku culture" refers to "a constellation of 'fannish' cultural logics, platforms, and practices that cluster around anime, manga and Japanese games and are in turn associated with a more generalized set of dispositions towards passionate and participatory engagement with popular culture and technology in a networked world" (2012, xi).

More than thirty years has passed since 1983,[17] and the meaning of otaku has

---

[16] The dictionary *Digital Daijisen* by Shōgakukan on the Kotobank website has defined the word "otaku (御宅)" written in kanji (Chinese characters) and the word "otaku (オタク)" written in katakana characters, differently. In this instance, the former is used as an honorific expression, meaning "you," "your house," "your family," "your husband," or "your company." The latter means being over-enthusiastic about something, or being an enthusiast, for example, an anime otaku. The dictionary also states that the word "otaku" has been used since the mid-1980s to mean "friends." It often refers to someone who is specific to a particular area, lacks knowledge about other areas, and is antisocial. It is believed that the first person to use the word "otaku" was Nakamori Akio in his series of "Research on Otaku" (*Otaku no kenkyū*) columns in a magazine called *Mangaburikko* in 1983 (Nyao 2013).

[17] It is believed that the first person to use the word "otaku" was Nakamori Akio in his series of "Research on Otaku" (*Otaku no kenkyū*) columns in a magazine called *Mangaburikko* in 1983 (Nyao

changed over time, both positively and negatively. The word gradually became better known outside the "marginalized and stigmatized geek subculture," and by influential cultural forces around the world connected by the Internet (Ito 2012, xi). Additionally, otaku usually called what they deemed to be "outsiders" as *ippanjin* (ordinary people). In other words, they thought of themselves as being "outsiders" in society. Therefore, they cautiously communicate with, and open their minds to, people who share the same interests or do the same things as they do.

When Niconico began, most users were believed to be otaku who followed messages advertised on 2channel (2ch), the most accessed anonymous web forum, which was one of the best-known places for otaku in the Japanese Internet sphere. It is usual to see creative works being consumed, produced, reproduced, remixed, and redistributed by users in Niconico. But it is important to note that the word "otaku" defines a very specific group of people in society that is not representative of all Niconico users. Therefore although it is important to acknowledge the existence of otaku at the dawn of Niconico, this dissertation will use the words "user" or "*utaite*", both of which convey a somewhat different meaning to, and cover a wider group of people than, the very specific word "otaku."

B) Social Places

To avoid confusion about the meaning of "place" in the Internet age, I have followed Joshua Meyrowitz's suggestion in his influential book *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*, that the electronic society that human beings inhabit has become "relatively placeless" (1985, 309). In this dissertation, therefore, a "social place" denotes a physical space, while a "digital platform" refers to virtual space. Both a "social place" and "digital platform" are spaces that are created and filled with human experiences. Creators, including fans, also create social places to distribute and share their creations: *dōjinshi*.

2013).

Every month, numerous *dōjinshi* conventions[18] are held across Japan, the best-known being "Comiket"[19]

1-3-1-2 Celebrity Culture

Celebrity culture is another artefact related to my research. If *dōjin* culture signifies the equality of the participants concerned, celebrity culture, would seem to indicate the opposite. That is, that those involved in celebrity culture adopt a hierarchy and, as such, are unequal.

Olivier Driessens (2013a) has stated that "Celebrity has become a defining characteristic of our mediatized societies" which corrrelates with the success of mass media in society (543). Driessens (2013b) has said that even though the word "celebrity" might not have been used, nevertheless, the study of celebrity has been investigated since the middle of the twentieth century, starting with Max Weber's (1948) work on charismatic authority and moving on to "star" studies undertaken by, for example, Richard Dyer (1998). Research on celebrity studies has rapidly increased since the 1990s to the present time. Driessens has argued that the concept of "celebrity" is actually diverse, however vague the definition (Driessens 2013b). There are a number of terms used to define "well known individuals," which resemble celebrity, such as "star," "superstar," "hero," "idol," or "icon," but they differ so far as the nuance is concerned. For example, "idols" and "icons" apply to the popular music industry. "Celebrity," however, has a broader meaning and "could be said to have as a central quality its media generated fame" (ibid., 544). Marshall P. David has posited that celebrity "can be thought of as the general and encompassing term, whereas concepts of hero, star, and leader are more specific categories of the public individual that relate to specific

---

[18] In Japanese, *dōjinshi* conventions are called *dōjinshi sokubaikai* (or *sokubaikai* for short), or *dōjinshi* events (*dōjin-ibento* for short).

[19] This event was established for fans to trade and distribute their original or parody of the original work. Starting in 1975 with a small-size event with 32 *circles* and 700 participants, it has now expanded to 35,000 circles and more than 500,000 participants over a three-day period. Groups of *utaite*, Niconico singers, who usually cover Vocaloid songs, have participated in the Comic Market to distribute their creative works (for example, music CDs, DVDs, and accessories).

functions in the public sphere" (1997, 7). Driessens (2013b) has followed Marshall's defintion and has suggested using the term "celebrity" as "the general and common concept to denote 'well-knownness,' regardless of the way it has been acquired."[20]

With regard to *utaite*, most were ordinary users when they started their activities, that is, they were neither idols nor celebrities. Given that they have achieved fame through their singing talent, they are sometimes regarded as Japanese idols. Moreover, once they have made their professional debut, they have usually belonged to Japanese performer management companies / agencies (known as *jimusho* in Japanese).

According to Patrick Galbraith and Jason Karlin, "Idols" (*aidoru*) is "a word used in Japan to refer to highly produced and promoted singers, models, and media personalities." (2012, 2). "Idols" may be either young men or young women who undertake various methods of performing, ranging from singing, dancing, modeling, acting, and so on. To be very good-looking or talented is a plus, but is not necessary (Galbraith 2018).

Moreover, in Japan, powerful *jimusho* are crucial stakeholders who have broad responsibilities: from scouting, training, scheduling, negotiating, organizing concerts and fanclubs, creating the content performed, and controlling overall images and communication of the idols under their management (Marx 2012, 35-38). Before the slogan "idols you can meet" (*ai ni ikeru aidoru*) was successfully introduced by AKB48, the famous female idol group, idols were people who were very difficult to engage with. Johnny & Associates, the influential *jimusho* of male idols, is a good example of this. Despite the influx of social media content, this *jimusho* has extremely strict rules regarding access to its idols. For instance, for a long time it did not allow online media to use photos of the idols. It was only on January 31, 2018, that a photo of Nishikido Ryo, a member of Kanjani Eight, a boyband under the

---

[20] For example, "*ascribed* through family relationships (royals), *achieved* through talent and accomplishments (e.g., musicians, sports stars, or criminals), and predominantly *attributed* via the media (reality TV-participants or so-called socialites [such] as Paris Hilton)" (Driessens 2013b, 544).

management of Johnny & Associates, was published online for the first time, and the *jimusho* stated that only three photos were allowed for each item of news. Yamashita Tomohisa (YamaP), a famous male idol, singer, actor and TV host, created an Instagram account (@tomo.y9) on May 16, 2019 and became the first idol from this *jimusho* to open a social media account, which resulted in him gaining more than one million followers in one day. However, although the *jimusho* has lessened restrictions on the Internet, it is still difficult for fans to approach their idols from Johnny & Associates compared with the AKB48 business model. Without doubt, fans of Japanese idols have learnt and adapted themselves to *jimusho* practices.[21] Most *utaite* fans are currently, or used to be, fans of idols. They have also usually adopted the practice of giving presents to *utaite*.

Well known *utaite* are famous not only for their ability to sing, but also for their talks on live streaming and their collaboration with other users on Niconico. They have fans who have treated them as "well-known" people. *Utaite* to some extent belong to a world of Internet idols, that is, celebrity culture. However, they also use Niconico and Comiket, both of which have a strong relationship with the *dōjin* culture.

Up until now, I have examined two cultures: *dōjin* culture and celebrity culture, which are the main elements related to the creative culture of *utaite.* From a cultural perspective, both are elements that I shall use in my analysis.

1-3-2 The Economic Perspective: Commercial Media and User-Generated Media (UGM)

This section focuses on the economic perspective of the media. Commercial media is media owned by corporates aiming to create a profit based on advertising revenues. Most

---

[21] The practice of fans giving a present to someone who is respected or loved (usually called *sashiire*) is interesting. Presents vary from fan letters to flowers, accessories, food and sweets. Usually with famous idols, a *jimusho* accepts only fan letters and refuses other gifts. Small *jimusho* or new idols, however, are usually more accepting of gifts. The accessibility of idols for their fans has become a key factor in the business and culture.

commercial media creators are restricted to professional producers; amateur producers are rarely allowed to distribute their work. Non-commercial media is media that primarily runs on funds or donations from governments, or supporters, such as public broadcasting institutions. It is believed that non-commercial media are not governed by financial concerns.

In the early 2000s, Niconico was an emerging online platform that allowed users to post their content on it regardless of their professional background. Now, although users need to register an account before posting, it is exceptionally easy to do so in comparison to broadcasting content on commercial media such as commercial radio and television. Initially, Niconico was free of charge. Subsequently, however, it introduced a premium membership system to users, which was its main source of revenue. It may be said that Niconico was similar to public broadcasting for a period of time.[22] This dissertation pays attention not only to media as platforms but also to media as cultural objects, especially with regard to how creative works are produced and circulated. Therefore, instead of using the words "non-commercial media", I shall use the words "User-generated media" (UGM) as alternative media that is distinct from commercial media, indicating non-profit oriented media created by its producers. It is essential to note that UGM existed before the advent of online media, such as *dōjinshi* in *dōjin* culture.

In order to deepen an understanding of UGM, in the following section I shall review the previous literature regarding the development of web 2.0 on social media and how audiences in mass media have become producers in this field.

1-3-2-1 From Web 2.0 to Social Media

In recent years, social media has become one of the main research interests for many media scholars. For example, danah boyd suggests that the need for conducting research on social

---

[22] Later, when Niconico became famous, it formed business alliances with various companies and to some extent gradually transformed into commercial media.

media stems from a cultural perspective rather than from a desire to understand technological innovation. She argues that social media is not a subgroup of digital media; rather that "It refers to a set of tools, practices, and ideologies that emerged after the dot-com crash by a network of technologists primarily located in the Bay Area"[23] (boyd 2015, 1). In December 2017, *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media* was published with a collection of social media studies from various standpoints. In the introduction, the editors indicate that social media studies have developed from a small topic under the heading "Internet Studies" to a major research theme within several disciplines (Burgess, Marwick, and Poell 2017).

The terms "Web 2.0," "user-generated content (UGC)," "social networking sites (SNS)." and "social media" are sometimes used interchangeably and often create confusion among users and scholars. In the following section I shall first define these four terms.

A) Web 2.0

The dot-com bubble that burst in 2001 seemed to be a nightmare for the computer-mediated communication (CMC) dream that occurred at the end of the 1990s. However, a few years later, the idea of Web 2.0 become a crucial movement of the world wide web with individuals (for instance, personal homepages), and the Bulletin Board System (BBS) – Web 1.0 – engaged in more participatory practices encompassing crowd and collective intelligence such as Wikipedia and blogs. The term "Web 2.0" was first used by a User Experience (UX) designer Darcy DiNucci (1999) in *Print* magazine. It was then elaborated and popularized by Tim O'Reilly and his colleagues in 2004 (Cervinschi and Butucea 2010). Since Web 2.0 is a concept rather than a specific functional update, O'Reilly defined Web 2.0 as:

> the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering

---

[23] The full name is the San Francisco Bay Area, USA. It is famous for high-tech industry.

software as a continually updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation," and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences (O'Reilly 2007, 17).

Gabriela Grosseck, however, described Web 2.0 as referring "to the social use of the Web which allows people to collaborate, to get actively involved in creating content, to generate knowledge and to share information online" (Grosseck 2009, 478). According to both definitions, it is appropriate to endorse Web 2.0 as the platform and catalyst for user-generated content (UGC).

B) User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC), which is sometimes referred to as user-created content (UCC) or customer-generated media (CGM), already existed before the emergence of Web 2.0. Users had generated their own content since the dawn of CMC via BBS or personal webpages. Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein stated that UGC became popular in 2005 and the term "is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users[24]" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 61). Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defined the meaning of UGC using three criteria: that the content of UGC has to (1) be published and available online, (2) show a satisfactory amount of "creative effort," and (3) be created outside the professional arena (Vickery, and Wunsch-Vincent. 2007, 4).

It is clear that both definitions attempted to exclude corporates or users with professional experience and restrict UGC to end-users only. However, the word "users" in

---

[24] End-users refer to people for whom the product is designed for when programmers / creators design their work.

UGC nowadays has a broader meaning which encompasses all users without any restrictions. Moreover, criteria regarding the "creative effort" omitted the "share" behavior of users from the UGC. However, "share" has now become an essential function of Web 2.0 and social media. Although sharing is not considered a creative process, a single click of "share" is one post of content online.

In addition, I am skeptical about the principle of public availability. For instance, users on famous social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Niconico have the "friend only or community member only" function which allows only friends or people who have an access link to see the post. Moreover, the expansion of UGC to physical spaces such as *utaite*' CD at Comiket is also included. Therefore, although UGC is generally used to refer to the content created by users in digital form, this dissertation will use the definition of UGC as comprising several types of media content created by users that are available both online and offline.

C) Social Network(ing) Sites (SNSs)

Having started Facebook in 2004, on August 28, 2015 Mark Zuckerberg posted on his Facebook page that there were a billion people who used Facebook in one day on August 24, 2015. As of June 4, 2019, Facebook reported on its own website that it had 1.56 billion daily active users in March 2019, which means there are more than one out of seven people on earth using Facebook every day. danah boyd and Nicole Ellison, defined "*social network sites* (SNSs)" as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (boyd and Ellison 2007, 211). They further suggested using the term "social network sites" rather than "social networking sites" since "networking" implies meeting with strangers or making new friends rather than communication between friends,

while most users utilized SNSs to keep in touch with their acquaintances online.

However, Peter Brandtzæg and Jan Heim (2009) gave a different reason for why people were motivated to use SNSs, having questioned 1,200 SNS users. They found that the most important reason suggested by 31 percent of users was to form a relationship with new friends, while 21 percent stated they used SNSs to connect with their existing friends. This research will use the definition of SNSs provided by boyd and Ellison, but use the term "social networking sites" (SNSs) to emphasize both building networks with new friends and keeping networks with existing friends.

D) Social Media

Looking back at the history of social media, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated that it started with the creation of Usenet, a worldwide distribution discussion system, which had been established by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis in 1979. During the development of the technological and telecommunications infrastructure, the components of social media were gradually built up in several websites and services, so that, for instance, the word "blog" derived from an online diary community, Open Diary (1998), or the creation of SNSs such as Six Degrees.com (1997), Myspace (2003), Orkut (2004), and Facebook (2004), were the "proto-social media," which later became the foundation for social media (boyd and Ellison 2007; Burgess, Marwick and Poell 2017; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

Regarding the definition of social media, Toni Ahlqvist et al. (2008, 13) have said that "social media is built on three key elements: content, communities and Web 2.0." Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein made it clear that Web 2.0 signifies the conceptual and technological platform for the development of social media, whereas UGC is how people utilize social media. In addition, they described social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010,

61). Furthermore, they placed social media in six different categories based on the level of two characteristics: "social presence/media richness" and "self-presentation/self-disclosure": (1) collaborative projects (for example, Wikipedia), (2) blogs, (3) content communities (for example, YouTube, Flickr), (4) social networking sites or SNSs (for example, Facebook), (5) virtual game worlds (for example, MMORPG, such as the World of Warcraft), and (6) virtual social worlds (for example, Second Life) (ibid., 61-65). In 2019 there have been several developments in social media. Considering only the content, Facebook now has timeline features that can upload photos and videos such as those on YouTube. Also, the project of this research, Niconico, a prominent Japanese video-sharing site, initially had only video content but now has blog and SNSs functions. The key notion that Web 2.0, UGC, and SNSs are the main foundations of social media still exists, but the distinct line between each category has now become blurred. For Jean Burgess, Alice Marwick, and Thomas Poell, social media technology has a broader meaning. They defined "social media technologies" as "those digital platforms, services and apps built around the convergence of content sharing, public communication, and interpersonal connection" (Burgess, Marwick and Poell 2017, 1). In this dissertation, social media refers to the digital platforms, services and applications that have built on the concepts and technology derived from Web 2.0, UGC and SNSs, which allow users to create, share and collaborate with the content inside and across the platforms.

To sum up, the term *media* in both elements: "commercial media" and "user-generated media (UGM)"in this research, denotes both platforms and cultural objects. This dissertation uses UGM rather than UGC to emphasize the broader meaning used in the framework. In addition, it refers to content and media both offline (non-digital media) and online. The main difference between commercial media and UGM is that the former is focused on making a profit, while the latter is focused on creating products rather than

making a profit.

1-3-2-2 The End of an Audience?

In the previous section, I have reviewed the media. As stated in the explanation of Wendy Griswold's (1994) cultural diamond, without producers, no cultural objects can exist. In this section, I shall focus on producers such as *utaite* in the UGM who were usually called an audience in the twentieth-century mass media age.

`"The Medium is the Message" is one of the phrases used by technological determinists, the phrase being coined by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. He pointed out that rather than the content in the medium, the "medium" or technology itself affects people and society. Landon Winner elaborated on the ideas of technological determinism with two hypotheses: "(1) that the technical base of the society is the fundamental condition affecting all patterns of social existence and (2) that changes in technology are the single most important source of change in society" (Winner 1978, 76).

Transferring this notion from mass media such as television and radio to computer-mediated communication (CMC), the distinct role in the communication model has become unclear. While every communication consists of S (sender), M (message), C (channel), and R (receiver) (Shannon and Weaver 1963), in the twentieth century the mass media industry restricted the S-M-C roles to professional producers and left only the R to the audience. Some may argue that there were amateur DJs who created their local radio stations in small communities, but they required relatively high technical knowledge and experience, which amateurs did not have. That is to say that in the world of mass media there was a big barrier set against the general public becoming senders.

On the other hand, the Internet enables every user to become a sender if he or she wishes. Although at the beginning of the Internet era only a few users who were able to access the cutting edge technology were able to become senders and creators, as well as

receivers, after the release of the first generation iPhone on June 29, 2007, the mobile technology and applications simplified the procedures involved and empowered and accelerated the proficiency of users to send messages or create content through Internet channels.

Various terminals such as notebooks, iPhone, iPad, Kindle and other mobile utilities have been developed, and such media have become embedded in our daily lives. Henry Jenkins named this media ecology "Media Convergence," as "a situation in which multiple media systems coexist and where media content flows fluidly across them" (Jenkins 2006, 282). He suggested that convergence of the media provokes "Participatory Culture," which is a "culture in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content" (ibid., 290). Nowadays people have more opportunity to express and share their opinions, and work through various channels, regardless of their profession. As a result, the previously obvious distinction between producers and audience has become blurred. Those who become producers or senders in the communication process are no longer limited to people who are willing to devote time and effort to creating their products.

The term "audience," which sounds passive, now seems to be obsolete and is being replaced by words such as "user," "participant" or "consumer." Toshie Takahashi suggests that rather than using a single term we should adopt various different terms depending on the context, thus emphasizing "how people engage with media and ICT [Information and Communication Technology] as audience members, users, interpreters, participants and consumers in everyday life" (Takahashi 2009, 6).

Furthermore, Alvin Toffler (1980), in his book *The Third Wave*, predicted the rise of the "prosumers" in the post-industrial age, as pure consumers of the industrial era (Second Wave) would decline and become producers at the same time as becoming consumers. In a

critique of Toffler, Axel Bruns (2009) proposed a new term, "prouser," to call users who participate, receive and create content on the Internet. Both Toffler and Bruns pointed to a significant change in the image of the audience and consumer between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Toffler focused on the blurred line between producer and consumer, including the individualization of people in society, while Bruns placed emphasis on the Internet, in which users can create content and become producers any time they wish. The latter has argued that Toffler's ideas are not completely relevant to present-day society (Bruns 2009). Moreover, the emergence of "Web 2.0" casts doubts on Toffler's notions. Rather than separating individuals from others, social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook or Instagram, bring people together and create communities.

A) Active Audience: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century

The Internet is not a magical box that generates an active audience. Active audiences existed before the birth of the Internet. Sonia Livingstone (2003) examined the shifting history of audiences, based on the findings of Richard Butsch (2000) with regard to theater audiences in the nineteenth century. Contrary to the image of passive audiences in the twentieth century, Livingstone showed that in England theater audiences of that period had a very active, loudly critical, and ignorant, way of behaving that people nowadays would think of as rude and retrogressive, and "Indeed, the more noisy they were, the more privileged they were seen to be, actors having the status of servants" (ibid., 18). Later, a calm, passive audience was regarded as more sophisticated when behavior was introduced to regulate the "over-active" audience together with the conversion of theaters to hinder the movement of audiences, such as fixing the floor seats and darkening the light in the auditorium. Consequently, "the 'active' engagement with the performance marked the lower classes" in theaters at the beginning of the cinema era (ibid., 18-19).

However, in the mass media era of the twentieth century, the term "active audience"

represented a counter hegemony to the passive meaning of audience in early communication theory (that is, Hypodermic Needle Theory; Magic Bullet Theory; Two-Step Flow Theory; or the Shannon–Weaver Model of Communication). Later, ranging from Uses and Gratifications Theory (McQuail 1997) to Stuart Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding Theory, or the study of audiences of the television program "Nationwide," to prove the concept of Decoding Theory (Morley 1980), media scholars have argued the case for the existence of audience power in mass media for more than half a century, and, among active audiences, "fans" may be regarded as one of the prominent subject groups for more than two decades.

B) Fans

Fans have constructed their creative spaces so that they can exchange items such as fanzines or fan activities with others (Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992). Emphasizing the engagement of audiences, Michael de Certeau coined the term "poaching" to describe active readers by comparing writers, whom he describes as the "founders" of land or "builders" of houses, to readers as "travelers": "they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves" (de Certeau 1984, 174). Henry Jenkins (1992) adopted this concept in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* to examine the female fans of sci-fi TV programs. Although de Certeau and Jenkins focused on different media, both were devoted to audience-centric perspectives with a resistance to the dominant power of professional industries over customers. Jenkins's seminal work has triggered various scholars to conduct research on fans to show them as a distinctly active audience group within a general audience (for example, Hills 2002; Noh 2001; Yang 2009). Then, when the Internet and Web 2.0 became widely available, technology reinforced the participatory cycles, both offline and online. Various scholars have concentrated on fan activities on the

Internet, such as Angelina Karpovich (2006) who focused on beta readers' activities[25] in online fan fiction communities and Mark Andrejevic (2008) who investigated the inter-activity between producer and audience in a famous TV show's bulletin board of the popular website TelevisionWithoutPity.com.

In Japan, it is imperative to consider otaku, who are believed to be the most enthusiastic fans in the country. They were famous for being both the creators of parody works, and consumers of content produced by the media industry. It should be stressed that Niconico has a strong relationship with otaku culture, and it is no exaggeration to say that this website started and grew within otaku culture, especially when it first began. After its release in December 2006, Niconico received the Grand Prix of the Japan Otaku Award 2007.

C) Participatory Culture

The media environment has changed since the growth of the Internet, Web 2.0 infrastructure, social media, and mobile technology. At the same time, the meaning of "participatory culture" has changed over time. Henry Jenkins defined the words "participatory culture" as meaning the "Culture in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content" (Jenkins 2006, 290). However, in the book *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce, and Politics*, Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and danah boyd (2015) reconsidered the focus on participatory culture from fans to the general public. The influential work of Jenkins showed the participation of fans to be confronting the mainstream media— a counter-hegemony— of cultural production and media sharing in the dominant media sphere of the mass communication era, when the line between producers and audiences or consumers was still distinct (Jenkins 1992, 1-2). Subsequently, however, after witnessing digital culture, his

---

[25] A beta reader is a test reader (usually a volunteer / unpaid) who provides feedback and comments on a manuscript before publishing.

scope of participants has been broadened to people in the public domain who can access networks. Jenkins argues that his initial attempt to explain participatory culture by focusing on fans was appropriate since, "fans were often early adopters of new media platforms and practices and experimenters with modes of media-making" (Jenkins 2015, 3). Influenced by the idea of culture as "ordinary" and as "the sum total of human experience" as stated in 1958 by Raymond Williams, Jenkins redefined participatory culture as something that "describes what are sometimes very ordinary aspects of our lives in the digital age" (2015, 1-2).

Reconsidering *utaite*, who are Internet singers on Niconico, their primary purpose in uploading videos is to show them to other users. Their motivation might be either to gain popularity or to "play" (create things for their own pleasure). Moreover, *utaite* are to some extent regarded as fans. Not fans of some specific characters or content, but rather people who are fond of singing or who enjoy sharing their voices with others. They participate in fandoms who share the same interest: singing. Imagine the pre-Internet era: homemade videos might be submitted to some local or national television program, and then a night after their broadcast the singer might become the talk of the town, either locally or countrywide. Then a famous record company might find the singer, and he or she would be signed up for a debut. Broadcasting (television and radio) has one big difference from the Internet which is that both time and space are limited. Now, however, via a personal screen on a smartphone, anyone can become a sender, a creator, or an audience for others. The essential point is that mobile terminals and the infrastructure of the Internet has formed ubiquitous time and space for individuals without being restricted by an elite professional group of people. In other words, the image of an active audience, formerly limited to some groups of hardcore fans who devote time and money for creating fan works, has expanded to everyone in society.

1-3-2-3 Networked Information Economy (NIE)

To describe the Networked Information Economy, I employ the theoretical framework of Yochai Benkler (2006), a professor from Harvard Law School in his book *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. Benkler wrote about two radical shifts relating to information production in economic organization: (1)"Industrial Information Economy (IIE)" and (2) the "Networked Information Economy (NIE)" (2006, 1-3).

The first change had occurred more than 150 years ago, which was focused on information, cultural production such as film or music, and the control of symbols (ibid., 29-30). The focal points of communication technologies during the IIE were production and commercialization of information exchange, emphasizing a one-way communication with expanding distribution networks: for example, local newspapers became nationwide newspapers (ibid., 29-30).

In the twentieth century, the dominant style of public communication was information and cultural production produced by the mass media. However, when Internet technology arrived, it transformed the concentrated, one-way mass media by removing the physical and economic constraints of media creation (32). Benkler asserted that the emergence of the networked, computer-mediated communications environment has decentralized "the capital structure of production and distribution of information, culture and knowledge" (30), and built on "emergent patterns of cooperation and sharing" (32-33). The shift from IIE to NIE increased and empowered individuals to be more active in the "nonmarket" (outside the market system) regarding "nonproprietary production" (meaning anyone can produce or distribute items) (2). Moreover, it also created an extensive cooperative collaboration based on sharing information such as Wikipedia, or open source software (meaning any computer software that is distributed with a source code that anyone

can read, modify, and enhance), which he termed "common-based peer production" (60) on account of the new "feasibility space for social practices" (31) on the Internet.

Although Benkler's work may not stress the growing importance of individual power on the Internet, his work has pointed out the new modality of networked collaborative sharing among users within the Internet sphere. And although traditional mass media, such as hard copy newspapers and broadcasting, have limited space for expression, the Internet (for example UGM) has provided plentiful spaces or platforms for individuals.

This dissertation deploys Benkler's framework by assuming that Internet technology, especially social media, has altered the means of production of media content and amplified the collaborative creation and sharing of users. Compared with commercial media, UGM operates for individuals and focuses on collaboration and sharing rather than on financial profit.

1-3-3 The Political Perspective: Professional and Amateur

The last perspective I shall examine is derived from the politics of the creative culture. As has been previously explained, commercial media in general is restricted to professional producers, whereas UGM is open for everyone to use, including amateurs. Mass media, which had limited resources of broadcasting time and spaces, barred amateurs from the opportunity to publish their creative works.

The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement was driven by non-experts and concentrated on creating and sharing inside particular communities. Stacey Kuznetsov and Eric Paulos (2010) described the development of the DIY culture, ranging from the communities of amateur radio hobbyists in the 1920s to pirate radio stations in the 1960s; and punk handmade "zines" in the 1970s; to the rave culture in the 1990s. They contended that DIY cultures nowadays "reflect the anticonsumerism, rebelliousness, and creativity of earlier DIY initiatives, supporting the ideology that people can create rather than buy the things they

want" (295-96).

During the mass media era, professional producers working in commercial media, held financial power, together with resources and authority. Amateur producers sometimes created small communities which collaborated and shared among their members. In the past, the line between professional and amateur was relatively clear. However, in social media, the clear border has become indistinct. Some amateurs have the same or higher skill levels as professionals or can earn more than professionals from their activities. There are various terms such as "amateur professional," "expert amateur," "semi-professional" to distinguish these creators from amateurs as a whole. In *dōjin* culture, however, the word "professional" usually stands for people who earn a living from working in their occupation for financial reward. Thus, the main difference between the amateur and professional is the difference between those who make a living creating their work (professionals), and those who create work but who do not make a living by so doing (amateurs). To avoid confusion, in this dissertation, amateurs are people motivated by the pleasure gained from undertaking their activities and who usually have no authority over commercial or mainstream media. Also, these amateur individual producers are bound together by creating, curating, remixing, collaborating or sharing content created by others, whereas professionals are motivated by financial or economic benefits and have been granted authority to publish their works in the commercial media by corporates.

1-3-3-1 "Spreadability" and "Stickiness"

Another theoretical framework that I employ in this dissertation comes from *Spreadable Media: Creating Meaning and Value in a Networked Culture*, by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green (2013). This book was published seven years later than Benkler's. By 2013, with the proliferation of Web 2.0 and social media, networked collaboration and sharing among users on the Internet had become easier for scholars to focus on. In this book,

Jenkins et al. suggested there was a crucial shift from distributing to circulating in media content. Previously, mass media had distributed the message to the audience. However, in the present age of social media, it is the audience who decides and selects what to share or circulate and "the decisions that each of us makes about whether to pass along media texts […] – are reshaping the media landscape itself" (ibid., 1-2). The authors use a number of words to indicate this circulation, such as "spread", "spreadability", or "spreadable." Moreover, they stress the importance of the circulation framework with the statement that "if it doesn't spread, it's dead" (ibid., 1). They describe "spreadable media" as to "examine the emerging hybrid model of circulation, where a mix of top-down and bottom-up forces determine how material is shared across and among cultures in far more participatory (and messier) ways" (ibid., 1). Moreover, they coin the term "spreadability" to refer to "the technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content [rather] than others, the economic structures that support or restrict circulation, the attributes of a media text that might appeal to a community's motivation for sharing material, and the social networks that link people through the exchange of meaningful bytes." (ibid., 4).

Jenkins et al. contrasted "spreadability" with "stickiness," a concept taken from *The Tipping Point* (2000) of Malcolm Gladwell. Furthermore, they employed eight binary factors[26] to compare both terms, and argued that the stickiness model was limited in that it focuses on business rather than on audience online creation (2013, 5-7). Nevertheless, they still believe that "the 'distribution' reach of sticky destinations and the 'circulation' reach of spreadable media should coexist" by admitting the value of mass media channels (ibid., 8).

---

[26] The eight binary factors are as follows: (1) The Migrations of Individuals versus the Flow of Idea (2) Centralized versus Dispersed Material (3) Unified versus Diversified Experiences (4) Prestructured Interactivity versus Open-Ended Participation (5) Attracting and Holding Attention versus Motivating and Facilitating sharing (6) Scarce and Finite Channels versus Myriad Temporary (and Localized) Networks (7) Sales Force Marketing to Individuals versus Grassroots Intermediaries Advocating and Evangelizing (8) Separate and Distinct Roles versus Collaboration across Roles (Jenkins et al., 5-7).

A) The Stickiness of Commercial Media Compared with the Spreadability of UGM

It is clear that Internet technology, especially Web 2.0 and social media, has caused a major shift of cultural production and circulation. Mass media, which had dominated media ecology for a long time, were disrupted by production from users who were amateur producers. The distinct line between professional and amateur producers has become blurred. In the past, a professional producer might be determined by considering whether or not that person produces and distributes content in mainstream (commercial) media. However, in social media anyone can become a producer or distributor.

In addition, this research also adopts the concept of circulation by networked users in the social media, as well as the spreadability of content, based on the sharing, collaboration, or remixing by the audience as attested by Jenkins et al. Although the concept of their book is situated in Web 2.0 and social media technology, this study suggests that content circulates not only inside the Internet sphere but also spreads into broadcasting media and other social places created by the community. Therefore, apart from analyzing the means of production, it is also essential to examine how content created by *utaite* circulates through various platforms.

1-3-3-2 *Utaite* and Professional Debut

Most *utaite* are amateurs, or certainly used to be amateurs. On Niconico, *utaite* remix their voices with existing music clips and upload their singing videos to the "tried singing" category (*utattemita*).[27] Then other users watch, share, remix, or collaborate with other creators, which leads to the circulation of *utaite* content on digital platforms such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and any other social media where other users choose to share those

---

[27] The official term of *utattemita* in Niconico is "Sang it." However, to keep the original meaning of the Japanese word, which means to "try to do something," in this dissertation, I shall use the words "tried singing" instead.

content. Some *utaite* have started to expand their offline activities, such as by participating in Comiket or holding live concerts. There have been cases where famous *utaite* have been scouted by record labels and have made their professional debut.

In 2010, Pico, a male *utaite*, released his debut with Ki/oon Music, a record label company under Sony Music Labels Inc. At that time Niconico users were amazed that an ordinary user from a subculture video-sharing website had signed up with a major music company. At the present time (2019), however, it is estimated that more than a hundred *utaite* have debuted with major or indie record companies. A hundred amateur singers from the UGM (non-mainstream media) who have entered the music industry is a significant amount of people. The key to this movement stems from neither professionals nor the media industry, but rather from the aggregate of the ordinary behavior of amateur users in their daily lives.

Up until now, I have reviewed previous research and frameworks from cultural, economic, and political perspectives. In the following section, I shall connect these three perspectives with their six elements together as a conceptual framework to provide a model for this dissertation.

1-3-4 The Triangular Prism of Creative Culture

I started section 1-3 with a review of Wendy Griswold's [1994] 2013 cultural diamond, which is the model usually applied to the study of culture in sociology. Although I attempted to use her model to examine the connection between each element inside the creative culture, what seemed to be lacking was that it proved difficult to analyze elements that confronted one another, such as commercial media with UGM. I then examined elements from three perspectives related to *utaite* and found six elements which were significant for the analysis of their creative culture. I shall use this conceptual framework and propose a conceptual model called "The Triangular Prism of Creative Culture" to clarify concepts and explain the results of the analysis, and to propose a relationship of each element regarding

the creative culture as in Figure 1–C below.
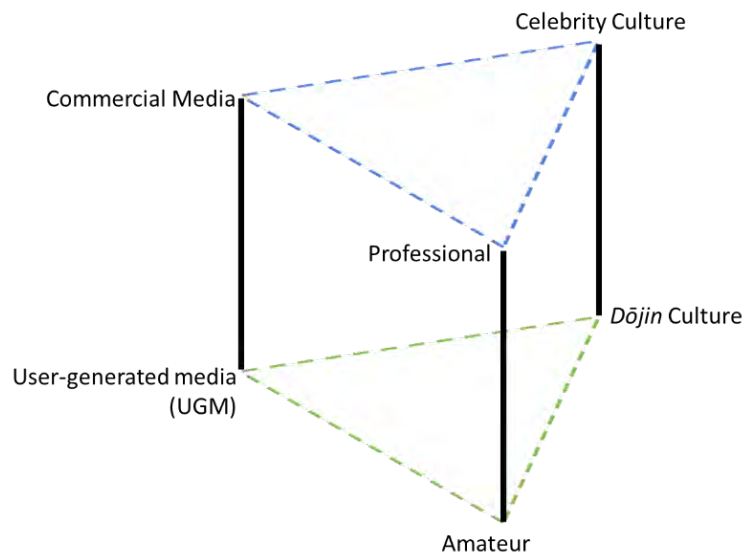
Figure 1–C: The Triangular Prism of Creative Culture

There are two triangles in Figure 1–C, showing the hegemony and counter-hegemony of creative culture from cultural, economic, and political perspectives. The cultural perspective analyzes the ethos inside the community and society. While the *dōjin* culture focuses on production of goods, sharing them and equality of status, the celebrity culture emphasizes the consumption of fans, being produced and inequality of status. The economic perspective focuses on the financial motivation inside the distributors / circulators of the culture. The commercial media, which require sponsors for their funding, are controlled by corporates, whereas the UGM denotes a grassroot movement motivated by aims that are non-monetary. These aims might include a sense of belonging to the community, a sense of fulfillment when creating something, or feeling satisfied when creative works are seen and / or shared. The political perspective focuses on the power between professionals and amateurs. In the mass media era, when resources such as airtime and funding were limited, the priority of the commercial media was usually restricted to small, professional groups. Amateurs sought a way to exhibit their work through alternative media and social places such as *dōjinshi* conventions. The dominant power of professional regimes and the mass

media used to be strong, and the demarcation line between senders and receivers used to be rigid, and clear. However, the Internet and social media have disrupted this relationship, and the distinct line between the two has now become blurred and difficult to distinguish.

Moreover, all six elements shown in the diagram are correlated with each other. First, the three elements in both the upper and lower triangles are connected. For example, celebrities are created by professionals and the distribution of their work and themselves is affected by commercial media. On the other hand amateur creators, influenced by the dōjin culture, create works that are circulated on UGM.

The three vertical lines comprise two elements, both top and bottom, which shows two opposing ideologies. The upper is regarded as the hegemony and the lower as the counter-hegemony in society. The two key terms, hegemony and counter-hegemony are derived from Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971). Hegemony comprises the dominant political, economic, and cultural systems that exist in a given society, while the counter-hegemony consists of the emerging attempt to dismantle the hegemonic power.

The upper triangle (hegemony) has a predominant influence on the creative culture of society. Here, celebrity culture is distributed within commercial media, which focuses on financial profits and is produced by professional people. The lower triangle (counter-hegemony), however, is opposed to this dominant power. The counter-hegemonic *dōjin* culture, which focuses on producing creative works by amateurs, is circulated by UGM.

There are six elements in the conceptual model that need to be examined. They are as follows: professional, amateur, *dōjin* culture, celebrity culture, UGM and commercial media. I have divided these elements into three groups of two elements each that are opposed to each other: (1) celebrity culture vs *dōjin* culture; (2) commercial media vs UGM; and (3) professional vs amateur.

On the one hand, amateur creators within the *dōjin* culture produce their creations and circulate them across UGM platforms. Their creations are flexible and non-corporate, and there is a two-way communication channel with fans. On the other hand, creative work within the celebrity culture is produced by professional people who create and distribute their creations through commercial media. Here there is a dominant, one-way channel of communication, geared towards traditional receivers (audiences).

In the past, the senders of commercial media sent messages to consumers (receivers), and were the dominant power in the relationship between senders and receivers, with a one-way movement of information, but the advent of social media has meant that receivers can now also be senders, which, in turn, has meant that the previous dominance of senders over receivers has diminished. Users on the Internet may now be both senders and receivers, with two-way channels of communication.

My hypothesis is that the creative culture of *utaite* emerges from *dōjin* culture, UGM and amateurs, but stems from celebrity culture, commercial media, and professional people when *utaite* make their debuts. If this scenario is correct, I posit that the position of the creative culture of *utaite* who do not make a debut would be in the same position as the *dōjin* culture, UGM and amateurs in the lower triangle of the model. However, I also suggest that most *utaite* who have made their debut have not completely moved from the lower triangle to upper triangle within the model. At the present time their movement is in flux, and they may be located somewhere in between the two cultures, two types of media and the two types of status. The creative culture of *utaite*, therefore, does not remain within the position of the lower triangle.

I have set out to show and analyze the transformation of the creative culture of *utaite* throughout this research. I shall also discuss the possibility of adapting this model to other research subjects in the social media age.

1-4 Dissertation Outline

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. In Chapter 1, I focus on the *utaite* phenomenon in Japanese society and review previous studies. I then describe my theoretical framework adopting cultural, economic, and political perspectives. Based on these theoretical frameworks, I have proposed a conceptual model and named it "the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture," which I shall use to analyze the creative culture of *utaite* in this dissertation.

In Chapter 2, I explain the terminology used in this dissertation and the demographic of *utaite* to illustrate the comprehensive image of the research subject. I then describe how to gather data through the methodology I have used, and the limitations of this research.

Chapter 3 focuses on the historical and cultural perspectives of social places and digital platforms related to *utaite*, where creators can participate in exhibiting, selling, or exchanging information. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on *dōjinshi* conventions, which are social places that have been rooted in Japanese *dōjin* culture for almost half a century. In this respect, I have selected the biggest *dōjinshi* convention in the world, the Comic Market, as a case to examine. The second part centers on Niconico as an emerging platform in the virtual world. I not only trace the history of these two organizations, but also examine the different ethos that exists between Comiket and Niconico.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the principal analysis of this dissertation. I have divided the research objectives into two parts. The first part, Chapter 4, emphasizes the creative works of *utaite*, especially regarding the production process of their singing clips on Niconico. I use both qualitative and quantitative research data to examine how the works of *utaite* were produced across online platforms. The second part, Chapter 5, focuses on the circulation of *utaite* themselves, together with their peripheral activities. Utilizing data from interviews and online documents, this chapter aims to examine *utaite* from their beginning

to their professional singer debuts.

In Chapter 6, which concludes this dissertation, I use a conceptual model to demonstrate the creative culture of *utaite* in the age of social media.

Chapter 2

Research Subject and Methodology

Before discussing the methodology, I consider it necessary to define three terms which are crucial to this research, namely, Niconico, Vocaloid and *utaite*.

2-1 Terminology

2-1-1 Niconico

Niconico (formerly Nico Nico Douga or *nikoniko dōga*), usually abbreviated in Japanese to *nikodō*, is a prominent Japanese video-sharing website, owned by DWANGO Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of KADOKAWA CORPORATION. Niconico started providing its services on December 12, 2006. It provided not only video-sharing but also services such as games, image-sharing and live broadcasting. The main revenue source of Niconico is its premium user subscription fee. Although registered users can use most of the basic functions (such as watching a video of ordinary quality, or writing a comment) free of charge, for premium users there is a charge of 500 yen (five dollars) plus consumption tax[1] per month.

Premium users can also use extra functions such as streaming their own live programs, or watch high quality videos. As of March 2019, Niconico had more than 70 million registered users and 1.8 million premium users (Nicopedia 2019d). Moreover, male users accounted for 68 percent of the registered users as of September 2018, and the majority of users were in their 20s (37.7 percent), 30s (26.3 percent) and 40s (16.8 percent) as of March 2018 (Nicopedia 2019b). A special feature of Niconico is the comments written by users, which are overlaid directly onto videos at a specific time. The comments are recorded as "logs" and then appear on the relevant scenes when played back. Users enjoy watching the running commentary, and feel as though they are currently sharing the same emotions

---

[1] The consumption tax in Japan is now 8 percent at the time of writing (July 2019).

with other users in "real-time," although in fact they are watching or commenting on different timelines. Satoshi Hamano (2012, 489-90) coined the term for this phenomenon as "pseudo synchronism."

Niconico provides several services and categories. In this dissertation I will focus on the video-sharing service in the "tried singing" (*utattemita*) category.

2-1-2 Vocaloid

Figure 2–A: The package of Vocaloid "Hatsune Miku". © Crypton Future Media Inc.

Vocaloid is a singing synthesis software, and the singing can be produced without "real" singers. It is a computerized voice, and the origin of the word "Vocaloid" was derived from the words "vocal" and "android." Yamaha does not release Vocaloid as a product; rather, it provides technology and software licenses to third-party companies. These companies then "develop and release their own singer library bundled with the Vocaloid software" (Kenmochi 2010, para. 3). The first Vocaloid was released in 2004 by Zero-G Ltd. under the product name "Leon," which was a male voice speaking in English. Subsequently, there have been a number of Vocaloid products released. The most popular Vocaloid product has been "Hatsune Miku," a female voice speaking in Japanese created by Crypton Future Media Inc., which was released in 2007. However, "Hatsune Miku" was not the first Japanese Vocaloid. The same company had previously launched the first

Japanese Vocaloid, "Meiko" (a female voice), in 2004 and "Kaito" (a male voice) in 2006. "Hatsune Miku" was their third Vocaloid product, which became famous with virtual idols, both domestically and internationally. "She" had concert tours around the world, performing holographically.

There have been many reasons suggested for the high rating of Hatsune Miku, relating to the characters, the technology, the voice, and Niconico. After the release of "Hatsune Miku," several creators posted "Hatsune Miku" singing videos on Niconico, and some of them became popular. Other users then reproduced these videos by remixing them with several derivative elements, such as human singing voices, Hatsune Miku fanart,[2] or dancing videos. In this research, however, rather than focusing on the virtual idols of "Hatsune Miku," or the success of Vocaloid, I have concentrated on Vocaloid songs created by Vocaloid producers.

2-1-3 Utaite

Utaite (pronounced u-tai-te) is a Japanese Internet slang word which refers to people who upload their singing voices (songs) onto the Niconico platform under the "tried singing" category. Recently, this term has also been applied to other Internet singers on other platforms (for example, TwitCasting and YouTube.) However, this dissertation will focus on *utaite* only on Niconico.

Utaite and *kashu* are considered to have almost the same meaning, although the spelling differs by a hiragana character in the middle of the two words. The latter is a common word meaning "a singer in the entertainment industry." Interestingly, the word *utaite* has an ever more complex meaning. In Japanese, the character "*te*" (meaning hand) is often used as a suffix to refer to people who bear specific responsibility in a group or clan.

---

[2] Fanart is artwork of any form, created unofficially by fans of manga, television drama, etc., and based on the original.

Utaite is a word comprised of "singing" (*utai*) and "hand" (*te*) which denotes "a person who is in charge of singing in a group" (Tamura 2010, 13). The original meaning of the word "*utaite*," which differs from the word *kashu*, is maybe the reason why users on Niconico platforms selected this word to refer to a person who plays the singer's role within user groups, and one who takes on the role of singing on Niconico platforms.

Utaite sing both original and cover songs[3] from Vocaloid, anime, game, j-pop and related genres. Vocaloid and anime songs are the most well-known genres with regard to *utaite*. Sometimes *utaite* change the lyrics and create parody versions of songs, primarily for entertainment. Niconico has several categories for different genres of video clips. After they have created song clips, *utaite* upload them to a "tried singing" category.

Given that they have absorbed otaku and *dōjin* culture, *utaite* usually use manga caricatures as avatars rather than real photos. These manga caricatures are used not only for avatar icons but also for the characters in video clips. Before they became popular, *utaite* tended to prefer anonymity and concealed their real faces and personal information. However, after becoming famous, some utaite started to disclose their identities using several methods, such as showing their real faces in live broadcasts, or by participating in *dōjinshi* conventions to sell their CDs or goods, or by appearing in concerts. Other *utaite*, however, decided to retain their anonymity after their debut.

Figure 2–B on the following page is an example of *utaite* using manga caricatures as characters on a CD album. The Japanese text at the top of the figure states "*Utaite* who participated (listed in Japanese alphabetical order)." This is followed by ten profile pictures and names of the *utaite* singing in the CD. Each illustration depicts unique features of each *utaite* character. For instance, the character Nero always wears a hat; Ren, the guy shown in

---

[3] "Cover songs," or a "cover" version in popular music, is a new performance of previously performed songs by someone other than the original artist.

the bottom right picture, has a masculine adult voice, together with a beard and glasses. At the time when the CD was released on June 15, 2011, some *utaite* who are shown here had already revealed their real faces in live streaming on Niconico. Nevertheless, using manga caricatures as avatars continue on both online videos and physical CDs to retain anonymity and to follow the Niconico culture. Also, although *utaite* may request various illustrators to draw manga caricatures for them, they usually keep their unique features consistent for their characters. (In Chapter 5, I will say more about how the identity of the *utaite* has been formed through their caricatures.)

Figure 2–2–B: Manga caricatures of *utaite* in the CD album "*Moratoriamu.*"[4]

The CD album above is also indicative of another important element in Niconico culture, which is that there are various types of creators. In this CD, for instance, there were three main creators: *utaite* as singers, a Vocaloid producer as song writer and music creator, and an illustrator who drew the manga caricatures. In addition to *utaite*, there are other roles in Niconico where users are also called by specific names. Table 2–1 on the following page lists the roles of creators including *utaite* in Niconico.

---

[4] Team Entertainment, 2011. "Top Page. Moratoriamu Nem's Garden." Accessed July 12, 2012. http://www.team-e.co.jp/sp/nem/index.html.

Roles in Japanese	Romanized letters	Names of roles used in this dissertation	Details of the role	Remarks
歌い手	*utaite*	*utaite*	A user who upload his / her singing videos on Niconico	posts creations under the category of *utattemita* ("tried singing").
ボーカロイド・プロデューサー（ボカロ P) or 本家	*bokaropurōdeyusā bokaropī or honke*	Vocaloid producer or family head	A user who creates music using Vocaloid software.	Usually uses a username ending with -P (e.g. kurousa-P).
ミックス師	*mikkusushi*	Sound-master	A user who modifies and adjusts video to enhance the sound quality.	
動画師	*dōgashi*	Video-master	A user who creates and edits the video.	
絵師	*eshi*	Illustration-master	A user who creates computer graphics or illustrations.	
エンコード師	*enkōdoshi*	Encoding-master	A user who: 1.compresses/combines video and audio. 2. optimizes the video for uploading to Niconico.	
踊り手	*odorite*	Niconico dancer	A user who uploads his/her dance videos on Niconico	posts creations under the category of *odottemita* ("tried dancing").
生主	*namanushi*	Live streaming host	A user who hosts live steaming programs in Niconico.	
職人	*shokunin*	Craftsman	A user who is skilled in a particular craft on Niconico, such as lyrics, comments, and subtitles.	Ex. lyric craftsman, comment craftsman.
リスナー	*risunā*	listener / audience	A user who is part of the audience of the show.	

Table 2–1: Roles in the Japanese language; roles as translated in this dissertation, and details of each role on Niconico.

All these roles are named using Internet slang words, some of which are derived from words used in daily life, and some are newly created internet slang such as "Vocaloid,", "*enkōdoshi*," and "*mikkusushi*."

Figure 2–C below is a screenshot of a *utaite* singing video on the "tried singing" category on Niconico. Comments arrive on the video while it is being played. On the right-hand side is a list for checking all messages that have been logged. This video was posted by a female *utaite* named Hanatan. She covers the original songs created by a Vocaloid producer using the voice of a female Vocaloid singer named Megurine Luka. Hanatan did not create this clip all by herself. She collaborated with other users who create illustrations, videos, and who mix the sound and voice. This is a brief example of a *utaite's* creative work. Later, I shall analyze the production and circulation processes of *utaite* to show the emerging creative culture of amateur creators on social media.

Figure 2–C: Screen shot of a *utaite* singing video clip on Niconico (Hanatan 2009). [5]

---

[5] Hanatan 2009. "✿Palette utattemita." Niconico Video, 3:50. Accessed January 1, 2011.
https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm8378522.

2-2 From Users to Internet Singers: The Demographic of *Utaite*

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the otaku and *dōjin* culture. Niconico has a strong relationship with them. The *utaite* have adopted a similar way of behaving like otaku, with a particular emphasis on anonymity. They tend to conceal their real identities on Internet platforms, especially with regard to their real profiles such as age, sex, location, and faces. Shunzuke Nozawa, in his paper entitled "The Gross Face and Virtual Fame: Semiotic Mediation in Japanese Virtual Communication" has argued that Japanese virtual communication comprises: "*acts of opacity*: the presentation of the self–in–disguise" and that Japanese people in the virtual world "are normatively faceless, mobilizing elaborate techniques of material camouflage and anonymity to effectively conceal their body and obscure their identity" (2012, sec. 1, para. 3).

Moreover, he talked about *utaite* as "musicians" in Niconico, who concealed their faces and bodies. Some of them, however, gained fame (ibid., sec. 3, para. 7). He stated that utaite behavior is "*hypertrophy,* a sort of ritualized excess, of disguise that characterizes their videos" (ibid., sec. 3, para. 8). Furthermore, he also noted that "some viewers consider this genre, the singing videos in particular, as nothing less than 'voice-exposing', and to be altogether "gross." (ibid., sec. 3, para. 7). Nozawa also mentioned that popular *utaite* sometimes become the target of Internet bullying. During my observation, I found that some users criticized them for being *"*Internet karaoke men," meaning that they consider *utaite* to be like people who sing karaoke songs, and not real singers. In other words, that they are not talented enough to be called singers. The reason for this criticism is because of the different ethos between *dōjin* culture and idol culture, which I shall explain later in this dissertation.

For *utaite*, therefore, one small misdemeanor (such as having a relationship with a fan or using illegal software) might develop into a flaming on their uploaded videos and other social media accounts. Examining the way *utaite* behaved during the years 2011 to

2014 was challenging on account of the anonymity (concealment) element and camouflage of the *utaite*, including their fear of outsiders and Internet bullying.

The demographic information I have summarized comprises basic details, based on information provided by the *utaite*, which might be true or false, and which include my observations from their tweets, photos, voices, live concerts, and other activities. Based on data obtained from Nicopedia in May 2012, there were around 1,000 users who claimed to be *utaite*, and who were listed in Nicopedia. However, as of August 12, 2019, on the *utaite* database website.[6] there were 5,000 *utaite* listed, which means the actual current number of *utaite* may be more than 5,000. Their age is also difficult to determine as they usually do not reveal their exact age. Guessing from their voices and the stories that they told during my main observation field work period between 2011 and 2014, it appeared that most *utaite* were in their late teens and twenties. During that period, only a few of them were in their thirties. Male *utaite* tended to be more popular than female *utaite*.[7]

Table 2–2 on the following page shows the top ten *utaite* ranking as of November 5, 2017, taken from the *utaite* database website. Only two out of ten female *utaite* (Kuroneko and Wotamin) were ranked in the top ten (Kataoka 2017), that is, 20 percent. The ratio is still the same for the top twenty, with just four female *utaite* ranked. It is thought that most *utaite* fans are female users, while most male users are fans of Hatsune Miku, the famous Vocaloid character. From the table, it may be assumed that the top ten famous *utaite* in 2017 were those who had started their Niconico activities between 2008 and 2012. All of them continued to post videos until the data collection date in November 2017.

---

[6] This website was created by Kataoka Ryo from Codelink Co. Ltd., using data from Niconico. Kataoka, Ryo. 2017. "Rankingujun no utaite ichiran" Accessed November 5, 2017. http://nicodb.jp/u/bgm/alllist/1.

[7] Since most *utaite* fans are female, male *utaite* usually became more famous than female *utaite*.

Rank	Username	Username (Romanized)	Sex	Debut	Major Debut Year	Participated in Comiket	Total uploaded Video	Total views	Total Comments	Total Mylist (Favorite)	Debut Day in Niconico	Latest Post Date	Avatar
1	96猫	Kuroneko	F	Yes	2016	Yes	132	107,779,397	3,131,191	2,319,083	2010/2/21	2017/9/15	
2	そらる	Soraru	M	Yes	2016	Yes	264	101,271,370	2,373,233	2,194,923	2008/7/22	2017/10/28	
3	まふまふ	Mafumafu	M	Yes	2016	Yes	121	111,004,156	2,771,167	2,073,782	2011/6/22	2017/9/21	
4	天月-あまつき-	Amatsuki	M	Yes	2014	Yes	173	84,463,794	1,858,577	1,773,284	2010/2/11	2017/10/14	
5	ヲタみん	Wotamin	F	Yes	2012	Yes	214	50,950,438	629,720	1,298,259	2008/5/4	2017/8/18	
6	Gero	Gero	M	Yes	2013	Yes	64	50,794,742	1,807,460	1,157,115	2009/2/15	2017/10/28	
7	あほの坂田。	Ahonosakata	M	Yes	2015	Yes	121	49,103,866	1,416,255	1,079,750	2009/10/14	2017/8/13	
8	りぶ	Ribu	M	Yes	2012	Yes	56	50,253,754	500,422	999,682	2010/5/23	2017/10/15	
9	伊東歌詞太郎	Itōkashitarō	M	Yes	2016	Yes	75	44,907,948	550,708	986,084	2012/1/30	2017/9/16	
10	ぐるたみん	Gurutamin (Glutamin)	M	Yes	2011	Yes	58	49,731,159	3,356,822	975,326	2009/6/5	2017/10/1	

Table 2–1: *Utaite* ranking, based on the total number of "Mylist" (favorites) from the *utaite* database website of November 5, 2017 (Kataoka 2017).

It is essential to emphasize that all top ten utaite in Niconico debuted with major record labels[8] in Japan, and all of them have participated in Comiket at least once. As of August 10, 2019, Wotamin (ranked fifth) has not yet concealed her real face. For an event like Comiket, she collaborated with a *dōjin ongaku* circle[9] and requested them to either distribute her CD on the convention day or to release it together with other *utaite*; Ribu (ranked eighth) only showed his face during live concerts; Glutamin (ranked tenth) disclosed his face during live concerts, signing autographs, and attending handshaking events; Itōkashitarō (ranked ninth) always appeared wearing a half-face fox mask to cover the upper part of his face. Most fans who have seen the real faces of Ribu, Glutamin and Itōkashitarō have said they are good-looking, and that their characters are fairly similar to their manga caricatures.

2-3 Methodology

Kanchana Kæothep and Somsuk Hinwiman (2017), and Jolynna Sinanan and Tom McDonald (2017), suggest that ethnography is one of the most applicable tools to use when focusing on cultural studies and social media, since the researcher can examine the lived experience of the subject through participant observation and interviews. Moreover, since *utaite* have several activities, both offline and online, it is necessary to undertake observation in both social places and on digital platforms. Therefore, this study employs an ethnographic fieldwork methodology with both offline and online observation. In addition, data from secondary documentation is used, such as a *utaite*'s ranking and analysis of the videos (both live and recorded), on Niconico and *utaite* magazines to confirm the credibility of the

---

[8] In Japan, major record labels are record companies and their affiliates are registered under the Recording Industry Association of Japan (RIAJ). Others are called independent record labels or "indies," unlike in the US, where major and minor record labels are categorized based on the market size of the company and whether or not it is a multinational company.

[9] A group of creators who produce music-related *dōjinshi.*

fieldwork data. I shall now explain the limitations of the methodology and ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted in detail.

2-3-1 Limitations of the Methodology

Conducting qualitative research on *utaite* would be challenging, since *utaite* were initiated within the *dōjin* culture, and fear of outsiders would be a critical barrier to interviews. Also, *utaite* and *utaite*' fans can become a target of Internet bullying or be severely criticized by other users. In this research I therefore had to ensure anonymity for every informant, which included Internet observations, unless the information had been publicly announced, or posted on the Internet, or in physical spaces. It would have been great if I could have become a *utaite* myself, just as I became a staff member at the Comiket, to make it easier for me to conduct field research. Unfortunately, however, this was not achieved.

For the interview, I employed the snowball or chain referral sampling techniques, which have been widely used in qualitative research where the research subject is a "hidden population" on account of the sensitivity of the topic (Browne 2005; Faugier and Sargeant 1997). With snowball sampling, a search is made for a sample study though referral systems among people who know, share or belong to a group of people with the same characteristics (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981).

2-3-2 Ethnographic Fieldwork: Participant Observation

I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork focusing on *utaite* over a four-year period, from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2014. It included participant observation (both overt and covert), in-depth interviews, questionnaires with key informants, and informal discussions, both offline and online. I then left the physical fieldwork for two years, from January 2015 to December 2016, but still observed the online activities of *utaite*.

As David M. Fetterman argues, although long-term continuous fieldwork is necessary, leaving the field for a period of time and returning again to ensure the hypotheses

are correct is also beneficial for researchers who would like to confirm the "patterns of behavior over time." Fetterman gave the example of his successful three-year fieldwork where he visited his chosen sites for two weeks every few months. He claimed that "this approach allowed me to conduct intensive fieldwork, pull back and make sense of what I had observed and recorded, and then return to the field to test my hypotheses" (1989, 9).

I agree with Fetterman on taking a break from a research project for a certain length of time. In my case, I gradually became a big fan of several *utaite* groups during the research period. Leaving the field but staying with the data reduced my subjective feelings and increased my objective point of view, and also helped me to develop a critical mindset towards the research. On the last day of the year 2016, I participated in the winter Comic Market on the third day, and it was then that my physical fieldwork restarted. Unlike the first period of fieldwork, this time I mainly conducted covert participant observation, both offline and online. I ended all participant observation, both offline and online, in March 2019.

This study will use the four-year ethnographic fieldwork data for the core analysis. The following observation data from 2015 until 2019 will be used as support data for updating and reaffirming the analysis results from the first period.

Table 2–3 on the next page shows the participant observation list divided into two sections, with the first period (2011–2014), and the second period (2015–2019), together with the whole period.

2-3-3 Ethnographic Fieldwork: In-depth Informant's Interview

An informant's interview is the most important method for gathering qualitative research data (Fetterman 1989). I encountered difficulties when requesting interviews with *utaite*. I exhausted all the methods I used, both online and offline, in trying to establish contact, from sending out a multitude of emails, to tweeting to *utaite* Twitter accounts, and to attending events *utaite* participated in, in order to pass my name card around.

Name	Total number of participants observation (times)
First Period (2011–2014): Core Analysis	
■*Dōjinshi* conventions	
Comic Market (summer/winter) (C80–C87)	8
M3 in 2011	1
■Live concerts	
Utaite live concerts	20
Niconico live concerts (online viewing)	3
Utaite live streaming on Niconico	50
Utaite Café in 2011	1
Bookstores (*utaite*-corners) in 2011	4
Utaite handshaking event in 2013	1
Informal interviews with *utaite* fans 2011–2014	10 people
Research intern at Niconico 2013	1 month
Second Period (2015–2019): Support Data	
Utaite live streaming on Niconico and Twitcast	10
Comic Market (summer/winter) 2016–2018 (C91–C95)	5
Bar created by *utaite* in 2018	1
Whole Period (2011–2019)	
Social media observation (Niconico, Twitter, Blogs, SNS) News of *utaite,* Niconico staff, fans, non-fans, anti-*utaite* and other *utaite*-related issues)	daily basis

Table 2–3: Participant observation list.

After all the attempts were made, however, the initial response rate was zero. I suggest that the mixed responses to the emerging Niconico culture, particularly with *utaite* as Internet idols, resulted in most of them taking a very cautious approach to being interviewed, especially with regards to this researcher who had no specific role in Niconico. Fortunately, after six months, I found one *utaite* who allowed me to interview her. I employed the snowball sampling technique in asking her for referrals. She introduced me to another *utaite* who, soon after, introduced me to his partner who was also a *utaite*. Nevertheless, although these three informants were well known members of the *utaite* community who sent requests for interviews direct to the *utaite* Skype group which had more than twenty members, the response rate was zero, and the snowball sampling ended. Therefore, the data to be discussed below in this section was collected from only three *utaite* in 2011.

Table 2–4 below provides general information about the three key informants.

Informant	Sex	Age	Became *utaite* (year)	Occupation
A	**F**	**26**	**2008**	Student / Professional Singer
B	**M**	**38**	**2007**	Office worker
C	**F**	**33**	**2007**	Office worker

Table 2–4: General information about the three informants of 2011 (as of August 2011).

2-3-4 Interview Design: Graph Writing and Questionnaire

The interview methodology in this dissertation was developed and designed to ascertain the informants' lived, embodied experiences of *utaite*, together with significant data regarding their life history, how much effort they had spent on *utaite* activities, their relationship with other users, and their processes of production.

To collect such data, in-depth interviews were deemed to be necessary; however, prior to the interviews it was found there was a difficulty in memory recall, as well as a difficulty in explaining the overall process using only oral communication. To deal with these issues, I added graphs, charts and diagram drawings, together with a questionnaire for the interviews. The graphs are tools for recalling the memory of the informants; the diagrams assist their explanations; and the questionnaire is used to acquire basic information from the interviewee, such as the length of Internet use per day. The interview set used in this research can be found in Appendix 1 (in Japanese).

Regarding the graph interview technique, this research applied Matt Hills's use of graphs for self-imaginings in autoethnography, a method used for fan research (2002, 81-88). According to Sally Jo Cunningham and Matt Jones, autoethnography is a method whereby "the investigator creates an ethnographic description and analysis of his/her own

behavior, attempting to develop an objective understanding of the behaviors and work context under consideration by casting the investigator as both the informant 'insider' and the analyst 'outsider'" (2005, 1).

Usually autoethnography is applied to the researcher's own experience as a way of reflecting on that experience from an academic perspective. Matt Hills encouraged fan scholars to be more concerned with multiple fandoms rather than focusing on just single fan culture. Additionally, he proposed "chart[ing] all one's objects of fandom, both past and present" as a means of understanding the autoethnographer's self-experience, and gave as typical examples two diagrams: the relational diagram and line graph (Hills 2002, 82). In Figure 2–D, Hills illustrated his own fandom experiences by charting a line graph between the level of fandom and age.
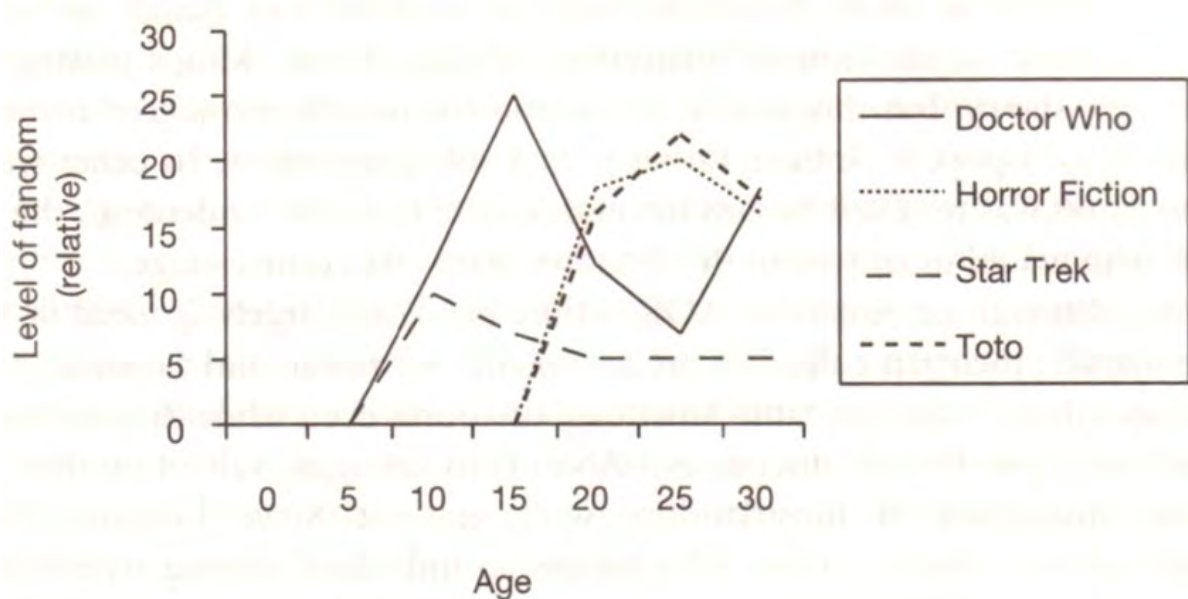
Figure 2–D: Matt Hills' graph of significant fandoms over time, with a subjective sense of variable intensity (2002, 83).

I. Musical Life Graph

Based on Hill's suggestion of using the graph for the researcher's self-experience, this research applied charting a line graph technique directly for the informants. In other words, via writing a graph, the informants themselves become the authoethnographers and tell their stories and self-experience through the interviews

As shown in Figure 2–E below, the graph for this research used four categories: a black line representing singing, a blue line representing musical activities, a red line representing Niconico activities in total, and a dashed red line representing *utaite* activities. The X-axis indicates age, and the Y-axis shows the affection level for each variable. For the X-axis, informants were free to write any age they reckoned to be as the turning point of their comic event life. For the Y-axis, the affection level was explained as their level of love and attachment for each variable at a specific age.
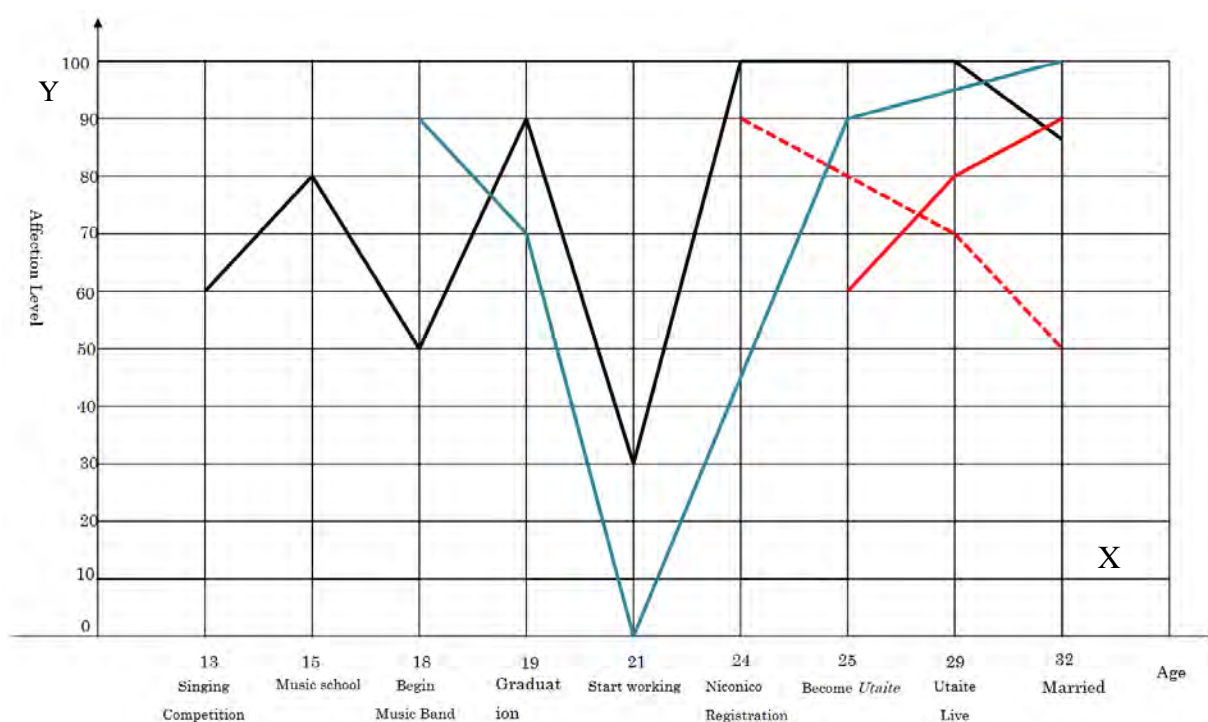
Figure 2–E: Example of a musical life graph of a *utaite*.

II. Radar Chart: Effort Spent on Musical Activities

Since a line graph shows only an overview of a life history, it does not provide any data concerning the recent behavior of the informants. I therefore designed a radar chart for ascertaining the amount of effort the informants spent on musical activities. In Figure 2–F, in this radar chart, the red line shows their *utaite* musical activities, while the blue line indicates other musical activities. Informants were asked to give an estimate of the effort they spent on their musical activities, and to write down the media or tools they used in the balloons next to each category. The nine categories are based on the behavior found during the period of participant observation, and 0-100 indicates the amount of effort they spent on their musical activities.
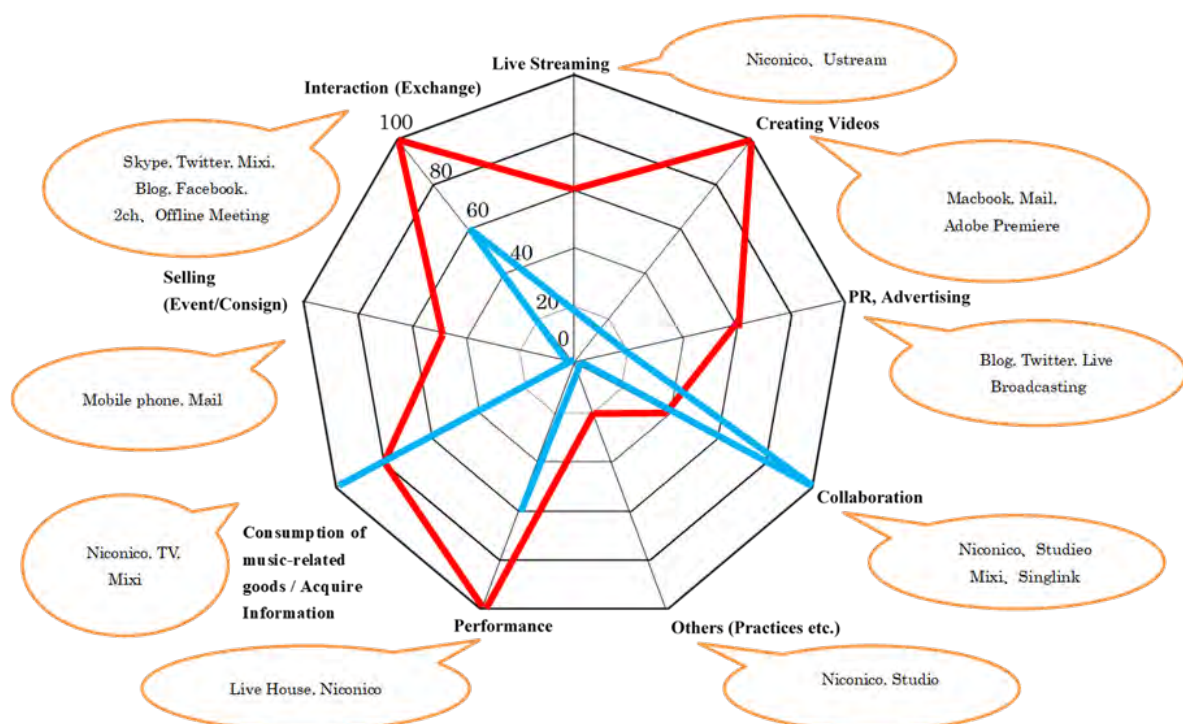
Figure 2–F: Example of a radar chart showing the amount of effort an informant spent on their music activities.

III. Relationship Diagram and the Production Process

To examine the relationships between *utaite* and other users, and how the community and networks have been constructed, I gave two blank pages to the informants. On the first page

I asked them to draw a figure that showed the connections between them and others regarding *utaite* activities. I then asked them to draw a diagram that showed the production process from the start to its uploading, and whether they had had any previous experience in releasing a *dōjin* music CD. I subsequently asked them to draw a diagram of the production process for the CD creation.

An interview set with examples of answer sheets and the questionnaire was given to the informants before the interview. The questionnaire was designed to be answered quickly; for instance, it asked "yes/no" questions, or straightforward questions such as "What year did you start using the Internet?" Each interview took from around one to three hours. The interview questions were based on the graph, chart and diagram explanations, and questionnaire answers from the informants. The process started with the line graph, radar chart, and three diagrams, and was followed by the questionnaire. It is important to note that this interview set was considered to be a tool to stimulate the informants' memory, or to illustrate the overall picture, rather than an analysis of the numbers (such as affection level) as quantitative data. For example, the affection level 50 of informant A does not equal the affection level 50 of informant B. The research focused on the qualitative data received from the interviews, and used the interview set as a guideline to access the information.

This chapter began with the three terms I used in this dissertation: Niconico, Vocaloid and *utaite*. I then introduced the demographic of *utaite*, based on their characteristics of anonymity and camouflage. Subsequently, I explained the research methodology. I used ethnographic fieldwork to gather data from "hidden sampling" such as *utaite* and fans. The answers from three informants will be carefully analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5. Before covering the analysis section in the following chapter, however, I shall focus on the historical and cultural perspectives of both *dōjinshi* conventions and Niconico, which are the main social places and digital platform for *utaite* activities.

Chapter 3

Social Places and Digital Platforms for *Dōjinshi* Creators in Japan

Before analyzing the creative culture of *utaite*, it is important to understand their origins.

especially with *dōjinshi* conventions such as the Comic Market. I shall first focus on *dōjin*

culture by examining the social places and digital platforms where *dōjin* culture exists from

an historical perspective, and show where *utaite* create their communities and participate

together to exhibit, sell, and exchange information with other creators, their audience, and

fans.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on *dōjinshi* conventions,

which are social places that have been rooted in Japanese *dōjin* culture for almost half a

century. I have selected the Comic Market (Comiket) as a case study with regard to social

places. The second part centers on Niconico as an emerging digital platform on the Internet.

[1] It is hoped that an examination of Comiket in the real world and Niconico digital

platform will lead to an in-depth understanding of the cultural production of *utaite* from the

perspective of the ethos that lies within *dōjin* culture.

3-1 Existing Social Places: *Dōjinshi* Conventions

In Japan, there are small- and large-scale *dōjinshi* conventions (also called *dōjin* events or

dōjinshi marketplaces) held across the country every week. There are two main types of

dōjinshi conventions in Japan. One is an "all-genre" event and the other a "one genre" event,

called an "*onrī ibento* (only event)" in Japanese. The former is open to any genre of work,

while the latter is usually limited to one story or one genre. Typically, there are three main

types of participants at *dōjinshi* conventions: (1) ordinary participants[2] (*ippan*), (2) creators,

---

[1] It should be noted that a "social place" denotes a physical space, while a digital platform refers to
    virtual space.
[2] The Comic Market official website translated *ippan sankasha* as "general participants", but in this

including circles (*sākuru*), [3] costume players and "commercial" people [4] and (3) staff members. Although costume players and commercial people are prohibited at some events, or are not included, every convention has ordinary participants, circles and staff.

3-1-1 Three Main Types of Participants at Dōjinshi Conventions

"Ordinary participants," or attendees, are people who participate in *dōjinshi* conventions, but have no specific role, unlike circles, costume players or staff. They may be readers, or fans who are searching for *dōjinshi*, in either original or derivative versions. While some conventions such as Comiket allow people to enter free of charge, [5] others require participants to pay an entrance fee or buy a catalog and use this as a ticket.

A "circle" is either an individual who creates, or a group of people who create, *dōjinshi*. They usually trade or distribute their works at *dōjinshi* conventions, or through personal websites, SNSs, or bookstores that accept *dōjinshi*. In the past, a circle usually referred to a group of people, not an individual. Since copying technology was expensive, people often formed a group (circle) to reduce the printing budget, or worked together with people who had the same interest. Nowadays, however, there are various small printing centers that cater for all types of circles, and the number of individual circles has increased. The word "circle" has been retained to refer to creators distributing their work at these conventions.

dissertation I shall use the words "ordinary participants" as a closer meaning in English.

[3] Circles have to apply to the Comiket selection system and sit at tables in designated areas. They do sell *dōjinshi* for money, but ideally the revenue received should only cover their costs and provide enough to support them to create more *dōjinshi* (especially in the case of derivative works). According to the Comiket ethos, they should participate in Comiket and aim to share their works with other participants rather than aim to make a profit.

[4] Comiket provides a commercial sector, where there is a separation between individual *dōjinshi* circles and commercial creators, who participate under company names. People who come to Comiket for commercial reasons are also participants and Comiket staff train them to ensure they understand that, because of the Comiket ethos, there are no customers or companies in Comiket.

[5] From the summer of 2019 to the "golden week" (May) of 2020, the Comic Market will collect an entrance fee by selling wristbands to ordinary participants who do not buy the catalog. As of August 2019, there is no further announcement with regard to the winter Comiket convention of 2020, or whether or not there will be and entrance fee.

The "staff" manage and support the conventions. Conventions that are run by companies usually hire temporary staff who are paid to help on the days the conventions take place. With *dōjinshi* conventions created by fans, however, (for example, the Comic Market and Comitia), staff members are usually voluntary workers.[6] Unlike temporary staff, voluntary staff members start work to prepare for the convention and finish when the convention has ended. The length of the preparation process varies according to the scale of the event; it might be as short a period of just one month or it could be as long as six months. Some large *dōjinshi* conventions operate a dual system for their staff. People may volunteer to become staff members, carrying out various tasks, while employees are hired to take care of business matters such as renting venues for events.

No individuals, including people in the commercial sector at Comiket, can act like customers in a store or as professional artists. At the Comic Market, everyone is treated as equal within the three types of participants described above.

In this section of Chapter 3, I have selected the Comic Market to help explain the historical and cultural background of *dōjinshi* conventions in Japan and their connection to Niconico and *utaite*. I start with the history of the Comic Market (Comiket). It may be said that Comiket is the foundation of the voluntary-based, amateur-driven convention in Japan.

3-1-2 The History of the Comic Market

On June 30, 2019 the Comic Market defined itself on the "ideals and vision" page of its official website as "a *dōjinshi* (self-published non-commercial publication) exhibition marketplace […] that started in 1975 as a 'space' reserved for people to pursue new possibilities in creative expression in the realm of manga and to act as a forum for communication between fans" (Comiket Inc. 2014). Comiket is administered by the Comic

---

[6] At Comiket, circles and commercial participants pay for spaces. Staff provide and set-up tables and chairs for circles, but commercial participants have to rent and set up booths by themselves.

Market Committee (CMC), and Comiket Inc. is a legal entity that acts to support the committee. Comiket uses a dual management system; that is, the convention is operated by the collaborative work of volunteers, together with paid employees who usually have previously been voluntary staff.

Until December 2018, Comiket took place twice a year as a three-day, all-genre event, being held in mid-August (summer Comiket) and at the end of the year (winter Comiket.) All the halls and other facilities of the Tokyo International Exhibition Center, often known as Tokyo Big Sight, the biggest convention venue in Japan, were used. The convention was free of charge.[7] but purchasing a catalogue which costs around twenty dollars (2,000 yen) was recommended, as it was difficult to walk around without the official map of the list of circles.

Despite its size, it is nevertheless said that at least 20,000 circles are rejected during the selection process every year. For fans, Comiket became a symbol of *dōjinshi* conventions in Japan, and some people think Comiket is a festival rather than a convention.

3-1-2-1 Five Ages of the Comic Market

Figure 3–A on the next page shows the rapid growth in numbers of the Comiket participants and circles. From its beginning on December 21, 1975 (the first Comic Market, or C1) to the latest Comic Market (C95), which took place from 29 to 31 December 2018, Comiket has encountered various incidents which have affected the number of participants, both circles and ordinary attendees. From 1975 (C1) to 1983 (C25), Comiket was held three time a year in the spring, summer and winter. From C26 in 1984, however, Comiket omitted the spring convention and held events only twice a year in the summer and winter up until now (with the exception of the Comic Market Special which was held occasionally).

---

[7] Except for the summer Comiket in 2019 and up to the "golden week" (May) Comiket in 2020 when the CMC has decided to charge participants,
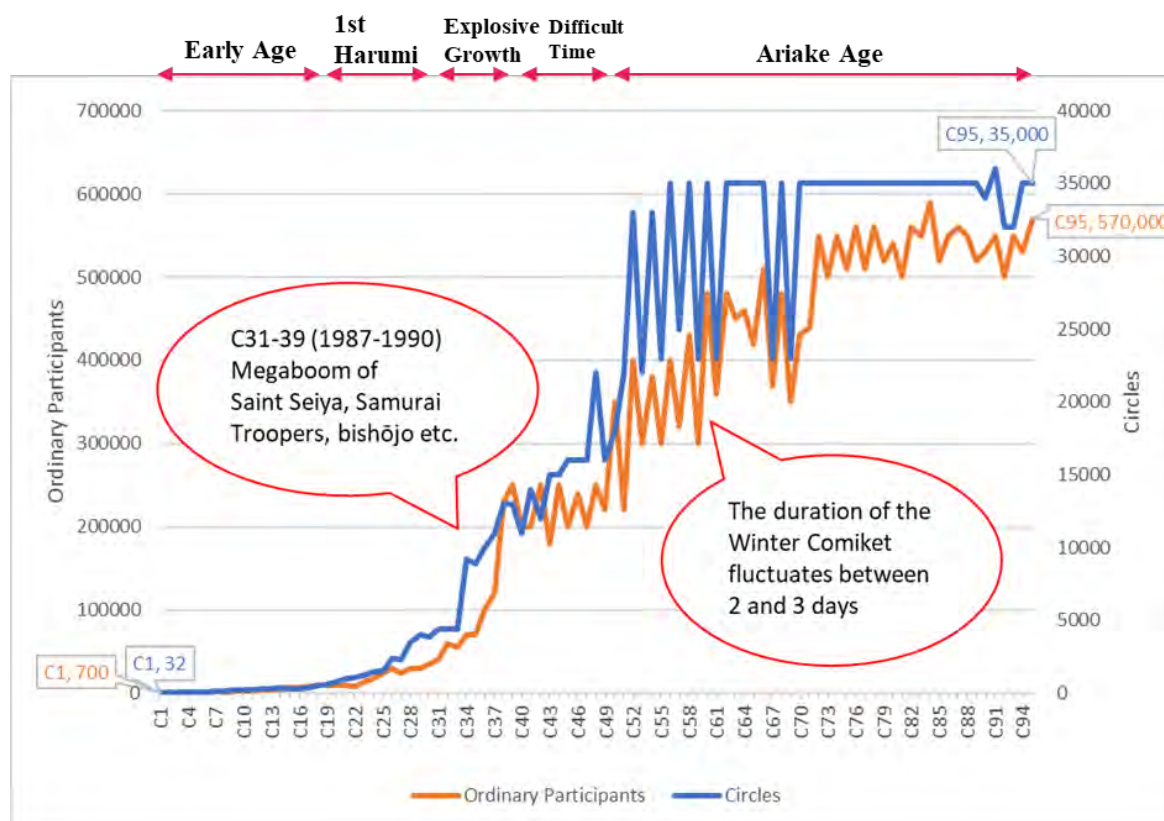
Figure 3–A: Five ages of the Comic Market and the number of ordinary participants (orange) and circle participants (blue) in the Comic Market from C1 (December 21, 1975) to C95 (December 29–31, 2018) (Comiket Inc. 2019f).[8], [9].

The presentation given by the CMC in January 2008 divided the history of Comiket into seven eras, based on the trends of fans and the change of venues (Comic Market Committee 2014, 26-33). However, Kō-Ichi Ichikawa, a Comiket committee member and one of the representatives of Comiket who made a presentation at the Comic Market Symposium in 2009, proposed dividing Comiket into five eras (Ichikawa 2009).

During the five ages of Comiket, the period between 1991–1995 (C40–C49) was what I call "a difficult time" for Comiket, *dōjinshi* creators and also otaku in Japan after the

---

[8] This graph has been created based on the Comic Market Chronology as listed in the Comic Market Official Website. It has excluded information about the Comic Market Special which is held every five years on special occasions.

[9] Based on information from Ichikawa in 2009 and CMC in 2014, together with the Comiket chronology and the book *Komikku māketto 30's fairu* ("30 Years of Comic Market"*)* (Comic Market Committee 2005) on the official website, I have summarized the development of Comiket in five eras. For more details, please see Appendix 2.

Miyazaki incident.[10] Otaku were now perceived to be people who were anti-social, who had

mental disorders, and who might develop into serial killers. Moreover, the notion of manga

as harmful reading material escalated in Japanese society. For example, police raided

bookstores selling *dōjinshi* and *dōjinshi* printing companies on account of obscenity charges

in March 1991. As a result, Makuhari Messe, a venue in Chiba prefecture, refused to lend

its venue to Comiket. This is believed to be one of the most serious incidents in the existence

of Comiket. Later, Chiba Prefecture revised the Prefectural Ordinance of Juvenile Protection

and set stricter laws against potentially harmful books, which ensured that not only Comiket,

but also other comic events were unable to hold events at the Makuhari Messe for many

years until otaku became better thought of in Japanese society.

After the millennium, in contrast to its scary image in the 1990s, otaku subculture

became a trend in Japanese society, which led to an influx of ordinary participants in

Comiket. There were problems with participants who acted like customers, which went

against the ethos of Comiket. The beginning of this period also comprised the launch of web

2.0 around the world. Otaku, also known as geeks or pioneer users of the latest technology,

participated in this emerging trend. More *dōjin* circles were connected to the Internet and

SNS usage increased for *dōjinshi* activities such as Mixi (SNSs). Niconico and Pixiv (SNSs

for illustrators) started to have an impact in Comiket from 2007. At C84 (summer 2014),

Kobayashi Sachiko, a famous professional *enka* singer,[11] first participated in Comiket as a

utaite circle after she had appeared on Niconico. She claimed to be a *utaite* at the Comiket,

not a professional singer.

---

[10] The most important incident that occurred in relation to Comiket was the advent of the serial child
killer Miyazaki Tsutomu, also known as the "Otaku Murderer," in 1989, which triggered a strong
criticism of otaku and the potential harm comic books might create for children with their explicit
sexual images.

[11] *Enka* is a genre of Japanese traditional popular music.

3-1-3 Participants at the Comic Market

I used data from the survey undertaken by CMC in 2011 to check demographic information about Comiket participants (Comic Market Committee 2011). Table 3–1 on the following page shows the percentage of participants divided into the three main types of participants. While the majority of ordinary participants and staff members were male, 65.2 percent of the *dōjinshi* creators or circles were female (Comic Market Committee 2011, 4). The overall average age of participants was between 27.9 and 31.6 years. The majority of participants were single (more than 80 percent), and were mainly university undergraduates working as office workers who paid less than 30,000 yen (300 dollars) for *dōjinshi* products.

	Circles	Staff	Ordinary
■ Female	65.2	23	35.6
■ Male	34.8	77	64.4
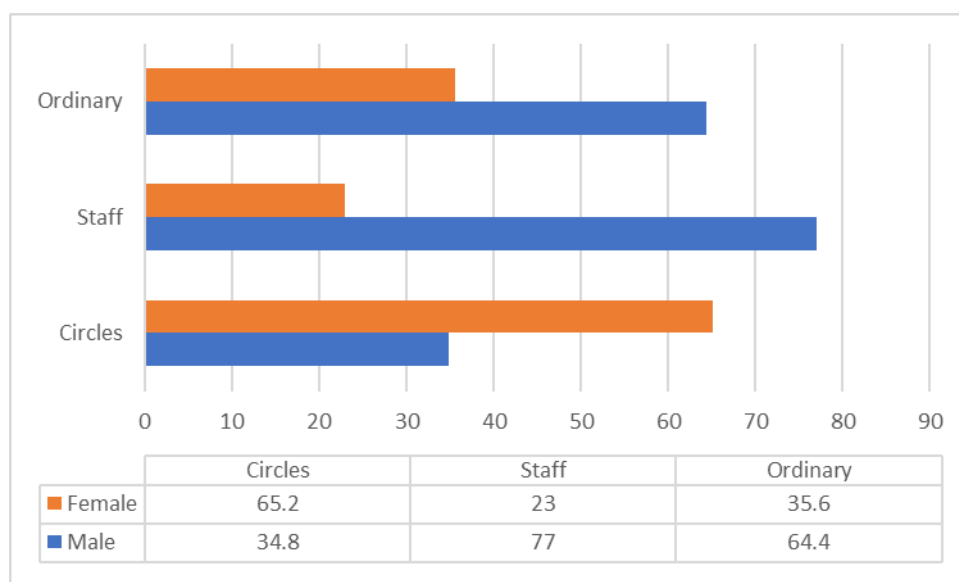
Table 3–1: Participants divided into percentages of the three main types of participants (based on data from the latest survey for the 35 year Anniversary of Comic Market (Comic Market Committee 2011, 4)).

3-1-4 The Comic Market Today

At the time of writing (July 2019), the upcoming summer and winter Comic Market (C96 and C97) will be special events because the east hall of Big Sight will be closed for the preparation of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Both Comiket events this year will be held for four

days[12] for the first time. In this section, I will use information obtained from C95 (winter 2018) to show the overall image of the most recent Comiket. Since 2006 (C70, C71), the number of circles had become stable at 35,000 circles.[13] At C95 (December 29–31, 2018) there were 35,000 circles, 570,000 ordinary participants, around 3,000 staff members, and 165 commercial companies in the corporate area.

The venue the event was held in was the Tokyo Big Sight, currently the largest convention center in Japan. The *dōjinshi* area functioned from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The commercial area functioned from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the first two days, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the last day. Figure 3–B on the next page shows the Comiket information map. Usually there was a long line of ordinary participants waiting outside the venue before the gate opened at 10:00 a.m.[14],[15]. Examples of overcrowding, both outside and inside the Comiket venue, are shown in Figures 3-C and 3-D. Moreover, the blue arrows in Figure 3-D are pointing at white papers in the hands of the participants. They were the circle maps attached to the Comiket catalog which helped participants to find their favorite *dōjinshi* or circles. People usually check their favorite circles on social media or websites before they come to Comiket.

---

[12] Comic Market 96 (C96) will be held from August 9 (Friday) to August 12 (Monday), 2019 and Comic Market 97 (C97) will be held from December 28 (Saturday) to December 31 (Tuesday), 2019 at the Tokyo Big Sight.

[13] Although there were some minor changes from C90 (summer 2016) due to the construction of the venue, when the number of circles ranged between 32,000 and 36,000.

[14] On the left-hand side of the map nearby the East hall 7 and 8 there is the East waiting line, and on the bottom right of the map below the entrance plaza the West waiting line. Circle participants, however, were able to enter the venue via the "circle gate" using a "circle pass" during the hours of 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. For staff members, the hours worked depended on the particular department they were in. In my case, when I was a member of staff at the "shipping/unloading department," I had to arrive at the venue by 6:00 a.m. Staff members had to carry a staff pass and wear a staff armband and a staff hat which changed color every Comiket to distinguish the staff from other participants. With these three identifiers, staff could enter all places in the venue. However, during a break, no staff could wear identifiers while in the venue or buying *dōjinshi*.

[15] In recent years, the number of people who have "cosplayed" in Comiket has been increasing. Cosplayers can participate in Comiket as either a circle or as a cosplayer. The *dōjinshi* created by cosplayers are usually books of photos of themselves or other related goods such as Polaroid photos, or flyers about themselves. Cosplayers who do not participate as circles can show themselves in designated areas. At C95 Comiket provided changing areas and public spaces for cosplayers, both inside and outside the venue.
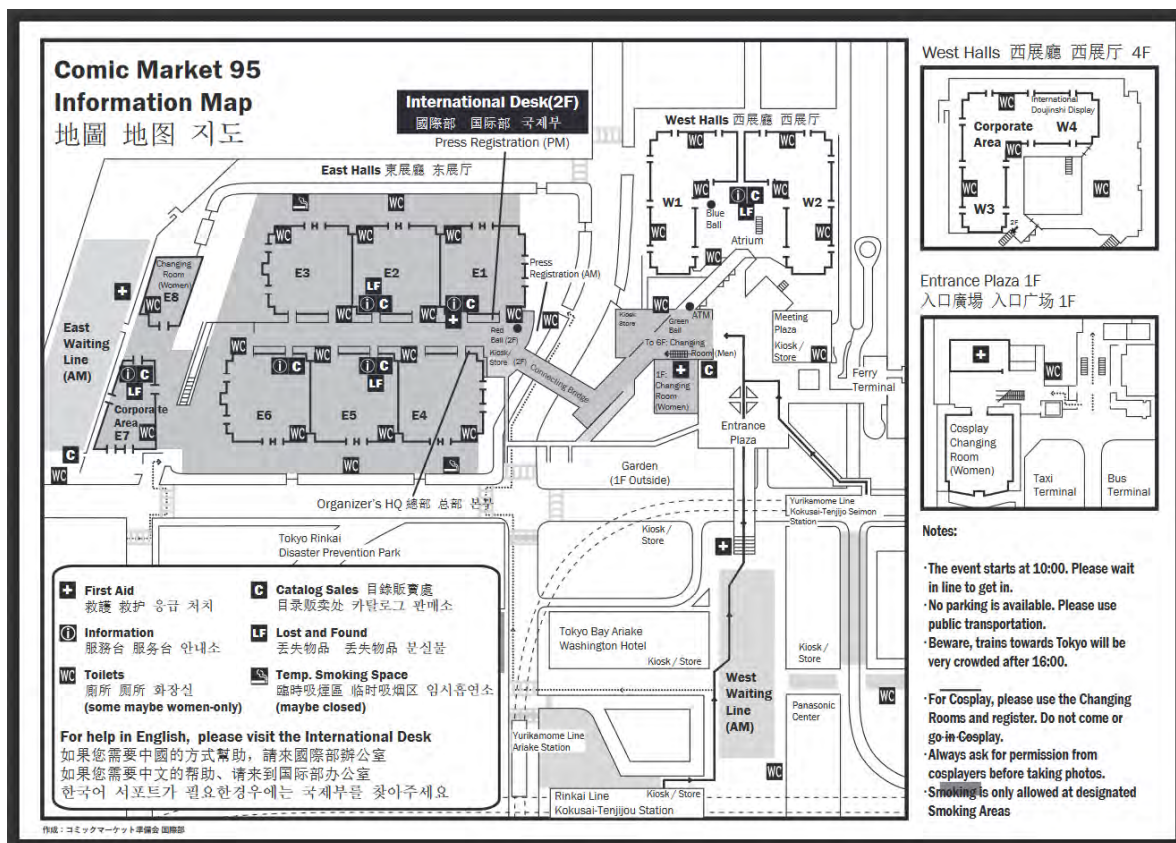
Figure 3–B: Comic Market 95 information map for international participants in English and Chinese from the official website (Comiket Inc. 2018a).

Figure 3–C: Participants queuing to see the "shutter" circles outside the East hall 2 (C85). (This photo was taken by the author on December 30, 2013, at 11:26 a.m.).

Figure 3–D: Overcrowding inside the East Hall 3 (C85).
(This photo was taken by the author on December 30, 2013, at 12:01 p.m.)

Figure 3–E below shows part of the circles' map in East hall 1. The location of each

circle was decided by the CMC. The circles were divided into five groups: island (*shima*);

head of the table (*tanjōbiseki*); fake wall (*nisekabe*); wall (*kabe*) and shutter.
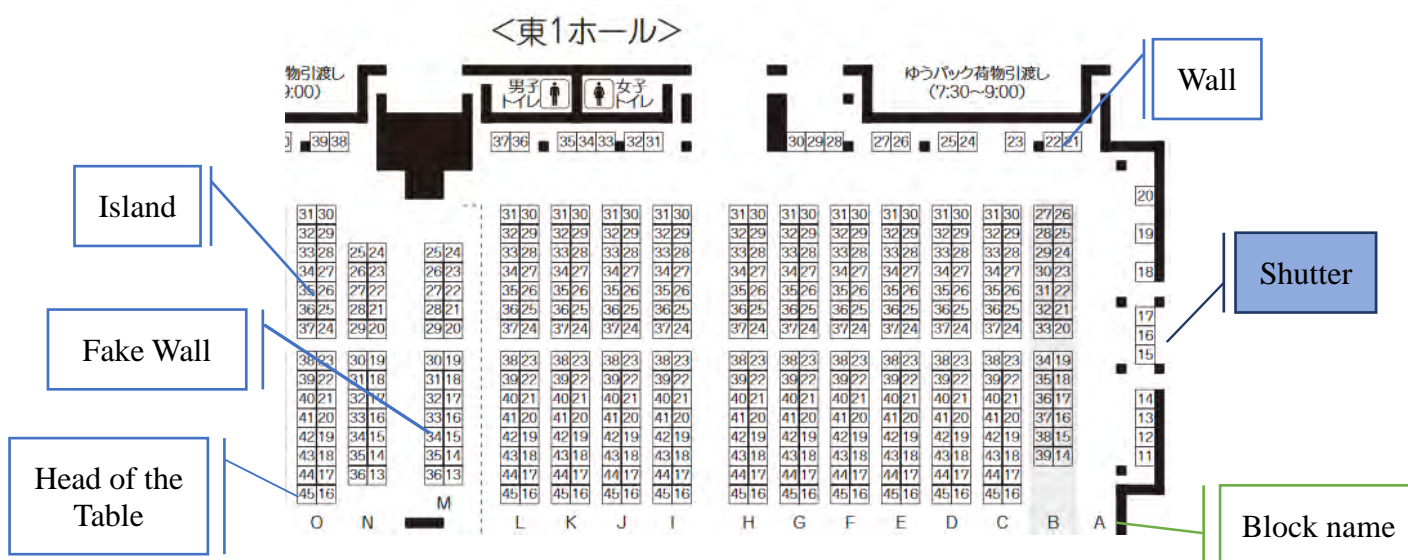
Figure 3–E: Map of the circles and their location in East hall 1 (C95) from
the "*Comiket Appeal 95*" (Comiket Inc. 2018b, 15).

Figure 3–F on the next page shows the full *dōjinshi* circles map in East halls 1-6. Each hall had designated areas for several genres that changed every day, which were decided by the Comic Market Committee (CMC.)

There were several small numbers with alphabets in both English and Japanese on the map, showing the position of each circle. One number meant two circles (for example, the number 23 meant that 23a and 23b were at the same booth). Each circle was allotted one space (W 90 cm × D 45 cm × H 70 cm) or half the size of a long desk, together with two chairs. Each circle usually brought a tablecloth and decorations such as posters portraying the *dōjinshi* to the venue.

Each circle was placed in a location based on its forecasted popularity. The popularity of circles ranged from island > head of the table > fake wall > wall > and shutter (the most popular). Most circles were "island" circles, while each block had "head of the table" circles (such as O16, O45, O23, O38, shown in Figure 3–E). Circles in the A block were placed against the wall of the hall, and were usually called "wall circles" (such as A 11 to 14 in Figure 3–E) while circles in the M and N blocks, adjoining hall 1 and hall 2 areas, were called "fake walls." The last group was the circles that were placed before the shutter of the halls. Usually there was a long queue of people outside the hall waiting to see the "Shutter" circles. Famous *utaite* were usually placed at the wall or shutter circles.[16] The cost of one circle space included the non-refundable circle application fee of 1,000 yen (10 dollars); a system fee (by mail 600 yen – 6 dollars – or online 1,100 yen – 11 dollars); and an 8,000 yen (80 dollars) participation fee would be applied if the circle was selected by the CMC.

---

[16] The CMC estimated the popularity of circles by researching information about each circle prior to the convention. Sometimes, however, they would make an incorrect forecast and put a famous circle inside the "island." (This is in fact what happened to a *utaite* who participated in Comiket for the first time.) This would cause severe congestion in the hall, which meant that the staff would have to move the circle to the spare wall area.

East Hall 1-3
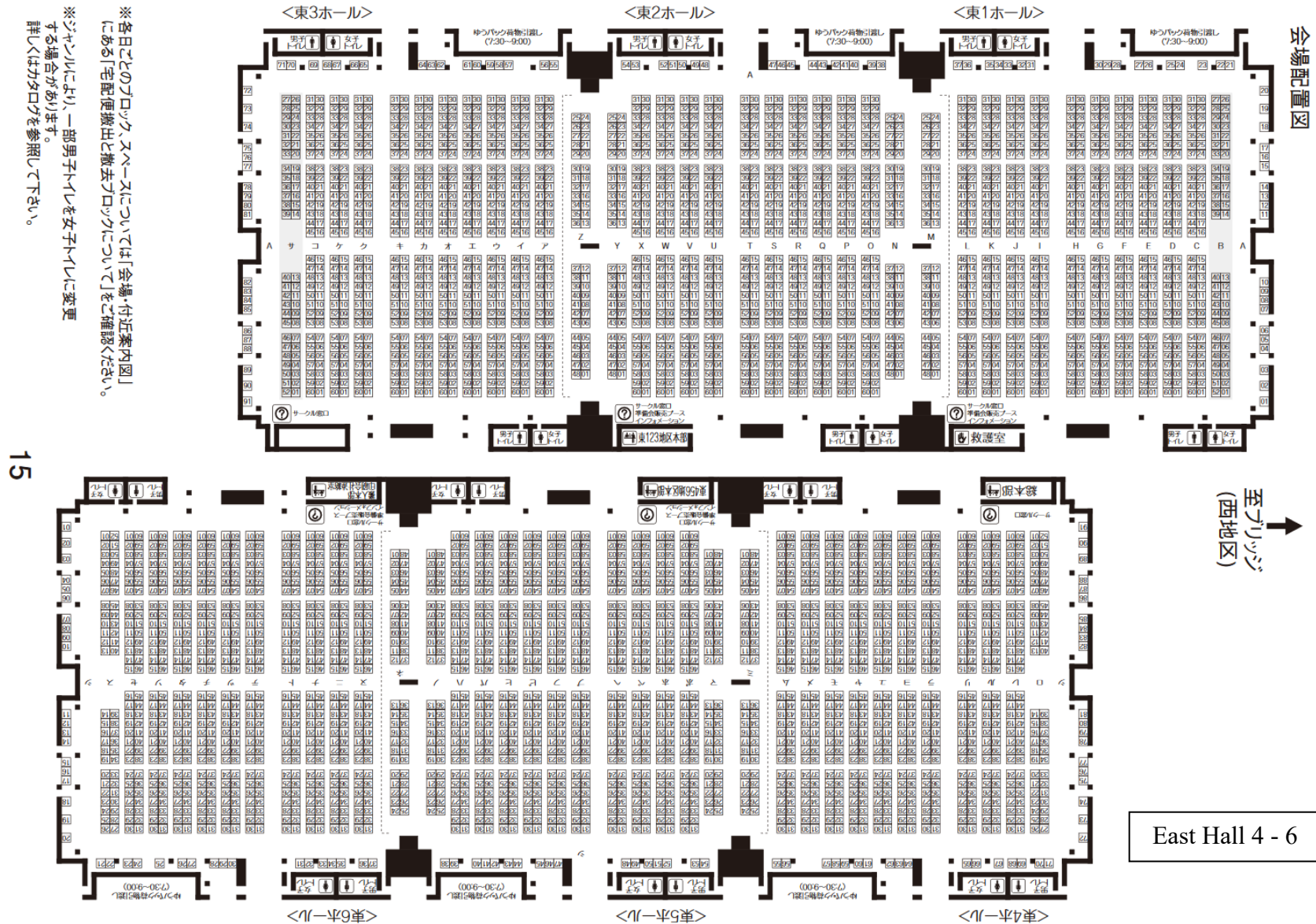
East Hall 4 - 6

Figure 3–A: Complete circles map in East hall areas 1 to 6 in the Comic Market 95 from the *"Comiket Appeal 95"* (Comiket Inc. 2018b, 15).

Although there have been thousands of circles which have participated in the Comiket in recent years, only a few have been able to break even. Some famous circles might earn more than a million Japanese yen (more than 10,000 dollars) in one day, but the majority of the circles were in the red.[17] This result has been linked with answers from circle participants with regard to "What is the most attractive thing in the Comic Market?" The top three answers were, "Happy to let other people see my works" (67.2 percent); "I love the festive atmosphere" (54.5 percent); and "I could meet with my friends" (51.6 percent), respectively (Comic Market Committee 2011, 11). There were also some differences in the distribution of *dōjinshi* media between male and female circles. In Comiket, female circles distributed more manga than anything else at 70.4 percent, followed by novels at 31.9 percent and illustrations at 7 percent.[18] Male circles, however, distributed manga and novels at 57.7 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively, followed by illustrations at 24.2 per cent, criticism of material and people at 10.7 percent, and digital *dōjinshi*, including games, at 8.2 percent, music CDs at 5.1 percent and other types of CD/DVDs at 4.8 percent (ibid., 9).

I now focus on the percentage of music CDs, which is directly related to *utaite*. While the percentage of music CD circles for males is 5.1 percent, for female circles in this survey the percentage is zero. Based on my fieldwork at Comiket, it is true to say that most famous *utaite* are male and also that most *utaite* circles are male circles. Some famous female *utaite* also participated in Comiket, but they usually collaborated with male *utaite* and participated together as one circle. Therefore, although the CMC survey shows that no female *utaite* participated in the Comiket, in fact there were some female *utaite* who did so.

---

[17] The latest survey for the 35th year anniversary of Comic Market, conducted by the contents research team of the CMC in 2010, found that almost 70 percent of circles (Total number of questionnaires (n) =33,347) were in the red regarding their overall *dōjinshi* annual profit and loss (including other *dōjinshi* conventions and revenue from *dōjinshi* stores), and only 15 to 17 percent were able to break even with less than 50,000 yen (500 dollars) annual profit (Comic Market Committee 2011, 10).

[18] Because some circles created more than one *dōjinshi*, the total percentage is higher than 100 percent.

3-1-5 Dōjin ongaku, Genre codes, and Utaite in the Comic Market.

I have already discussed the meaning of *dōjinshi* in Chapter 1 Section 1-3-1-1. Using the

definition of *dōjin* from Hiroaki Tamagawa (2012), *dōjin ongaku* means self-financed or

self-published music created by an individual, or collaboration between individuals (108). I

agree with this definition to some extent, especially with regard to the *dōjin ongaku* circles

that have participated in Comiket. However, it is too broad a definition to be used outside of

Comiket or other *dōjinshi* conventions, because, for example, it also includes independent

music (indies) which are also self-financed. In fact, however, the *dōjinshi ongaku* usually

exclude independent indies. Ideguchi Akinori (2012), the first to write a book about *dōjin*

ongaku, argued that these two words are difficult to define because of the expansion of *dōjin*

ongaku online and in the commercial world. He proposed three factors to determine whether

music creations should be called *dōjin ongaku*: were they self-created? Did they have well-

defined routes when they were distributed at *dōjinshi* conventions / *dōjin* stores? Were they

believed to be legitimate? (*shinnen*) (48-76). The last is very important, especially within

Comiket. It is necessary for *dōjinshi* creators to create their work simply for the sake of

presenting their work to show what they have done to others, rather than for commercial

reasons. In this dissertation, therefore, I define *dōjin ongaku* to mean self-financed / self-

published music, created by an individual or collaboration between individuals, that has

found well defined routes of distribution. The creators of *dōjin ongaku* aim to show what

they have created rather than buying or selling their wares for commercial purposes.

From C31 (winter 1986) onwards, genre codes were introduced to categorize circles

by the CMC.[19] Each genre had its genre code number and subgenres, which circle

participants used when applying for the system of selection.[20] These genre code numbers are

---

[19] See Appendix 3, Genre codes at C95 in each hall in the Comiket.
[20] For example, the genre "original (young girls)" was the code 112 in C95, and there were two
    subgenres: animals and illustrations. Genres that were not included in the list provided were also
    welcomed.

important for all circles for two reasons. Comiket usually places circles in the same

subgenres in the same area, so that people who share the same interests can meet, talk and

exchange information. Another reason is that Comiket tried to open up the opportunity for

various genres, because when there were lots of circles applying for the same genre, the

chance of being selected became more difficult.[21]

Both Niconico and *utaite* were categorized under the collective genre called "digital

(others)," which was located in East hall 5 and 6 on the second day of C95. Various subgenres

were applied to this genre code. CMC has divided the subgenres into eight groups and *utaite*

is on Niconico under the heading *utattemita* ("tried singing") (including fans of *utattemita*)

(Comiket Inc., 2018c)[22],[23].

Before the emergence of Niconico, *dōjin ongaku* had already gained popularity in

the *dōjinshi* world. Ideguchi (2012) suggested that Desktop Music technology (DTM) had

played an important role since the late 1980s (41-2). DTM allows users to compose music

on the computer without real musical instruments, which, in turn, has allowed Japanese

amateur music composers to create music easily by themselves without help from

professionals. Ideguchi noted that in C50 (summer 1996), Musical Instrument Digital

Interface (MIDI)[24] was included as a subgenre in Comiket for the first time; followed by the

establishment of Music Media–Mix Market (M3),[25] the first music-only *dōjinshi* convention

in 1998 (63). Both movements showed an increase in the number of *dōjin ongaku* creators.

---

[21] Since most of the *dōjinshi* in Comiket are derivatives works, original *dōjinshi* are usually categorized with the word "original" in front of the categories. In general, there are two types of names given to genres in Comiket. One is the collective genre, which consist of major topics, such as history, TV, anime, games, original (young boys). Within the collective genre there are several titles relating to the same topic, excluding titles that have specific genre codes. There are also genre codes for specific titles, such as *Hetalia: Axis Powers; Tōken ranbu; THE IDOLM@STER*, which are manga and games titles. Usually CMC first categorizes each title in the collective genre. If some titles are extremely popular with the participants, CMC will create specific genre codes for each title.

[22] See Appendix 4 for eight subgenres of "digital (others)" in the Comiket.

[23] Fans of *utaittemita* means the creators who are the fans of *utaite*.

[24] In Comiket, circles distributed MIDI data on floppy disks as a particular type of *dōjinshi*.

[25] M3 is a music-only convention, which allows only music-related *dōjin* circles to participate.

C74 (summer 2008) was the first time the word "Niconico" was included in the subgenres of *dōjin* software, or about one-and-a-half years after the launch of Niconico in December 2016. Later, because of the congestion within the hall containing circles displaying *dōjin* software,[26] in C76 (summer 2009) CMC divided *dōjin* software up into three genre codes: *dōjin* software, *Tōhō Project*[27] and original digital ("others"). In C77 (winter 2009), CMC deleted the word "original" from the genre name. The genre "digital (others)" has become the genre code for most *dōjin ongaku*-related works since then, except for some particularly famous genre such as *Tōhō Project*, which has its own specific genre code. *Utaite* also participated in Comiket as circle participants under the "digital (others)" genre, with "tried_singing" as its subgenre.

As stated in Chapter 1, I was astonished by the *utaite* fans' behavior which was different to that of the usual Comiket participants. For example, the fans stared at the *utaite*, and asked for autographs or to shake hands with *utaite*, or even to take photos of them without permission.

I have here reviewed a brief history of Comiket. From my position as a participatory observer, I would say that although Comiket is the largest *dōjinshi* convention in the world, it is also a "closed" community, where participants are requested to understand the ethos of the convention before attending. This is in comparison to other conventions held in Japan, such as the Tokyo Motor Show, an automobile convention with slightly larger numbers of people attending than at Comiket.

Internet platforms are developing and changing, and, Comiket will also adapt to the new emerging culture as a social place for *dōjin* culture. Nevertheless, there is an ethos that has never changed in Comiket since it began almost forty years ago, which is that everyone

---

[26] There were more than 3,000 circles within the *dōjin* software genre in C75 (winter 2008).

[27] The *Tōhō project* is a *dōjinshi* series created by ZUN from one particular Japanese circle: Team Shanghai Alice. It is famous for shooting games, books, and music CDs. The *Tōhō project* is also famous on account of the original *dōjinshi* which triggered the creation of derivative *dōjinshi*.

is a participant; no one is a customer. Comiket provides spaces for exhibiting creative works and mainly supports individuals. It does not allow anyone commercial to participate as a circle. Commercial companies such as publishing, or animation companies are allowed to trade only in designated commercial areas. The main difference between individual and commercial entities, according to the Comic Market's ethos listed on the Comic Market official website, is that "as a rule Comiket considers individuals engaged in self-expression as a hobby (and not commercial enterprises) to be the basic building block for creative endeavors" (Comiket Inc. 2014). The word "hobby" is significant. Apart from the idea that everyone is a participant, another major credo at Comiket is that everyone creates *dōjinshi* because they would like to show their creations rather than selling them to others, and that what they have created should be regarded as a hobby rather than as a commercial enterprise. The non-commercially oriented philosophy also appeared in the annual profit (only 15 to 17 percent of circles were able to break even with less than 50,000 yen (500 dollars) annual profit, and almost 70 percent of circles were in the red), as well as in the listing of the voluntary staff members who devoted themselves to create spaces for everyone to express themselves through their work without payment.

This ideology has formed the contemporary *dōjin* culture in Japan which started within the fields of literature and academia. It has now expanded to social places other than Comiket, such as other *dōjinshi* conventions and online platforms that have a strong relationship with *dōjin* culture such as Niconico.

In the next section, I shall examine the history of Niconico as the emerging digital platform in online spaces.

3-2 Emerging Digital Platforms: Niconico

3-2-1 Major Virtual Platforms for Creators

Before discussing Niconico in detail, I shall begin with listing the major virtual platforms for Japanese creators. Figure 3–G on the following page shows the launch date of each major platform. On the left-hand side are platforms created by Japanese companies, while platforms created by other countries are listed on the right-hand side. The one in the middle (FC2) is a company that does not disclose its name but says it has its headquarters in the US. The squares in green are platforms related to *utaite* activities. During the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, the pre-Internet era, the closed network bulletin board *pasokon tsūshin*[28] was the main tool for Japanese people to communicate with others within the same network.

The Internet gradually expanded in Japan, following the release of Windows 95 and 98, and major search engines such as Yahoo! Japan, and Google started up. From the end of the twentieth century to the beginning of the 2000s, Web 2.0 and UGC gradually appeared in virtual spaces. Regarding mobile phone technology in Japan, the "i-mode" was launched by the giant Japanese telecommunications provider NTT DoCoMo on February 22, 1999. (green squares).

The i-mode was unique to Japan and was different from all other mobile phone technology in the world as it used Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) standard. It allowed users to do a number of things via mobile phones, such as checking emails, reading weather forecasts, surfing websites, playing games, and booking tickets. Figure 3–G shows that in 1999 there were several prominent platforms that were released to support UGC in Japan.

---

[28] *Pasokon tsūshin* (Personal Computer Telecommunication) was a pre-Internet age communication system, famous in Japan during the late 1980s to 1990s. It was a service that performed data communication via a communication line between a personal computer and a server host station (or a node or host) using specific software.
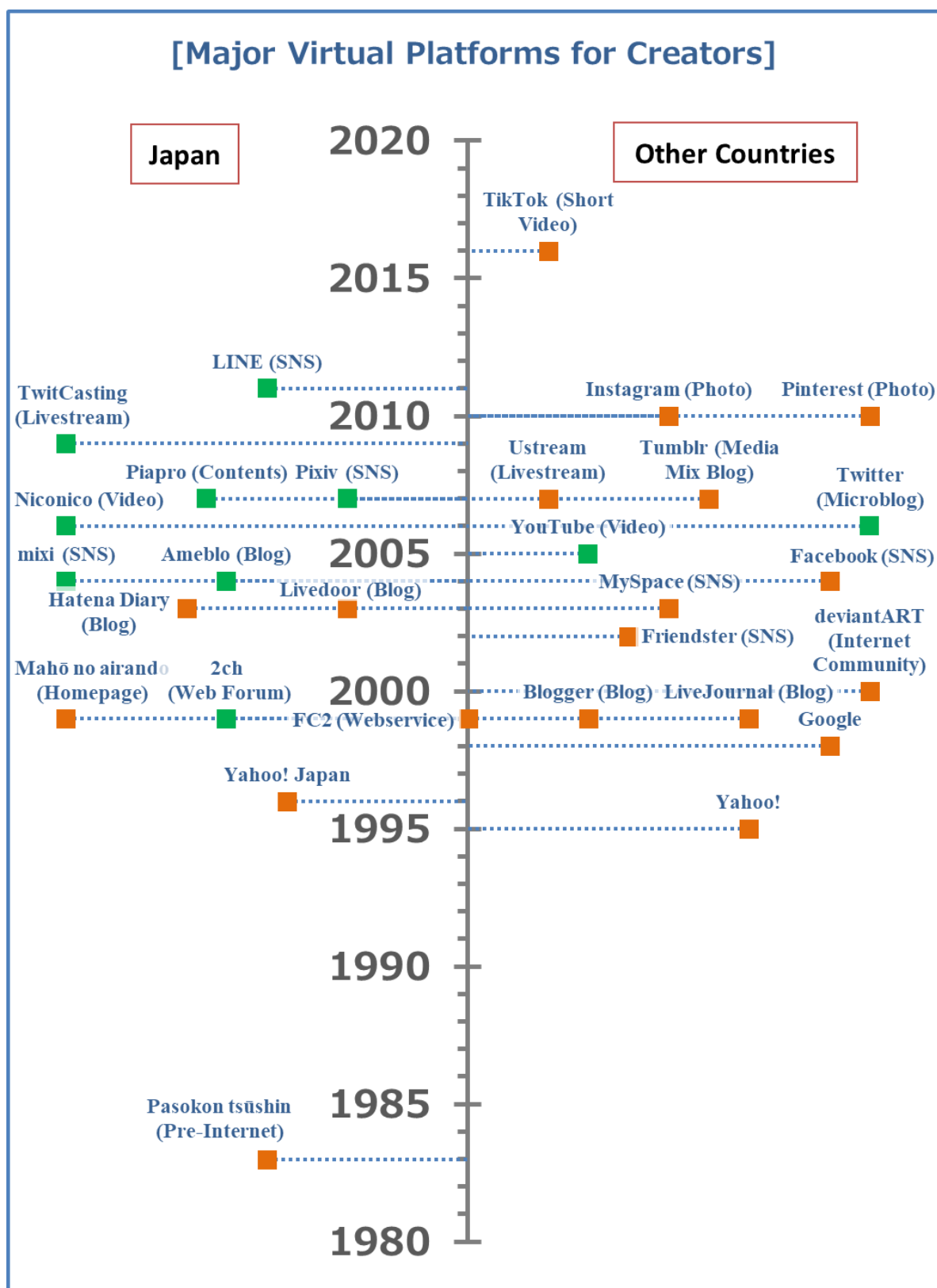
Figure 3–G: Major virtual platforms for creators and platforms in Japan that relate to *utaite* (green squares)

For example, "2ch," the web forum (bulletin board), "FC2," which provided several web services such as a web diary, chat, and a web hosting provider, and *Mahō no airando* ("The magic island,") which provided a homepage for fiction writers. At the same time, Blogger and LiveJournal had also been released in the US. In addition, it enabled users to post content on websites without any difficulty.

From 2002 to 2008, the SNS boom arrived in Internet spaces. In Japan, Mixi, a Japanese SNS, started in 2004, while new blog services also emerged at this time. After YouTube was launched in 2005, followed by Niconico in 2006 and Ustream in 2007, the digital world moved from text-based to photo-based and video-based eras. Once the iPhone was released on June 29, 2007 as a Smartphone with a built-in camera, and the mobile Internet connection changed from 3G to 4G, this technology allowed users to connect to virtual platforms through applications.

Subsequently the main online content altered from "creating something" to "sharing something" with others. For example, sharing short messages of not more than 140 words via micro-blogs such as Twitter (2006) or sharing photos on Instagram (2010) or Pinterest (2010). From the end of the 2000s onwards, the words "social media" have increasingly gained popularity on the digital platform. Nevertheless, the majority of Japanese people did not use social media in their daily lives until the middle of the 2010s (Institute for Information and Communications Policy 2019).

3-2-1-1 *Utaite* and SNSs

During the middle of the 2000s there were various SNSs with specific themes that emerged in Japan. I here mention two major websites which had a direct connection to *utaite*: Pixiv and Piapro.

Pixiv is an illustrations SNS[29] created by Pixiv Inc. in 2007. Registered users can

---

[29] Nowadays (2019) Pixiv also has comics, novels and literature sections for supporting other types of

post both original and derivative works; they are connected by tags and bookmarks, and they communicate via comments. Pixiv became popular with illustrators in Japan and other countries.[30] As stated in Chapter 2, *utaite* use manga caricatures (illustrations) as their avatars and for characters in their videos. Usually *utaite* contact illustrators who post their works on Pixiv and request collaboration.

To give a concrete example, *utaite* A (male) wants to create a new singing video on Niconico covering the Hatsune Miku song which has lyrics about school life. He then searches for someone to draw his manga caricature that will appear on his video. The collaboration might occur in a number of ways, depending on his relationship with the illustrator. He might, for example, have (1) a friend who is an illustrator, or (2) have a fan who is an illustrator, or (3) he is a fan of an illustrator, or (4) he has no contact with any illustrator.

For the first scenario he could ask his friend to draw his manga caricature for him by explaining that he wants the caricature to be in school uniform. Regarding the second scenario, the illustrator might draw manga caricatures of his/her favorite *utaite* and uploaded them to Pixiv. The *utaite* might ask the illustrator to borrow an existing caricature if it fits with the theme of the video, or request the fan to provide a new drawing with a particular theme. (Sometimes the illustrator is the one who tells the *utaite* that he/she would like to collaborate with him by drawing his picture.)

For the third and fourth scenarios, the *utaite* needs to contact his favorite illustrator personally to ask whether he or she agrees to collaborate by drawing a manga of him. The collaboration may be free of charge (with just a credit written on the video), or he might pay a commission. If illustrators are open for commission or collaboration requests, they usually

---

creators.

[30] As of April 26, 2019, Pixiv announced on its website that it has more than 40 million registered users, and so far, more than 85 million works have been posted on this website.

write details about this on their personal accounts on Pixiv, Twitter or Piapro. Illustrators who draw for users in Niconico are usually called *eshi*[31] or illustration-masters.

Piapro is the consumer generated media (CGM)-sharing website started up by Crypton Future Media, Inc. (Crypton) in 2007. This company created Hatsune Miku, the most famous Vocaloid character. The cycle inside Piapro as explained in its website is: sharing, supporting, collaborating, and showing gratitude.[32]

Piapro was launched on December 3, 2007, about three months after the release of Hatsune Miku. Hatsune Miku's fame triggered inquiries from fans who contacted Crypton to ask to what extent they could use the Hatsune Miku character for their derivative work. Crypton then decided to announce derivative guidelines for its company products, producing Piapro as the "creative place for creators" to gather all individual creations on the Internet in one place. It also announced the Piapro Character License (PCL)[33] for its characters (Okada 2008). To encourage UGC or CGM activities, Crypton categorized the derivative uses of its characters into three types: PCL license, Piapro Link, and Commercial use.[34]

Apart from Pixiv and YouTube, *utaite* frequently use Twitter, Ameblo (full name: Ameba Blog), Mixi, Line, and TwitCasting as communication tools between users and *utaite*.

---

[31] The word "*eshi*" (illustrator) is widely used in Japan, and not only on Niconico. The translation of this word to "illustration-master"in this dissertation denotes illustrators who have collaborated with other users on Niconico.

[32] (1) "sharing:" users share content created by themselves (for instance, lyrics, music, illustrations, 3D models) on the website; (2) "supporting:" other users see them, and use tags or comments to encourage the creators;.(3) "collaborating:" users collaborate or remix the shared content together and post them on websites such as Niconico; (4) "showing gratitude:" after using content shared by others, the original creators must be thanked.

[33] Crypton Future Media, Inc. adapts "Creative Commons License – Attribution-NonCommercial, 3.0 Unported" ("CC BY-NC") to the original illustrations of Hatsune Miku, Kagamine Rin, Kagamine Len, Megurine Luka, MEIKO and KAITO for creators all over the world. For more information see https://piapro.net/intl/en_for_creators.html. (Accessed July 22, 2019.)

[34] (1) "PCL license," which allows non-commercial use of the characters; publishing illustrations or videos of Hatsune Miku are permitted under this license. (2) "Piapro Link" for non-profit trading of illustrations or goods using QR Codes. (Creators print QR codes onto the derivative works that they want to trade.) (3) "Commercial use" for using the characters to make a profit, for example, selling CDs in record shops. In this case, each creator has to contact Crypton directly to sign a contract for commercial use, so that when *utaite* want to distribute their *dōjin* CDs in Comiket, they first have to apply to the Piapro Link (2) to receive the QR codes to place them on their derivative work.

As creators, *utaite* are flexible in terms of adopting new technology. *Utaite* often try a new technology to expand communication channels with their audience.

3-2-2 Development of Niconico as a Digital Platform[35]

In previous two chapters, I set out a brief history of Niconico and reviewed previous research other scholars have undertaken of Niconico. In this section I shall trace the history of Niconico since its first release to its most recent version to examine Niconico's development up to the present time (Nicopedia 2019b).

Niconico (known as *nikoniko dōga* or *nikodō*— "smile videos"—in Japanese) was first released on December 12, 2006. Although the main service of Niconico is video-sharing, it has also expanded into other services to serve users' needs. As of August 6, 2019, the English version of the Niconico website showed that it provided twenty-three services[36] for users as shown in Figure 3–H on the next page.

As a digital platform, Niconico passed through various trials and errors regarding service developments. There were several services that were introduced and then suspended on account of their lack of popularity or technological improvement.[37], [38].

---

[35] The summary of this section is based on information in "Nicopedia," the encyclopedia on the Niconico official website. Accessed July 19, 2019. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/.

[36] On the same date, on the Japanese website page, only twenty-two services are shown (excluding "Mastodon" which finished on April 28, 2019.)

[37] For example, Niconico Phone (*nikoden*) was a service that allowed listeners to call live stream users on phone-ins or call-ins on the radio program. Started in 2010, this service is restricted to premium users of Niconico. However, since callers had to pay for telephone calls, users tended to use Skype instead. Niconico Phone ended its service in January 2014.

[38] With regard to the current services, during the main fieldwork period from 2011–2014, *utaite* usually used Niconico Video to upload their singing clips; Nico Live to host their live stream programs; Niconico Images and Nico Commons for borrowing materials for creating video clips from other users; and Niconico Ads to advertise their videos or live stream programs.
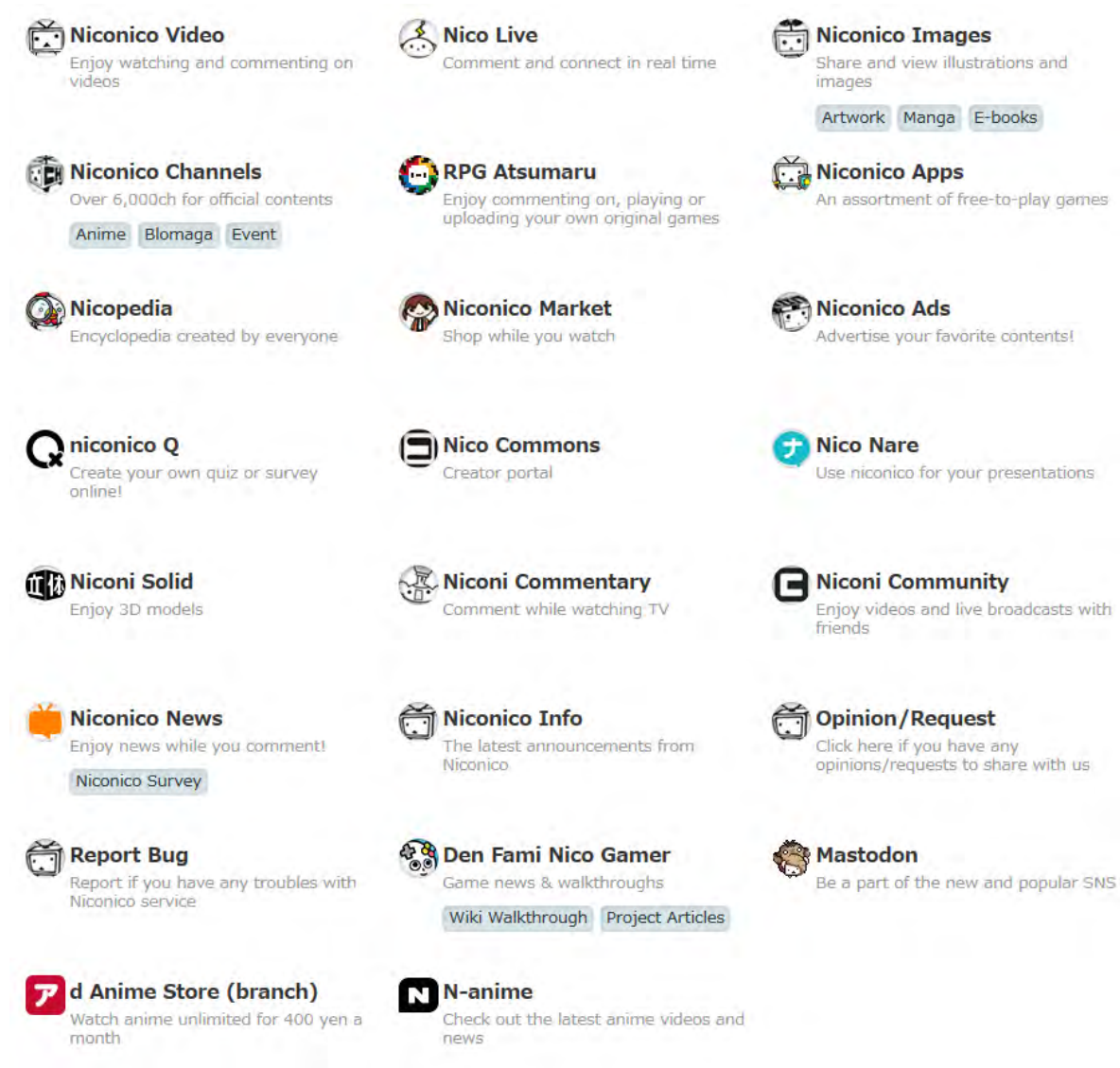
Figure 3–H: Services currently provided by Niconico (Niconico 2019b).

At the time of writing (July 2019) Niconico has already released sixteen versions (Table 3–2), with each version gradually helping to create a specific Niconico culture.

Version No.	Version sign	Pronunciation	Period
1	(仮)	Kari	December 12, 2006 to January 15, 2007
2	(β)	Beta	January 15, 2007 to February 24, 2007
3	(γ)	Closed Gamma	March 6, 2007 to June 18, 2007
4	(RC)	RC	June 18, 2007 to October 10, 2007
5	(RC2)	RC2	October 10, 2007 to March 5, 2008
6	(SP1)	SP1	March 5, 2008 to July 5, 2008
7	(夏)	Summer	July 5, 2008 to October 1, 2008

8	(秋)	Aki	October 1, 2008 to December 5, 2008
9	(冬)	Fuyu	December 5, 2008 to December 12, 2008
10	(β β)	Double Beta	December 12, 2008 to October 29, 2009
11	(9)	Kyū	October 29, 2009 to October 29, 2010
12	(原宿)	Harajuku	October 29, 2010 to April 30, 2012
13	(Zero)	Zero	May 1, 2012 to October 17, 2012
14	(Q)	Q	October 18, 2012 to October 7, 2013
15	(GINZA)	Ginza	October 8, 2013 to June 27, 2018
16	(く)	Crescendo	June 28, 2018 to the present

Table 3–2: Versions of Niconico, and periods of time given for when they existed.

3-2-2-1 The dawn of Niconico (Kari / Beta / Closed Gamma)

Excluding the current version (Crescendo), I have divided the Niconico versions into three time periods and have focused on the services related to *utaite* activities.

I. Kari

I have called the first era the "dawn" of Niconico, which was the most important period with regard to forming its unique culture. The first version was named *Kari* ("tentative / temporary") which was written after the word *nikoniko dōga* (Niconico video), since the developers could not as yet decide on an exact name for this service.

Figure 3–I on the following page shows the main page of Niconico *Kari*. It was simple in comparison to Niconico today. It had only one service which was "Niconico video" for watching and writing comments. When Niconico began, it did not have a video posting function, so users used videos directly linked from YouTube. To post videos, they simply wrote the Universal Resource Locator (URL) of YouTube[39] on the designated field on top of the page and clicked the post button. The main Niconico feature, writing comments on videos, was then implemented. At that time Niconico did not require users to register an account

---

[39] Later, Niconico *Kari* also supported video links from AmebaVision, a Japanese video-sharing website from CyberAgent, Inc.

http://www.nicovideo.jp/ Go

19,843 captures
7 Jan 2007 - 4 Aug 2019

ニコニコ動画(仮)
NICO NICO DOUGA

投稿動画にみんなで書き込め！
現在のコメント投稿総数：**74446** 件

Write YouTube or AmebaVision link here to post the video

【お知らせ】実験サービス終了まで、あと**8日**です

YouTube または AmebaVision の閲覧ページURLをそのまま貼ってね

投稿

動画タイトル検索： 検索

Blogs from the developers

今 コメントが書き込まれた動画

最新の開発ブログ（新着情報）

全1930件中、1〜10件目を表示してたりします。

前のページ　次のページ

実験サービス終了のお知らせ NEW!!
2007-01-05 20:20:31

明けましておめでとうございます
2007-01-03 23:20:02

年末のご挨拶
2006-12-31 20:57:13

当日ランキングを追加
2006-12-28 18:23:07

サイト内の動画の検索機能を追加
2006-12-28 00:35:19

Video Linked from YouTube with latest comments from users.

Ranking

ランキング

コメント数 [合計 / 本日]
再生数 [合計 / 本日]

Latest Video Posts

今 投稿された動画

Figure 3–I: A screenshot of Niconico (*Kari*) taken on January 7, 2007

(Nikoniko dōga fukyū iinkai 2007).

prior to usage as it does today. Niconico Kari also had blogs written by developers setting out the development process and a "ranking" function.[40]

II. Beta

The second Niconico version was "Beta," which started on January 15, 2007 and lasted for around forty days. The first users of Niconico even now consider that this version was well-known for being the most chaotic period of Niconico. There were a number of videos uploaded to YouTube by Niconico users as Niconico had not yet supported the video-posting function.[41] The second version of Niconico was famous for the beginning of two unique comments culture on this website: (1) *soramimi* ("mishearing") is writing comments about lyrics or other audio material which you fail to hear correctly, and you feel that others may mishear as well. For example, mishearing English lyrics translated into Japanese lyrics. (2) *danmaku* ("bullet curtain") is where a number of the same comments are written onto the video on Niconico at the same time, making a screen covered by characters like a curtain of flying bullets. For instance, Figure 3–J on the following page shows the moment when a frame from a video was almost fully covered with the word "*okusenman*," which was a specific part of one of the lyrics in a video. *Danmaku* may comprise a number of the same comments, as in Figure 3–J, or beautiful computer graphics created by users who are called "comment" craftsmen or *danmaku* craftsmen[42] on Niconico.

In Figure 3–K on the following page, rather than a frame of a video covered by the same words or letters, a *danmaku* craftsman has written a special computer script to create a

---

[40] On the day they started the services, the management team, including Nishimura Hiroyuki, the founder of 2ch, advertised its services by posting Niconico URL links on 2ch, the famous web bulletin in Japan full of Internet geeks and otaku. Soon after, Niconico became talk of the town on 2ch and on Internet online spaces over a short period of time.

[41] At that time, YouTube limited the length of videos to ten minutes per clip with low definition, so users were restricted to low quality and a short video. To mitigate the technical problems, users were challenged to create funny or interesting clips such as gags and ideas for videos which did not require high quality or a long storyline. A famous theme was the loop video, which was a video that kept playing the same scene over and over again.

[42] See the explanation about craftsmen in Chapter 2 Table 2-1.

tank driving into the video, which he has uploaded. The video in the background originally depicted just the moon, a town and cars.
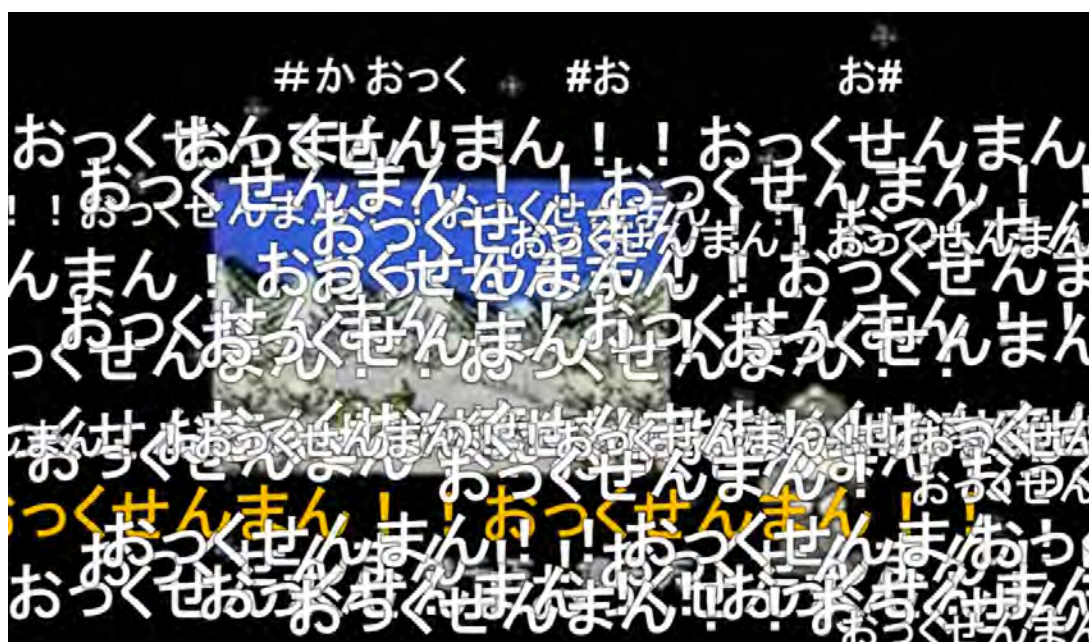
Figure 3–J: An example of *danmaku*, writing a particular part of a film's lyrics: "*okusenman*."[43]

Figure 3–K: An example of *danmaku* art on Niconico created by a *danmaku* craftsman.[44]

---

[43] Otemoto 2008. "Nikoniko danmaku dai jiten" Niconico video, 11:39. April 5, 2008. Accessed July 20, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm2898941.

[44] Rirī 2019, "Danmaku asobi yozora no machinami to jidōsha." Niconico video, 1:04. January 24, 2019. Accessed July 20, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm34520244.

Subsequently the craftsman visited this video and posted the tank in the clip. In Niconico, a skilled craftsman usually receives compliments in the comments. It is clear that the *danmaku* in Figure 3–J is easier to create for users who do not know about computer script. When they witnessed the beautiful *danmaku* created by this craftsman, some users started to learn how to create computer script for comments and to create *danmaku* themselves, since there were several websites that posted tutorials on the subject. Thus, new craftsman was born. This is how roles in Niconico both expanded and continued. Although the Beta version ended after DDoS attacks,[45] and with YouTube cutting off its connection with Niconico, both the *soramimi* and *danmaku* culture still continue on Niconico and have become particular types of expression and symbols of "unity" among Niconico users, because they have shared the same feeling at a specific moment in a video.[46]

III. Closed Gamma

The third version was called "Closed Gamma" which started on March 6, 2007. Since YouTube had cut off its connection to Niconico, after closing for a while, Niconico reopened and released the SMILEVIDEO, a video server specific to Niconico. SMILEVIDEO enabled Niconico users to upload high quality videos. Niconico now changed to a registered system for all users, which meant that users had to acquire IDs prior to watching Niconico. As the server had limited availability, it was difficult to get an ID during that period owing to the overwhelming number of requests from users.

Moreover, since users could upload videos to Niconico, other functions started up while this version was extant, such as a video delete request form; video tags; category tags;[47] My Page (personal page); My List (own favorite); My List ranking; and a mobile

---

[45] A DDoS attack, or distributed-denial-of-service attack, is an attempt to disrupt the usual traffic of a targeted server, service or network by overwhelming the target or its surrounding infrastructure with a flood of Internet traffic originating from many different sources.

[46] In this second version, Niconico received more than five million comments and more than one hundred million-page views in a month.

[47] Category tags comprise a group of tags that have been categorized by the developers. They were

service.

Figure 3–L on the next page shows the video tags (inside the red square) at the top of the page. This simple video tags system then became an essential tool between users with regard to metadata creation for search engines, providing the connection for derivative works, and a communication tool. I shall examine the importance of these video tags in the latter part of this dissertation.

Figure 3–L: The screenshot of Niconico (Closed Gamma) after login, showing the video tags (inside the red square) at the top of the page (Gigazine 2007).

3-2-2-2 Monetization (RC-RC2-SP1)

IV. RC-RC2

Niconico started its business model by implementing a paid user system. The fourth version was called "RC," which stands for "Release Candidate," and was released on June 18, 2007.

---

implemented on Niconico from May 2, 2007 onwards, and were used to categorize all Niconico videos until June 26, 2019 before being replaced by the "genre" system. (See the Niconico Crescendo version for more information about this.)

In this version, a major update was the introduction of the premium user system which cost five dollars (500 yen) plus consumption tax[48] per month. Premium users received privileges not available to ordinary users. For example, only premium users could skip advertisements or use the reservation functions for live streaming.

Figure 3–M on the next page shows the total number of Niconico premium users from 2007 to 2019. The number reached a peak on September 1, 2016 and then started to decrease, which was almost exactly when the YouTuber boom arrived in Japan (2016–2017).
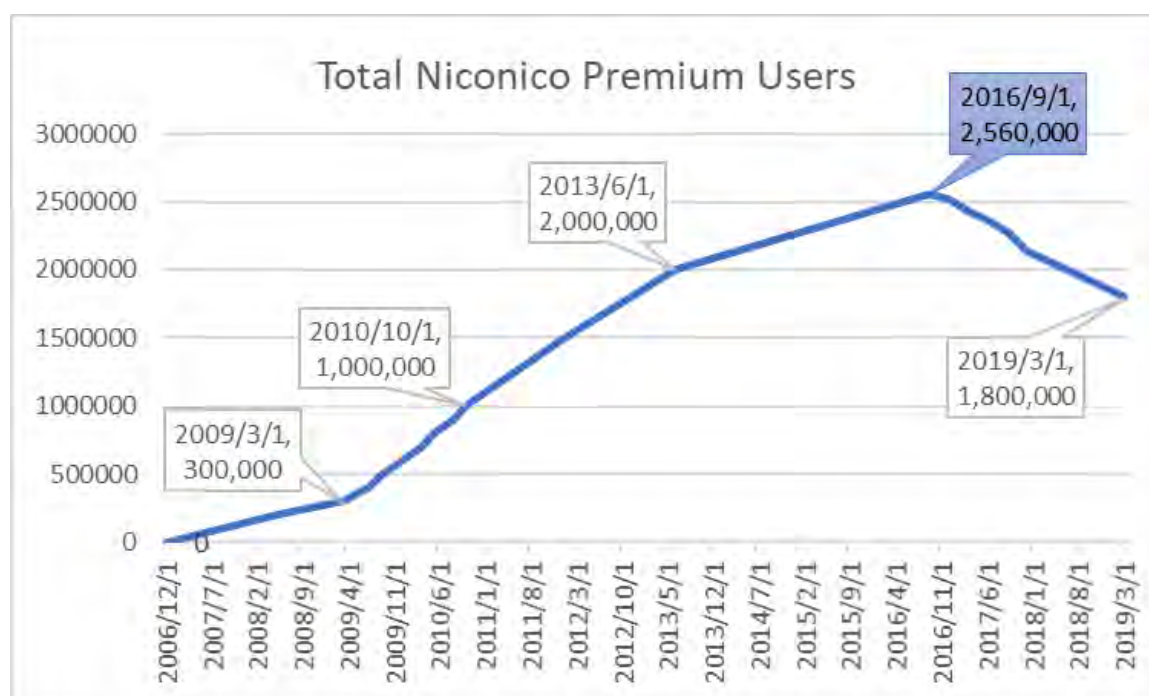
Figure 3–M: The total number of Niconico premium users from 2007 to 2019 (Nicopedia 2019d).

The premium user system has created the main revenue stream for Niconico up until now. The fifth version "RC2" was released on October 10, 2007. This version focused on a design change to suit the ordinary user. The major change in this version was the release of *Niconico kōshiki namahōsō* ("Nico official live"), which was official live streaming from Niconico, but not as yet from users.

---

[48] The consumption tax in Japan is now 8 percent at the time of writing (July 2019).

V. SP1

The sixth version of Niconico, "SP1," was released on March 5, 2008. Having received criticism about the previous version, Niconico again changed the user interface design, which resulted in even more comments about bad design. The most important function released in this version was "Nicopedia," or the Niconico version of Wikipedia. Implementing Nicopedia to Niconico was significant because it connected with a "tag" or video tags in every video.[49] The tag function is the metadata for all users to search for the same category or derivatives of specific works, and it is used for the search engine inside Niconico. In Figure 3–N below, there were tags such as the "tried singing" (category); Gurutamin (a *utaite*'s name), and *Only my railgun* (the name of a song) which were the metadata for this video.

Figure 3–N: The video tag is on top of the video[50] (red square) and the Nicopedia connection (red icon with white kanji inside).

Clicking on the tags would link to the video, with the same tags in the search engine. However, other tags functioned not only for the metadata. Usually other tags were posted by other users, and sometimes these tags became a communication tool. For example, "Beware

---

49 Niconico allowed users to have eleven tags for one video. (One had to be the category; therefore, ten tags for a free edit.) From December 15, 2009 to October 15, 2015, the posters could log up to five tags per video. (In the current Niconico version, "Crescendo," users can log all of the tags if they wish.) These free tags had become the communication tools for users.

50 Gurutamin 2010. "'uruoboe de utattemita' only my railgun 'gurutamin.'" Niconico video, 4:17. August 12, 2010. Accessed July 22, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm11729204.

of crying" "Non-stop tears" "Good erotic voices." Since the number of tags was limited, users who did not think the same as previous users would edit the tags based on their feelings, which sometimes resulted in a "tag war" between users. There is a tag written as *jūyō nikoniko bunkazai* ("Important Niconico cultural property"), which is a word play on government designated "important cultural property." At the back of each tag, some have red icons with kanji inside. These are links to Nicopedia for people who would like to know more about the meaning of the tag. The grey one, however, is the non-registered tag in Nicopedia. In most cases, they were comments from users, and difficult to apply to use as tags in other videos. Tags were also used for writing the metadata of other collaborators in this video.

In brief, during the RC-RC2-SP1 period there were some major changes, the influence of which has strongly affected Niconico today, with, for example, premium users, Nico Official Live and Nicopedia. The changes made with regard to user interfaces brought sharp criticism from existing users.

3-2-2-3 "Trial and Error" (Summer–Ginza)

I named the period July 5, 2008 to June 27, 2018 as "Trial and Error" because since the RC version of Niconico, the developers had attempted to change the user interface and functions, and most of the time this gave Niconico a bad reputation. They continually received comments that the early versions of Niconico were better. Consequently, the Niconico management team usually claimed they would like to return to "the original" (*genten*) during their presentations before releasing the new version.[51] Major updates of services related to

---

[51] For example, the "Double Beta" version meant they wanted to return to the "Beta" version of Niconico, which performed better, or "Zero" which implied "start again." Until now, the version with the longest period in use has been the "Ginza" (October 8, 2013 to June 27, 2018) which was named after the company building that was located in the Ginza area in Tokyo. During the Ginza version, in October 2014 the owner of Niconico, DWANGO Co. Ltd., merged with Kadokawa Corporation, a Japanese media conglomerate.

utaite during this era were as follows.

A) **Niconi Community:** allowed users to create a community and share a video or live stream among the community users.

B) **Nico Commons:** a creator portal (such as Piapro) to share creative works. This later connected to two important features: the **Contents Tree** and **Niconico Creators' Support Program** (*kurieitā shōrei puroguramu*). By registering in the Contents Tree, users would have to specify the materials they had used from Nico Commons. Then, when other users remixed these users' works to create derivatives, they would also register on the system. The more a particular creation has been used as material for derivatives on Niconico, the more money users will receive from Niconico through the Niconico Creators Support Program.

This is another way for Niconico to encourage the users to create both originals and derivatives. After registering, the Contents Tree will appear, showing original works near the video player which is called *oyasakuhin* ("parents' creation.") After clicking on the link, it will move to the Contents Tree which shows other derivative works which are known as *kosakuhin* ("kids' creation") as in Figure 3–O on the following page. The middle of the figure is the "own creation" of this user. He created the video using one "parent" and had created 770 "kids' creations" (as of July 23, 2019.) In other words, he created a first derivative of the original, and then other users remixed his work to recreate other derivatives of the original.

C) **Nico Live (for users)**: Live streaming for users (only for premium users.) (In the current version of Niconico – Crescendo – there are three types of Nico Live: for official use, for Niconico channel users, and for premium users.)

What has been written above comprises brief details of all the previous fifteen versions of Niconico. A major change occurred on February 28, 2018 when Niconico decided to allow

users to watch videos without being registered (such as the *Kari* version created when Niconico began.)
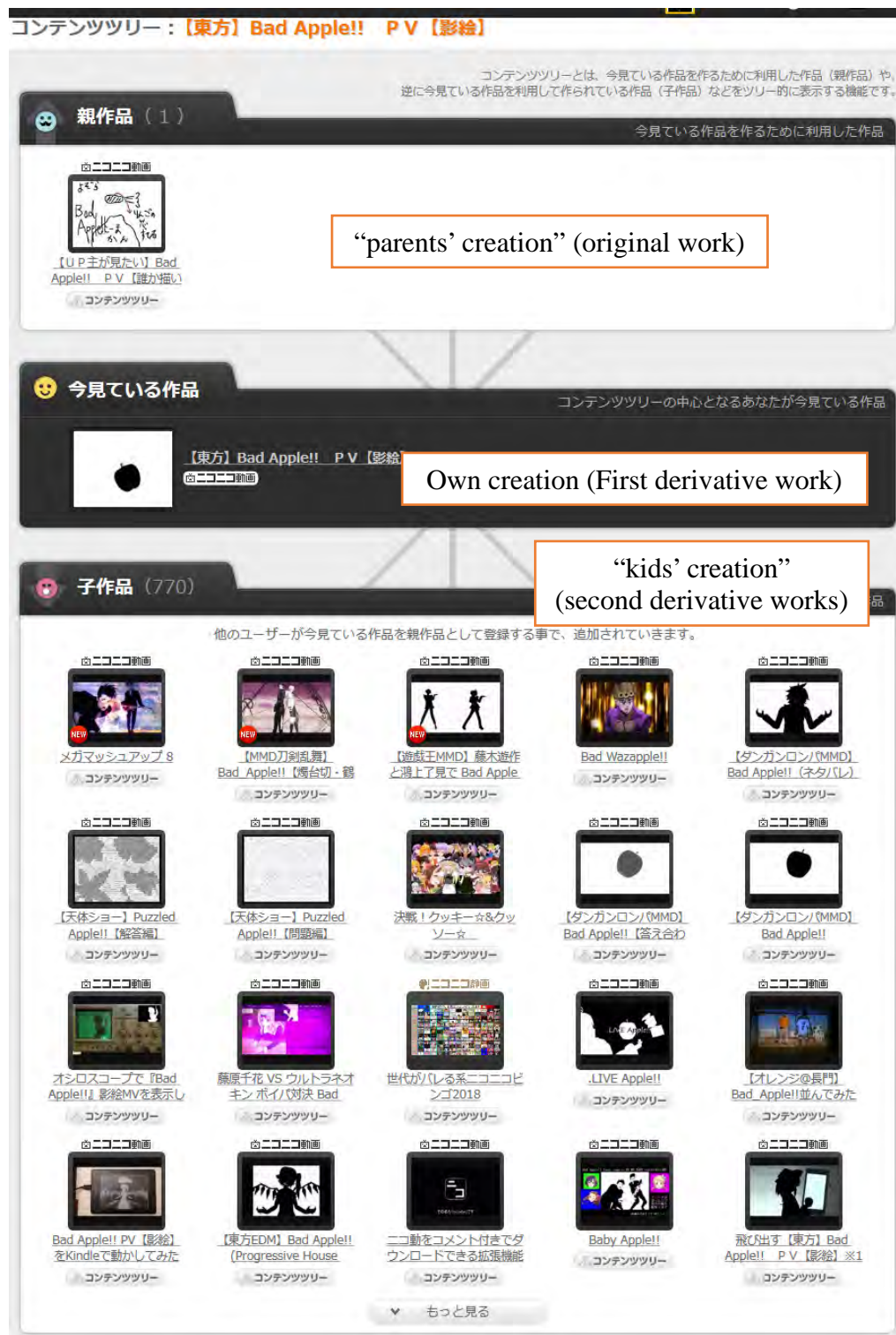
Figure 3–O: An example of a Contents Tree (Niconico 2019c).

3-2-2-4 Current Niconico Version: Crescendo

Figure 3–P: The screenshot from the main page of the current Niconico
(Crescendo)(Niconico 2019a).

The current version of Niconico is "Crescendo," which was released on June 28, 2018. Niconico have claimed that they completely recreated this version, which means they have redesigned not only the user interface but also the infrastructure to improve the speed and connection. For example, on June 26, 2019, it implemented the "genre system" and used this to categorize all videos in Niconico rather than using the previous tags category system (with categories and sub-categories).

As of August 8, 2009, Niconico has seventeen genres as shown in Table 3–3 on the following page.

Entertainment	Radio	Music/Sound	Dance	Animal
Nature	Cooking	Traveling/Outdoor	Vehicle	Sports
Society/Politics/News	Technology/Craft	Commentary/Lecture	Anime	Games
Others	R-18			

Table 3–3: Current genre system in Niconico (as at August 8, 2019). The "tried singing" tag is placed within the Music/Sound genre.

Inside the genres are the tags or previous category tags. For example, in the previous version, *utaite* uploaded their videos to "tried singing," a subcategory of "Entertainment and Music," but now it has become the "tried singing" tag under the Music/Sound genre.

Although there are now several competitors in the market and the main revenue from premium users of Niconico keeps on decreasing, nevertheless paid users of Niconico channels increased significantly from 680,000 to 950,000 people during the fiscal year 2018 (KADOKAWA CORPORATION 2019.) In the Internet era, there have been several rises and falls of famous platforms, and Niconico has passed through several difficult periods over the last ten years. It is now at a critical point of its existence as it needs to be transformed in order to continue as a virtual platform for creators.

Up to now I have summarized the development of Niconico as a digital platform for creators, from its release to its current version. However, Niconico has not only been on the Internet; it has tried to merge the physical world with the virtual world.

3-2-3 Expansion of Niconico Into the Physical World

Apart from its online platform, Niconico attempted to expand its activities into the real world by creating social places. For example, in 2010 it built the "Niconico Headquarters," which provided studios, stores, and cafés for users in Harajuku in Tokyo, an area famous for Japanese youth culture, before moving to Ikebukuro, an area famous for fangirls, and

especially *yaoi* fans.[52] In 2011, Niconico also built "Nicofarre" in Roppongi in Tokyo, which was a live house[53] with a 360-degree LED screen that surrounded the venue. This screen showed online comments and computer graphics during live concerts or events, and aimed to merge the Internet with the real world. Both Niconico Headquarters and Nicofarre closed at the end of July 2019 and will subsequently move to the new Hareza studio that will open in November 2019.The best known of Niconico's activities in the physical social places is the Niconico Conference series.

3-2-3-1 Niconico Conference Series

Niconico Conferences were held occasionally to introduce new services or features on the Niconico website, as well as important announcements from the management team. This feature started on October 10, 2007 as a presentation conference for Niconico RC2. The names of the conferences varied according to the size and aims of the conference: "Presentation Conference" (*Happyōkai*); "City Conference" (*Chōkaigi*); "Small Conference" (*Shōkaigi*); "Big Conference" (*Daikaigi*); and "Super Conference" (*Chōkaigi*).[54] The venues changed, based on the size of the conferences, and were not limited to Tokyo or nearby prefectures but were all around Japan and also outside the country in Taiwan. Before the summer of 2010, attendance at the conferences was free, with a lottery system for a real ticket, and users could view the conferences via the official live streaming on Niconico. However, from "*Nikoniko Daikaigi 2010 natsu: Egao no chikara*," August 26, 2010, it

---

[52] "*Yaoi*" is an abbreviation from *Yama Nashi, Ochi Nashi, Imi Nashi* ("no climax, no resolution, no meaning"), also known as "*June*" (ju-ne), "boys' love" or "BL." It is a genre of the media featuring romantic sexual relationships between male characters. Most of the *Yaoi* creators and readers are female.

[53] Originating in Japan, a "live house" is a venue featuring live concerts with a drinks corner. It is said to be the birthplace of Japanese underground music subculture, developing from "music café*s* (*ongaku kissa*)" during the 1960s and 1970s. There are approximately 1,000 live houses in Japan and 300 in Tokyo (Metropolis 2009).

[54] Niconico's "City Conference" (町会議) and "Super Conference" (超会議) are pronounced in the same way in Japanese, but different Chinese characters are used for the spelling.

became obligatory to pay for real tickets as well as for viewing conferences on the Internet. Real tickets were more expensive than Internet tickets, and users who bought real tickets could watch the Internet archive versions of the conferences later.

3-2-3-2 Niconico *Daikaigi*

The conference series had a strong connection with *utaite.* From *Nikoniko Daikaigi 2009-2010 nikoniko dōga (9) zenkokutsuā* ("Niconico *Daikaigi* countrywide tour 2009–2010 for Niconico (9)",) the *Daikaigi* changed from mainly introducing new services or technology to two-thirds technological presentation and one-third live concerts given by invited users, especially *utaite* and band members (such as guitarists and drum players.) These *Daikaigi* were held in venues in eight main prefectures from Hokkaido to Kyushu. Subsequently the *Daikaigi* usually started with introducing new services and ended with a performance given by popular guest users, who had been selected and invited by Niconico.

3-2-3-3 Niconico *Chōkaigi*

After the number of visitors to Niconico increased, it was decided to create a "super conference." Since 2012, Niconico *Chōkaigi*, a two-day event, has been held once a year in April at the Makuhari Messe in Chiba Prefecture, close to Tokyo. Niconico has claimed that the Niconico *Chōkaigi* is an event that "recreates the world of Niconico in real life;" "a fusion of online creativity and reality;" a connection "between users, contents and business;" and "a platform for Japanese subculture" (DWANGO Co. Ltd 2018, 3–5.) People who visit the venue can experience online activities in Niconico in real life. The content varies from technology, anime, manga, music, dance, and Japanese chess to politics. Users can participate in two ways, either as onsite visitors by buying a hard copy ticket and going to the venue, or as online viewers, watching for free through a Niconico Live program. In addition, visitors to the Niconico *Chōkaigi* can also view the live streaming real-time via their mobile phone applications while walking in the venue or watch the Niconico archives

when they return home.

Moreover, from *Chōkaigi* 1 to 3 (2012–2014), after the event ended, there were live performance sessions given in the evening by guest users called Niconico *Chōparty* ("Niconico super party.") Most famous *utaite* and other users in the popular categories (such as the live stream host, Niconico dancers – *odorite*, etc.) were invited to perform there. Visitors needed to buy the *Chōparty* tickets separately in order to watch the live performance sessions, either as real tickets or as tickets on the Internet. Since 2015, however, *Chōparty* has been held separately on a different day and in a different venue to that of Niconico *Chōkaigi*.

Figure 3–Q below shows the number of onsite visitors versus online viewers at Niconico *Chōkaigi* from 2012 to 2019. The graph shows that onsite visitors gradually increased from fewer than 100,000 in 2012 to 168,248 in 2019. On the other hand, the number of online viewers reached its peak in 2015 at almost eight million viewers. The numbers dropped in 2016, but gradually increased once more in 2018.
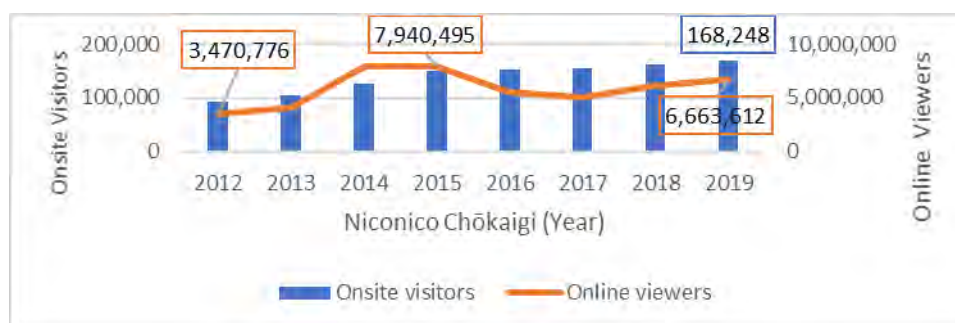
Figure 3–Q: Onsite visitors versus online viewers at Niconico Chōkaigi from 2012 to 2019 (Nicopedia 2019a).

3-2-4 From My Fieldwork: Niconico Chōkaigi 2 and Niconico Chōparty II

To have a concrete idea of what Niconico *Chōkaigi* and *Chōparty* were, and how they were similar to, or different from, the Comic Market, I conducted fieldwork as a research intern at Niconico for about one month during April 17 to May 16, 2013. During the fieldwork, I

joined the Chief Creative Officer (CCO) team that had four members: the CCO (entertainment specialist); the secretary (management specialist) and two planners (the director and a technical specialist.) Despite it being a small team, the four members comprised the management team of Niconico *Chōkaigi 2* and *Chōparty* II, as well as other *utaite*-related activities, and I participated at both events as one of the staff members.

3-2-4-1 Niconico *Chōkaigi 2*

Niconico *Chōkaigi 2* was held on April 27 and 28, 2013 at the Makuhari Messe hall. The first day ended at 18:00 and the second day at 17:00.[55] The venue consisted of rooms 1 to 8, which were divided into three parts: exhibitors, stage / conference, and joint events (such as Niconico *Chōparty II* or THE VOC@LOID Chō M@STER 24.) For example, the "tried dancing" corner provided dance lessons and dance events for visitors to learn and dance together with famous Niconico dancers, while the "tried singing" corner provided a stage for visitors to sing on stage.

For online viewers, their viewing was somewhat limited as they saw things through a camera lens controlled by the staff in each corner. I was one of the staff who controlled the camera with a bird's-eye view of the venue. I read the real-time comments on the video and tried to move the camera, but I couldn't answer all the requests made at the same time by the viewers.

Figure 3–R on the next page shows an example of one exhibitor, and how both online and offline viewing were linked. It is a screenshot of myself at Niconico *Chōkaigi* 2 on April 27, 2013 from the live streaming archives of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) channel on the Niconico website.[56] This is one example of how *Chōkaigi* connected to the Niconico

---

[55] The ticket price for onsite visitors was 1,500 yen (15 dollars) per day (as an early-bird ticket); 2,000 yen (20 dollars) per day (when bought at the venue); 2,500 yen (25 dollars) for two days (early-bird tickets only); and fast-pass tickets (early-bird only) for 1,500 yen (15 dollars) per day and 2,500 yen (15 dollars) for two days.

[56] It was in the corner named *Chōjimintō* ("Super LDP,") provided by the LDP. In the exhibition area there

digital platform.
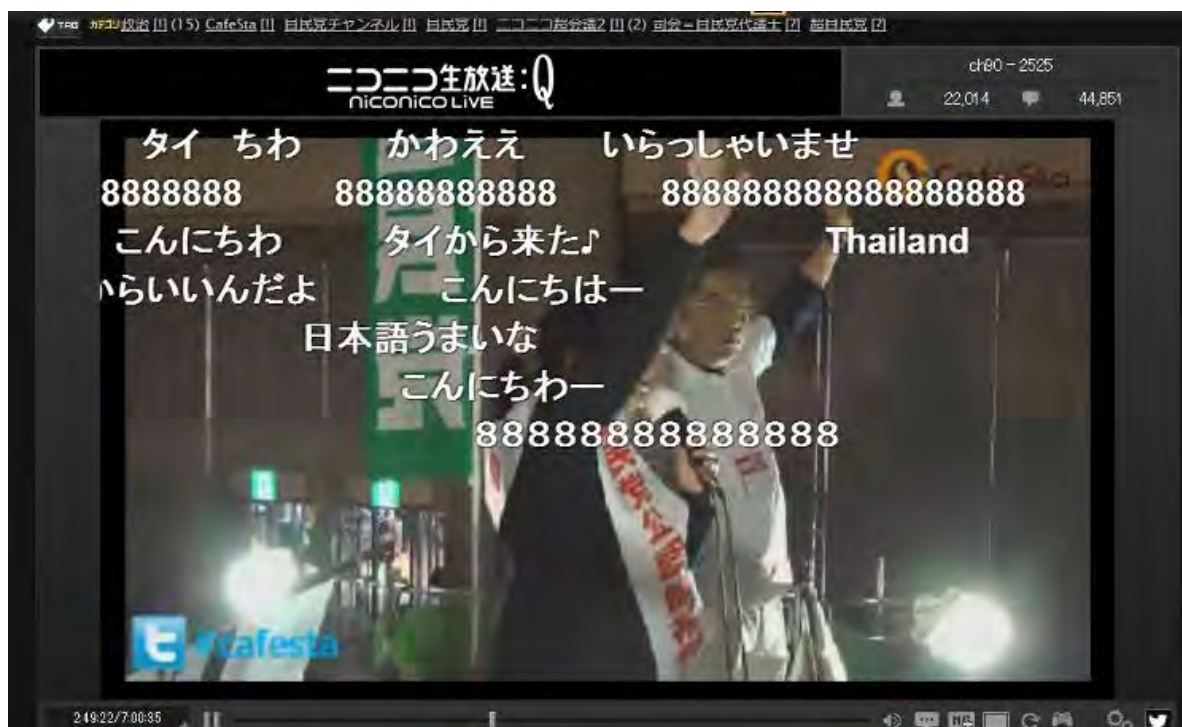
Figure 3–R: Screenshot of the author on April 27, 2013 at Niconico *Chōkaigi* 2, taken from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) channel on April 29, 2013.

3-2-4-2 Niconico *Chōparty* II

Niconico *Chōparty* II was a joint event with Niconico *Chōkaigi* 2, and was held at Makuhari

Messe event hall. The first day (first night carnival) started at 18:00 and the second day (last

night carnival) at 17:00. Visitors had to pay for tickets to enter the venue, and online viewers

---

was a real promotion car for the LDP with a green flag with the LDP's name written on it. Japanese politicians usually go on the roof of this car and ask for votes from voters. I had no idea what would happen. I stood near the car; the staff told me to climb up the ladder to the roof. There was one guy in front of me who said something, and people milling around the van, including staff, applauded. Then it was my turn. A guy in a white shirt passed me a big microphone covered with white garments and told me to wear a sash. At the time I did not realize what was written on it, but I watched the video archive later and discovered that it was the name of the LDP. Then I saw the screen near my feet showing that I was now on the live program. A guy next to me was the MC and told me to introduce myself and to look at the big whiteboard in front of me (online viewers couldn't see this.) On it was written "My name is … from the LDP. Please vote for me." After I had said this, people surrounding me applauded and it was the end of my turn. Everything happened very fast and I didn't have enough time to see the screen to check how online viewers had responded. Two days later, I found the archive video of this corner on the LDP channel in Niconico. I found out that people had responded positively to what I had said (the number 8 means "applause" in Niconico).

had to pay for tickets to view the live streaming.[57] Popular users from famous categories were selected and invited onto the stage. Some users performed for only one day while others for both days, depending on the program.

During Niconico *Chōparty* II, there were twelve *utaite* who appeared on the first day and thirteen *utaite* (eight, plus one *utaite* group comprising five members, with the band name of *Root five*) on the second day. Six *utaite* participated on both days. *Root five* members participated on the first day as individual *utaite* and on the second day as a group. There was only one *utaite*, Gero, who performed solo on both days. Figure 3–S below shows the stage inside the event hall.

Figure 3–S: Inside Niconico *Chōparty* II. Photo taken by the author on April 27, 2017 at 18:47.

There were three big screens behind the stage. On the screens, not only images from the camera but also real-time comments from online viewers appeared on each screen from

---

[57] The ticket price for onsite visitors was 5,800 yen (58 dollars) for the first day and 6,800 yen (68 dollars) for the second day (with all seats reserved;) whereas an Internet ticket cost 2,000 yen (20 dollars) for the first day, 2,500 yen (25 dollars) for the second day and 3,000 yen (30 dollars) for both days. People who bought onsite tickets could watch the online archive for the first time free of charge. While the onsite capacity was limited, the virtual world had more space for viewers. (*Chōparty* II had 12,000 onsite visitors, but 1.1 million online viewers.)

right to left. Furthermore, online viewers could see some special effects while watching, which were invisible to the onsite users. For instance, when *utaite* sang a song about a rainy day, online viewers could see computer graphics of falling rain or umbrellas inside the venue. These were features that encouraged convergence between the social place and digital platform.

3-2-5 The Ethos of Niconico

In the first half of this chapter I reviewed the physical social place of the Comic Market for creators, while in this section I have introduced Niconico primarily as an emerging digital platform. Comiket and Niconico *Chōkaigi* and *Chōparty* shared some similarities, but there were also differences. On the one hand, both Comiket and Niconico encouraged visitors or participants to express and share their creations with others. On the other hand, they had a different ethos. While Comiket is very concerned about all participants being equal, Niconico *Chōkaigi* and *Chōparty* are business events. The staff at the latter two events were employees of Niconico and professional staff from the convention company. They were paid to work. The visitors at these events are customers and, as a rule, staff couldn't participate in the exhibition, unlike Comiket where time is allowed for volunteer staff to purchase *dōjinshi*. I was surprised when I learnt about this as I had previously thought that both Comiket and Niconico had the same ethos before I started my research internship at Niconico. It is also important to emphasize that *utaite* and their fans also encountered this situation and found they had to adapt their behavior to both the social place and digital platform.

3-3 Revisiting the Conceptual Model: *Utaite*

In this chapter I have reviewed both the historical and cultural backgrounds of the Comic Market and Niconico, from where *utaite* originate. One is a social place that exists and was created by users who wanted a place for people to share their work and communicate with

other people who share the same interests. The other is primarily an emerging digital platform. Starting from a dependence on another website, such as YouTube, for "playing," Niconico eventually developed its own platform for users to share their work and also attempted to expand its activities into the physical world and connect them together. Both the social place and digital platform encountered problems which they attempted to resolve.

I would now like to reconsider my conceptual model, taking into account the cultural backgrounds I have discussed in this chapter. Figure 3–T below illustrates the position of *utaite* in the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture. I propose that the position of the *utaite* should appear in the middle of the Triangle, illustrating the connection of six elements from three perspectives (cultural, economic, and political) between the dominant practices of professionals in the commercial media, which creates idols in celebrity culture and the alternative practices of amateurs using UGM within the *dōjin* culture.
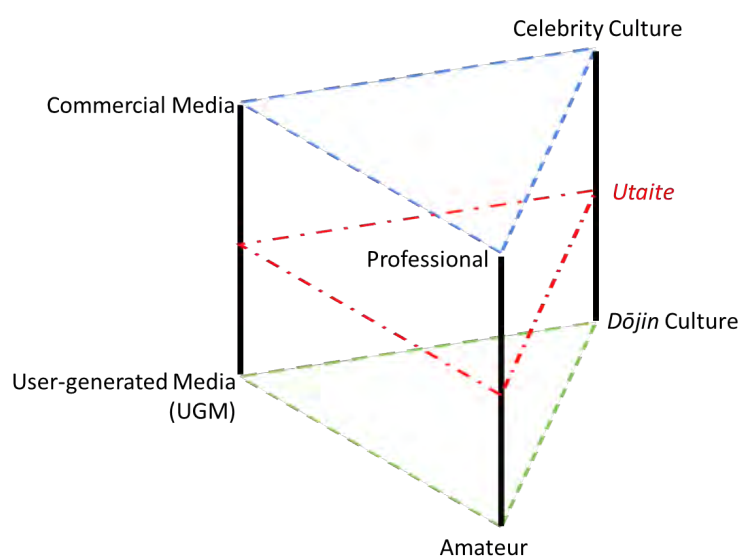
Figure 3–T: The position of *utaite* in the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture

I first discuss the economic perspective, that is, the commercial media and UGM. The philosophy of Comiket and *dōjinshi* are aligned with the concept of UGM, and Niconico's philosophy when it first began also fits with this concept. After Niconico expanded its activities to physical spaces, such as Niconico conferences, however, its

commercial motivation became stronger. Nevertheless, the Niconico management team have often claimed that the *Chōkaigi* was in the red and that they provided these events for the sake of creative culture. Comiket also received some criticism when it began to include a corporate area within its events. However, unlike Niconico, it attempted to retain its philosophy of everyone being equal, and its main emphasis is still on the circles rather than on the corporates.

With regard to the cultural perspective, that is, *dōjin* culture versus celebrity culture, *utaite* are users and participants who move between social places and digital platforms. Moreover, some famous *utaite* have also appeared in commercial media, debuted as indie artists, or have held private, live fee-paying concerts. They have focused on creating content, and to some extent rely on what they create being consumed by fans. Some fans have treated them as though they were famous idols or singers in the celebrity culture, even though they should be regarded as participants in Comiket and users in Niconico. Nevertheless, they are somewhat more iconic as seen through the eyes of fans, and when some *utaite* become famous, they have been invited to concerts or to appear on commercial media. These particular *utaite'* cultural positions have altered, from being producers to being produced by professional staff. They have focused on creating and sharing their creations in Comiket and Niconico but have also sung in profit-oriented live concerts nationwide.

From the political perspective, some *utaite* began their careers because of the fame they gained within Niconico. *Utaite* have been scouted by the music industry, which started to see profitable business ventures with the *utaite* phenomenon. *Utaite* would make a debut or be invited to social places organized by Niconico such as Niconico *Chōkaigi* or *Chōparty*. Once the business motivation became stronger, the conflict between the two types of ethos became problematic, because *utaite* were criticized by both participants in Comiket and by other users on Niconico.

On the one hand, the ethos of equality in Comic Market has become a fundamental tenet of *dōjin* culture, especially for the purpose of creation. The majority of Niconico users when Niconico began were also affected by this culture. Rather than gaining financial profit, playing and sharing were the main objectives for its creators. On the other hand, although the creative culture on Niconico digital platform emerged from the *dōjin* culture, it did not completely follow the Comiket ethos, which aimed for expressing and sharing without for financial reward. Niconico employed a different approach.

In December 2011, for example, Niconico announced its Creators' Support Program to encourage creators to share and collaborate their creations with others on its platform by providing some financial rewards. This was a relatively new concept at that time, since most derivative works from fans on the Internet were usually regarded as "free labor" (Terranova 2000). However, unlike Comiket, where the majority of creations are derivatives, Niconico has both original and derivative creators on its platform especially after the Hatsune Miku boom in 2007. Since both original and derivative creators are users, they could easily make contact with other users, and ask for permission or new collaborations. Given that there was a mutual agreement on the usage of borrowing and collaboration; there have been few conflicts of ethos on this digital platform. This should be regarded as one of the merits that social media has brought to creative culture.

The middle position in the model also indicates the conflicts and compromises which *utaite* may encounter. As *utaite* utilize both Comiket and Niconico to circulate their creative works, they therefore needed to learn and adapt to two different cultures and practices. The need for participation in both social places and digital platforms should be considered and examined. It would surely be easier for *utaite* not to participate in Comiket, given that the ethos is different to that of Niconico, but nevertheless most do participate in that physical space, and compromise to adapt to the Comiket's ethos. (The importance of the expansion

of utaite into physical spaces will be discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5.)

In the next two chapters I shall use the conceptual model to analyze the data I have gained from my fieldwork, and explain how the *utaite* adopted and adapted these two different ideals into their cultural production and circulation activities.

Chapter 4

"Tried singing" (*Utattemita*): *Utaite* and Online Derivatives

In this chapter I shall analyze the creative works of *utaite*, utilizing research data on how the works of *utaite* were produced across online platforms by using qualitative data (See Chapter 2 for more details about the methodology.) Interviews with three *utaite* were conducted in 2011 to gather in-depth information regarding the production process and human relationships. I have also selected a famous Vocaloid song: "A Thousand Cherry Blossoms"—*Senbonzakura—*as a case study to analyze the video clips posted by *utaite* (Kurousa 2011).

4-1 How to Become a *Utaite*

To start with, I deal with the question of how to become a *utaite* on Niconico. Anyone who has a registered Niconico account, and has the tools for recording, editing and uploading his or her voice clips, can become an *utaite* on Niconico. According to an article about how to undertake "tried singing,"[1] published in 2010, there are four simple steps to creating a video clip. They are as follows:

1. Preparing the required equipment (for example, PC, microphone, music editing software, earphones / headphones.)

2. Deciding on the type of accompaniment (for example, karaoke backing track.)

3. Recording the voice and mixing with the accompaniment.

4. Inserting the video or photo and posting on Niconico.

During the fieldwork I conducted, I attempted to become a *utaite* myself, using my iPhone to record and pre-install Windows Movie Maker to mix my voice with an existing

---

[1] Utatte mita no yarikata o shōkai shite mita. 2010 *Utatte mita no hon o tsukutte mita: nikoniko dōga no utatte mita fan ni sasagu. Entā burein mukku*. Tokyo: Enterbrain.

video. After the upload, I received some views, numbering less than a hundred, but no one commented or shared it. The reaction that occurred with my *utaite* trial is not an unusual phenomenon. Like other platforms, Niconico provides space for expression, but it does not guarantee that the clips will be watched. There are many factors that determine who becomes famous on Niconico, and one of these is the quality of the upload. The word "quality" here includes, but is not limited to, voice quality, download time and the use of humor in the video clips.

As explained in the previous chapter, Niconico provides several amenities, with video-sharing as one of its core services. Given that *utaite* are the media producers and Niconico is the channel, all uploaded video clips are the media that is consumed and evaluated. For the *utaite*, singing is the act of creation.

However, the voice is only one component of the video clip. Other components, such as voice quality, the mix technique, video size, song selection, illustrations, or use of humor, are also significant. Not every *utaite* excels in editing and uploading the videos, and they tend to either borrow from pre-existing works or collaborate with other users to produce high quality work.

4-2 The Production Process, from the Beginning to Posting on Niconico

This section will use the interview data and figures that three informants answered to analyze the production process for Niconico. It should be noted that despite the diverse experiences of the informants, all three have backgrounds in music. I gave the set of interview questions to the informants before they saw me on the day of the interview, and asked them questions based on the answers they had already given.

I. Informant A (female, aged 26, a student and professional indie singer)

A graduate of an art college who majored in music, informant A had considerable experience

of singing. Before becoming a *utaite* in 2008, she was a vocalist of a duo and participated in various musical activities, one of which was *utaite*, to increase her fan base. Below is the figure she drew and an excerpt from her interview explaining her production process in Niconico (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011):
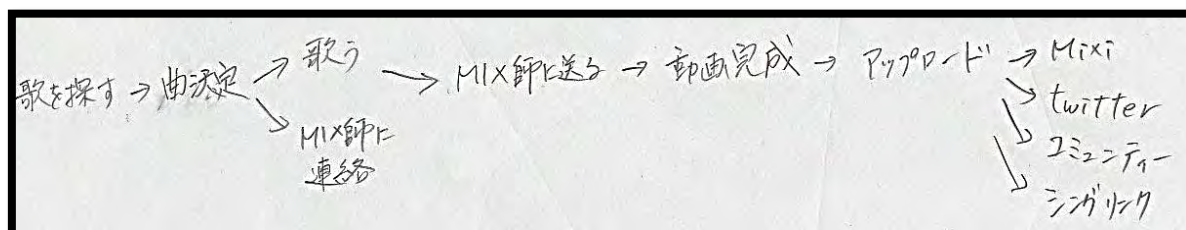
Figure 4–A: Production process as drawn by informant A.
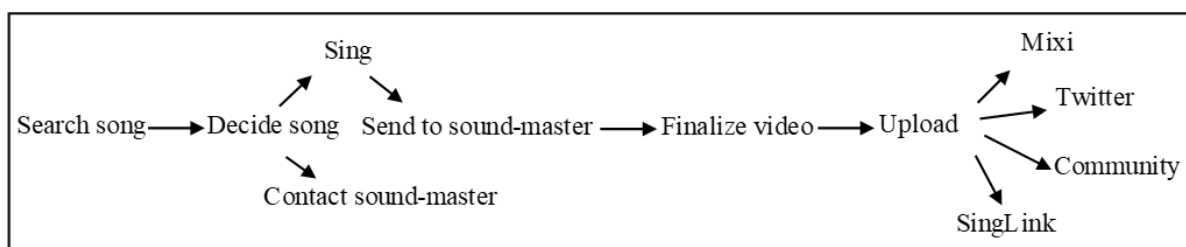
Figure 4–A–1: Production process as drawn by informant A (translated version.)[2]

> As it is, if [I] want to sing something, first I search for a song I will sing. Then, if I think I have found a good one, I then decide on the song. After the decision, before recording, I will first ask about the sound-master's schedule. I will team up with someone who is available and send the file to him/her [laughs]. I have two or three people in store [laughs]. It seems like if one person is not available then I ask someone else: "Hey, do this." Then I send him or her the song [I recorded] and, well, finish it along with the video.

I then asked about other people involved in the production process after sending the recording to a sound-master. Below is the conversation between us ("W" as writer; "A" as informant A) (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011):

> W: Is it the video-master (*dōgashi*) who finalizes the videos?
> A: Recently, in many cases, a person who becomes a sound-master (*mikkusushi*) attaches them [the songs] to the videos for me.
> W: In other words, it seems as though a sound-master becomes a video-master?
> A: Yup. Rather than a video-master, you would say "encoding-master" (*enkōdoyasan*).[3] Then you upload.

---

[2] See the explanation of roles in Niconico in Chapter 2, Table 2-1.

[3] There are many ways of referring to the "master" on Niconico. For example, ending with -san (Mr

W: You don't have illustration-master (*eshi*)?
A: There is no illustration-master.
W: You usually use the existing videos?
A: Yup. Oh well, I use an illustration-master sometimes, but it's quite rare.
W: OK. What's next?
A: After finalizing the videos, [I] upload [the clip.]
W: Who is the uploader?
A: I do it myself.
W: What do you do after that?
A: Only advertising.

Informant A explained that in the beginning she did not know that she could ask for another person's help with the technical processes, and undertook the entire production by herself in forty minutes, using her own microphone (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011.)

> Yes. [I] "tried singing" while taking a break. At that time, I really did everything all by myself. I didn't know about things such as sound-masters or that if you didn't upload the video beautifully,[4] no one would watch it. Really, I just winged it. I tried singing the songs that I wanted to sing and just sang at that moment. It took me only around 40 minutes after deciding on the song to uploading it, including the recording and mixing it by myself [laughs]. Thus, at the beginning, it was always, like, "Hmmm, what should I sing?" Then I would sit in front of the PC and search the songs until I uploaded the new [cover] song. All of these [steps] took me 40 minutes.

To decide on a song, she chooses a song that she thinks is good. Her first and second uploaded clips were anime songs, and after the third song she started to sing Vocaloid songs. In the last part of the process, informant A stated that she advertises her new video clips on Niconico via four channels: Mixi, Twitter, community (Niconico) and Singlink, an SNS for the "tried singing" category. She further stressed that she never posts her videos on YouTube directly; they have been reposted mostly by her fans.

II. Informant B (male, aged 38, an office worker)

Informant B had loved to sing since he was young and had a dream of becoming a voice

---

/Mrs) or *ya* (which means shop in Japanese.)

[4] The word "beautifully" (*kireini*) here means to upload under limited circumstances such as low bit rate/ moderate file size (so the viewers can smoothly playback online) but still look the same or almost the same with the original size (high-quality). In order to do this, encoding knowledge is needed. An unskilled encoding may lead to slow playback and a low-quality video clip.

actor. After graduating from university, he spent five years as an actor in a vocal performance college.[5] A friend recommended that he post in Niconico, and his first upload in 2007 was a voice clip that had failed to pass the anime song Grand Prix contest. He showed me his sketch of the production process and explained his production process in our conversation as follows: ("W" as writer; "B" as informant B) (interview with *utaite* B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011):
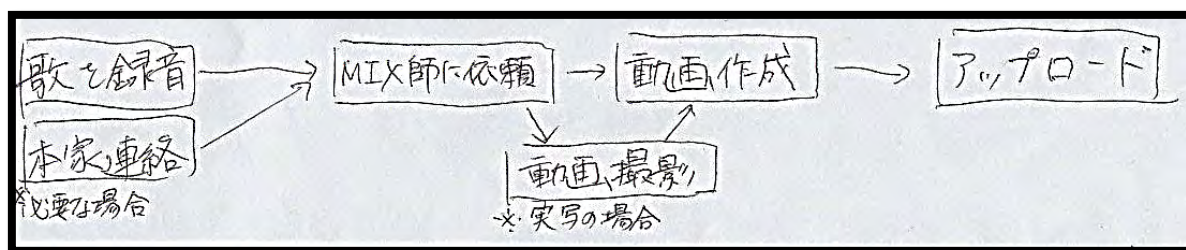
Figure 4–B: Production process as drawn by informant B.
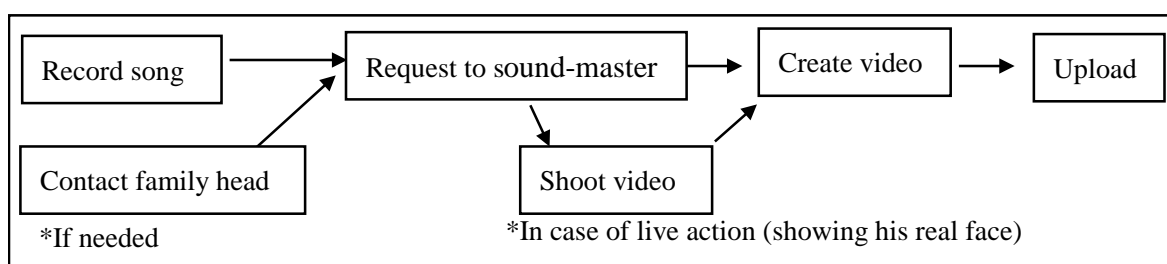
Figure 4–B–1: Production process as drawn by informant B (translated version.)

B: I sing a song then contact the family head (*honke*).
W: [Do you] contact the family head before singing, not after singing?
B: Well, both. There are times when I make contact, and there are times I contact them when I have already decided to upload. However, most of the time there is no need to contact the family head, just pasting the link to the original video is OK. Therefore, only when I've heard that a particular person is quite strict, or I have arranged a bit, will I contact them. However, when I use the original video without editing or arranging, I will simply only paste the original video link. This is only in case it is needed. Next, after recording, I ask that [friend's name] does the mix for me; he always does.
W: You don't do the mix by yourself?
B: I don't do the mix myself.
W: Do you still need the sound-master?
B: Yes, I do.
W: Compared to the mixing process, is the video part easier?

---

[5] He was in an acting school (for voice actors) for four years. From the third year, he also went to another college for three years (one day per week per college.)

B: The video is probably easier. For mixing, first my friend does the mix for me. I listen and then, since he is a friend, I ask him to change this and that. I want this part to be like this, and I want the overall sound to have a nuance. We argue back and forth many times. If we are quick about it, we argue only five times, but it may be twenty times.

W: I see. And then you create the video?

B: If a real image is needed, I will shoot a video. However, for Vocaloids, since they already have videos, I use existing videos to upload.

W: You upload only to Niconico? What about YouTube?

B: No.

W: Sometimes I see your videos on YouTube, so you are not the person who uploaded them?

B: Someone else would have uploaded them.

W: By the way, in case you need to use an illustration-master (*eshi*) [to draw for you], when do you contact them?

B: If I need to use an illustration-master, I will order from here [points to the beginning of the figure.]

W: You make contact at the beginning of the process?

B: Yes, at the beginning.

III. Informant C (female aged 33, an office worker)

Of the three informants, informant C was the first who became a *utaite* in 2007. She joined Niconico not long after it was founded (around the time of the Beta version). From 2000 to 2006 (before the establishment of Niconico), when she learned that the general public (users) could use their voices on the Internet like DJs on the radio, she started an Internet radio service via a Livedoor[6] service and 2ch[7] VIP board. She was self-taught and had prior experience with sound/video mixing and editing before participating in Niconico. Her favorite genre is parody song (*kaeuta*), which sets a song to its original tune but changes the lyrics.

However, she admitted that recently she lost the motivation to be a *utaite.* Since the emergence of skillful *utaite* on Niconico she feels overwhelmed and thinks that she may be unsuitable because she does not take it seriously. She always thinks of being a *utaite* as one of her hobbies. When she showed me the figure of her production process, she apologized

---

[6] Livedoor Co. Ltd. was a Japanese Internet service provider, an operator of a web portal and blog platform.

[7] A famous Japanese internet web forum.

for having a non-complicated production process and quickly explained her sketch as shown below ("W" as writer; "C" as informant C) (interview with *utaite* C in Tokyo, September 25, 2011):
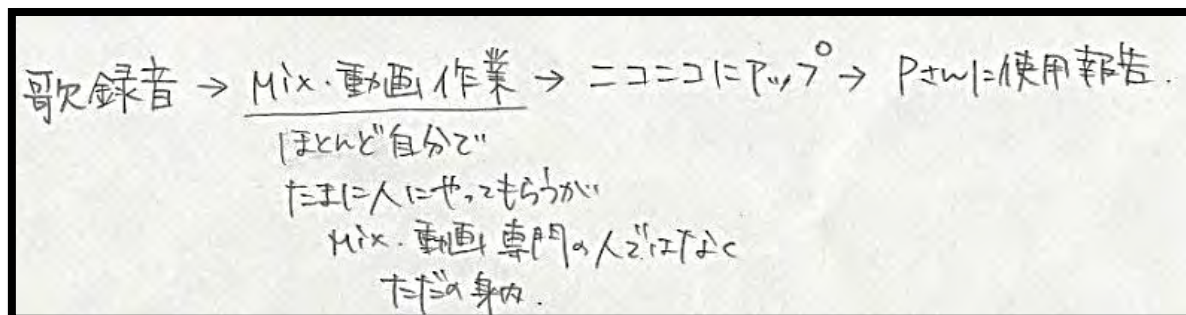

Figure 4–C: Production process as drawn by informant C.
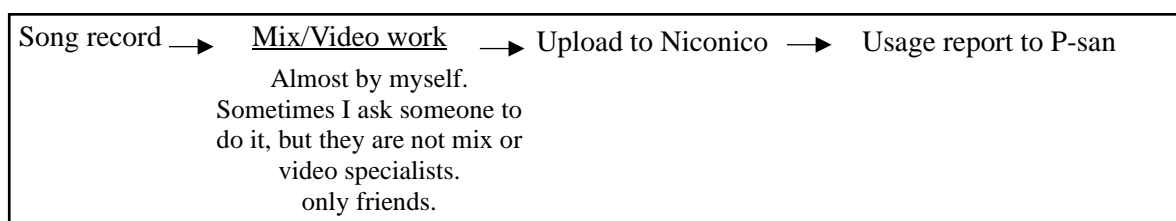
Figure 4–C–1: Production process as drawn by informant C (translated version.)

W: OK, first, do you start by recording the song?
C: Yes. I the mix/video work by myself, but sometimes I let others do it. However, they are not specialists. Just my friends. After that I upload it to Niconico and tell the Vocaloid producer (*P-san*) that "I used it."
W: You contact the Vocaloid producer after uploading?
C: Yeah, exactly. I used it. It is OK to contact after uploading to say that I sang using the video.
W: I see. You don't contact the producer before you upload it, right?
C: That's right. Instead of saying "Can I do it?" since the sound source is available for use, I contact the producer and say something like "I used it here" after uploading.

I asked her to explain how she had managed to study audio mixing by herself:

W: How did you study audio mixing?
C: Um… Some people had a kind of hobby and disclosed information such as, "If you want to make this type of sound, you need to customize it like this." I saw them and used them as a guide.
W: In other words, you are self-taught, right?
C: I am not sure I should call it "self-taught" … since I hadn't learnt how to do it properly in a theoretical way; I just did it in the way that made my ears feel good.
W: You have never learned from school or friends, right?
C: Never.

4-2-1 Effort Spent on Musical Activities

In addition to the production figure, I asked the three informants to write a radar chart[8] to show how much effort they spent on each activity on Niconico: live streaming, creating videos, PR/advertising, collaboration, interaction (exchange), selling, consumption of music-related goods, performance and others (for example, practicing.) They also indicated the media or tools used during their musical activities. With the highest score being one hundred, both informants A and B answered with very high scores of ninety and a hundred, respectively, for video creation. However, informant C only awarded herself thirty marks for the same activity. Below are the excerpts from each informant ("W" as writer; "A," "B," "C" as informants A, B and C, respectively.)

> *Informant A [creating videos: 90/100]*
> *(interview with* utaite *A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011)*

W: [read the answer] You put most effort on Niconico in creating the videos. You estimated the effort made to be around 90 out of 100. The media and tools that you used were Niconico, video-master and encoding-master?
A: Well, video-master (*dōgashi*). An encoding-master (*enkōdoshi*) is a person who can upload the video beautifully.[9] People who implement encoding and upload in high definition.
W: Wow…
A: Well. Basically, most are undertaken by the sound-master (*Mikkusushi)* or video-master.
W: How did you get to know these people?
A: By referral, or sometimes when I asked a sound-master on Skype and he agreed to do it, or if that person didn't have the time, I would ask him to introduce or refer me to others.
W: Therefore, most of the time you first met them in the community, talked with them on Skype, and, if they agreed, they would do it for you. Am I correct?
A: Yep.
W: Do they do it for free?
A: Yes, sure!

> *Informant B [creating videos: 100/100]*
> *(interview with* utaite *B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011)*

W: The thing you put the most effort into in Niconico is creating the videos?

---

[8] See the radar chart answers and translations of informant A, B and C in Chapter 5-2
[9] See the meaning of the word "beautifully" (*kireini*) in Note 5 above.

B: Because for now I make all the videos by myself.

W: By yourself? You didn't use a video-master? That [clip's name] too? You did all the editing by yourself?

B: For that clip, I passed it to someone who did the mixing process for me. I wonder when… [thinks for a while]. When that person got really busy… maybe around here [points at the life graph around 2009–2010]… There was a song [song's name] that was the first – I shot the video and edited it. Sometimes I ask others to make stuff and stick it together. I also merge the photos or receive material from others and connect them.

Informant C (creating videos: 30/100)
(interview with utaite C in Tokyo, September 25, 2011)

W: You use a moviemaker to create a video?

C: Yes. A moviemaker. However, although I said "create," I made something simple. Using only a moviemaker [simple editing software] is enough [for uploading on Niconico.]

W: You didn't create the animation part?

C: Not at all. Because I cannot draw pictures

W: I see.

C: I am very bad at drawing pictures. Therefore I didn't do it at all.

W: What about the sound mixer? You use Audacity [the name of the audio software]

C: Yes.

4-2-2 "Others" in the Production Process

According to the interview excerpts and figures above, I compared Figures 4-A, 4-B, 4-C with Figure 4–D below which was created based on the *utaite* magazine mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, which set out four steps of how to become a *utaite*.
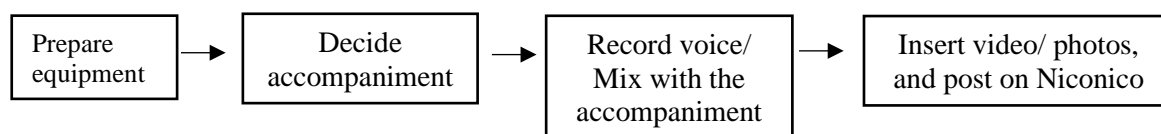
Figure 4–D: Production process introduced by *utaite* magazine.

Comparing Figure 4–D with what had been written by my three informants, it is clear that the former sets out the self-made production process, but that the three informants have other users (others) involved.

Figure 4–E on the following page shows a compilation of the answers from the three informants. I have highlighted two significant common "others" in the three diagrams below:

sound-master, (including friends who conducted the mixing process) and the Vocaloid
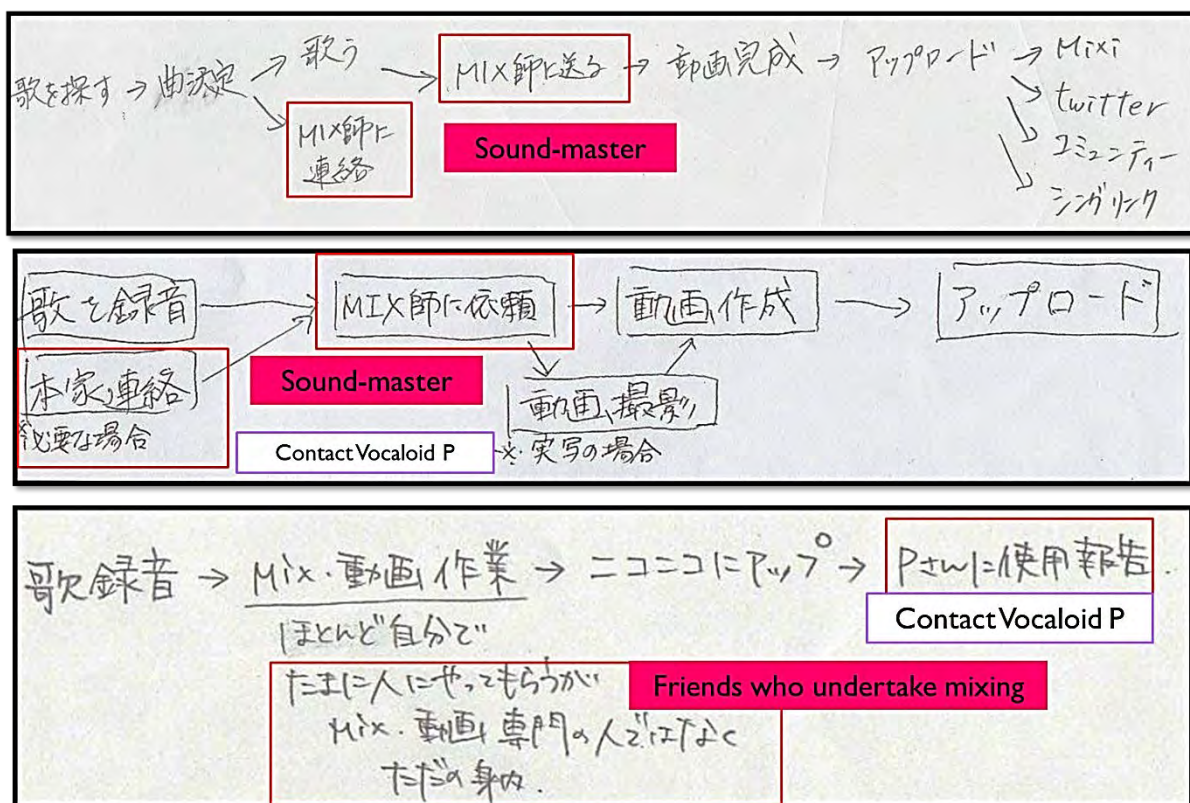
producer.

Figure 4–E: Interview results shows the shared presence of "others" in the production
process of the three informants from the start to uploading.

Two of the three informants included contacting the Vocaloid producer in their

diagrams. Unlike informant B, who contacted the original creators "when necessary,"

regardless of whether or not this was prior to, or after, the production process, informant C

always contacted them after uploading the video clips. For the former, the objective was to

receive permission; the latter, however, only stated the use of the Vocaloid original in her

video clips. Informant C assumed that all Vocaloid producers permitted users to use the

Vocaloid original clips for creating derivative works once they had shared the online clips

for downloading. Although informant A did not talk about this process, after checking her

derivatives in Niconico, it was found that she attached the links of the original Vocaloid clips

in the description parts of all her derivative works. It is essential to make clear that on Niconico, asking permission directly or reporting the use of original material to the Vocaloid producer is not obligatory, but including the links of the original clips is regarded as good etiquette.

The next "others" in the production process are people who undertake the mixing work. In Figure 4–D, recording and mixing are considered to be activities that *utaite* can conduct by themselves in the production process. However, it is apparent that all informants recognized the existence of a sound-master. The first two informants indicated the importance of the sound-master in their diagrams, while informant C noted that she and her non-specialist friends undertook the mixing process. Informant C learned how to mix from her Internet radio activities, and has sometimes undertaken mixing work for other *utaite*, however, she did not identify herself as the sound-master. It is implied that although informant C has a certain level of mixing skill and was able to conduct the mixing process by herself, she did not identify herself as a sound-master since she considered a sound-master's work to be a specialized skill that needed high proficiency. Informant A emphasized the importance of the sound-master for *utaite*, inferring that the sound-master affects the success of *utaite*. A skilled sound-master can adjust the nuances of the singing voice.

This section of the dissertation has examined the production process of *utaite* in Niconico from its inception to uploading. The three informants that I interviewed took roughly similar steps in the production process, from recording a singing voice, mixing, finalizing the video, and uploading. Taking into account the *utaite* core competency, before the interview, I expected to hear detailed information about how the singing voices were recorded, such as the price of a microphone or the studio they were using. Interestingly, however, when I asked the informants to describe the diagrams, they touched on the topic of recording only for a few seconds. When I inquired where they recorded their voices, all of

them replied that they recorded them at their homes and not at a rental studio. Informant B, who is famous for his "shouting" voice, told me that he used basic sound-proof materials to create a sound-proof studio at his home.

The sound-master and mixing process were heavily emphasized by all three informants. At the same time, acknowledging the original links in the description of the video clips, and asking for permission before use or after uploading were equated with giving credit to the original creators, and were regarded as good etiquette for derivative creators. However, compared with the Vocaloid producers who were the original creators of the songs, the sound-masters who undertook the technical part of the creation were invisible elements.

Moreover, according to what I had observed, most derivative clips created by *utaite* had tags for their names, the original Vocaloid song names, and the Vocaloid producers' names; however, they rarely wrote the names of the sound-masters in the tags, and only wrote them in the description of the video. Without a tag, which is one of the communication tools adopted by users, it was difficult for listeners to recognize the existence of sound-masters through watching the videos. The importance of the sound-master was known among the *utaite* but not by their audiences. Lastly, I should emphasize that the interview results clearly set out the production process and rendered the functions and importance of the Vocaloid producer and sound-master visible in the *utaite* production process.

4-3 The Online Community: The Relationship between *Utaite* and Other Users

In the previous section, I examined the production process in Niconico of each informant. I found the presence of "other users" during the creation of their work, such as the sound-master or Vocaloid producer. This section will focus on their relationship, and how the community and network have been constructed.

First, to understand the overall picture, I passed a blank sheet of paper to the informants and asked them to draw a diagram that demonstrated the connection between

them and others. Note that all specific names or information about certain individuals have been excluded and replaced with nom de plumes to protect the privacy of the informants.

Informant A drew the diagram illustrated in Figure 4–F on the following page to show her network on Niconico. Then she described people who have a close relationship in the conversation below ("W" as writer; "A" as informant A) (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011):

Vocaloid songs and a Vocaloid producer

A: At the start there are Vocaloid songs and I am the one who is searching for songs to sing, so the arrow points from me, but the arrow from the Vocaloid songs does not point at me.

W: Why?

A: Well, because the Vocaloid songs definitely don't need me, right? [laughs].

W: I see. What about the Vocaloid producer?

A: The Vocaloid producer is here. If someone likes my voice, sometimes they bring other musical work to me. [Err] if they can't use *Miku*, where a real human voice is needed, they sometimes ask me to sing it. However, this is not done on Niconico. It is considered to be a personal activity outside of the Niconico platform.

Fans and self

A: For fans it is a two-way communication, but it also depends on the person.

W: What about yourself?

A: I myself "try singing." After I sing, I upload.

W: [By pointing to a double-headed arrow] Do you mean you have interpersonal communication with the fans?

A: Well, some fans follow me, and fans follow the songs in "tried singing." That is why there is an arrow from fans to "tried singing," but yeah… how should I say…? Since I tell them that I am playing in the band now, well, sometimes they get involved in live streaming or Twitter, which is why I think there are times where it is possible to create interactive human relationships.

W: What about Twitter? Do fans reply to you when you tweet?

A: Yes.

W: Do you always reply to them?

A: Well, it depends on the content…

"Tried singing"

A: from "tried singing," I got to know other *utaite* and it's connected like Figure 4–F. We have become friends.

W: It seems as though you pass along the road which is called "tried singing" and have become friends, right?

A: Yes.

Figure 4–F: Relationship network as drawn by informant A.

Figure 4–F–1: Relationship network as drawn by informant A (translated version.)

Sound-master

A: There are people called sound-masters. There are many types of relationships. Sometimes I know other *utaite* through a sound-master. Since this person [pointing at the sound-master circle written in Figure 4–F] is connected with many *utaite*, when I ask him, "Do you know this person?" he usually answers me in the affirmative.

W: I think you told me before that on Niconico sound-masters are regarded as important people.

A: Well, yes.

W: Could you give some examples of sound-masters on Niconico?

A: Like [mentions three famous sound-master names.]

W: Does every sound-master do it for free?

A: Yes. They do it for free. But there is a possibility that you need to pay if you make a CD. It depends on the person.

W: So, it is a case-by-case negotiation?

A: Yes.

Informant A then talked about the illustration-master and video-master. Informant A rarely communicated with either of them as they typically collaborated directly with the Vocaloid producers. Informant A stated that up to now, no illustration-master had drawn an illustration for her. Also, she stressed that although the video-master could do the encoding work, usually they do not connect directly with the *utaite*. For informant A, the sound-master was the person who undertook the encoding process for her.

Unlike informant A, informant B drew a diagram using specific names, as shown in Figure 4–G on the next page, of all his connections. According to the result of the interviews, a *utaite* usually uses Skype as a tool for communicating with other *utaite*. Of the informants, both informants B and C are members of a *utaite* group who gather on Skype ("Project H."[10] in Figure 4–G–1 and 4–H–1) At the beginning of his *utaite* activities, informant B had been invited by a friend to join this Skype group. In this group, he met with *utaite* I and became her partner. Then he gradually established relations with other *utaite* with whom he shares activities. Starting with *utaite* II and III, he stated that he knew *utaite* II first through

---

[10] "Project H" is an nom de plume used in this dissertation to refer to a Skype group of *utaite*. This project started with a few Niconico *utaite* participating in 2ch, a famous Japanese web forum. At the time of the interview in 2011 it had thirty to forty members. Informant C is one of the pioneers who created this group.

comments on his video made by *utaite* II on Niconico.

Informant B described the story of *utaite* II as follows (interview with utaite B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011):

> First, there were fans of *utaite* II who wrote comments overlaid onto my video such as "*Utaite* II wrote on his blog that "There is someone like you," or "A guy named *utaite* II wrote something about you." Thus, I searched and found that *utaite* II had written about me. Then I contacted him, and since he lived in Osaka, we arranged our first meeting at an event in Osaka. After meeting at the Osaka event, we talked about singing together, and since then have become good friends.

Later, they formed a duo team—Group I—and have performed in various concerts. Moreover, *utaite* II introduced informant B to *utaite* III who has the same band as a favorite. Then they started to perform together under the name Group I-1. Also, with regard to *utaite* IV, they first met at *Niconico daikaigi*, an event that included a concert arranged by Niconico, where they happened to sing the same song together. As a result, informant B and *utaite* IV formed another *utaite* duo team: Group II.
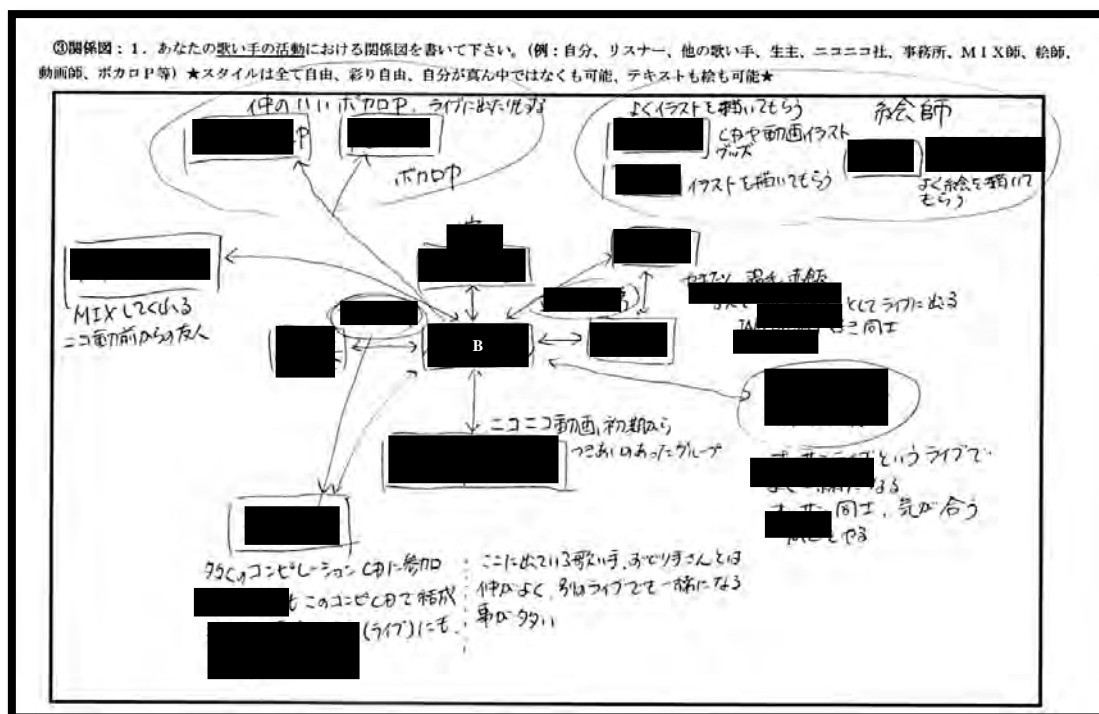
Figure 4–G: Relationship network as drawn by informant B.
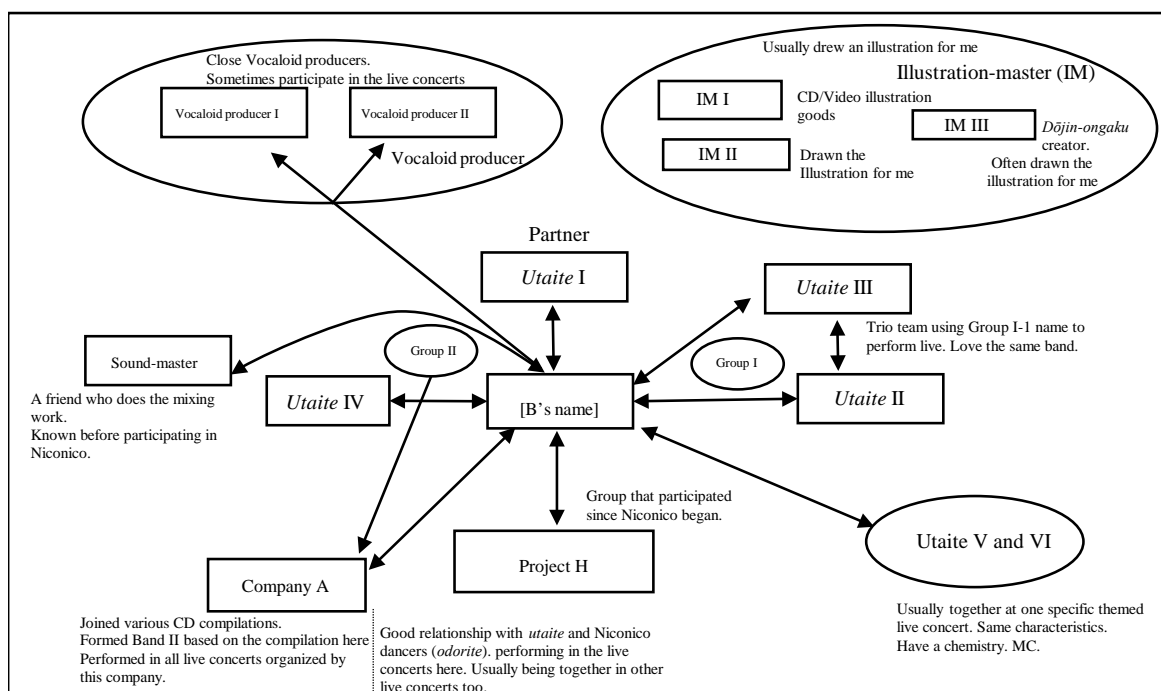
Figure 4–G–1: Relationship network as drawn by informant B (translated version.)

Group II started their activities by creating a compilation album with one prominent management company: Company A (which appears on the bottom left of Figure H). Furthermore, they performed under the name of Group II in every concert organized by Company A. Informant B stressed that through this connection, he established close relations with other *utaite* and Niconico dancers (*odorite)* who appeared in the same live concerts. The last two *utaite* that he mentioned in the diagram are *utaite* V and VI. Since they share some common interests and characteristics, although they have not created a group, they usually perform together at specific theme concerts organized by *utaite* V.

Informant B talked about users in other positions: sound-masters, Vocaloid producers, and illustration-masters. As explained in the production section (see 4–1), the sound-master in the diagram has been a close friend of informant B since college. He always asks that this particular sound-master does the mixing. He also has two close friends who are Vocaloid producers who can play a musical instrument (keyboard). During the live concert, they performed together, and at the party afterwards they talked and became better acquainted. In

addition, he shared three different encounters with illustration-masters.

He met with illustration-master I at an offline meeting, a gathering of fans. She is one of his fans. At the party she said to him, "I draw illustrations," and gave him a postcard depicting some of her illustrations. There has been greater collaboration between them since then, where he often asks her to draw an illustration for him. He also expressed interest in the cover of the CD, and stated that it is the work of illustration-master I. Illustration-master II watched his video on Niconico, and created another video using his own drawings. Informant B found it and sent a message of thanks, saying, "Thank you for drawing me." They also became good friends and subsequently engaged in conversations.

Illustration-master III is also a songwriter and composer of a famous *dōjin-ongaku* circle. Informant B and Illustration-master III knew each other through attending a live concert when informant B sang the latter's song that he composed. Informant B emphasized that it was essential to keep their relationship built on either a fan base or on friendship. The illustrations created by the illustration-master for non-commercial use on Niconico are free of charge. This differs from illustrations for *dōjin* CDs, such as those on CD covers, as those are regarded as job requests. (I shall examine the production process of *dōjin* CDs in the next chapter.) I pointed out that there are no fans in the diagram. Informant B admitted that he tends to be shy with strangers, and only communicates with his fans through Twitter and offline gatherings.

Similarly, there are no fans included in Figure 4–H on the next page drawn by informant C. Before explaining the diagram, she clearly stressed that she joined Niconico at an early phase of its existence and undertook all the audio mixing and video creation by herself. Informant C further described the beginning of "Project H." She told people in 2ch that "she would do the Internet radio." By then some had already joined the Skype group and "Project H" was born. After some time, some of the members invited their friends to

join, and the group grew more prominent. As for informant C, her interpersonal communication on Niconico is still mainly based on members in this project, even though recently this community is now inactive with no activities.
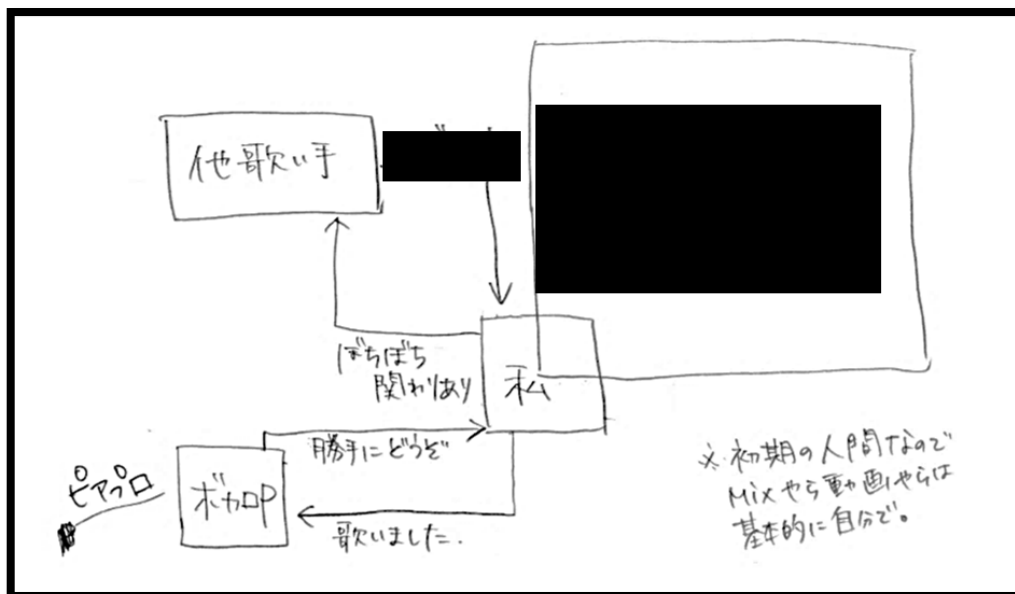
Figure 4–H: Relationship network drawn by informant C.
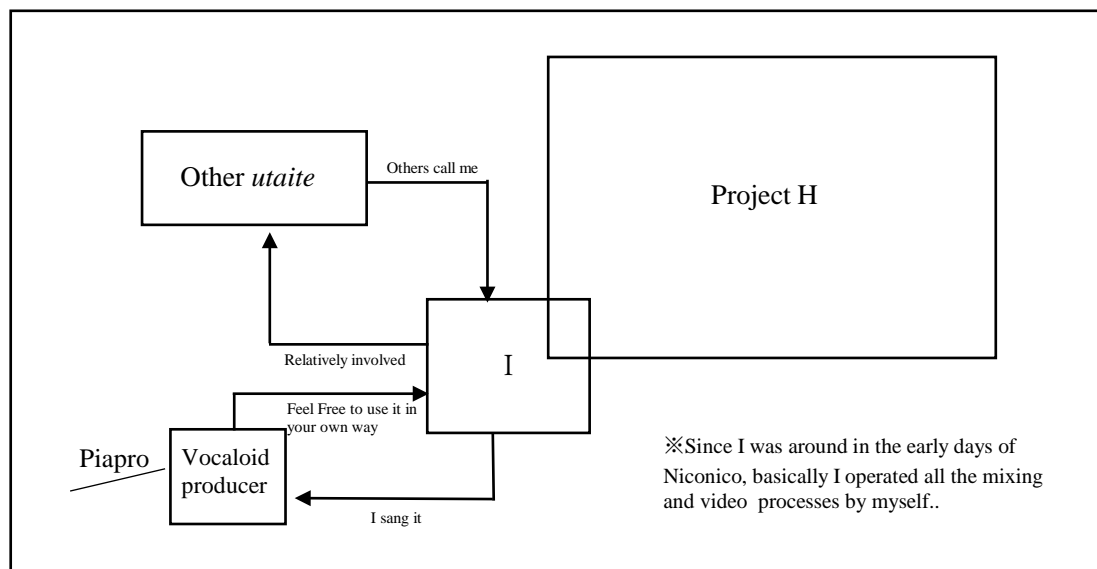
Figure 4–H–1: Relationship network drawn by informant C (translated version.)

She emphasized that she does not have any close contact with the Vocaloid producer. However, she may still connect with the group through the Japanese online social media

group for creators, Piapro,[11] which provided creators with a place to post their creations (such as music, lyrics, illustrations) and the ability to collaborate to create new content.

During the interview, informant C added the word "Piapro" to the diagram. The reason why the word is separated and emphasized is that this community has an important role to play in connecting *utaite* with the Vocaloid producer. There, creators share their works such as lyrics, illustrations, or backing tracks. Usually Vocaloid producers would post their backing tracks in a karaoke version, on MP3 or on their personal websites. Sharing in Piapro allows the uploaded materials to be useful. Below is an account of a communication between herself and the Vocaloid producer (interview with *utaite* C in Tokyo, September 25, 2011):

> Most users who post backing tracks (*ongen*) here usually allow others to sing their songs. Additionally, there is a message board for contact use. Thus, there is a place for us to write after singing that "I have used your backing tracks. The video is here. Thank you." I myself do not sing lots of Vocaloid songs, maybe only two or three songs. However, every time I do so I contact them by writing on the message board on Piapro that "[I have] used it." This is how I related to them. I do not have a good relationship with anyone in particular.

Informant C noted that the Vocaloid producer usually posted MP3 links in their video descriptions. Most of the MP3 links were from Piapro. When I asked her about the "Nico Commons" (where users can upload and share their creative work on Niconico), she replied that she has never used it.

The last part in the above figure is "Other *utaite*." For informant C, these are *utaite* who did not participate in "Project H." She knew many of them, and was known by them. However, she does not know them well. They converse when they meet at live concerts or parties, but that is the extent of their relationship. In informant C's opinion, when Niconico first began, this allowed users to do all the creative work by themselves.

> At the very beginning, everybody did things by themselves. There were no people like what you now call "sound-masters." Though there were illustration-masters, at

---

[11] Details relating to Piapro can be found in Chapter 3.

that time there were no such people as "sound-masters," "video-masters," or "encoding-masters." We thought we should do everything by ourselves. That is why I do not have any connection with those people.

When I asked her about fans who do not exist in the diagram she drew, she replied: "I do have fans, but I'm not involved with them at all." She also claimed that at the very beginning of Niconico, registered users did not state their names in the clip. When she uploaded her first singing clip, she did not write her name, either in the title or within the description of the clip. In contrast, *utaite* users of Niconico today generally write their names in the title of the clip. Informant C noted that the situation in the past was entirely different to that which pertains on Niconico today.

4-3-1 Collaboration Among Utaite

The interview results showed a network collaboration between *utaite* and other users. Informant C had the fewest users in the relationship diagram. She spent most of the time undertaking the production process by herself. Informants A and B stressed the necessity of a sound-master. Informant B is the only informant who has an interpersonal relationship with an illustration-master, and informant A described the existence of fans in the diagram. It seems reasonable to suppose that because of her aim to obtain more fans from Niconico, she tends to pay attention to her existing base of fans more than the other two informants. However, informant B continues to organize offline meetings with fans after his concerts.

The interviews also showed variations with regard to the level of intimacy. Unlike informants A and C, who wrote just "people" in their diagrams of position titles, informant B gave the people individual names. It is likely that informant B had a closer relationship with other users than the other two informants, an assumption stemming from several activities indicated in the diagram. While informants A and C showed people whom they had contact with and used both directly or indirectly, and those with whom they had one-way or two-way communication, informant B showed only people with whom he communicates

directly.

In addition to the collaboration with technicians or specialists such as a sound-master or Vocaloid producer, it is clear from the three diagrams that the informants also have relationships with other *utaite*. All informants stated that they have direct communication, as well as collaboration, with other *utaite*. Being friends with online users (who share the same interests or *dōjin*) is not unusual within the online community.

In Niconico, the collaboration culture had already formed among *utaite.* The collaboration of singing clips might start with only two *utaite* or a team; the majority consist of duos.

The production process can be implemented either online or offline. The parts for each *utaite* to sing are decided. Then individuals record their voices and send the file to a *utaite* or sound-master who is responsible for mixing. With regard to offline contact, a studio may be rented, or the singers may gather at a place to record and then send the clip to the sound-master if required. The finalization of the process may be undertaken by a sound-master, an encoding-master or with the *utaite* themselves. Only one *utaite* will upload the clip to Niconico, using the title and tags to specify all collaborators.

It is interesting to note that some popular *utaite* groups will create names to identify their teams during collaborative activities. Some examples include *Asamakku* (a duo *utaite*: Asamaru and Jack); Point Five (.5) (a group of users comprising five *utaite*—Amu, Asamaru, Clear, Dasoku, and Mīchan—a Vocaloid producer and an illustration-master); *Dagero* (a duo *utaite*: Dasoku and Gero) or 1122 (a duo *utaite*: Dasoku and Ren.)

From the above examples, it is clear that some *utaite* have participated in more than one team. Their activities have ranged from posting collaborative clips to joining live concerts or selling CDs, to debuting as professional singers. In this dissertation, the analysis will focus only on singing clips on Niconico created by collaboration between *utaite*.

Table 4–1 below shows the data of the video clips uploaded by each informant.

Informant	Highest rank	Highest view counts	Amount of uploaded videos (As of August 2011)		
			Solo	Collaboration	Total
A	4th	56,320	37	5	42
B	1st	444,400	29	27	56
C	1st	461,743	12	9	21

Table 4–1: Data of videos uploaded by the informants.

The table shows that the video clips of informants B and C became the first rank in Niconico at least once, as both have the highest view counts of around forty thousand views. The key point of this table is that it reflects the type of uploaded videos. As analyzed previously, informant B has a greater tendency to be more active in interpersonal communication among users in Niconico. The number of collaborations in the table above is concrete evidence to support this assumption. Informant C[12] has a collaborative work rate of more than 40 percent. Since she is one of the pioneer members of "Project H," she received more chances to communicate and collaborate with other *utaite*. On the other hand, informant A managed to upload solo creations with only five collaborative works so far.

These three informants have devoted their energy to collaborate at different levels. Using half of her total effort with regard to creating singing clips to collaborating with others, informant A said that she frequently collaborates with her *utaite* friends. There is no exact pattern to determine who will send the invitation first. She sends a Skype message saying, "Sing this song?" to her friends when she gets bored with singing alone. Similarly, when her friends invite her to collaborate, they send messages such as, "I think I will sing this; join?" via Skype. After they decide to collaborate, informant A will sing her part, and then send the

---

[12] Informant C noted that recently she had deleted half of her clips on Niconico as she felt embarrassed by the quality of them. She had actually uploaded around forty clips in total.

sound file to her *utaite* friend for the mixing process. When she is the one who triggers the plan, she will search for a sound-master who will undertake to do the mixing. Of the five collaboration videos she has undertaken, she has been the organizer once.

Of the three informants, informant B dedicated his efforts to collaborate the most, rating it 80 out of 100 percent. Moreover, the same evidence is shown in his relationship figure and the number of collaboration clips in the table. He stressed the importance of collaboration in the interview, stating that "Rather than saying that I spend an effort to collaborate, now I usually undertake collaboration activities as a duo under the name of 'Group II,' since there are lots of things that I cannot do alone."

Informant C uses around 60 percent of her effort in producing a singing clip in collaborating with others. Up until now, all her collaborative works have been conducted only within Niconico. She described the collaborative process in a similar way to that of informant A. The initial invitation might be sent by either herself or other users. Usually the person who initiates the collaboration is the person who handles the mixing process, by either providing the sound-master or by doing it by him- or herself. Informant C emphasized that sometimes she and her *utaite* friends undertook the mixing, and that she herself had never asked "specialists" [13] to undertake it. She further stressed that with her method of collaboration she would record her singing voice, receive the sound file from the other *utaite*, and undertake all the mixing process by herself at her house.

Informant C differs from informants A and B with regard to the type of collaborators. While informants A and B usually cooperated with close *utaite* friends, informant C stated that she does not collaborate with specific individuals. Her collaborators usually changed with each new recording, and might be any *utaite* in "Project H" or *utaite* with whom she has become acquainted on Niconico. Informant C described how she invited another *utaite*

---

[13] The word "specialists" here means sound-masters.

to collaborate with her as follows (interview with *utaite* C in Tokyo, September 25, 2011):

> First, [I found that] my video clip had been used in another chorus video [a mix of *utaite* videos] as well as the clip of the person [I later contacted.] At that time, I felt that my voice and that person's voice were a good fit. Then I searched that person's website and found his contact details, so I mailed him, and he replied "Yes." After that I said to him, "Let's meet on Skype," then we contacted each other using Skype.

It is important to note that, according to her story, there was another Niconico user who had used several *utaite* singing clips to create a new derivative work: a "chorus video."[14] Informant C met him on account of that chorus clip. Here I would like to emphasize the effects of derivatives that contribute to the creation of further derivatives on Niconico. Although collaboration among *utaite* is not something new anymore, informant C explained that when Niconico began, the situation was completely different. The first duo *utaite* who undertook a singing collaboration were insulted by other users. She described the situation in 2007 as a time when it was usual for people to create a clip individually. Therefore, "when someone contacted another person [of a different sex] to create and upload singing clips together, they were [both] strongly insulted on the Internet [and were considered to have] a dubious relationship or [were engaged] in blind dating." On the grounds that Niconico has emerged under the otaku culture, it is reasonable to suppose that this situation was related to the norm in the closed culture of postmodern society. In 2007, circles in Comiket had already changed from consisting of groups of *dōjin* to individual people. The perception of users in Niconico at that time was that each individual created, remixed and posted on Niconico. Thus, collaboration between two users, especially with regard to two people of the opposite sex, was thought to be irregular. However, with the passing of time, the more collaborative works that were posted to Niconico, the more users accepted the new norm of users collaborating together to create their work.

---

[14] A "chorus video" is a type of derivative work on Niconico. It is a mix or compilation of *utaite* videos. The creators would remix at least two *utaite* videos together to create a chorus video.

I have so far analyzed qualitative data from interviews with three *utaite*. The research has shown the comprehensive production process, and has examined the interpersonal communication and relationships among users, looking at elements such as how collaboration with others begins and how collaborators communicate to create a derivative work. Moreover, this research has discovered the importance of the sound-master who undertakes the technical part of the process. This role has rarely been discussed in past research in this particular field, since it was difficult to find in quantitative data. However, it is important to note that the qualitative data from only three informants may not represent the views of all *utaite* on Niconico. In the next section I will therefore analyze existing derivatives in Niconico to confirm the result from this section.

4-4 The Production Process in "Tried singing": The Case Study of *A Thousand Cherry Blossoms*

On the night of New Year's Eve in 2015, Kobayashi Sachiko, a famous Japanese *enka* singer, in an amazingly long, sparkling white gown, sang the cover song of *Senbonzakura* in a Japanese nationwide program *NHK Year-End Red and White Song Festival.* This was the first time that a Vocaloid song had been used in this program.

This song was created by a Vocaloid producer named Kurousa-P, who is one of the members of the *dōjin ongaku* circle called "Whiteflame." He used the Vocaloid princess Hatsune Miku as the "singer" of his original song and lyrics, and also collaborated with a skilled illustrator (Ittomaru), guitarist (Hajime) and video-master (Mienohito). It is the story about the westernization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration.

After its first posting on Niconico in September 2011, derivatives of this song were created both online and offline. It ranked in the top three in the Joysound Karaoke Annual Ranking three years consecutively, from 2012 to 2014 (Xing Inc. 2018). Moreover, according to the Niconico website on March 19, 2018, *Senbonzakura* has 8,465 works

registered under the "*Senbonzakura*" tags (Niconico 2018c) and 5,003 works registered as derivatives under its contents tree in Nico Commons (Niconico 2018b).

4-4-1 Online Derivatives

Table 4–2 on the following page shows information regarding derivatives of *Senbonzakura* for the first three days after the original was posted by Kurousa-P, a famous Vocaloid producer on September 17, 2011, at 19:00. Three hours and seventeen minutes after the post, another user posted the first derivative work, a Karaoke version (with vocals) of the original. Half an hour after this first derivative work was posted, an "off vocal" (instrumental) version followed.

 The next day eight derivatives were posted on Niconico, including one "tried dancing"[15] (highlighted in blue) and seven "tried singing" (highlighted in pink) works. Two and three days later, sixteen "tried dancing", and twenty-seven "tried singing" derivative works were posted. In total, there were fifty-three derivative works uploaded in three days, and thirty-nine videos posted under the "tried singing" category.

 From the third day, some users started to post clips that were created based on some previous clips from *utaite* and the original clips in the "tried remixing" (*awasete mita*) and the "tried chorusing" (*gasshō shitemita*) (both are highlighted in magenta) categories. These second-tier derivative creations are therefore the derivatives of first-tier derivatives. For instance, clip no. 21 was a remix of two "tried singing" clips (nos. 14 and 19) which were uploaded on the same day at 13:56 and 16:55, respectively.

---

[15] "Tried dancing" is one of the categories on Niconico where users upload their dancing clips.

No	Day	Date/Time	Title	Category Tried xxx	Video	Illustration	Lyrics	Backing Track	Vocal	Mixing	Encoding	Others Components	Total
1	Original	9/17/2011 19:00	『初音ミク』千本桜『オリジナル曲PV』	Vocaloid	User	User	Self	Self	Miku			Guitar (User)	
2	3 h 17 m later	9/17/2011 22:17	【ニコカラ】千本桜（on vocal）	Karaoke	Original	Original	Original	Original	Miku				
3	3 h 47 m later	9/17/2011 22:47	【ニコカラ】千本桜（off vocal）	Karaoke	Original	Original	Original	Original	No voice				2
4	Second Day	9/18/2011 3:29	アメリカ人に「千本桜」を踊らせてみた	Dancing	No	No	Original		No voice				
5	Second Day	9/18/2011 4:20	千本桜　歌ってみた【どなるこ】	Singing	Original	Original	Original	NicoKara	Self				
6	Second Day	9/18/2011 11:27	『千本桜』を歌いました【うめちゃん】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
7	Second Day	9/18/2011 12:41	「千本桜」を歌ってみた【雪宮莉音】	Singing	No	No	Original		Self				
8	Second Day	9/18/2011 15:23	【実姫】千本桜【歌ってみた】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Self			
9	Second Day	9/18/2011 21:00	『千本桜』をわんつーさんしで歌いました【もーちゃ】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
10	Second Day	9/18/2011 22:07	千本桜　歌ってみた	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
11	Second Day	9/18/2011 23:17	【歌ってみた】千本桜【八雲】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				8
12	Third Day	9/19/2011 0:33	°。:*・千本桜　歌わせて頂きました・*:。°	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Self	Self		
13	Third Day	9/19/2011 2:29	千本桜 うたってみた - peco*	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
14	Third Day	9/19/2011 6:00	【まふまふ】千本桜@歌ってみた【(ﾉ)・ω・(ヾ)】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Self	User	Mastering (User)	
15	Third Day	9/19/2011 6:00	千本桜　歌ってみた　【柚那】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
16	Third Day	9/19/2011 13:56	千本桜を歌い上げてみたverカルラ	Singing	Original	Original	Original	NicoKara	Self	User			
17	Third Day	9/19/2011 16:39	【airu】「千本桜」歌わせていただいた。	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
18	Third Day	9/19/2011 16:52	【歌ってみた】　千本桜　【ファントム】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
19	Third Day	9/19/2011 16:55	【千本桜】を歌ってみたんですよ【蓮】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
20	Third Day	9/19/2011 18:21	千本桜歌ってみた【この子】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
21	Third Day	9/19/2011 19:51	【合わせてみた】千本桜【【蓮】＆まふまふ】	Remixing	Original	Original	Original		Utaite				
22	Third Day	9/19/2011 21:50	クリア系シャウト多めな感じで千本桜歌ってみた	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
23	Third Day	9/19/2011 22:25	【千本桜】森で静かにしてそうな奴が歌ってみた	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
24	Third Day	9/19/2011 22:39	ドナルドダックが千本桜を歌ってくれました【ニャン吉】	Singing	No	Karaoke	Original	NicoKara	Self				
25	Third Day	9/19/2011 23:20	【PV作ってみた】千本桜【初音ミク】	Creating PV	No	No	Original		Miku				
26	Third Day	9/19/2011 23:23	「千本桜」歌ってみた【柿チョコ】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User			
27	Third Day	9/19/2011 23:38	【合わせてみました】　千本桜　【男3人】	Remixing	Original	Original	Original		Utaite				16
28	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 0:06	【●あるた●】千本桜【歌ってみた】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
29	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 0:44	【るし】割烹着に踊らされて千本桜【歌ってみた】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self		User		
30	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 1:01	盛り上がって「千本桜」歌ってみた。タイ焼き屋	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self		User		
31	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 1:09	【枯れて】千本桜 歌わせて頂きました。【verアマネ】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
32	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 1:47	【歌ってみた初投稿】「千本桜」【眠らせ熊】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
33	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 4:28	【【蓮】ビビ千本桜　合わせてみた【柿チョコ　アマネ】	Remixing	No	No	Original		Utaite				
34	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 5:40	【自分の好みで】千本桜【合わせてみた】	Remixing	No	No (User)	Original		Utaite				
35	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 8:11	【歌ってみた】千本桜【しかく】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
36	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 8:21	【ソロTAB】【ぎぷそん】千本桜を弾いてみた【黒うさP】	Playing	Partial	Partial	Original		Miku			Guitar (Self)	
37	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 11:12	【歌ってみた】千本桜【焔魂】	Singing	No	Karaoke	Original	NicoKara	Self				
38	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 12:49	【合わせてみた】千本桜【柿チョコ＆柚那】	Remixing	Original	Original	Original		Utaite				
39	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 16:24	黒うさPさんの「千本桜」を弾いてみた【コード譜あり】	Playing	Partial	Partial	Original		Miku			Guitar (Self)	
40	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 17:58	【歌い手さん支援】千本桜【コーラスのみ歌ってみた】	Singing Assist	No	Karaoke	Original		Self				
41	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 18:09	【千本桜】を歌ってみたよお　【龍次】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Self			
42	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 19:21	千本桜 歌ってみた【椎名まり】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
43	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 19:28	【柿チョコ×まふまふ】千本桜【合わせてみた】	Remixing	Original	Original	Original		Utaite				
44	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 19:37	千本桜　を歌った。	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
45	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 20:31	【千本桜】　低い声で　歌ってみた　【ESKA】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
46	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 20:56	【千本桜】を歌ってみた【蓮】を早くしてピッチを下げてみた	Changing Pitch	Original	Original	Original		Utaite				
47	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 21:06	千本桜歌ってみた【黙太】	Singing	Original	Original	Original	NicoKara	Self				
48	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 21:08	【鼻声だけど】千本桜【歌ってみた】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
49	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 21:41	『千本桜』を歌ってみました。だぬ子。	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
50	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 22:13	【男女１２人で】千本桜【合唱】	Chorusing	Partial	Partial	Original		Utaite				
51	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 22:14	【炎合唱】千本桜【男女6人+α】	Chorusing	Partial	Partial	Original		Utaite&Miku				
52	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 22:39	【千本桜】を歌ってみた@リタテオ	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self				
53	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 23:22	【(´・ω・`)】千本桜　かんで歌ってみた【ゆきとす】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		
54	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 23:40	千本桜、歌ってみた。。。フジクラ【女子】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	User	User		27
Total													53

Table 4–2: Original and derivatives of "*Senbonzakura*" on the first three days it was released. Table created based on data accessed on June 27, 2017 (Niconico 2017).

Moreover, less than four hours after this, on the same day, another creator uploaded clip no. 27, which was a remix version of three *utaite* (nos. 14, 19, 22). It should be noted that both clips were created (that is, downloaded, remixed, and uploaded) in a short time, within three hours after the latest video of *utaite* had been posted. On the fourth day, an increase in the variety of categories could be seen, but with "tried singing" still the most uploaded of all the categories.

4-4-2 Components of "Tried Singing" and its Derivatives

Another essential point to be noted in Table 4–2 is the components of each derivative. Separating the video clips at the component level is a vital process for examining the online derivatives. Chen's (2012) work revolves around an attempt to create a free culture on the Internet using Creative Commons. His book shows the cycle of how parts of previous works create new works, and how those works generate chains of creations, with the Internet as an accelerator of the process. Based on his idea, it is clear that derivatives are created by components of previous creations, either by imitation or remixing. Focusing on the components and their transmission leads to an understanding of the propagation of derivatives in digital spaces.

Production may be simple, like clip number 7, a singing clip without a video (comprising only a blue screen with the song title, name, and vocals), or it can be more complicated, like clip number 50, which remixes twelve *utaite* vocals in the chorus style in combination with another edition of the original video. This study uses the description of each video (like Figure 4–I) to analyze all clips from Day 1 to Day 4.

Figure 4–I: Description of video no. 14 shows the original link, self, and other collaborators (Mafumafu 2011).

It was found that the video components of "tried singing" and its derivatives could be divided into three core categories: visible (for example, video, illustration), audible (for example, lyrics, backing track, vocals) and invisible (for example, mixing, encoding.) Users freely produce their creations by changing or remixing one, some, or all components. In addition, it is usual for users to write down the link to works they borrow or names of persons they collaborate with to express their thanks.

In Table 4–2 in the section 4-4-1 when uploaders clearly write down the names of collaborators, they label this as "user." If they state that parts have been undertaken by themselves, this is shown as "self." However, since all the information is based on descriptions written by the users, some information may be missing. For components that are easy to see and hear, such as "visible" and "audible" (except for backing tracks, since both original and karaoke are almost the same),[16] it is possible to fill the table by watching all the clips. I decided, however, to leave the table blank for the backing track and invisible components (mixing and encoding), which are difficult to determine simply through observation. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to assume that the missing information means the uploaders used an original version of the backing track and conducted the mixing and encoding parts by themselves.

4-4-3 Participants in the Production Process

A further important point to note in Table 4–2 is the presence of collaborators, indicated as "user" in red. In Table 4–3 on the following page, I selected only collaborative creations involved in the production process. It was discovered that apart from an original Vocaloid song and one remix derivative (that used an illustration from another user), all were creations

---

[16] Vocaloid producers usually upload backing track versions of their Vocaloid songs to blogs, Twitter or SNS. Some users believe that backing tracks that are provided directly by producers are better quality.

in the "tried singing" category. Moreover, it is obvious that most *utaite* collaborated with other users with regard to invisible components. I then replaced the word "user" with the real usernames stated in the "video description." Looking at the invisible components in Table 4–3, it is notable that some derivatives have the same user undertaking both the mixing and encoding elements, while others have different users in charge of each component.

No	Day	Date/Time	Title	Category Tried xxx	Video	Illustration	Lyrics	Backing Track	Vocal	Mixing	Encoding	Others Components
			Component Type		**Visible**		**Audible**			**Invisible**		
1	Original	9/17/2011 19:00	『初音ミク』千本桜『オリジナル曲PV』	Vocaloid	Mienohito	Ittomaru	Self	Self	Miku			Guitar (Hajime)
13	Third Day	9/19/2011 2:29	千本桜 うたってみた - peco*	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Rikkusu	Rikkusu	
14	Third Day	9/19/2011 6:00	【まふまふ】千本桜＠歌ってみた【(ノ)・ω・(ヾ)】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Self	Jiyū	Mastering (Gajū-P)
15	Third Day	9/19/2011 6:00	千本桜 歌ってみた 【柚那】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Gajū-P	Jiyū	
16	Third Day	9/19/2011 13:56	千本桜を歌い上げてみたverカルラ	Singing	Original	Original	Original	NicoKara	Self	Kurutsu		
17	Third Day	9/19/2011 16:39	【airu】「千本桜」歌わせていただいた。	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Ragueru	Ritateo	
18	Third Day	9/19/2011 16:52	【歌ってみた】 千本桜 【ファントム】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Honya	Chiru	
26	Third Day	9/19/2011 23:23	「千本桜」歌ってみた【柿チョコ】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Madamxx		
28	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 0:06	【●あるた●】千本桜【歌ってみた】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Mar	Mar	
29	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 0:44	【るし】割烹着に踊らされて千本桜【歌ってみた】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self		Ruarosso	
30	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 1:01	盛り上がって「千本桜」歌ってみた。タイ焼き屋	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self		Kenken	
31	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 1:09	【枯れて】千本桜 歌わせて頂きました。【verアマネ】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Gajū-P	Jiyū	
34	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 5:40	【自分の好みで】千本桜【合わせてみた】	Remixing	No	No (Zarigani)	Original		Utaite			
42	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 19:21	千本桜 歌ってみた【椎名まり】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Kurukuru	7＠	
49	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 21:41	『千本桜』を歌ってみました。だぬ子。	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Ajiko	Ajiko	
53	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 23:22	【（・ω・｀）】千本桜 カンで歌ってみた【ゆきとす】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Key373	Key373	
54	Fourth Day	9/20/2011 23:40	千本桜、歌ってみた。。。。フジクラ【女子】	Singing	Original	Original	Original		Self	Mutō	Mutō	

Table 4–3: Names of other users who participated in the production process.

In addition, there are two users, "Jiyū" (highlighted in yellow) and "Gaju-P" (highlighted in green), who participated in the production process with three different *utaite*. According to the Nicopedia (Nicopedia 2018b) and my list (bookmark) page (Niconico 2018a) of user Jiyū, he is acknowledged as a user who supports an encoding technique for *utaite*. Gaju-P (Nicopedia 2018a), however, has several roles in Niconico. Having the "-P" after his username means that he is a Vocaloid producer; at the same time, he is also famous as an *utaite* and sound-master responsible for mixing and mastering[17] for other *utaite*.

Figure 4–J on the following page illustrates the relationship between *utaite* in clips nos. 14, 15, and 31, and the two users who provide the invisible components. In other words, the three *utaite* "share" the same technicians to create derivatives in digital space.

---

[17] A process in audio post-production. It refers to using the equalizer and the compressor to adjust the volume, sound quality, and sound pressure level of the master audio after the mixing process.
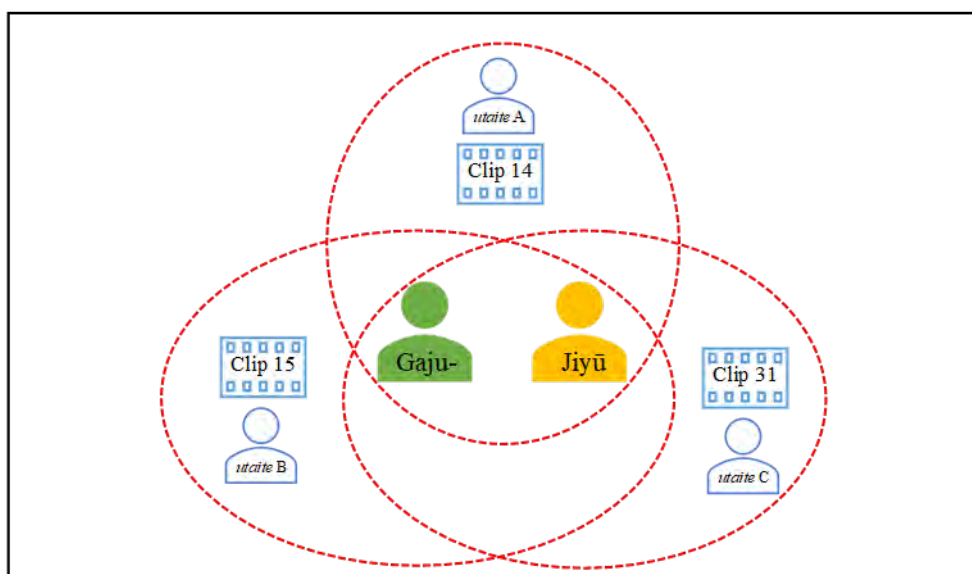
Figure 4–J: *Utaite* sharing collaborators in the production process.

As mentioned above, derivative creators usually express their thanks after borrowing or receiving components from other users via text written in the video description. On Niconico in particular, users typically show their respect by calling the original Vocaloid song creators (the Vocaloid producers) *honke*, which means "family head" in Japanese. Similarly, they address collaborators with words that end with *shi* (師)— "master"—or *shokunin* (職人)— "artisan"—to differentiate their craftsmanship among user groups. Up to here, I have analyzed the case study of *Senbonzakura* and have explored the components inside the creations. The study discovered the existence of collaborators and the sharing of users who are specialized in technical fields in the production process in Niconico.

I have examined the production process and relationships among users in Niconico based on the interview results in sections 4-1 and 4-2 of this chapter. However, because of the difficulty of acquiring interviewees, this study also included the case study to verify the interview data. As a result, this section has affirmed the importance of collaborators for *utaite*, especially with regard to specialists who undertake the invisible roles of sound-master and encoding-master.

4-5 Analysis of the Results

The previous three sections have outlined the *utaite*'s production process in Niconico using data from the case studies and interviews. Based on the results, this section will further examine the creative activities of *utaite* regarding social and cultural production in digital space.

4-5-1 Breaking the Barrier: Communication between Original and Derivative Creators

When considering the cultural production in Niconico, there is one word that should be emphasized: "borrow"—*kariru*. Figure 4–K on the following page is a screenshot from *Senbonzakura* (karaoke version—instrumental.) Users write the word to "borrow"[18] in the humble form of Japanese on the video. Moreover, the word to "borrow" is found in the video description of the derivatives, introducing the link to previous works which uploaders have imitated or from which they have reused components to create their video clips. Figure 4–L on the following page demonstrates an example of the relationship between the original (family head) and derivatives. From the figure, we can see the first-tier categories "borrowed" components from the original. The second-tier categories, however, can "borrow" from both the original as well as from the first-tier categories. In other words, the borrowing culture in Niconico is a non-linear behavior that can cross through all categories.

Another important issue is that the production of *utaite* shows an important change in the relationship between original and derivative creators in comparison with that of creators of original and derivative works in previous research with respect to the existing communications barrier. It is usual to see both original and derivative work in Niconico. By "original," I mean a new, authentic, first-hand creation from its creators. Azuma Hiroki (2012) defined derivative works as "a general term for the largely eroticized rereading and

---

[18] "Borrow" (verb) in Japanese is 借りる (*kariru*) in the casual form; 借ります (*karimasu*) in the polite form; and お借りします (*okarishimasu*) in the humble form.
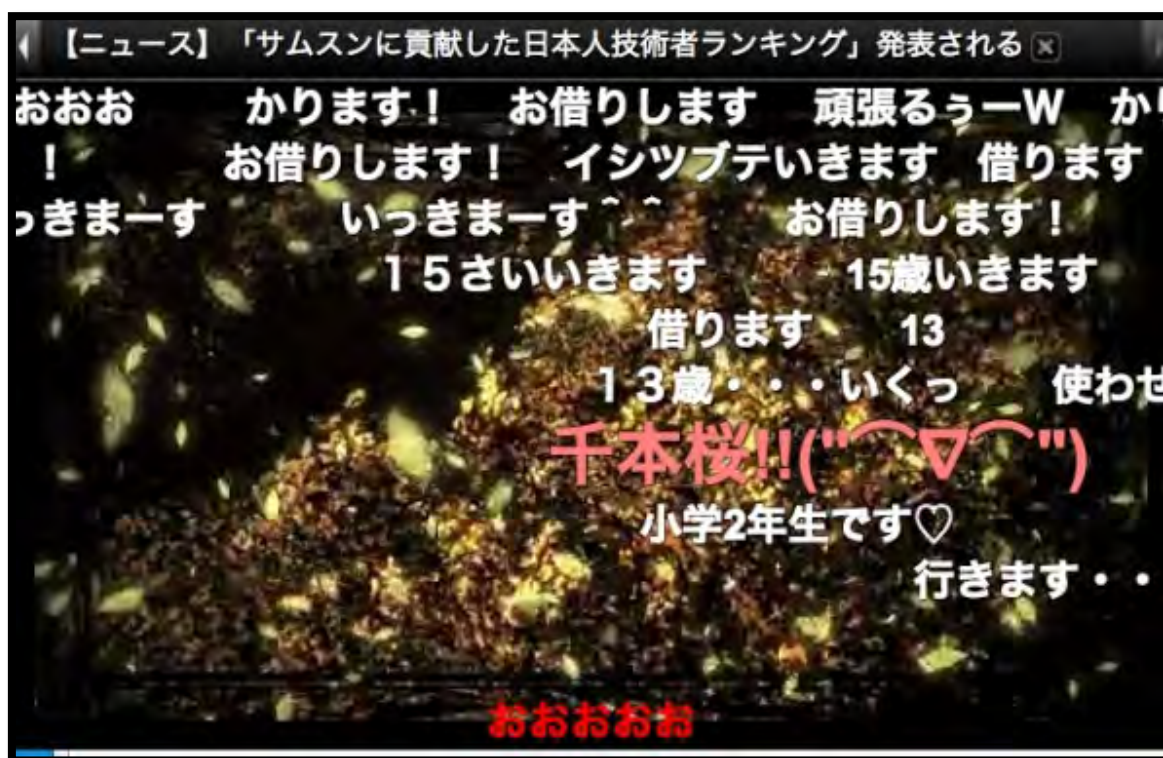
Figure 4–K: *Senbonzakura* (Karaoke version) and comments showing the word "borrow."

(Kaishū 2011.)
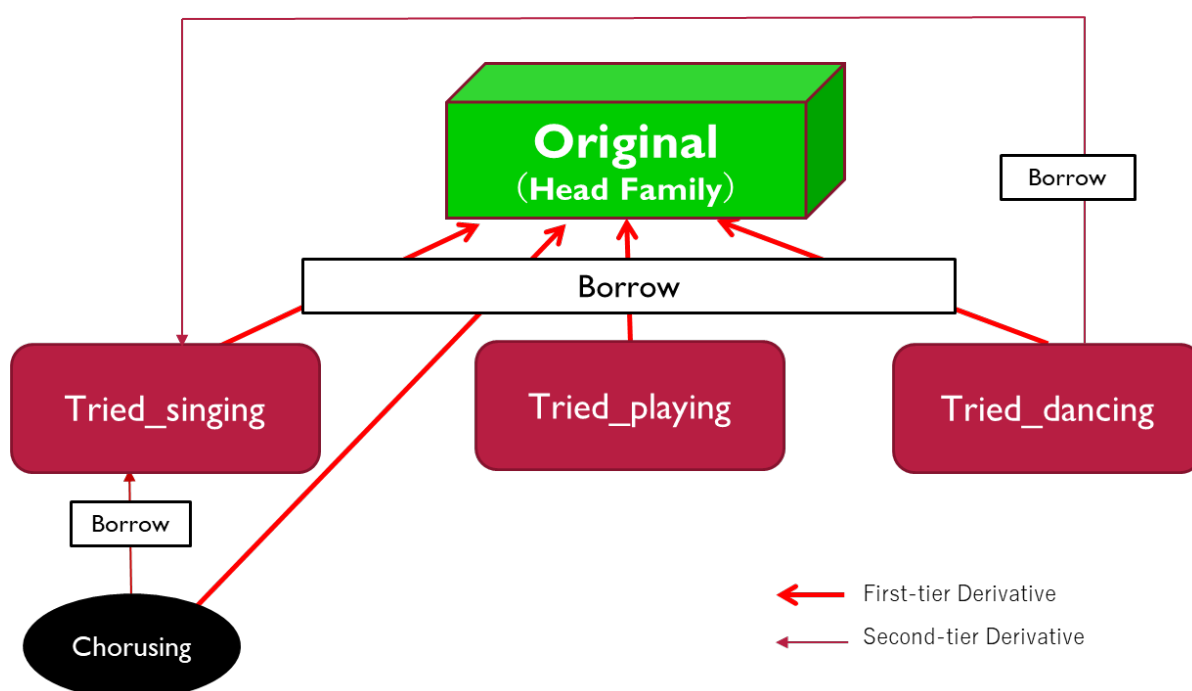
Figure 4–L: Example of borrowing in Niconico

reproduction of original manga, anime, and games sold in the form of fanzines, fan games, fan figures, and the like" (31). Since Azuma focused on derivative works at the Comiket, the word "eroticized" is included in the definition. It is true that most derivative fan-created works at the Comiket contain an erotic element, but not all of them. Some are simply works of parody with humorous content, or consist of the remixed version of the original. In this study, I agree with Azuma's definition, but exclude the word "eroticized."

Figure 4–M below shows how the *utaite* and their derivative works differ from previous fan research. Looking at the first two types of media in the diagram, manga (comics), for example, is published by publishing companies and written by manga writers. Usually the copyright belongs to both the manga writer and publisher. Fans who love manga write a *dōjin* manga or parody version of it and sell the *dōjinshi* at the Comiket, or in bookstores that accept *dōjinshi*, or through online channels.

Type / Media	Publication	Music	Music (Vocaloid)
Original work	Writer/Publishing Company	Composer/Music Company	Vocaloid-P
	↓	↓	
	Communication Barrier		
Derivative work	Dōjinshi writers	Cover Artists	*Utaite*
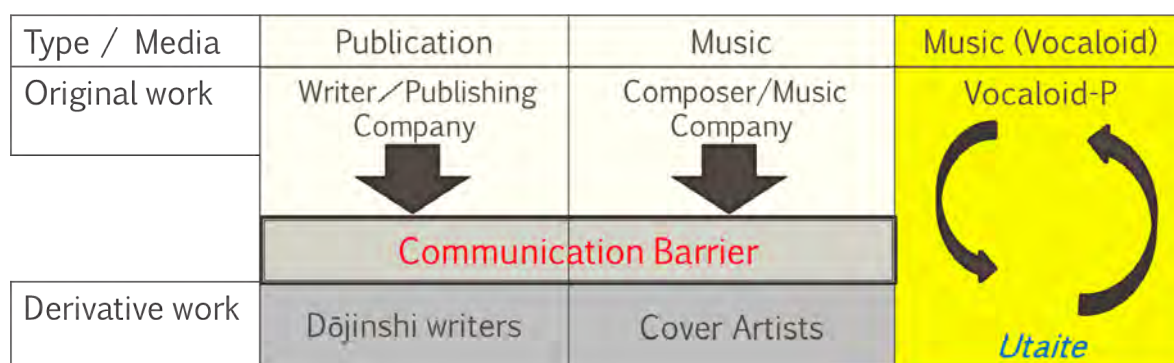
Figure 4–M: Diagram showing the differences in the communication paradigm between publications/music and Vocaloid music.

Usually, manga fans create derivative works without permission from the originators, which Henry Jenkins has named "textual poaching" (Jenkins 1992). In Japan there is a tacit understanding between the original creators and fans that *dōjinshi* is a particular kind of fan activity which demonstrates a love of the original work. As long as they are not obviously showing that they are engaging in this activity for business purposes, publishing companies

tend to overlook them.[19] However, there are much stricter rules and regulations with regard to music. Music companies, including *jimusho* and composers, are the copyright holders, and singers sing cover versions of songs and upload them to social media. In Japan, the Japanese Society for Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers (JASRAC) have made an agreement on the usage of UGC with social media websites such as Niconico and YouTube. However, there are many limitations, such as that users must not create background music themselves, unless they have received permission to use the official music from the copyright holders.

There is a strong communication barrier between original creators and derivative creators.[20] This is especially so in the case of manga; unless there has been an official announcement of derivative-use permission from the publishers,[21] *dōjin* manga creators cannot contact the publishers and ask for permission. As far as music is concerned, JASRAC is the "middleman" who deals with copyright issues. Thus, it is difficult for cover artists to contact the composers/music companies directly. In other words, there is a huge and strong communication barrier between the corporates and derivative creators.

However, the situation is different with *utaite*. The original creator and copyright holders, the Vocaloid producers, are also the ordinary users as *utaite*. During my fieldwork, I found that *utaite* and Vocaloid producers communicate with each other. Some developed a good relationship and released CDs together. The communication paradigm has shifted from the corporates versus active audience/fans to users versus users.[22]

When fans "poach" the texts, they remix and recreate them, to produce new

---

[19] A trial took place between *shōgakukan* and Fujiko Pro (a publishing company and the original manga writer) and the derivative manga writer Tachima Yasue regarding "The last episode of Doraemon," which was Tachima's *dōjinshi* of the manga Doraemon. This *dōjinshi* was very popular with readers, and over 10,000 copies of the publication were sold.

[20] Sometimes original manga writers write the *dōjinshi* of their own work and sell them at the Comiket.

[21] The manga writer of Axis Powers "Hetalia" has officially announced support for derivative works.

[22] This dissertation does not, however, focus on copyright problems; in any case, copyright remains with the original creators.

creations, but "poaching" may also mean the illegal and hidden behavior of violating copyright. "Borrowing," however, has a different meaning. "Borrowing" denotes that (1) the right of the works still lies with the original owner; and (2) that thanks and respect for the original work are paid to the original creator by giving credit or requesting permission to use. In fact, existing derivative creators at Comiket also respect original works and would not claim copyright for their *dōjinshi*. However, since there has been no communication channel for them to send their thanks or feelings of gratitude to the original creators, most *dōjinshi* at Comiket are still "poaching" rather than "borrowing." Another important point to stress here is the flow of information in social media. Given the overwhelming amount of content that is posted every second, unless people share, repost or remix the content, it will be left to be forgotten on the Internet. All creators in Niconico are users. For original creators, the more people utilize their clips, the more popular these clips become. Hence, when people "borrow" parts of their works, then remix and recreate them, rather than being forgotten, the original creators gain popularity through the derivative works.

4-5-2 From "Fanmade" to "I made" and "We made"

From the standpoint of fan culture scholars, devoted fans creating derivatives of their favorite works— "fanmade"—is not something peculiar. I must confess to having an incorrect view before interviewing my informants; that is, I used to believe that all *utaite* were Vocaloid fans who created "fanvids" and posted them on Niconico. However, all three informants said in the interviews that they were not Vocaloid fans. I then started to check magazines that introduced several *utaite* and discovered that most of their inspirations derived from watching other videos of other *utaite* in "tried singing." From that time onwards I expanded my framework from the participatory culture of fans to utaite creators.

In the mass communication era in the twentieth century, airtime in the mainstream media of television and radio was limited, and every second was valuable. Audience voices

were produced and circulated within restricted areas by word of mouth or fanzines. However, the Internet and social media now provide spaces for expression for everyone who has access. Furthermore, the development of mobile technology—smartphones—has amplified the generation of texts, photos and video clips to digital spaces. Individuals can become civic reporters or producers, and share in social media channels to identify themselves. The words "I made it"— "I made"—have become buzz words in the Information Age.

With regard to *utaite*, however, their production process goes further than "I made." According to the results of the interviews, although the three *utaite* initially created clips by themselves, once they learned about the *utaite* community and the existence of specialists such as sound-masters and encoding-masters, they gradually began to collaborate with other users. Eventually the production process became a virtual online team, resulting in creations that gather components from many collaborators to create: "We made."

4-5-3 Three Steps of the Production Process in Niconico

In creating derivatives, some or all parts of the original work have to be included, and *utaite*, one of the derivative creators in Niconico, is no exception to this. *Utaite* can upload their own voice singing songs created by themselves to the "tried singing" category. The Vocaloid producer also operates in the same way, and the "songs" are their creations. This "self-made," or creating everything by your own ability, process is simple, but may nevertheless be the most challenging step. Some users in Niconico are able to create every part from nothing. For example, there may be a Vocaloid producer who can draw, create a video, mix, and encode by him/herself.

However, most users tend to start from the second step, which is "borrowing." Starting with MAD videos and derivatives of famous Vocaloid songs, they begin to "borrow." They may "borrow" from existing parts that are available by copying or downloading, and then remix/recreate with the previous self-made part.

Figure 4–N below shows three steps of the production process in Niconico. It is important to emphasize that this model shows neither a step-by-step flow nor a one-way creation. Rather, it indicates the means of creation and relates to the creation's expansion from self to the networked culture.
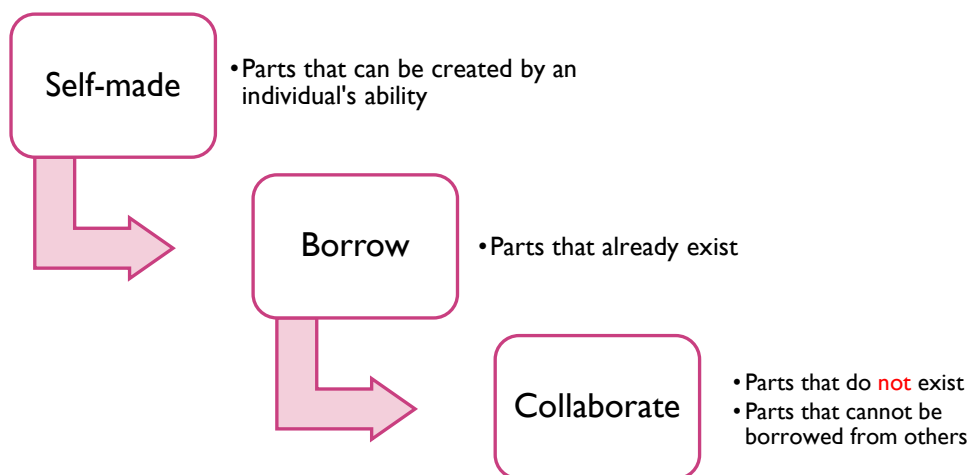
Figure 4–N: Three steps of the production process in Niconico.

Most past research into fan works has usually covered the production process. There are still components that cannot be "borrowed," copied or downloaded, especially with regard to the technical parts such as mixing and encoding. Furthermore, these include components that have not previously existed. For instance, illustrations of the *utaite* or parody songs. Here, collaboration emerges among users to create a better work.

Taking into account that most creators and users in Niconico have social media channels, I suggest that collaboration, particularly between *utaite*, generates a contact ratio with other users, both fans and non-fans. It should also be noted that a collaboration culture did not exist in the early days of Niconico and was initially contested. However, after experiencing several conflicts and compromises, the advantages of collaboration have now been accepted, and a collaboration culture has become embedded in the Niconico platform.

4-5-4 Networked Creative Culture

To sum up significant characteristics of the production process, I illustrate the networked creative culture of *utaite* in Niconico in Figure 4–O below.
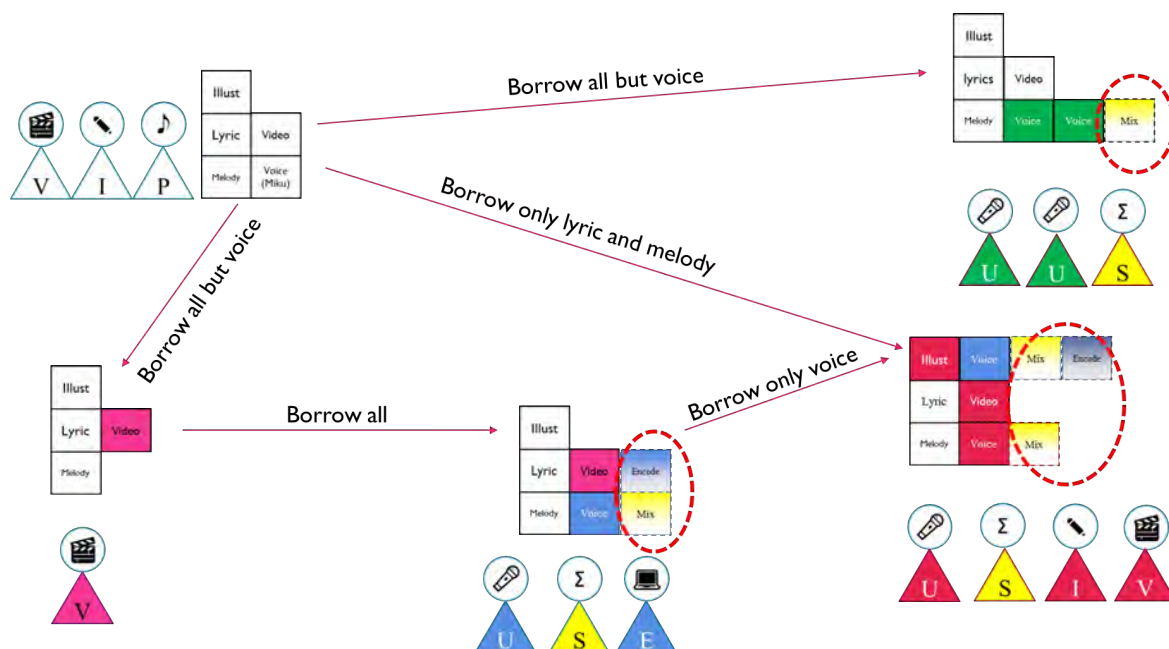
Figure 4–O: Networked creative culture of *utaite* in Niconico.

To begin with, the top-left group consists of a Vocaloid producer (P) who collaborates with a video-master (V) and an illustration-master (I). Their original Vocaloid song consists of five components: illustration, lyrics, melody (backing track), video and voice (Hatsune Miku.) The original is then borrowed by three groups of users: one video-master (pink) and two *utaite* (U) teams (green and red.) There is also a blue *utaite* team, however, which borrows the video not from the original but from the video-master. Each *utaite* team has its own sound-master (S.), and each team has adopted different ways of generating videos. Unlike the blue team, which has an encoding-master (E), the green team has two *utaite* while the red team has an illustration-master and a video-master.

The green team borrows all components except for the voice from the original and the sound-master mixes two vocals into the clips. Next, the video-master also does the same by borrowing all parts except Miku's voice to make a karaoke version of the Vocaloid song

by inserting text into the new video. Then the blue team borrows all components from the karaoke clip to create a singing video. At this point, one audible and two invisible components are included in the clip. The red team then borrows only the lyrics and melody from the Vocaloid producer and vocal part from the blue team nearby. It is important to note that although the red team borrows only the vocals from the blue team, they have actually also received two invisible components. Finally, the red team uses new illustrations to create a new video and mixes the vocals from the previous clip. In Figure 4–O, it can be seen how components have been replaced and remixed by the variation of colors. Above all, it is most important to emphasize the yellow sound-master who participates in every team. As mentioned previously, users in Niconico not only collaborate but also share specialists among creators.

Although *utaite* works have been posted to Niconico, other collaborators such as illustration-masters usually post their illustrations on Pixiv, or SNS for illustrators. Vocaloid producers have also posted original backing tracks on Piapro, a content website for creators. In addition, apart from Piapro, invisible elements such as the sound-master or video-master usually have Twitter accounts to advertise their works. Some post on their Twitter accounts that they are open for collaboration. During the interviews in 2011, the main tool for personal communication was Skype, but now in 2019, it has changed to Line.[23] Therefore it is appropriate to say that the creative culture crossed to multiple platforms in virtual spaces.

Figure 4–P on the following page shows that Niconico users sometimes asked for permission to use the existing content or requested a new creation of content. For example, a *utaite* might ask a illustration-master to draw their manga caricatures and then borrow them to use in the video clips on Niconico. But invisible elements such as technical part from a

---

[23] Line is an instant messaging software operated by Line Corporation, a subsidiary of the Korean company Naver Corporation. It is popular in Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Indonesia.

sound-master or an encoding-master cannot be "borrowed", and thus *utaite* need to collaborate with these specialists to create their work. Also, Niconico has "Nico Commons" where *utaite* can "borrow" parts to create derivatives. Later they will register their works to Nico commons, and their work may be "borrowed" by other users to create more derivatives.
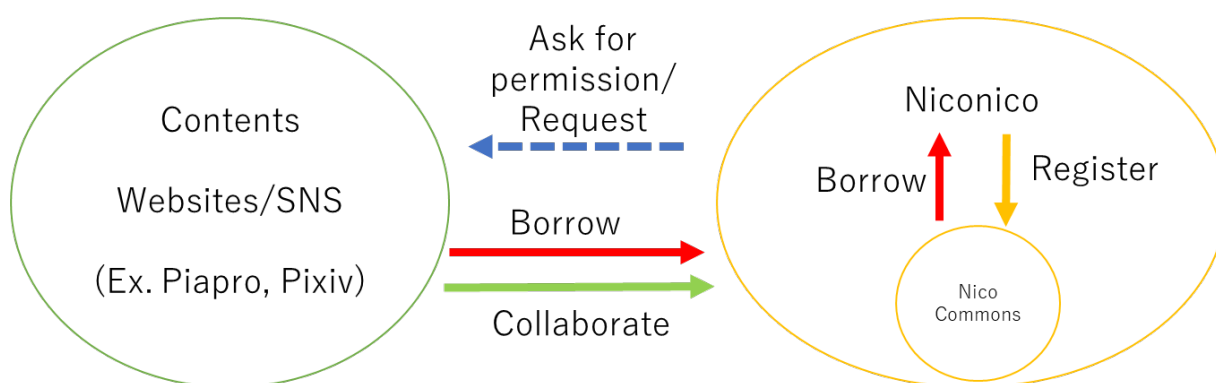
Figure 4–P: Networked creative culture of *utaite* across platforms.

4-6 Summary: Initial Creative Culture of *Utaite*

This chapter has set out to investigate and show the production process of the work of *utaite*, using ethnographic fieldwork and a case study. So far, I have analyzed the interview results of three informants and have explored the production process inside Niconico. This study has found the existence of other, invisible users in the process. The importance of technical specialists such as the sound-master and the encoding-master has been revealed. Also, the significant respect that *utaite* have with regard to Vocaloid producers is shown through the expressions of thanks on message boards or video descriptions. This expression of gratitude leads to the expansion of *utaite* activities in the physical world that will be discussed in the following chapter. Moreover, this research shows the construction of personal relationships among users, in particular through collaboration.

To verify the result of the interviews, *Senbonzakura,* a famous Vocaloid song, has been analyzed and used as a case study. Based on the examination of the original song and its derivatives, I have categorized the components of the video into three main types: visible,

audible and invisible. This study has also found the existence of other users or collaborators in the production process. The data has shown that *utaite* share collaborators.

It is suggested that the result of the analysis might change the way of examining the way *utaite* produce their creations in the social media age. The "borrowing" concept can also apply to other creative culture on the Internet, where all creators are users without the existence of a communications barrier. The design of platforms such as Niconico or Piapro are also significant since they encourage users to "borrow" and express gratitude. Niconico has offered some of its revenue to the creators whose works have been "borrowed." Although the system on Niconico still has room for improvement (such as that only the creators who upload the clips can access the revenue, not the collaborators), nevertheless, both original and derivative creators on social media can find mutual agreement with regard to collaboration, with a two-way communication process.

From fan research to personal creation and collaboration on the Internet, social media has empowered not only individuals but also groups. While "we made" has decreased in social places (for example, the increase in individual circles in Comiket has led to a decline in circles comprising a number of people), at the same time social media has encouraged collaboration among creators.

I have divided the production process into three steps to identify when users have needed to "borrow" or collaborate with others. I have also showed the networked creative culture to explain *utaite's* production process in the age of social media. I have depicted the creative culture between users and have found that users do not stick to one platform; rather, their works flows across several platforms via "borrowing" and collaborating.

In Chapter 3, I showed that the creative culture of *utaite* is located in the middle of the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture model since they have expanded to social places such as Comiket, and some of them have entered the music industry through Niconico. They

have mixed all six elements together.

In this Chapter, however, I have concentrated on the period before the start of the Niconico Creator's Support Program in December 2011, which is the system of financial support for users who post their creations on Niconico. [24] Note that the words "inside Niconico only" in the diagram below mean creations that were exhibited only in Niconico (under the "tried singing category"), which means that at that point in time there were no financial benefits for *utaite*. Figure 4–Q shows the creative culture of *utaite* inside Niconico during the early years of Niconico.
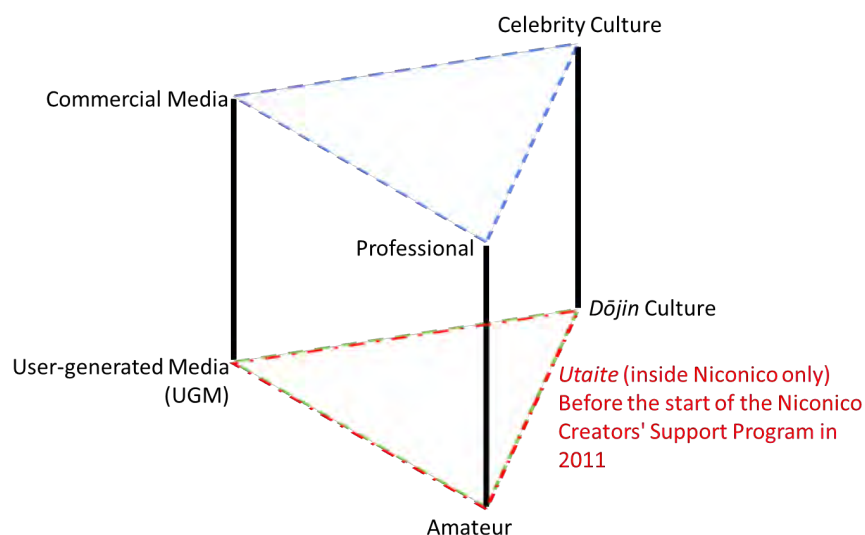
Figure 4–Q: The position of *utaite* creative culture (inside Niconico only) in the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture before the start of the Niconico Creator's Support Program in 2011.

Although there was no financial benefit for *utaite*, many creators and their creations emerged during the early years on Niconico. It was a time when *utaite* and users in general focused on their productions rather than on the consumption of their fans. Most enjoyed the pleasure of creating and sharing, as well as reading comments, or seeing responses from others. It was a time when the creative culture of amateur creators in Niconico had started to

---

[24] The detailed criteria for calculating the amount of money to be paid out to users for their creations are unpublished because of Japanese laws, but it is calculated based on the popularity of the creations, which means the number of views; advertisements paid by other users for the creations; how much the creations have been "borrowed" and how much collaboration there has been.

form, especially with regard to the production process. Every user was equal to every other user. A number of specialist roles emerged, as well as the conventions of writing explanations showing which parts of a former creation had been "borrowed" and mentioning the person or persons with whom there had been a collaboration. The function and structure of the networked creative culture of *utaite*, together with other creators across the Niconico platforms, has nowadays become the prototype pattern for other creative culture in social media. This phenomenon then gradually shifted to the upper triangle, as I explained in Chapter 3. That specific period of time should therefore be regarded as the beginning of *utaite*' creative culture, which comprised a mixture of three elements: *dōjin* culture, amateur, and UGM.

In the following chapter, I shall focus on the *utaite* themselves and the circulation of *utaite*' creations through the expansion of *utaite* activities on other social places and digital platforms outside Niconico.

Chapter 5

***Utaite*: Circulation and Expansion of their Creative Work**

The previous chapter focused on the core work of *utaite* and their singing clips, and explored

the creative process of networking among users. The main focus of this chapter, however,

will be on the *utaite* themselves, together with their peripheral activities, to analyze the

circulation and expansion of themselves and their creative works, both online and offline.

The data was collected through online and offline participant observation, and casual

interviews during 2010–2014, including in-depth interviews with three *utaite* in 2011. Some

current data are used to demonstrate recent trends. All online observations and most offline

participant observations were covert, while overt observations were conducted with some

utaite fan groups. This chapter also includes analysis of online documents to add to, and

substantiate, the results from the qualitative data.

5-1 *Utaite* Forming their Identity through Caricatures and their Creations

In Chapter 2, I outlined why *utaite* used manga caricatures as their avatars and

characters on Niconico, and in this chapter I will show how *utaite* form their identities

through their avatars and their creations.

According to informant B, the reason why *utaite* need to use caricatures rather than

photos of themselves is because: "You will be beaten" (*tatakareru).*) (Interview with *utaite*

B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011.) The word "beaten" here means being attacked or severely

criticized by other users. Critics of *utaite* who showed their faces included those who said

they "just want to be popular" or that they paraded themselves "as if they were famous artists."

Because they fear being attacked by other users, *utaite* usually do not upload their cover

song videos or show their real faces. Some *utaite* wear masks or display only part of their

face (such as the mouth, chin, or eyes) to avoid personal identification. Since most users who

adopted Niconico in its early days were Japanese geeks (otaku) who were fond of anime and manga, and some were core users from 2channel, a famous Japanese bulletin board famous for its anonymity, manga caricatures are usually used as avatars by users. Furthermore, these caricatures are used in singing videos of *utaite* posted on Niconico. As discussed in the previous chapter, an illustration, a visible element in the video, can be borrowed from an existing one on the Internet, or newly created by *utaite* themselves, their fans or an illustration-master.

There are websites that gather information only about *utaite*. When searching on Google Japan and typing in *utaite* names, the auto-complete keyword "faces (*kao*)"[1] usually appears first in the search box, meaning it is the most frequently searched keyword. For example, I searched for the female *utaite* named "Wotamin,"[2] an active *utaite* who still conceals her real face after her debut. I received an auto-complete result, as in Figure 5–A below, which sets out her name followed by her face, her CD, her album, *utattemita* ("tried singing"), "Dear" [song title], the keyword *utaite*, and her lyrics.

Figure 5–A: Search box auto-complete texts that appeared when I searched for "Wotamin"on Google. (Accessed August 12, 2019).

---

[1] Kao is written as 顔 in Japanese.

[2] Wotamin is written as ヲタみん in Japanese.

I was able to conduct a face-to-face interview with one illustration-master who allowed an informal interview with me without disclosing her name and work. She discussed her negative feelings about *utaite* when she first met one. "I received a request to draw a manga caricature for one *utaite*. I told him that I would like to meet him in person so I could get to know his character. However, he refused and instead sent me some manga caricatures. Then he told me that his character looked like these manga. To begin with, it was a weird experience for me." (Interview with an illustration-master in Tokyo, February 20, 2012.) This illustration-master was a professional illustrator and manga writer who did not know about *utaite* before receiving the above request. As she was not a fan of any *utaite*, someone had hired her to draw him.

I also came across an illustration-master who drew illustrations for a famous *utaite* group. She was interviewed on their live streaming, and for the first time revealed her voice. There *utaite* told her that they loved her illustrations from the time that they first saw them. She said that she was a fan of theirs, and that the illustrations were all derived through her imagination by their voices, work and live streaming, since some *utaite* in this group had not disclosed their real faces.

Some *utaite* liked good-looking illustrations while others preferred simple ones. In a live streaming, one *utaite* said "I don't want a very handsome illustration. I don't like to see the fans' disappointed faces when they see the real me at an event or live concert." Another *utaite*, however, who did not show his face in public said, "For me, I love a handsome [illustration.]" The problem of the real versus imaginary *utaite* usually becomes a matter for discussion between fans, and this is especially the case for *utaite* who have not yet shown their faces.

A prominent case was that of one *utaite* with the username of "Panyo,"[3] who had committed an indecent act with a female fan who was under the age of eighteen in April 2013. Before his arrest, he had uploaded more than one hundred videos on Niconico. He was a famous *utaite* because of his singing voice, and he usually used handsome, sexy male manga caricatures for his avatar. After his crime was broadcasted on television, Internet users compared his face with his avatar and claimed that the two had nothing in common. Therefore, it may be presumed that users imagined the real appearance of this *utaite* through his avatars, which were created to camouflage his real identity.

It is not only the avatars, which illustrate utaite' appearances, but also their creative works which reinforce their online identities. In the following section I describe how *utaite* form their identities through their work on Niconico, using the song "Magnet" as a case study.

5-1-1 Magnet

A well-known example of an original Vocaloid song is "Magnet." Created by Minato (RyuseiP), [4] a famous male Vocaloid producer and *utaite*, using two Vocaloid voices (Hatsune Miku and Megurine Luka), the lyrics depict two ladies who have fallen into "forbidden" love. They show their strong emotions, without regard for the current moral attitude that is set against homosexuality in Japan. The illustration in the original video, drawn by YunomiP,[5] showed two Vocaloid characters wearing butterfly-design headphones

---

[3] Panyo (ぱにょ) has another famous username, "Hoshimi-aoto（星見蒼人," which he used for his
   activities as an actor and songwriter on Mixi. Although he wrote in his profile that he is forever a
   ninety-two-year-old, he was actually aged thirty-one when he was arrested.

[4] Minato (RyuseiP) is one of the usernames of Minato Takahiro, a Japanese musician, music producer
   and singer. He started to post his work in Niconico in 2008 under the name of "Minato." He
   subsequently uploaded his singing videos under the name of "Turai" on the same website. Later, he
   disclosed in his blog that both Turai and Minato were names of the same person.

[5] YunomiP is a Japanese illustrator and Vocaloid producer. She has stopped undertaking creative works
   having been accused of plagiarism, one of these works being the illustration for "Magnet." On
   account of this incident, Minato decided to stop releasing his original "Magnet" video in 2010, but it

and singing intimately in the distance (Figure 5–B left).

This song has triggered many derivatives and collaborations on Niconico,[6] especially with *utaite*, since "Magnet" comprises a duo; two *utaite* who often collaborate to create a cover clip. Many *utaite* have also created several derivations from the original version. The middle screenshot has been drawn by Hakuseki, depicting "Hitori" and "Che:sakurai," two famous female *utaite* in the Magnet style. The right-hand figure, illustrated by Hoshita, shows two famous male *utaite*, Faneru and Gero, covering the song "Magnet" together.

Figure 5–B: Screenshots of the original version of two characters in "Magnet" (Left) and derivatives of the original work of two *utaite* groups (Middle and Right) (Gero 2009; Minato (RyuseiP) 2009; Hitori 2009).

At first glance it may be assumed these are simply the digital meme of one famous illustration, however, after examining both cover videos, there are several deviations from the original version. Since both Hitori and Che:sakurai are *ryōseirui* (singers who can sing in both male and female voices) they have collaborated to create a cover video that expresses their abilities. Like other derivative clips of "Magnet," they opened with a derivative drawing of Miku and Luka depicting themselves (Figure 5–B middle).

In the middle of the clip, the picture and voices change to two male singers. Looking at comments on the video (Figure 5–C left,) viewers were astonished by the sudden change. Most users typed "!?" to express their feelings while some wrote: "male or female?"

---

was republished again in 2018.

[6] On January 10, 2019, there were 5,361 videos using the tag "Magnet" on Niconico.

Subsequently the video remixed all the voices (two male and two female) together with the

final part of the clips (Figure 5–C right.)

Figure 5–C: Screenshots of the "Magnet" cover of Hitori and Che: Sakurai in four
characters (Hitori 2009).

However, Faneru and Gero (*Negero*[7]) recreated the "Magnet" cover video in a

different way. Unlike most *utaite* who used the original, or requested an illustration-master

to draw a meme illustration for them, Negero asked an illustration-master to draw and create

their derivative video using a short animation style. Starting with a scene of the two of them

sitting in the same room, Faneru greets the audience with: "Welcome back to *Negero* radio,"

and begins to read a fake letter from "Shut Up Vomit."[8] The letter asks whether or not *Negero*

would sing "Magnet" together. Faneru replies that he has already sung it twice, while Gero

says it was a good song and makes a joke with Faneru about the sender of the letter. Then,

without permission, Faneru starts to sing the introduction to the song, ignoring Gero's

objection to this, and says to him that "other *utaite* usually speak some dialogue before

singing, shall we?" Gero then stops muttering and agrees to sing. The scene changes to the

black background with the song name "Magnet" in blue, and the illustration depicts *Negero*

mimicking the original illustration that appears. Both speak some funny dialogue, and all of

[7] Negero is the team name of Faneru and Gero, derived from an amalgamation of their names.
[8] "Vomit," or *Ōtobutsu* (嘔吐物) in Japanese, is one of the nicknames of Gero on Niconico.

a sudden Gero shouts the first line of the lyrics. Figure 5–D on the following page shows fire around his character to demonstrate the power of his shouting, and also shows how Faneru is shocked by Gero's unexpected behavior.

Figure 5–D: Screenshots of the "Magnet" cover of Faneru and Gero in a short animated video (Gero 2009).

The song pauses and Gero is scolded by Faneru. However, when they start to sing again, this time Faneru is the one who surprises Gero by singing in a high-pitched voice. This funny singing and dialogue continue until the middle of the song, when someone knocks at the door. Another famous male *utaite*, Asuke (written in English as "Ask") appears and joins in the conversation. Gero makes some jokes before cooking fried rice which tastes very bad and makes all of them vomit (Figure 5–D Middle). Then the music starts again and the three of them sing together (Figure 5–D Right). In the last part of the video *Negero* energetically shouts and for a while Asuke attempts to join in, but eventually decides to leave the other two behind. The video ends with a message from Negero apologizing for their inappropriate manner in the video. The Hitori/Che:*sakurai* team recreated this video by keeping to the original style while including new elements—with new illustrations and four voices—while the Negero/Asuke team changed almost everything to a parody style, but kept the original song and some of the original illustrations to show the connection with the original work.

Utaite want listeners to become aware of their identity, whereas listeners conceive an exact image of them through their illustrations. The video clips not only confirm their

ability, but also communicate their identities and create images of *utaite* on Niconico. The above two samples are just the tip of the iceberg.

To provide a concrete example, I examined the *utaite* data of Gero. As of August 24, 2019, Gero had posted 180 clips since his Niconico debut in 2008 (Gero 2019). Furthermore, Gero is an active *utaite* user, not only in "tried_singing" but also in the video game live streaming category. Apart from "Twittering" and blogging, he often live-streams with Nico Live to communicate with his fans directly, and has appeared in other Niconico-related programs such as Niconico Radio. He has also participated in other *utaite* activities offline, such as in live concerts and the Comic Market. Using several communication channels, the image of the *utaite* named "Gero" has been formed and conceived by his listeners.

During my field work and observation period, I read Gero's Twitter feed every day, saw him talk and reply to fans and other *utaite*, watched his clips, listened to his live streaming, and participated in five live concerts in which Gero was one of the performers. Nevertheless, unless buying goods directly from him together with physical contact is counted, to date I have never known him as a real person, although I felt I was close to him because of being exposed to what he created every day.

From the identity he portrayed, as of 2011 to 2014 I guessed that Gero was a good-looking guy in his twenties who spoke with a Kansai (Western Japanese) accent. He is extrovert, energetic, and likes to tease people, including himself. He is a talented singer who is good at singing in both a shouting-style and ballad-style. He collaborates with several famous *utaite*. He seemed to have a close friendship with *utaite* such as Faneru, Dasoku, and Kogeinu. I also found out that Gero has both male and female fans, unlike most other male *utaite* who usually have just female fans.

To confirm the image that I had conceived, I conducted informal interviews with five *utaite* fans who knew Gero. All of them called him by his nickname "Gerorin" during

the interviews. They all said the same thing about his extraordinary singing ability and his funny characteristics. Most were surprised once Gero had revealed his real face to discover that he was a cute and handsome guy. However, opinions differed when the conversation moved to the issue of collaboration. I said that my impression of Gero was that he collaborated with Faneru (Negero) on Niconico. Two of the fans agreed with me, but the others said that Gero collaborated more with Dasoku (team name: *Dagero*) than with Faneru. Dagero not only participated as a *utaite* circle in Comiket, releasing a DVD about their travelling, but Gero and Dasoku were also famous *utaite* on Niconico and had been invited to several Niconico conferences. I told the five *utaite* fans that my impression of Dasoku was that he usually collaborated with another *utaite* named "Ren" under the team name "1122." They agreed with me and said they loved Negero, Dagero and 1122, but that their impression with regard to the Gero collaboration was that he collaborated with Dasoku rather than Faneru. It is usual for a *utaite* to collaborate with other *utaite*. Frequent collaboration of a *utaite* with other, specific, *utaite* reinforces the notion that they have a close relationship.

If the manga caricatures look very different from the real appearance of the *utaite*, they will be heavily criticized. Also, if the image is very strong, some drawbacks may occur. For example, there was one time when *utaite* who had a few collaborative histories together debuted as a singing group. Some of their existing fans criticized specific individuals in the group for why he/she didn't debut with other particular *utaite*, and even stopped following the new group. (At the end of this chapter, I shall elaborate on the dilemma of what happens after the debut of a *utaite*.)

5-2 Harnessing Social Media: Communication and Community on Digital Platforms

This section covers the social media usage of *utaite*. It will highlight how *utaite* use social

media to communicate, circulate their creative works, and form communities with other *utaite* and fans. The data to be discussed below was collected from three radar charts answered by three informants [9] in 2011, together with online and offline participant observation, including informal interviews between 2011 and 2014. In the following subsections, the analysis begins with the radar charts to find significant similarities and differences between informants. I shall examine, verify and elaborate the findings, using the in-depth interview data and information obtained from the fieldwork.

5-2-1 From the Perspective of the Informants: Efforts and Media Usage

The informants drew two lines on a chart to answer a single question: "How much effort do you put into your musical activities?" The categories were determined based on the results of participant observation and confirmed by one *utaite* (informant A) the only *utaite* who allowed me to conduct a preliminary interview (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, June 10, 2011.) The red line denotes *utaite* activities and the blue line denotes musical activities excluding Niconico. In addition, the balloons next to each category denote the media or tools they utilized in their activities. This chart was designed to encourage the informants to talk and to help them recall things during the interviews rather than for any quantitative purpose. Therefore, the number that each informant answered cannot be directly compared with the numbers of other informants. The tables following the charts are the translated version of the charts. The top three categories for effort that each informant spent on Niconico are highlighted. The red numbers show the three highest categories for each activity. The media and tools used by the informants are summarized in the last column. It was likely that since all three informants had different backgrounds and expectations of being *utaite* on Niconico, they put a different amount of effort into different categories.

---

[9] For detailed information about the methodology see Chapter 2.

Informant A

The data of Informant A (Figure 5–E on page 166), a professional indie singer, clearly shows that she focused on her professional work rather than on Niconico. However, to achieve her goal, which was to increase her fan base, only two categories—live streaming and interaction—have higher scores in her Niconico activities than other musical activities. Moreover, as a *utaite*, although she did not participate in conventions or practiced, she put a lot of energy into communication, video creation, and performance (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011).

Informant B

Informant B (Figure 5–F on page 167) was passionate about singing, had an educational background in a singing college, and dreamed of becoming a professional singer. After becoming a *utaite*, he and a *utaite* friend formed a group to create music for other people outside Niconico. He labeled this band as "Other music activities" when plotting the chart. He committed himself to video production, both with regard to creation and collaboration. With PR and advertising, he used blogs, Mixi (Japanese SNS) and Twitter to announce his news. Moreover, he said that he could not play any musical instrument, which was why he put zero out of a hundred for performance. Nonetheless, he added that if the "performance" meant a stage performance, on a real day the number would be different. Since he could not shout at home, he imagined himself singing a song or humming a tone instead; therefore the effort on the day of the concert is "hundred," but the effort for training in advance is close to zero (interview with *utaite* B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011).

Informant C

Informant C (Figure 5–G on page 168) plotted all her Niconico scores from low range to moderate (10 to 60). She emphasized that since being a *utaite* was a hobby for her, she did not spend too much time or effort on it. She had joined a friend's circle to create a *dōjin*

CD. She focused on communication, collaboration and practicing in the car, or singing karaoke rather than on production, consumption or performance of her creations.

5-2-1-1 Analysis of the Data of Three Informants

All three informants gave low scores for one category regarding Niconico activities: to acquire information about, and consume, music-related merchandise. Also, the interview data of the informants shows that they concentrated more on the production rather than on the consumption of their music (interview with *utaite* C in Tokyo, September 25, 2011).

Although no significant behavior in common was found under the "category of efforts," what stands out in the charts is that the informants do share some similarities regarding the use of media and tools (shown in bold characters in the last column.) All of them conducted live streaming on Nico Live. Skype was a tool that all three of them used for interpersonal communication, and they all used blogs and Twitter to advertise their works and to communicate with fans or other users. These results are consistent with findings obtained in the observation data. Since Skype was mostly used for personal contact among *utaite*, and blogs were mostly used as one-way communication for announcements, in the following sections I focus attention on the interactive communication tools of Nico Live and Twitter.

5-2-2 Nico Live: Community Creation and Communication

Before proceeding to examine the Nico Live platform, it is necessary to note that since Nico Live was first released for users in 2008 it has been updated several times. The findings in this section mainly analyze specifications used during its early period to 2014. Niconico released a major update of Nico Live in November 2017, with many functions now becoming free of charge. What follows is a summary of Nico Live specifications.
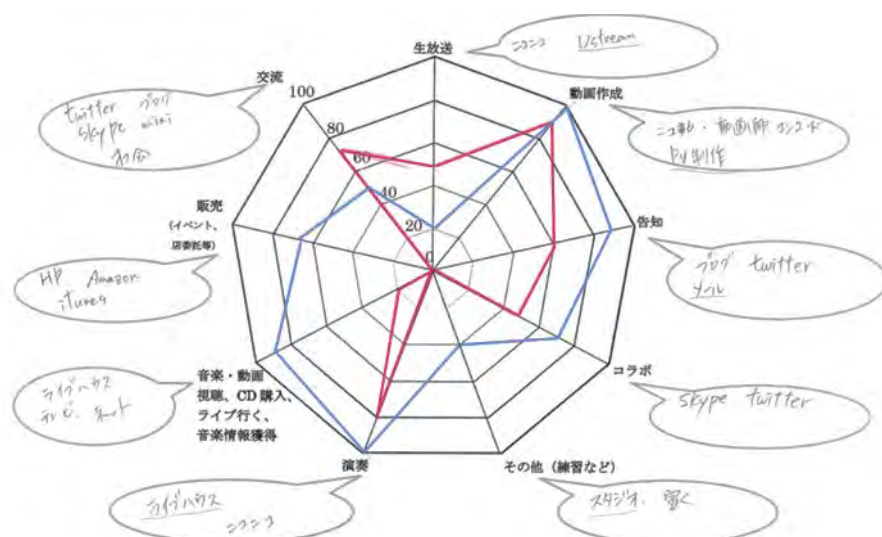
Figure 5–E: Radar chart answered by informant A.

Category of efforts	Niconico (%)	Other musical activities (%)	Media / Tools (* indicates media used only for informant's work)
Live streaming	50	20	**Niconico**, Ustream *
Interaction (Exchange)	**70**	50	Twitter, Blog, **Skype,** Offline meeting
Creating videos	**90**	**100**	Niconico, Video-master, Encode-master, PV creation*
Selling (Event / Consign)	0	70	Homepage,* Amazon,* iTunes*
PR, Advertising	60	**90**	**Blog, Twitter,** Mail*
Consumption of music-related goods / Acquire information	20	**90**	Live house,* TV, Internet
Collaboration	50	70	Skye, Twitter
Performance	**80**	**100**	Niconico, Live house*
Other (Practices etc.)	0	40	Home, Studio,*

Table 5–1: Translation of the radar chart answered by informant A.
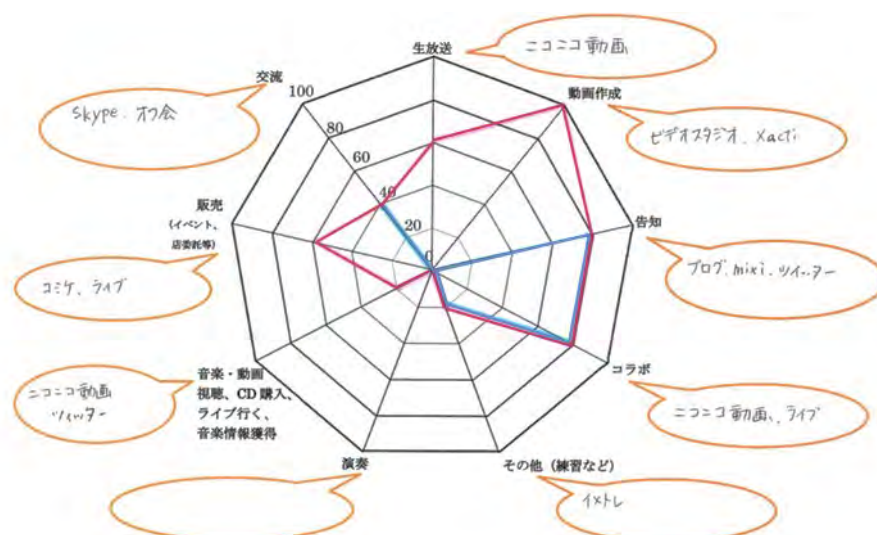
Figure 5–F: Radar chart answered by informant B.

Category of efforts	Niconico (%)	Other musical activities (%)	Media / Tools
Live streaming	60	0	**Niconico**
Interaction (Exchange)	40	**40**	**Skype,** Offline meeting
Creating videos	**100**	0	Video Studio, Xacti
Selling (Event / Consign)	60	0	Comic Market, Live concert
PR, Advertising	**80**	**80**	**Blog,** Mixi, **Twitter**
Consumption of music-related goods / Acquire information	20	0	Niconico, Twitter
Collaboration	**80**	**80**	Niconico, Live concert
Performance	0	0	N/A
Other (Practices etc.)	20	20	Image training

Table 5–2 :Translation of the radar chart answered by informant B.
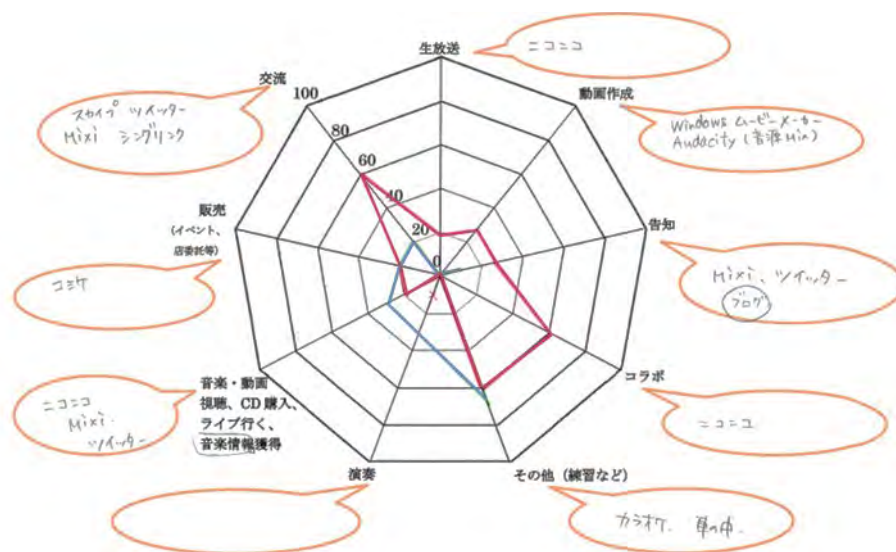
Figure 5–G: Radar chart answered by informant C.

Category of efforts	Niconico (%)	Other musical activities (%)	Media / Tools
Live streaming	20	0	**Niconico**
Interaction (Exchange)	**60**	20	**Skype,** Twitter, Mixi, Singlink
Creating videos	30	0	Windows movie maker, Audacity (audio mix)
Selling (Event / Consign)	20	20	Comic Market
PR, Advertising	30	10	Mixi, **Twitter, Blog**
Consumption of music-related goods / Acquire information	20	**30**	Niconico, Mixi, Twitter
Collaboration	**60**	0	Niconico
Performance	10	**30**	N/A
Other (Practices etc.)	**60**	**70**	Karaoke, in the car

Table 5–3: Translation of the radar chart answered by informant C.

5-2-2-1 Specifications of Nico Live for Users

Nico Live (*nikoniko nama hōsō* or *nikonama*) is one of the main services which allows staff as well as users to broadcast live programs. Nico Live started for staff use only in December 2007 before being released for all users in the following year. This section will focus only on Nico Live for users.

As a rule, for Niconico a user has to be a paying premium user and create his/her own community, the so-called "Niconi Community," prior to hosting Nico Live. The process for creating the community is simple. First, access to the Niconi Community page, click create own community, provide important information such as title, description, tags, types of group (public or closed) and other settings; then click confirm. Both premium and ordinary users can create a community. However, unlike premium users, who can create up to twenty communities and can host Nico Live, ordinary users can create only one community and cannot host Nico Live. The user can select whether or not the stream is restricted to community members, or whether it is for all Niconico users. Because of technical constraints Niconico limited the number of users who could live-stream at the same time. In the past, when it had a limited number of time slots, some users paid to reserve streaming at a specific time.

Niconico also provided a paid function, "cutting in line," which allowed users to broadcast their programs immediately. One live-streaming slot was thirty minutes, and the user could pay for a time extension for a maximum of six hours (Nicopedia 2019f).[10] Although there were lots of restrictions and rules for Nico Live in 2011, the features were also attractive for users, both for live streamers and their audience in comparison to Ustream, a main streaming competitor of Nico Live.[11]

---

[10] After the recent update in November 2017, time reservations, time extensions and "cutting in line" are now free of charge. For more information see Niconicopedia 2019. "Yūzānamahōsō."

[11] For example, there was a time-shift (TS) function, which meant that viewers could watch the recorded

In addition, by applying the same technique as for Niconico Video, Nico Live also showed viewers' comments appearing at a specific time in the live streaming screening. This function allowed live streamers to communicate in almost real time with their viewers.

Another important feature was the Niconi Community, which has to be created before streaming. Each community has its level. The level (starting from level 1; see how to calculate in Table 5–4 on the following page) is calculated by the number of premium users participating in that community.

Both premium and normal users can become a member of any communities they are interested in, free of charge, but only the premium users are counted for the level calculation. This level was used to obtain discounts or unlock important functions for Nico Live, such as the community capacity; backstage pass tickets; points discount[12] for time extension (500 points) / "cutting in line" (600 points) / slot reservation (500 points); and live-streaming participant capacity. These functions, especially the last mentioned, which restricted the number of participants who could view streaming at the same time, were very important for both live streamers and viewers.

Table 5–4 on the following page shows the merits of the community level for users in detail. In order to increase the community level, he or she needed to find as many premium users as possible to become members. One might start streaming with level one community, which allows 1,000 viewers to watch at the same time. Then, if users found it is interesting, they might join the community. Or the community owner might advertise on Niconico with ads and social media to call for more participants. Typically, *utaite* create a closed community; therefore, fans join the community to be able to see the contents inside.

---

live streaming when they were available; a phone-in function for live comments to broadcast to viewers via mobile telephones; a questionnaire function; and a Backstage Pass (BSP) function (a priority system for specific users).

[12] Required points for level one community: 1 point = 1 yen (excluding promotion).

Community level	Total premium members (estimated)	Max. member capacity	Unlocked function (1 point = 1 yen) (plus/minus in comparison with level 1)
1	1	5	Viewer 1,000 seats (Basic)
2	2	10	
.	.	.	
15	58	457	Phone-in (*nikoniko denwa*)[13]
20	128	1,157	Backstage pass 2 tickets
25	248	2,357	Live questionnaire
40	935	9,407	Cutting in line 400 pts. (-200 pts.)
46	1,418	14,057	Reservation 300 pts. (-200 pts.)
50	1,788	17,757	Cutting in line 400 pts. (-200 pts.) Viewer 1,500 seats (+ 500 seats)
54	2,206	21,937	Backstage pass 5 tickets
57	2,551	25,387	Time extension 300 pts. (-200 pts.)
60	2,923	29,107	Cutting in line free (-600 pts.)
69	(4,201)	41,887	Reservation 100 pts. (-500 pts.)
70	(4,358)	43,457	Viewer 2,000 seats (+ 1,000 seats)
74	(5,016)	50,037	Time extension 100 pts. (-400 pts.)
80	(6,093)	60,807	Backstage pass 10 tickets
86	(7,278)	72,657	One free time extension (-500 pts.)
90	(8,128)	81,157	Free reservation (-600 pts.)
97	(9,731)	97,187	Free time extension (-500 pts.)
105	(11,743)	117,307	Viewer 2,500 seats (+ 1,500 seats)
115	(14,528)	145,157	Backstage pass 20 tickets
150	(26,638)	266,257	Viewer 3,000 seats (+ 2,000 seats)
190	(44,978)	449,657	Viewer 3,500 seats (+ 2,500 seats)
256	(85,733)	857,207	Viewer 5,000 seats (+ 4,000 seats)

Table 5–4: The relationship between the community level and premium members participating in the community: maximum capacity and unlocked functions (Nicopedia 2019c; Nicopedia 2019f). [14],[15]

A concrete example is provided by the following: a *utaite* with a level one community (that is, with one premium participant (which usually was himself / herself), could host a live streaming with one thousand viewer seats. The viewer capacity would increase by five hundred seats once the community reached level fifty, which means the community had 1,788 premium users registered within its community. This *utaite* could undertake thirty minutes streaming for free. During my observations from 2010 to 2012, it was usual to see

---

[13] The phone-in service ended in 2014.

[14] This table is created based on information obtained from Nicopedia.

[15] Some functions became free of charge after the release of the November 2017 version.

utaite saying to viewers that he or she had "only five minutes left, but I will host another slot. Please wait. See you later." Then the viewers would say goodbye by typing the Japanese katakana letters *no* and *shi* (ノ シ) which look similar to hand-waving. And within a few minutes, a notification would appear on my mobile phone and my computer stating that the *utaite* had now started a new live streaming slot. Sometimes this would be repeated every thirty minutes all night long, because the live streamer did not want to pay for extra time. However, as shown in Table 5–4, once the community level had reached a certain level, the live broadcasters could extend their slot free of charge. The more premium users participated in the community, the more privileges the *utaite* received.

Table 5–5 shows the live streaming data of a male *utaite* on October 2, 2009. I selected the data when this *utaite* had started streaming in Nico Live for a second day. The table shows that he restarted to live-stream every thirty minutes to avoid a time extension charge, and that the longest waiting time between live streaming was three minutes.

No.	Time	Streaming length (min.)	Waiting time (min.)	Number of viewers	Total comments
1	15:58–16:28	30	-	485	1,926
2	16:29–16:59	30	1	551	2,529
3	16:59–17:29	30	0	640	2,532
4	17:32–18:02	30	3	745	4,218
5	18:03–18:33	30	1	773	3,447
6	18:34–19:04	30	1	823	2,020
7	19:04–19:34	30	0	865	3,463
8	19:35–20:05	30	1	937	4,635

Table 5–5: Live streaming data of a *utaite* on October 2, 2009.[16]

5-2-2-2 Premium Users and Ordinary Users

Looking at the picture from the point of view of the audience, as stated above, the capacity

---

[16] Data obtained from the live streaming archives of one *utaite* community. Because of the member-only restriction rule, the name and link have been omitted. (Accessed April 29, 2019).

of viewers for Nico Live was one thousand seats up to level forty-nine. Additionally, the seating system of Nico Live gave priority to premium users. That is, if more than one thousand users clicked to watch the live streaming at the same time, "ordinary" users would be randomly removed from the streaming room to ensure there were enough seats for premium users. If all of them were premium users, no one would be removed, but new premium users would be unable to get into the streaming room. Thus, it was usual to see ordinary users complaining on Twitter that they had been removed from live streaming and were unable to get in again.

I. "Arena" and "Standing"

Nico Live created sub-sets of seats inside the live stream room which were called "Arena" and "Standing" (*tachimi*). "Arena" was where the live streamer could see comments as a default setting; "Standing," however, provided a seat in a different room.

Therefore, if a live-streamer did not intentionally select to move to the "Standing" room, he or she could see comments only in the "Arena" room. This function was implemented to avoid the congestion of comments on one particular screen. The rooms of "Arena" and "Standing" could contain 500 users. If there were more viewers, the "Standing" room would be divided into compartments with the name followed by a letter of the alphabet (such as "Standing-A," "Standing-B," Standing-C," etc.) Premium users would have the privilege of getting into "Arena" first. If "Arena" was full, ordinary users would be demoted to the "Standing" room. This system encouraged users to apply to become premium users.

Up to now, I have described the specifications of Nico Live and the settings. In the next subsection, I examine how *utaite* used this tool to communicate with their fans.

5-2-2-3 *Utaite* in Nico Live

Utaite have several methods and tools with which to communicate with their fans, both inside and outside Niconico. With the inside functions there are one-way communication tools, such as comments on videos, clip descriptions, tags, and Niconico ads, as well as two-way communication channels such as a bulletin board in individual communities and on Nico Live.

Although nowadays having comments or emoticons flowing while streaming is no longer unusual, during the live-streaming observation period (2010 to 2013) this function was relatively new with live-streaming users around the world.[17] *Utaite*, the live-streamers, could read comments being written by the viewers and spontaneously respond if they wished. At the same time, viewers could also chat with others using the comments system or via specific tags on Twitter. Usually *utaite* allowed only members of their communities to watch live streaming. There was also a time-shift function which allowed users to reserve and watch the live streaming later. *Utaite* could choose whether they would or would not use this function for each streaming. The content of live streaming would vary depending on the *utaite*, from daily life stories, singing, drawing or even cooking. Furthermore, since *utaite* usually collaborated with other *utaite*, it was usual to see *utaite* hosting a live program together. Nico Live had a function that was able to sync Skype with a live program; thus, *utaite* did not need to be together physically to host the program.

To give a concrete example, Figure 5–H on the following page is the screenshot of a cooking program, live-streamed by a famous male *utaite*. The host *utaite* had reached a community level of more than 150; therefore, he could accept 3,000 viewers maximum at the same time. On the top right-hand corner of the figure, is the word "Standing-A-87,"

---

[17] Compared with Ustream, a major live-streaming competitor.

which is the compartment of the room I entered. The number denoted was the eighty-seventh

person who had entered the Standing-A room. Since I was a premium user, it implied that

there were more than 500 premium users in the Arena room already. The total number of

viewers since the start of the live streaming was 5,977 people with 15,194 comments.

This particular user had already shown his face on the Internet, in live concerts and

at Comiket; he therefore also showed his face in this live program. The comments of users

could be seen on the video screen and the log on the right side. The "w" means laugh and

"8" means applause in Japanese Internet slang. However, since the shot was in compartment

"A" of the "Standing" room and the host was in the "Arena" room when this screenshot was

taken, he could not have seen these comments in real time.

Figure 5–H: Screenshot of live streaming of one male *utaite* together with another *utaite*.
(Taken by the author on June 2, 2012).[18]

Expert *utaite* who knew the Nico Live system well would attempt to please all their

viewers. First, they would stay in the "Arena" room for a period of time. Then they would

say "I will say hi to 'Standing' [room] seats and come back." Then people in "Arena" would

---

[18] The name and URL link are omitted to allow privacy for the *utaite* community.

type words of greeting or symbols such as"ノシ" (characters that resemble hand-waving) or

itterasshai ("Please go and come back.") Subsequently the *utaite* would visit the "Standing"

room and say something like "Hi! Standing-A! How are you?" And listeners would write

back something like (name of *utaite*), "Good morning / Good afternoon / Good evening," or

"Thank you for coming." If there was more than one compartment in the "Standing" room,

the *utaite* would greet every compartment before returning to the "Arena" room, and usually

they would say goodbye to the "Arena" room before the finish of the live streaming session.

Above was the example of one *utaite* live program. There is no doubt that Nico Live

has become an important tool for *utaite* to communicate directly with their fans. *Utaite* often

give out personal information or thoughts during the Nico Live, and some *utaite* do not allow

users to talk about the content of the programs outside the streaming room. On the one hand,

it encourages users to watch the program in real-time to acquire the information. On the

other hand, the Nico Live would last for not more than around a week before the expiry date.

Therefore, *utaite* and their fans tended to use another platform that was more flexible and

easier for communication between users: Twitter.

5-2-3 Twitter: Strengthening the Relationship

Twitter is an important communication tool that connects not only *utaite* and their fans but

also fans who have the same favorite *utaite.*

5-2-3-1 *Utaite* and Fans

Informant A stated that she started to use Twitter from December 2009. She checked her

Twitter account very frequently and tweeted three to five times a day about her daily life, PR

and conversations with followers. She decided to reply to the tweets from her fans, taking

into account the content of the tweets. Informants B and C also said that they checked Twitter

when they had time. While informant B tweeted about five to ten times a day apropos his

daily life and other announcements, informant C tweeted around twenty tweets per day about her daily life and conversations with followers. All informants mentioned the same advantages of Twitter which are that they are short and easy to make (interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011; interview with *utaite* B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011; interview with *utaite* C in Tokyo, September 25, 2011).

Utaite would usually start the conversation on Twitter. For example, when they tweeted something about their daily lives, fans would reply as though they were friends. If the *utaite* said "Today is so hot," fans would reply "Yes, it's very hot;" "Please be careful of heatstroke;" "Drink a lot of water;" "Please drink my orange juice." Or after the live streaming ended, the *utaite* would tweet: "Thank you very much for visiting me today," and the fans would reply, "Thank you;" "Love you;" "I want to hear more."

However, in most cases famous *utaite* would usually reply to the tweets of other *utaite*, but rarely reply to tweets from fans. For instance, I have followed one *utaite* for almost ten years and have replied to him every time I have had a chance to do so. So far, I have received his "like" only once and have received replies from him fewer than five times. In fact, the one "like" was significant. I had not realized that he liked my tweet, but one of the *utaite'* fans who was quite close to me discovered this. She captured the screenshot and asked me: "Do you know that [*utaite* name] liked your tweet!?" I was surprised. It was a big issue, since he was very popular, and rarely liked a specific fan's tweet. This made me feel closer to this particular *utaite*. However, new *utaite* would usually reply to all tweets from fans since they had a smaller number of fans and replies, and they would want to increase their number of fans.

5-2-3-2 Fan and Fans

Apart from the relationship between *utaite* and fans, fans also create an interpersonal communication with other fans, both offline and online using Twitter. I wrote up three cases

from my fieldwork to show examples of how fans and other fans connected with each other, which I set out below.

A) From live streaming to Twitter: Case 1

Listeners on Nico Live could tweet their comments and feelings in real time. However, before the Twitter function was embedded into Nico Live, fans who watched the same streaming sometimes decided on the Twitter tag (#) for further discussion, especially fans in the "Standing" room. While fans who had "Arena" seats tended to focus on talking to *utaite*, fans who were unable to enter the "Arena" room usually communicated through comments on the screen with each other. Figure 5–I below is my tweet logs with another user who was in the same "Standing-B room."
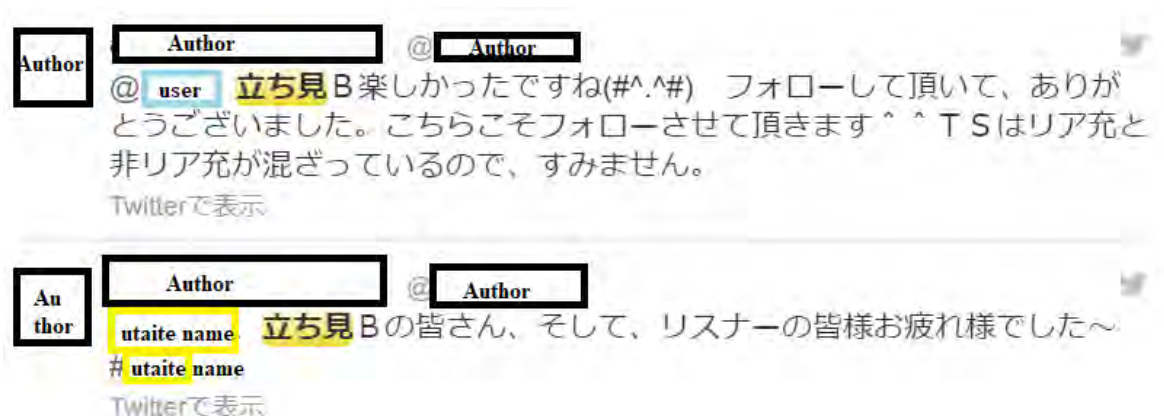
Figure 5–I: Conversation between fan and author who were in "Standing-B" on Twitter.

First, I greeted everyone: "[*utaite name*] Everyone at 'Standing-B' and all listeners, Good job for today #*utaite name.*" One user followed me and said she was also from "Standing-B." I followed her back and replied "@[username] 'Standing-B' was such fun. Thank you very much for following me. I will follow you back too (…)." Subsequently we became online friends and met each other at a *utaite* live concert.

B) From an offline event to Twitter: Case 2

A similar incident might also occur with offline events. When I went to a live concert of a famous *utaite*, I tweeted about it on my Twitter account, saying that I had: "Arrived at Kichijochi! I came too early, so I am now waiting for the opening hour," and I ended my tweet with the tag (#) and wrote the *utaite*'s name. Then someone followed me and replied to my tweet, saying: "I am sorry for the sudden reply. I read your profile and followed you^^. My name is […] and I love [*utaite*'s name] and [anime name] too! If you are OK with this, please follow me too!" I replied and followed her back. Later she thanked me for following her back and said she would participate in the same event, and also that she would be happy if we could talk about it (Figure 5–J).

Figure 5–J: Conversation between fan and author on Twitter during a live concert day.

C) From an offline event to Twitter: Case 3

Another offline case was when I met with the fans of a *utaite* in a live house. Since I was there alone for the first time, while I was standing, one young girl next to me asked me whether I was alone. I replied that I was. She said that she had also come alone. Then we

started talking about the *utaite* who was going to be on the stage that night. Other people surrounding us had also come on their own, so during the interval six of us went to a restaurant together. We talked about the *utaite* and found that we shared the same interests. Before saying goodbye, all of us exchanged our Twitter accounts. We have since talked on Twitter every day and have become quite close. In 2012, since a *utaite* ticket was very difficult to reserve (first come first served, but sold out in five minutes), we tried to reserve tickets for each other.

Of the three cases listed above, the third group had the strongest relationship. For instance, we talked and shared information on Twitter; planned to hold the same colors of chemical lights in the live concerts (some *utaite* have specific chemical light colors for their identities) or bought *utaite* goods for friends who could not come to the conventions. Having friends who were fans of the same *utaite* also indirectly strengthened their relationship with the *utaite* concerned.

This section of Chapter 5 has aimed to examine the social media usage of *utaite*. Each informant had different expectations and spent different amounts of effort on media usage. I found that the informants had the same media tools in common, which were Skype, blogs, Nico Live and Twitter. I have focused my attention on Nico Live and Twitter. Both of these communication tools were important for creating and strengthening the relationship between *utaite* and their fans.

5-3 Approaching Social Places

In the previous section of Chapter 5, I showed how *utaite* utilized social media to connect with their fans, and how fans linked with each other using Twitter. I also used examples of how I connected with other fans that I had met in real life and became connected with on the Internet. Nowadays it is difficult to separate the Internet from our daily lives; Internet culture

now expands into the physical world, especially into the social places which existed prior to the emergence of digital platforms. The *utaite* is no exception to this. Up until now, I have mentioned *utaite* in connection with Comiket. However, *utaite* activities are not limited to this particular social place. I have divided their activities into two categories: *dōjinshi*-related and idol-related. Both have a strong relationship with existing Japanese culture. The former connects with the *dōjinshi* culture and the latter relates to the celebrity culture I have discussed in Chapter 1.

5-3-1 Dōjinshi-Related Activities

In this section, to begin with I shall discuss *utaite* activities that are related to *dōjinshi*. I follow the definition of *dōjin ongaku* I defined in Chapter 3 by examining their work, their distribution routes for *dōjinshi*, and how they adapted to the Comiket ethos.

5-3-1-1 Creations of *Utaite* at Comiket

The first component in the definition of *dōjin ongaku* is self-financed / self-published music, created by an individual or collaboration between individuals. The main creations of *utaite* are music CDs or DVDs. However, they have also created other goods such as mobile straps, towels, pens, bags, and Polaroid photos.

Figure 5–K on the next page comprises examples of *utaite* musical CDs, DVDs and goods I bought from Comiket in the summer of 2011 (C80). The photo on the left shows musical CDs and DVDs from several *utaite* circles. At the back there is a towel and a paper bag with the logo of a *utaite* group. The photo on the right shows mobile straps created by three *utaite*: Clear, Dasoku and Pokota. Usually they collaborate with other users on Niconico to create CDs, together with other users such as illustration-masters, Vocaloid producers, video-masters and / or sound-masters. Of all of them, the illustration-master is the most essential collaborator in most *utaite*' work. Both photos in Figure 5–K clearly show

that all three *utaite* used manga caricatures and computer graphics rather than photos of their real selves. Unless *utaite* are able to draw themselves, they request an illustration-master to draw characters to use for their *dōjinshi*, mostly for CD jackets. If *utaite* want to create a CD that covers derivative Vocaloid's songs, the etiquette is to make contact with the Vocaloid producer to say that the Vocaloid song has been used in the *dōjin* CD in Comiket. Some *utaite* may collaborate with a sound-master during the mixing process or, for those *utaite* who have created a DVD, they might collaborate with a video-master. The remuneration for the collaborators varies from money to goods, or sometimes a good meal (in the case of friends), depending on personal requests.

Figure 5–K: *Utaite* musical CDs, DVDs and goods from C80 (summer 2011).Photo taken by the author.

A) Indie Artist's Musical CD Production Process

During the time of the interviews in 2011, the three informants had different experiences with regards to Comiket. While informant A had never participated in Comiket, informant B had participated as a circle, and informant C had participated as a circle assistant (*uriko* or

"salesclerk"). However, informant A had created a CD for her professional work as an indie artist. She gave reasons why she did not create a *dōjin* CD for Comiket, saying that she put most of her effort into her professional activities. She emphasized that if someone would invite her to help to create a *dōjin* CD for Comiket, she would definitely participate; however, so far no one had invited her.

I asked about the process of creating a CD for her profession. She detailed her indie CD production as shown in Figure 5–L, and explained her production process as follows:
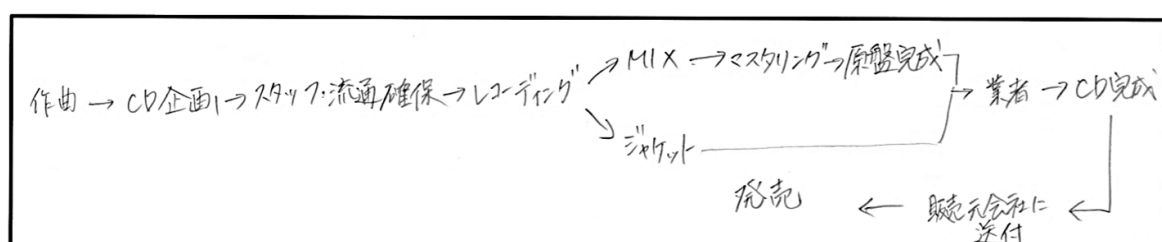
Figure 5–L: Production process of an indie artist's musical CD, as drawn by informant A.
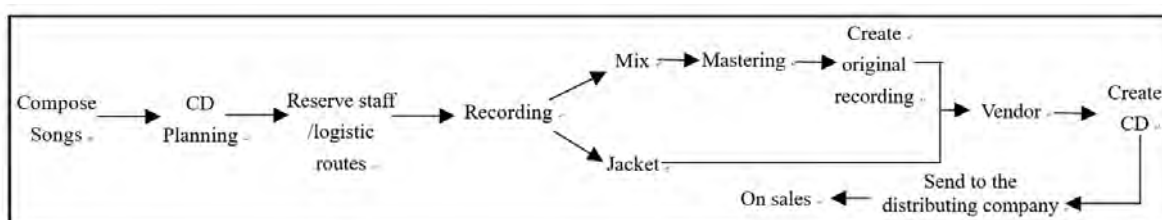
Figure 5–L–1: Production process of an indie artist's musical CD,
as drawn by informant A (translated version).

> First, after having songs in hand, when songs have reached a certain number and [I have] started talking about creating a CD album, I think about who will take care of the jacket, mix. … Since there are many people involved, I need to confirm with the *jimusho* [agency/office] and to employ staff and logistical routes. After I've decided, I will start the recording process. After I finish recording, I send the file to people who will mix for me. The process of creating the jacket occurs at the same time. After the mix comes the process of mastering. In mastering, I will [either] get the "original" recording, or the first CD will become the master CD. Once the master CD is in hand, I will send this CD and the jacket illustration to the vendor [CD creator.] The vending process is dealt with through contact with the agency. Later, the vendor sends the finished CD back [to me]. There is a distributor who signs the contract with the agency, so we send the CD to the distributor and the company will sell for us.

> (Interview with *utaite* A in Tokyo, July 23, 2011.)

Informant A further noted that this process is somewhat similar to her production process with the singing videos on Niconico; however, in comparison with Niconico, this process was very important for her, and she spent a lot more effort on it.

B) Dōjin CD Production Process

Informant B, who was the only informant experienced in creating and selling CDs in Comiket, also illustrated his production process. He explained his *dōjin* CD production process in our conversation as follows: ("W" as writer; "B" as informant B; interview with *utaite* B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011):
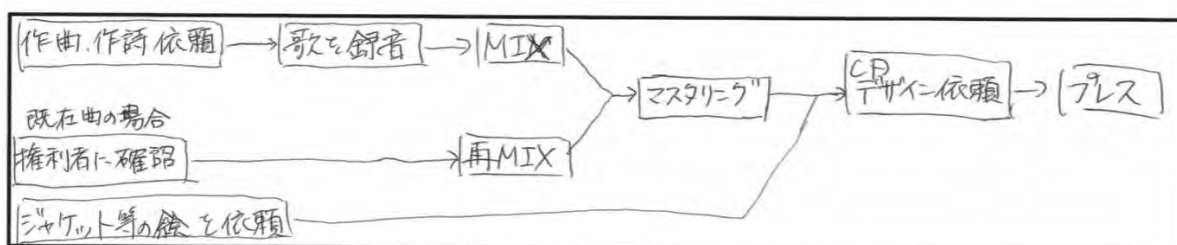
Figure 5–M: *Dōjin* CD production process as drawn by informant B.
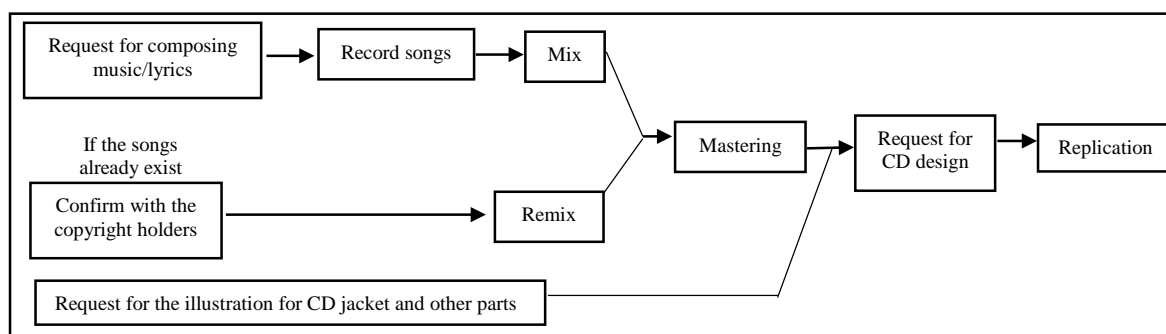
Figure 5–M–1: *Dōjin* CD production process as drawn by informant B (translated version).

B: Here [pointed to the top left hand box] when I create the original songs, I ask [others] to compose the music and lyrics. Then I record the songs, [undertake] mixing, mastering, ask for the CD design, and replicate the CD. If the songs already exist, I will ask [the copyright holders]: "Can I use these existing songs?" and say, "I will pay you." Then I will start the recording process […].

W: Do you need to pay money for the songs?

B: […] Since this is my personal CD, I have to pay the price for "Please let me use this song."

W: So you pay the Vocaloid producer?

B: If the Vocaloid producer was the one who created the song, I will pay the Vocaloid

producer; if the company created the song, I will pay the company.

W: It is OK if you cannot answer this question, but could you please tell me how much you pay them?

B: It depends on the person, but usually it is in between 20,000 to 50,000 yen (100 to 500 dollars). It also depends on the *utaite*. For example, if they make only 500 CDs, it would be cheap; if they make 10,000 CDs, it would be more expensive. I have heard that it depends on the price of the CD. […] Then, since I need to have an illustration for the jacket, after mastering, I ask the illustration-master to draw the jacket and other designs.

W: I think your answer differs from what happens with Niconico. When you create the CD, you have to contact the Vocaloid producer, don't you?

B: I have to contact the Vocaloid producer.

W: While for Niconico, sometimes you simply attach the link of the family head?

B: Since this is something about money, we have to pay the Vocaloid producers; that is, we say, "Please let me put this song into [my] CD," and ask how much it costs. With Niconico, nothing is said about money, since no money [transaction] is involved. In the case of the CD, however, there is a monetary [transaction] involved.

Communication between *utaite* and the original creators, especially individuals such as Vocaloid producers, should be noted. In Chapter 4 section 5, I mentioned the paradigm shift of this research, comparing it with previous fan research undertaken in the past. Informant B experienced both contact with a company and with individual creators. The above finding confirmed the dissolving of the communication barrier between Vocaloid producers, the original creators, and *utaite*, the derivative creators.

5-3-1-2 Distribution Routes of *Dōjin* CDs

The second component in the definition of *dōjin ongaku* is the well-defined routes of distribution. Apart from *dōjinshi* conventions that have accepted the *dōjin ongaku* genre, such as Comiket, M3 or Comitia, there were prominent distribution routes of *dōjin* CDs through *dōjin stores*. Also, some famous *utaite* may use existing music distributor routes and sell their work at record stores (such as informant A's indie CDs). In this section, however, I shall focus on the perspective of the unique *dōjinshi* stores' distribution route.

There are many *dōjinshi* stores, or stores that accept *dōjinshi* consignments in Japan, such as "Comic Toranoana," "Melonbooks," "Animate," "K-Books," and "Mandarake."

Some focus on *dōjinshi* only; some are bookstores that have a consignment corner for *dōjinshi*; while some sell mainly used *dōjinshi*. Such stores have expanded, not only in Tokyo but also in other prefectures, as well as abroad and online. Below is an example of one of the famous *dōjinshi* stores that accepted a *dōjinshi* consignment named "Comic Toranoana" (Toranoana) at Ikebukuro station,[19] Tokyo, As of August 19, 2019, Toranoana wrote on its website that it opened in 1994 at Akihabara, Tokyo as a *dōjinshi* store and became a pioneer in starting a domestic *dōjin* mail order service (TORANOANA Inc. 2019). Now it claims it has become the biggest otaku shop in the world with twenty-one branches.

Figure 5–N on the next page shows the simplified interior of the stores in June 2011. *Dōjinshi* creators can register their circles and work through the Toranoana website to use the consignment service. I have been in Tokyo since 2007 and have visited various *dōjinshi* stores. From 2010 onwards, I noticed the gradual change in the interior arrangements.

In June 2011, after I entered Toranoana, Ikebukuro branch, there was a corner set up for *utaite* just next to the entrance door near a shelf containing anime DVDs, anime songs and the audio dramas of anime actors. I heard voices I was familiar with when I looked at the *utaite* shelf. There was a small screen showing the promotion video of an album named "*Colour*" from one *utaite* group consisting of five *utaite* "Point Five (.5)." Surrounding the screen was the *dōjin* CD created by Point five and other *utaite*. Everything, including the promotion video, used manga caricatures. On paper was written "Hot topic on the Internet now! Niconico *utaite*!!" When I walked out of the store, I saw the decorated window showcase as in Figure 5–O on the following page. (This photo was taken on June 6, 2011.) It was after the release of the second album "*Colour*" from "Point Five (.5)," but before the release of the album "*Moratoriamu*" (June 15), which I wrote about in Chapter 2.

---

[19] Ikebukuro station is popular with fan girls at *dōjinshi* stores, while Akihabara station is popular with fan boys.
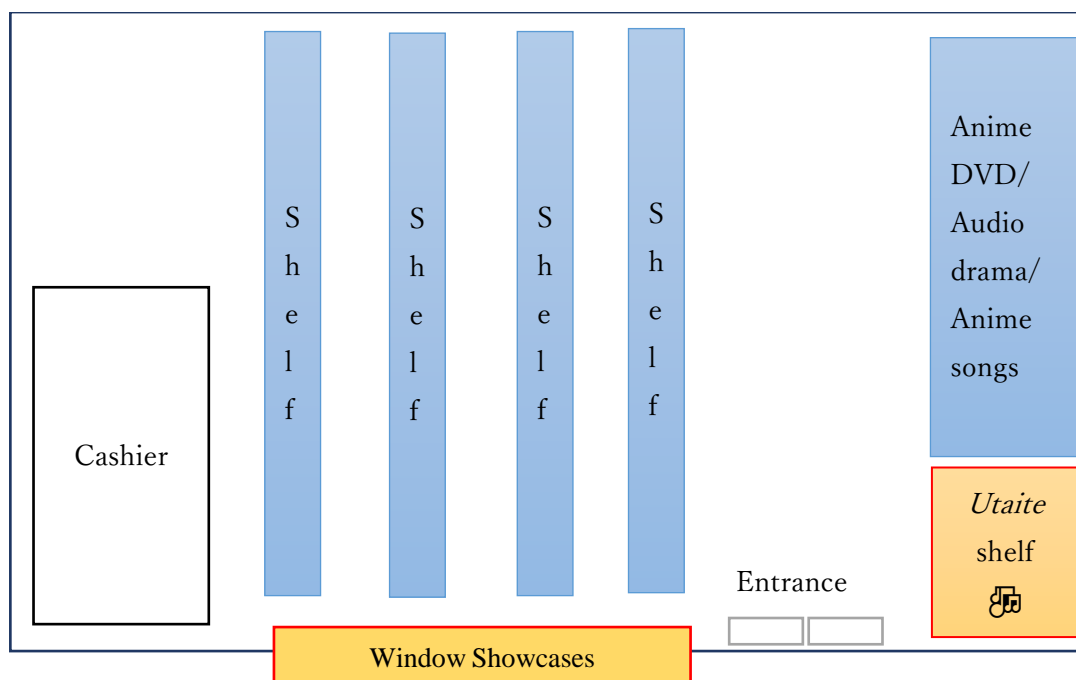
Figure 5–N: Simplified interior of Comic Toranoana, Ikebukuro branch, in June 2011.

Figure 5–O: Window showcases in front of Comic Toranoana, showing *utaite* CD promotion videos, billboards and decorations. (Photo taken by the author on June 6, 2011.)

Inside the showcase there was a screen showing the promotion video and two big billboards of posters written with information about each album. Additionally, the showcase was decorated with small manga caricatures of *utaite* taken from both albums. Though some *utaite* in the .5 group were members of a *utaite* that were in the *Moratoriamu* CD, they used different characters in the showcase because of a different illustration-master who drew their manga caricatures. I was surprised by the sudden change of the interior layout of Toranoana at that time since I thought *utaite* as a genre was still minor compared with the mainstream anime. This finding also coincided with the popularity of *utaite* at Comiket that started in 2010.At that time, *Dōjinshi* creators usually created their work and first distributed it at *dōjinshi* conventions. If there were some books left over, they would use the consignment *dōjinshi* stores to sell these. Some creators who cannot participate in the conventions also use this distribution channel to expand their works in the physical world.

5-3-1-3 The Ethos of *Dōjinshi*

The last component, the most abstract factor in the definition of *dōjin ongaku*, is whether or not the users understand the ethos of *dōjinshi*. The ethos of *dōjinshi* in Japan emerged from that of Comiket, which therefore means that the aim of *dōjinshi* is not to make money but to create for the sake of creating and to share creations with other participant creators and participants who are not creators.

To examine this component, I selected the period when *utaite* began to participate at Comiket and when some participants had a bad reputation because they were disapproved of by other participants. I focused on how they managed to deal with the conflict they experienced, and how they adapted to the ethos of Comiket.

Figure 5–P on the following page is an example of the layout of *utaite* circles in winter Comiket 2011 (C81) from one *utaite* fan magazine. It is clear that most *utaite* circles were placed in the same area as other *utaite* on December 31, 2011 in West hall 2 on the last

day of winter Comiket 2011. Moreover, most of the circles were placed as "wall circles" and "shutter circles" which meant they were forecasted to be popular. Some circles such as number 9 or 23 are not included in the layout and were placed on another day or in the commercial area.

This dissertation focuses on the *utaite* who participated in the *dōjinshi* area. Since some of *utaite* concealed their real faces from the public, they also adapted ways of participating at Comiket to fit with this.
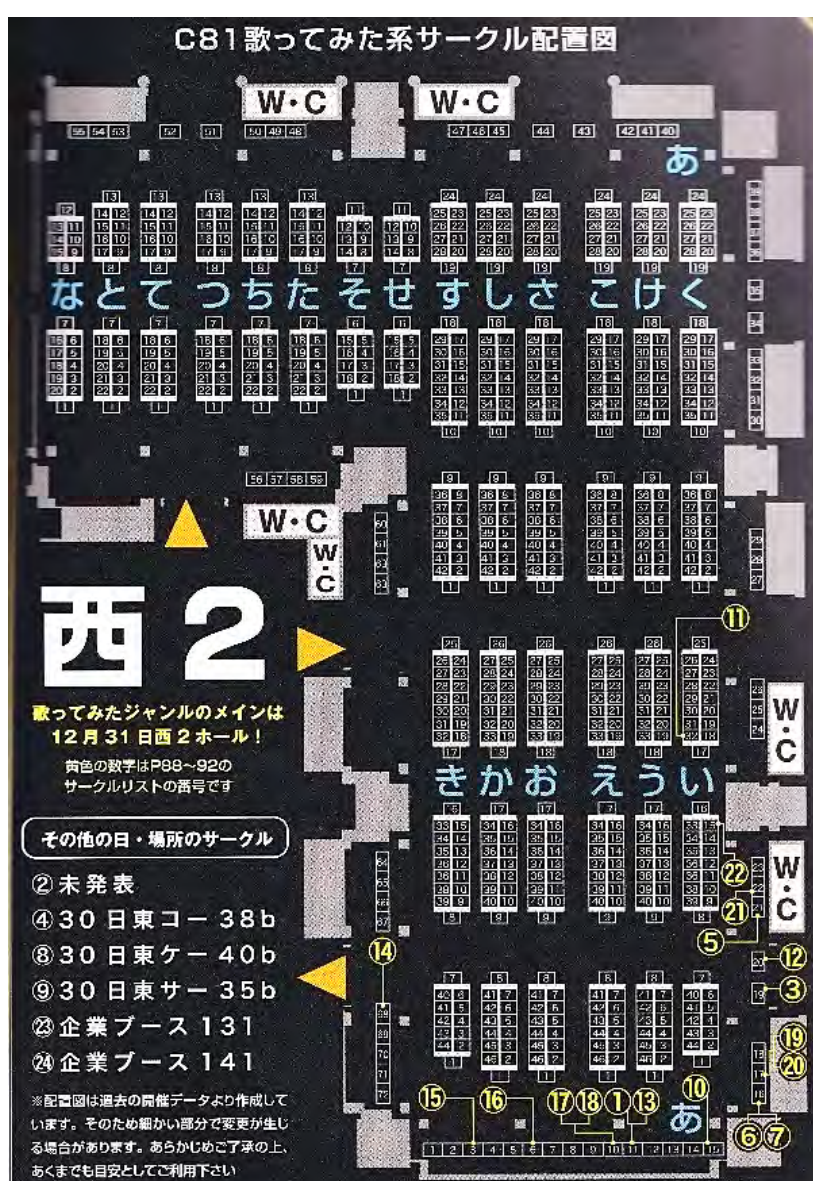
Figure 5–P: Example of the layout of "tried singing" circles (yellow numbers) in C81, from the magazine *Utattemita no 2011 nen no sōkessan yattemita!* (2011, 93).

According to my observations, there were four ways *utaite* participated (or did not participate) in this particular Comiket:

(1) They participated as a circle (individually or as a group).

(2) They collaborated with other *utaite*, or other *dōjin ongaku* circles (but not with Niconico circles) and released their CDs together as a circle (group). It would then depend on the *utaite* whether or not they would join up during the convention.

(3) They consigned their CDs to other circles and did not come to the venue.

(4) They released their CDs through companies that participated in the commercial area. These *utaite* mostly did not come to the venue or visited Comiket for only a short period of time.

During the period of observation from 2011 to 2014, although *utaite* were in different halls, on different days and in different circles, the layout of *utaite* circles were similar to that of C81 throughout this period. A congestion of participants occurred in the *utaite* area. However, in comparison to C79 in the winter of 2010 (see the photo at the beginning of Chapter 1), I felt there was some improvement in the *utaite* fans' behavior and with the behavior of the *utaite* themselves.

In C82 (winter 2011), while I was queuing up at one of the *utaite* shutter circles, a circle assistant carrying a board that had "[Circle name] End of the queue here"[20] written on it came up to me and passed me a piece of paper for me to write down what I wanted to buy. This was one example of the way in which *utaite* circles made the distribution of *dōjinshi* faster and smoother than previously. I was surrounded by fans who were aged from about 10

---

[20] In Comiket, famous circles that have long queues are supposed to prepare a board with the words "[Circle name] End of the queue here" in advance. This is because it is difficult for attendees to find the queue for the circle they would like to queue for. Typically, the last person in the queue carries this board and passes it to the next person who joins the queue, but sometimes the circle assistant carries it.

to the early 20s, and more than 90 percent were female. Since it was a cold day, I brought presents of heat packs as small gifts. I knew the name of the circle assistant since he had participated in Nico Live, and recently he had started to become a *utaite* himself. I called his name and said: "[assistant name] it's very cold today, please use these. I brought them for everyone," and passed him five heat packs. He smiled happily and accepted my presents. Then it was my turn. In front of me was the *utaite*, who, although he had rarely disclosed his full face on Niconico, was not now wearing a mask to cover his face. I greeted him by calling him by his nickname "Good morning [*utaite*'s nickname]" and he greeted me back, saying, "Good morning. It's very cold today, isn't it?" I then passed the piece of paper on which I had written down what I wanted to buy. He confirmed my order and put the *dōjinshi* into a special bag designed for Comiket. Before paying, I passed him my fan letter. He said, "Thank you," and looked at the envelope that I had written his name on for a few seconds before putting it in a box. Then I received my *dōjinshi* bag and said "[*utaite* nickname] today is cold. Keep at it! (*gambatte!*)" He replied, "Hang in there!" before I left the queue. Everything that happened, from the moment I first greeted the *utaite* until I had finished paying, occurred within less than one minute.

At C79, however, there was no piece of paper on which to order what to buy, no proper end-of-the-queue board, and *utaite* took from around two to five minutes to deal with just one person (including shaking hands and writing autographs). Nevertheless, even at C81 there were still some participants who attempted to take photos or waited nearby for as long as possible to see *utaite*.

5-3-1-4 Adaptation to the Ethos of *Dōjinshi*

I. Criticism from the Comiket Staff

The word "Niconico" first appeared as a subgenre in C74 (summer 2008), and *utaite* had reached their peak in popularity among users by about the beginning of the 2010s. The

change in the reactions of staff after *utaite* and their fans had participated in Comiket can be found by examining comments from the column *Haichi tantōsha no hitokoto kōnā* ("A word from the staff who are in charge of location arrangements")[21] on the official Comiket website. This column is also published in the Comiket catalog. It sets out the frank opinions of staff members who are in charge of the location arrangements for each genre. Staff taking care of the "digital (others)" location arrangements had started to talk about *utaite* from C79 (winter 2010) onwards, saying that when applying for circle spaces "'tried_singing' would be *dōjin ongaku*, but that books created based on the 'tried_singing' story would be placed in the Niconico area" (Comiket Inc. 2019b). After C80 (summer 2011) until recently C95 (winter 2018), there were complaints and requests from the staff with regard to the behavior of the participants of Niconico-related subgenres. The first comment in C80 revealed the exhaustion and shock felt by one particular member of staff:

> "Worn out…"
> The reason why I said "worn out" is because of my feeling that applications to Niconico-related circles such as "live-streaming host/*utaite*" and "Vocaloid producers" were drastically increased. Moreover, some of them were first-time participants at Comiket. It was a great pleasure to have a lot of newcomers, but there were also many problems. "Vocaloid producers" were still OK. However, there were a variety of problems left unsolved since the last Comiket, such as the "live-streaming hosts" who did not understand Comiket, or people who had participated in the Comiket for the first time and wanted to see "live-streaming hosts" for real, created by the crowd. Also, the number of new participants again increased this time. That's why I feel worn out ever since I attempted to plan countermeasures against these problems. As the person in charge of the location of this subgenre, I just have one thing to say: "Distributing your *dōjinshi* must be your first priority on which you should focus. I do not say please do not try to, for example, start asking for autographs or start to shake hands with the ordinary participants. However, please do consult with CMC staff members during the event and follow their instructions. In addition, this time your location is located away from a place where people can stare at you. Please acknowledge that. Thank you." (Excerpt from a staff comment in C80, summer 2011 (Comiket Inc. 2019c).

It is clear from the comment that the Niconico boom in Vocaloid producers, live streaming

---

[21] Comiket Inc. 2019a. *Haichi tantōsha no hitokoto kōnā (bakku nanbā)*. Last modified January 4, 2019. Accessed July 4, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/hitokotoBN.html.

hosts, and *utaite* began in Comiket C79 (winter 2010), which was when I witnessed the crowd of fans surrounding *utaite* circles in Comiket.[22] In addition to this comment from a staff member of Comiket, there were also a number of critical comments with regard to the bad behavior of people on social media. After C79, *utaite* who applied for C80 attempted to solve this problem by writing blogs about how to participate in Comiket. For example, "Please read the catalog carefully before coming," or "Please refrain from taking a photo." In C81 (winter 2011) the location problem was solved, but behavior of the Comiket participants still needed to be improved. The member of staff in charge wrote that "There was no problem regarding the location last time. However, I would like to say something to 'live-streaming hosts' and '*utaite*' who as ever had so many visitors all day long. Appealing to fans (autographs, shaking hands, etc.) may be important, and I won't say don't do that, but please give priority to the distribution of your *dōjinshi*" (Comiket Inc. 2019d). At the end of this paragraph, the location arrangement head stated that: "Comiket is the place where you present your fruitful work that you have created to show to others; it is not merely a place for promoting yourself. In addition, if you cannot manage the ordinary participants well enough, this will cause trouble in the surrounding area, including safety problems. Please be careful." (ibid.). After C81 in winter 2011 until C95 in winter 2018, there were similar messages in the same column.

However, the Niconico and *utaite* booms have slowed down over the last three years (2016–2019), and participants' behavior had also improved at Comiket, while Comiket staff have become better at controlling this subgenre. Staff in C95 (winter 2018) wrote: "As usual, we would like to ask a favor from the 'live-streaming hosts' *utaite* and 'famous people' who receive many visitors throughout the day. Appealing to fans (autographs, shaking hands, etc.)

---

[22] See Chapter 1 for more information about this.

may be important and I won't say 'don't do it', however, please give priority to distribution of your *dōjinshi*. In addition, please do not hesitate to consult the staff before doing anything. We will try to cooperate with you as much as possible" (Comiket Inc. 2019e).

It is clear that the comments from staff had become shorter, less aggressive and more conciliatory regarding the Niconico-related participants, including *utaite*. In the quote above, "the famous people" mentioned by the staff were the Internet idols and celebrities. These roles have newly emerged in Comiket since Japan experienced the YouTube boom in 2017. Some *utaite* have also followed this new trend. Some have left Niconico and some have increased their communication channels on YouTube.

II. Criticism on Twitter

A post to Twitter from one user on December 31, 2010 (at 17:14) during C79 stated that, "[Alert] This Comiket, lots of people who took photos of *utaite* from the upper bridge without permission could be seen. This behavior is a breach of decorum and the behavior of each individual may diminish the expansion of their [*utaite*] activities in the future. Please support [the *utaite*] with good manners [Please share]." Within a day, this tweet was re-tweeted more than a thousand times, with lots of people tweeting "Agreed," and criticizing *utaite* who were unable to manage their fans.

Another tweet during C80 pointed out the reason why *utaite* fans acted differently from other participants. A post to Twitter from one user on August 8, 2011 (at 18:27) said that "The relationship between Comiket and *utaite* has become a problem. They are not used to it. Fans who listen to the music feel strongly they are customers at a live concert. I think the reason maybe is because they are not fans of books or CDs but of people. That's why they demand to shake hands, autographs and photos." This tweet received fewer re-tweets, but was liked more than the previous tweet. I also found similar tweets mentioned the same things during the period 2010 to 2014. However, the number of critical tweets was

decreasing.

The main points that both tweets set out above had mentioned were related to the ethos of Comiket. The latter tweet indicated that the focus had shifted from creations to people or from CDs to *utaite*. Moreover, in the former tweet, "diminish the expansion of their [*utaite*] activities" refers to the so-called "blacklist" at Comiket. Although there was no exact list, or concrete evidence that this list in fact existed, circle participants who failed to follow Comiket's rules usually failed to pass the selection process in the following Comiket. Here, it is important to note that *utaite* were not the only people being criticized by other participants. There were always newcomers in Comiket, and most of the newcomers often did not understand either the ethos or the rules. It was therefore the duty of all participants, especially the circles, to educate newcomers beforehand.

III. Utaite and Fans' Education at Comiket

After receiving several criticisms from other participants on Twitter in 2010, most *utaite* started to tweet and write blogs to inform and educate their fans who came to Comiket. Most blogs and tweets in 2009 and 2010 focused on general information about Comiket, such as. "Please prepare for the heat or cold." The following is an example from a blog of one *utaite*. A blog post of a shutter circle *utaite* on August 11, 2011 (C80) at 17:29[23] mentioned the topic "Information for summer Comiket 2011 participants" after his *dōjinshi* information. This *utaite* wrote about three main topics: what is Comiket? Self-preparation (heat protection), and other cautionary topics (such as reading the catalog beforehand, using small bank notes, no photos, searching for the "end of the queue" board before queuing, and rules about presents). He also stressed the ethos of Comiket, saying that "No customer exists in Comiket. Everyone is a participant," and "Please bear in mind that this is a place where you cannot

---

[23] Accessed August 12, 2011. The URL and personal information are omitted on account of the *utaite*'s privacy concerns.

say I pay money and I can become a customer." In addition, he mentioned problems that would exist if fans did not follow the Comiket rules, such as, "If the queue becomes too long, causing trouble to other circles surrounding it, I will not be able to participate as a circle in the next Comiket. In order to be able to meet at the next Comiket with my newly released CD, please do not make any trouble with other nearby circles." In the previous subsection I mentioned the blacklist. In this blog post, it is clear that the *utaite* was aware of becoming blacklisted, which would result in him failing the next Comiket circle selection process. Other *utaite* posted similar cautions on their blogs and Twitter. Fans would then re-tweet and write comments to acknowledge the *utaite*. Subsequently, the situation gradually improved, as I have shown from the staff comments.

I have examined the *dōjinshi* activities of *utaite* in the social spaces following the definition of *dōjin ongaku*. The *utaite* attempted to adapt to solve conflicts that had arisen as a result of a different ethos in a different culture. Nevertheless, *utaite* activities did not stop with just the otaku culture but also expanded to the idol culture.

5-3-2 Idol-Related Activities

For *utaite* who have had experience playing in music bands, or who have dreamed of becoming professional singers, idol-related activities within the celebrity culture may be more familiar than the *dōjin* culture discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

Idols are famous not only because of their singing ability but also because they undertake several types of performance (Galbraith 2018). Idol-related activities can be classified into two main groups: singing activities and non-singing activities. The former are activities such as singing in live concerts, joining musical plays or "debuting" as professional singers. The latter may include a number of different activities, such as a hand-shaking event, a birthday party, a fan meeting, or working in a café and / or bar. Additionally, famous *utaite*

might be invited to appear in mainstream media such as on a television program. In this section I shall examine two types of activities through my participant observation. One is working in a café / bar of *utaite* and engaged in a non-singing activity, and another is at a live concert organized by *utaite* as a singing activity.

5-3-2-1 Non-Singing Activity

In June 2011, I found an announcement about collaboration between the album "*Moratoriamu*" and the café and bar "Whim's," created by the famous *utaite* named "That" on a Twitter post of a *utaite* who participated in the album. "That"[24] is a famous male *utaite* with an ability to sing, and is good looking. He started his *utaite* activity in 2008 and collaborated with various *utaite*. "Whim's" was in Kichijochi, Tokyo, and was open between June 2011 and September 2013. It was a topic of conversation for *utaite* fans, because "That" was the one who cooked and stood at the counter. He also invited other *utaite* to visit Whim's from time to time.
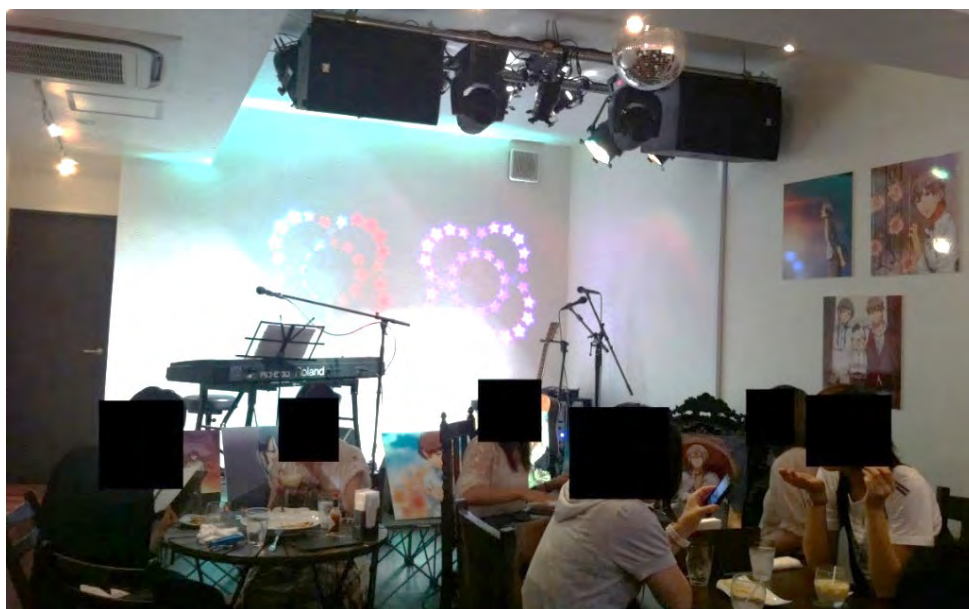
Figure 5–Q: The interior of "Whim's" café and bar created by *utaite* on June 24, 2011.
(Photo taken by the author.)

---

[24] Before becoming a *utaite*, he was a professional singer in the trio group "Absorb" (2005–2010).

When I arrived at the place on June 24, 2011 around 17:00, there were six people queuing. All of them were female, aged from about 10 to the early 20s. Most of them carried goods obtained from *utaite*, such as bracelets or mobile straps. The interior inside the café was decorated with posters of *utaite* caricatures from the album *Moratoriamu*, and there was a stage in the middle which I heard would be for a *utaite* mini live concert at night and live streamed on Nico Live. There were around thirty seats, including counter seats. I looked at the menu; there were special menus for *"Moratoriamu,"* which listed the names of *utaite* groups inside the album such as "Asamakku Potato," which was derived from two *utaite*: Asamaru and Jack. Sitting at the counter, I was able to talk with "That" and another *utaite* who came to help at the counter. Most of the talk was about *utaite*, Niconico, and "That's" food. After paying, I received a glass coaster with a *utaite* caricature as a gift for ordering the limited menu.

What is written above is an example of a *utaite* non-singing activity. Other fan meetings might be a small gathering in a restaurant, or a large one in a live house.[25] Some *utaite* invite fans to join a party after their live concerts, or include a party as part of their live concerts. Taking into account the virtual communication on Niconico or Twitter and the physical communication at Comiket or live concerts, non-singing activities create more opportunities for fans to communicate with *utaite* interpersonally. Although there is the same face-to-face communication, the atmosphere is more relaxed and "cozier" in comparison to that obtained at Comiket. With handshaking, signing autographs, toasting a drink together, and chit-chatting, and other such type of activities, *utaite* thereby reduce the distance with their fans, while at the same time expanding the places for their existence in the social places.

---

[25] Originating in Japan, a "live house" is a venue featuring live concerts with a drinks corner. It is said to be the birthplace of Japanese underground music subculture, developing from "music café*s* (*ongaku kissa*)" during the 1960s and 1970s. There are approximately 1,000 live houses in Japan and 300 in Tokyo (Metropolis 2009).

5-3-2-2 Singing Activity

Singing is regarded as a major activity of the *utaite* in physical space. Famous *utaite* might

be invited to sing at live concerts held by other stakeholders, such as the Niconico conference

series which I introduced in Chapter 3. In this section of Chapter 5, however, I would like to

focus on *utaite* who organize live concerts by themselves. Unlike virtual spaces, where *utaite*

can undertake live singing sessions using Nico Live for a small amount of money by paying

for a premium user fee (five dollars excluding tax), organizing live concerts in physical

spaces requires enough money and a number of prospective members of an audience.

Therefore, not all *utaite* are able to organize physical live concerts. The live concert might

be organized by an individual *utaite* or by a group.

During the period between 2011 to 2013, I participated in thirteen *utaite*-organized

live concerts, and one in 2017, to verify the data I had obtained during my main observation

period (Table 5–6).

No.	Month/Year	*Utaite*	No.	Month/Year	*Utaite*
1	Apr-11	Male (Duo)	8	May-12	Male/Female (Various)
2	Jul-11	Male (Duo)	9	Jul-12	Male (Duo)
3	Sep-11	Male (Trio)	10	Oct-12	Male (Duo)
4	Oct-11	Male (Group)	11	Jan-13	Male (Duo)
5	Oct-11	Male (Duo)	12	Jan-13	Male (Duo)
6	Oct-11	Male (Duo)	13	Mar-13	Male (Duo)
7	Nov-11	Male (Duo)	14	Apr-17	Male (Duo)

Table 5–6: A list of *utaite*-organized live concerts for participant observation data.

Between 2011 and 2013 it was rare to find individual live *utaite* concerts. During the

early years of Niconico, *utaite* tended to team up with other *utaite* with whom they often

collaborated on Niconico. Since one *utaite* could pair up with more than one team, it was

usual to see famous *utaite* participate in live concerts under various different team names.

Based on an analysis of my participant observation data, I have summarized the common characteristics of *utaite* live concerts as follows.

A) Prior to Live Concerts

In general, *utaite* announce information about their live concerts on their Twitter accounts and blogs. Only one of them use real tickets. Others use ticket reservation service providers such as "e-plus," "Ticket Pia," or "Passmarket," which allow audiences to buy tickets through the Internet or at convenient stores nationwide. It should be noted that ticket reservation providers in Japan also provide services for individuals. I remember encountering connection problems on the reservation system in 2011 on account of the congestion of access at any given same time. Ticket reservation started at 10:00 and I found myself sitting in front of my computer and waiting for the time to press the reserve button. The moment after reservations for tickets opened for purchasing, I clicked the button to access the reserve page; however, for a few minutes my screen was frozen. Then, when it was able to connect to the reservation page, all tickets had been sold out. This happened to me several times with famous *utaite* live concerts.

B) During Live Concerts

Live concerts of *utaite* usually use live houses[26] located in large prefectures such as Tokyo, Osaka or Hokkaido. Famous *utaite* might undertake nationwide live tours like professional singers. The size of the live house depends on their projected audiences. The average size of audiences at concerts that I have been has comprised around 500 to 800 people. On the day of the concert *utaite* usually set up a *utaite* goods corner (selling, for example, goods such as CDs, towels and T-shirts) prior to the live concert. Some fans buy the T-shirt with the concert logo and then instantly change into it at the venue. A *utaite* as a vocalist will typically

---

[26] See footnote number 25.

invite other Niconico users to become guitar players, bass players and drummers[27] in the music bands. Sometimes they also invite other *utaite* to join and sing in their live concerts. With the live concerts in which I have participated, all users have revealed their real faces without wearing any masks, except for one live concert where a guest *utaite* participated and sang together with other *utaite*, but without showing himself at all. Up until now (August 2019) this *utaite* has not revealed his real face to the public.

During the observation there was one incident that I would like to mention here. The first collaborative concert of one *utaite* team consisted of two male *utaite* in 2011. The tickets, which cost around 3,500 yen (35 dollars), excluding vat and a system fee, were sold out within the first ten minutes after they were put on sale. The small-to-medium size live house in Kichijoji, Tokyo was congested with five hundred people inside. During the last part of the live concert, one of the *utaite* started to talk about himself. He tearfully mentioned that he was thrilled with the number of people inside the hall. He said he used to sing in a restaurant when he was young, where there were fewer than ten people who listened to him, and all of them were his friends and family. He said how grateful he was to Niconico and his fans who had created this wonderful chance for him that he never imagined would ever happen.

C) After Live Concerts

There are three types of after-concert activities. For large-scale concerts (more than 500 attendees) there are usually no after-concert activity, whereas with medium-scale audiences (around 250 to 500 people), some *utaite* wait at the exit door before shaking fans' hands or giving high-fives with members of the audience. This would be a relatively short greeting with a physical touch. With small-scale audiences (fewer than 250 people) some *utaite* might

---

[27] These are users from "tried playing," one of the categories in Niconico.

invite fans to join a party after the concert at a restaurant. Here the party is regarded as a non-singing activity that connects directly to the singing activity.

5-3-3 The Importance of Social Places for Utaite

Utaite started their activities on a digital platform—Niconico. With mobile technology, it is difficult to separate the Internet from our daily lives and utaite excel at harnessing social media, as mentioned in the previous section. Utaite also utilize social places such as Comiket and live houses to expand their creative works, communicate with their fans face-to-face, and provide real performances on stage.

In the Web 2.0 era, listening to songs on websites or watching live streaming have become everyday activities for Internet users. It has reduced distance, time and cost for audiences to access. It is necessary to consider why people visit museums to see sculptures or pictures painted by famous artists, given that they can now sit back and see these on screens in their homes, or slide their smartphones to view them online. However, human beings seek "reality" and value "the real thing," rather than their derivative versions. What is significant about this is that social places for utaite are necessary because it is not only utaite who are attempting to expand their activities but also the audience who are searching for "real" utaite.

5-4 Debut and Dilemma

Famous *utaite* who have their own fans do not have to debut to earn for a living. They can earn more than enough to live on from activities in social places and on digital platforms. According to informant B, around ten percent of *utaite* could earn a living without a major debut (Interview with *utaite* B in Tokyo, August 31, 2011.).[28] However, some *utaite* dream of becoming professional singers like informants A and B, especially with regard to a

---

[28] At the time of the interview (August 31, 2011), it was estimated that there were around a hundred *utaite* who earned a living by employing *utaite* activities.

major debut. As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, all top fifteen *utaite* have already made their major debuts.

There are two types of debuts for professional singers: indie, or major debuts with major record labels. In the following section, I shall focus on *utaite* who have made major debuts.

5-4-1 Road to Debut and Return

Figure 5–R below illustrates the flowchart of utaite activity. Note that the size of the circle signifies the number of utaite at particular junctures,[29] and is typical of the amount of utaite based on my analysis.
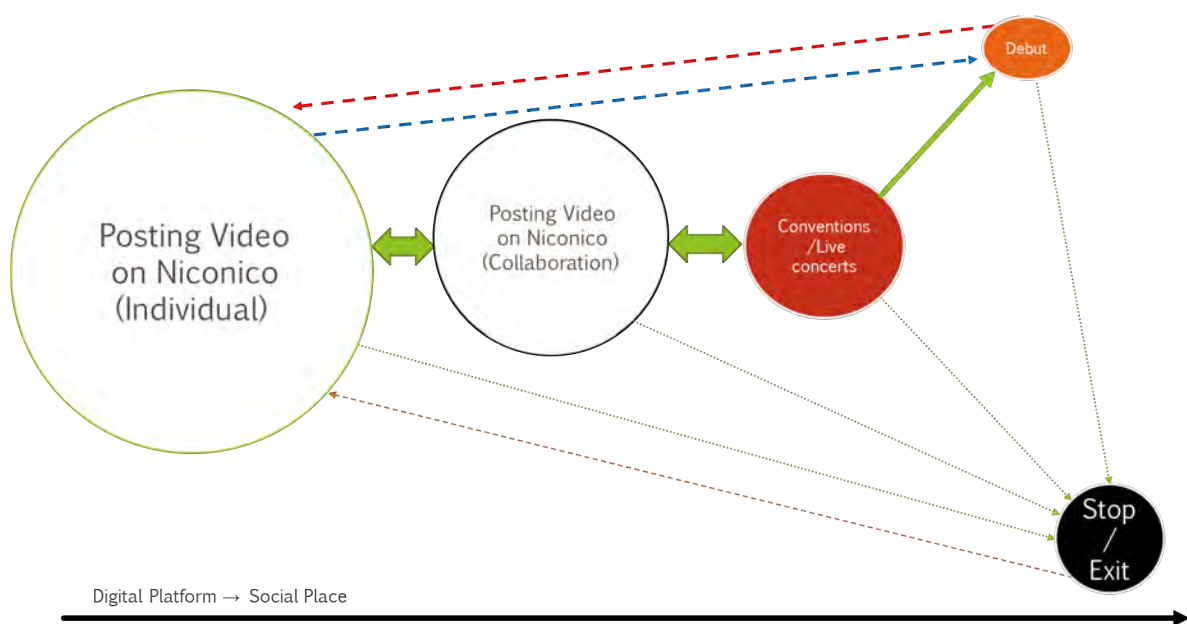
Figure 5–R: A flowchart of *utaite* activities.

Starting with the biggest circle on the left, *utaite* begin their activities by posting individual videos on Niconico. Then some *utaite* start to request, or be invited, to collaborate

---

[29] In 2011, it was estimated that there were around one thousand *utaite* posting videos on Niconico. About 35 percent collaborated with other users; around 15 percent participated in *dōjinshi* conventions and live concerts, while fewer than 2 percent made a debut with major or indie record company. (The numbers are estimated by the author from her observations).

with other users. The collaborators can be other *utaite*, or other users across platforms, such as sound-masters, illustration-masters or encoding-masters. Some *utaite* then undertake activities at social places, such as participating in *dōjinshi* conventions, or conducting live concerts. It is important to emphasize that most *utaite* who have made their indie and/or major debut, either directly or indirectly, have also participated in Comiket.

After participating on digital platforms and at social places for a period of time, only famous *utaite* make their professional debut. The smallest orange circle on the upper right in the diagram with the word "debut" depicts the number of *utaite* making their debut in comparison to the number of *utaite* who start to post something on Niconico. In most instances, the flow of *utaite* activities expands from digital platforms to social places before their professional debut. On the bottom right of the diagram is the "stop/exit" circle. Some *utaite* suspend their singing activities or leave because of lack of motivation, Internet flaming and / or other personal issues. However, some of these have also once more returned to Niconico.

At the beginning of the history of *utaite* (until the end of 2014),[30] a professional debut seemed to suggest the end of being a *utaite*, as his or her identity changed from being an amateur to that of a professional singer. However, in recent years (from 2015 onwards), some *utaite* have restarted their activities as *utaite* on Niconico after their debuts. For example, Shōnen T, a famous male *utaite*, has released his major debut album with SME Records, a record label of Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) Inc on March 28, 2012. His debut song, "*ai no kotoba*" was created by DECO*27, a famous Vocaloid producer on Niconico. This is a pattern of collaboration that occurs between a Vocaloid producer and a

---

[30] Since this transition has been gradual, it is difficult to provide an exact date. However, it may be said that the transition period started around 2012 and ended around 2015. I witnessed most *utaite* who had previously left Niconico start to return to Niconico around the end of 2014 to the middle of 2015. This return synchronized with an increase in the number of people who accessed the Internet through smartphones in Japan, which I have mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3.

utaite. Shōnen T then changed his name to Tomohisa Sakō and started his official Niconico channel. Before his major debut, he was an active *utaite* who usually posted at least one singling clip per month. His last post before stopping was on March 4, 2012. He stopped posting, but restarted posting again on July 20, 2014. Although he now posts only about once a year, he once again has started to collaborate with other *utaite* on Niconico.

In addition, the red dotted line in Figure 5–R shows not only the return of *utaite* after their debut; It also refers to other professional singers who have already debuted in the entertainment industry before and claimed themselves as *utaite* like Kobayashi Sachiko.

The most critical line in the diagram that I would like to stress here is the blue dotted line which indicates the direct connection between individual posting to professional debut; in other words, the *utaite* who set out on Niconico and never collaborate or participate in social places, make a major debut. This is the way Justin Bieber operated; he posted his videos on YouTube and was scouted.

During my main observation period, I could not find any *utaite* who had released a major debut album and had never collaborated with anyone. (Note that *utaite* who have had a professional debut experience, both indie and major, are excluded here.) Shimajī, who debuted in 2016, was the first *utaite* who had neither collaborated with any other *utaite* nor participated at Comiket before his debut.[31] He "mixed" by himself and used existing videos from Vocaloid producers. To some extent, it may be said that because he used Vocaloid videos for his singing, he did indeed collaborate with Vocaloid producers. However, to debut directly without collaborating with others on Niconico is significantly unusual. So far, only a very few *utaite* have made a major debut directly after setting out in Niconico.

---

[31] He later collaborated with Kobayashi Sachiko in 2018 after his debut.

5-4-2 Dilemma: Utaite and a Major Debut

At the end of Chapter 3, I revisited the conceptual model of this dissertation and argued that the position of utaite were somehow in the middle of the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture model. However, for some utaite, their major debut also meant a graduation[32] from utaite. As mentioned earlier, during the early stages of utaite, those who made their debut usually decreased or stopped their utaite activities. For example, with their name change; there would be fewer collaborations with other utaite; fewer physical activities with fans; and other restrictions on account of an agreement with the jimusho who took care of their activities. The reason why I emphasize the early years is because at that time, appearing on the Internet was still restricted by several major agencies, and the same rules usually applied to utaite

Turning to the conceptual model of this dissertation, when they undertook their debuts, the position of utaite moved from "producer, focused on creations, and on equality with other utaite" (*dōjin* culture) to "being produced and focused on fans consuming their work" (celebrity culture). Celebrity culture has a strong, one-way communication system, and celebrities are positioned in a place located far away from their fans. Being an idol also means an increase in creations for business purposes (professionals), rather than creations created as a hobby (amateurs). Based on my observations, prominent utaite decreased the use of UGM, and changed their focus to commercial media.

The red dotted line in Figure 5–S on the following page is not in the exact same position as the blue triangle (celebrity culture-professional-commercial media), since most *utaite* who have made a debut have not completely ignored their former *utaite* activities. They have, however, significantly decreased them or actually left them, and have later

---

[32] "Graduation" here means leaving *utaite* activity.

returned to their former activities which they were engaged in before they became professional singer. To analyze this transition from *utaite* to professional singers in detail, in the next subsections I shall focus on two main dilemmas which *utaite* have had to confront after their debut: "proximity" and "identity."
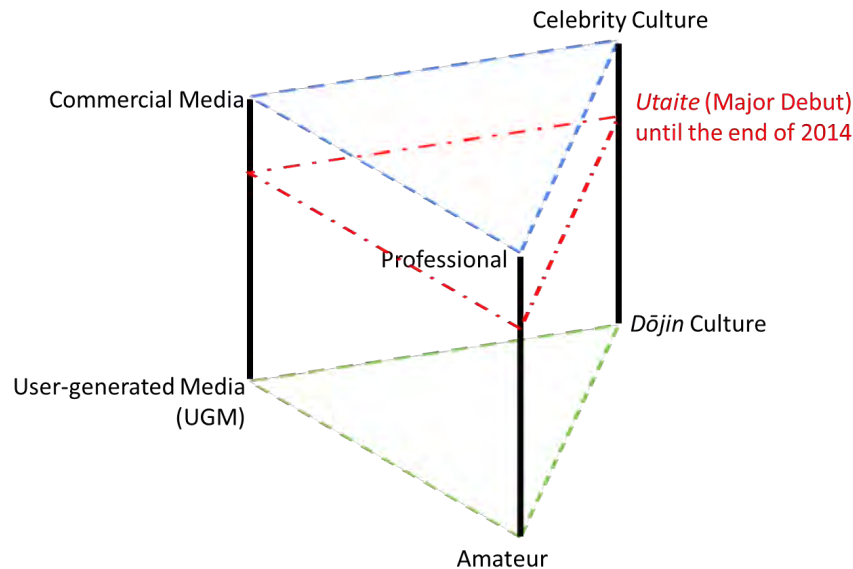
Figure 5–S: The position of the creative culture of *utaite* after their major debut (until the end of 2014) in the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture.

5-4-2-1 Proximity

Examining Twitter comments from fans when *utaite* made their major debut, apart from congratulatory comments, there were sad feelings about the distance between fans and *utaite*, which became wider. Up to this point, through the analysis of fieldwork data of *utaite*, both offline and online, it is appropriate to state that *utaite* have closer "proximity" to their fans before their major debut. However, afterwards, they become idols in the Japanese entertainment industry, where everyone knows the restrictions of the Internet and their distance from the fans. Four examples below are comments from fans on Twitter when their

favorite *utaite* has made his / her major debut. [33]

> (1) In a post on Twitter on July 22, 2015 (at 23:41) one *utaite* fan said: "I was shocked that before I knew it, [*utaite*'s name] made a major debut?? And one more of my favorite *utaite* became faraway again."
>
> (2) In a post on Twitter on May 13, 2016 (at 23:14) one *utaite* fan said: "There are more *utaite* who have made a major debut. As someone who has seen them all the time; on the one hand, I am happy that more people will know about them. On the other hand, several *niwaka* [newcomers who claim they are fans without having had a history of fan activity] and *shittaka* [people who do not know much, but who pretend they know everything] will increase. It seems [*utaite*] are going somewhere faraway. It's quite a complicated [feeling] [sad emoticon]."
>
> (3) In a post on Twitter on May 19, 2016 (at 7:38) of one *utaite* fan: "After [his/her] major debut, I don't feel that [he/she] is a *utaite* anymore, and I feel that [he/she] became rather faraway."
>
> (4) In a post on Twitter on May 13, 2016 (at 23:41 a.m.) of one utaite fan: "I always listen to "*Suna no wakusei* (Sand planet) of [*utaite*'s name.] I like not only [*utaite*'s name]'s way of singing, but also because [he / she] values activities on Niconico. Other *utaite* whom I used to like, when they became popular, made their major debut, revealed their real faces, and steadily began to leave Niconico. They would always become faraway people."

The above four tweets of fans shared the same keyword, "faraway," which denoted the change in proximity between them and the *utaite*. There is no doubt that after major debuts *utaite* would have more activities as professional singers and there would be new fans who

---

[33] Note that all personal information is omitted.

would know them after their debut. The decrease in *utaite* activity such as live streaming every day or having offline meetings with fans seems inevitable.

I would like to emphasize that such comments increased significantly after my main observations between 2011 and 2014. One reason is an increase in the news about *utaite* who made a major debut. Another is the way fans regarded *utaite* after their major debuts during the early days.

It was observed that a major debut of *utaite* was something like an unexpected dream for Niconico users. In October 2010,[34] after *utaite* Piko had made his major debut with Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) Inc., I remember lots of Niconico users were astonished with the news, since Piko was very famous among both male and female fans. Since his first video uploaded in 2007, Piko had had various collaborations in "tried singing," especially with another *utaite* called Sekihan, and had also been invited to perform at Niconico conferences. It was around a year after Justin Bieber had released his debut song *My World* in late 2009.

In one live concert after his debut, fans shouted to encourage Piko to sing with Sekihan on the stage. At first Piko refused outright, but fans still insisted. He then asked permission from the staff by using his microphone on the stage so all his audience could hear, but the answer from the staff was "No." I remember hearing a sigh from his fans in the concert hall, but everyone knew the reason for this negative response, which was that he had an agreement with his *jimusho*.

Being "faraway" is the usual situation that occurs when an ordinary person becomes a big star in the entertainment industry, though some TV programs like singing contests, regardless of his / her intentions. However, one thing where *utaite* differ from other people who become stars is in regard to the "communities," both offline and online, that *utaite* have

---

[34] The *utaite* who is believed to be the first singer who made a major debut from Niconico was "Rapbit." His made a debut on February 4, 2009 with the EMI Music Japan Inc. He posted his videos to the "music" category rather than the "tried singing" category.

constructed during their time with their fans. Some fans may have negative feelings toward newcomers who do not know the ethos or rules of the communities. It was therefore a dilemma for *utaite* as to how to strike a balance between existing and new fans under the restrictive rules of the *jimusho*.

5-4-2-2 Identity

Since the identity of *utaite* has an effect on their image for both their fans and other audiences, I have focused on *utaite* after their major debut by taking into account three factors: their names, face disclosure, and the experience of being *utaite*. I have used biographical information taken from their official websites, Twitter accounts and live reports from fans, if the *utaite* have disclosed their faces only during live concerts.

The first factor is their name after their debut. As of August 2019, almost all current *utaite* who have made a major debut still use their *utaite* names. For example, Mafumafu, Soraru, Kuroneko, and Piko. Some, however, have published both a part of their names or surnames and *utaite* names after their debut. For instance, Dasoku became Dasoku Kawamura. Some *utaite* changed their names completely after their major debut. For example, shōnen T became Tomohisa Sakō.

The second factor is face disclosure. Although concealing the face and using manga caricatures are the norm for *utaite*, disclosing the face is usual in the idol culture and the entertainment industry. Some *utaite* disclosed their faces after their debut, but others did not. There were many methods of concealment: some wore masks that showed only some parts of their face; some revealed their faces only during the live show; and some chose not to appear in public. Most *utaite* said that the reason why they still concealed their faces was because they wanted to retain their image for their fans who knew their manga caricatures.

Shimajī is not the only *utaite* who has concealed his real identity after his major debut. Shimaji himself is a famous male *utaite* who calls his character "Forever 82." He

depicts himself as an old man in his avatar as in Figure 5–U. He has said that he undertook

a mental age test and that the result was that he was mentally eighty-two years old. He then

decided to use this number as the age of his character (Nicopedia 2019e).

His *utaite* name, Shimajī, is formed from two kanjis: island (*shima*) and old man

(jī). With his singing it is easy to assume that he is younger than the age he has appeared

online, but even after his major debut with a record label in 2016 he still does not disclose

personal information about himself, such as his real name or age. In a live concert he wore

an old man's half-face mask to cover his face as in Figure 5–T.

Figure 5–T: Screenshot of Shimajī wearing an old man's mask on his official website.[35]
Figure 5–U: Avatar of Shimajī on Niconico and his blog ,showing the character of an old
man as his manga caricature.[36]

5-4-2-3 *Utaite* experience

The final factor is the "*utaite* experience," the most important factor I want to

emphasize regarding the identity dilemma. Interestingly, almost all major debut *utaite*

omitted the word "*utaite*" from their profile page and usually mentioned their previous

---

[35] Screenshot retrieved from Warner Music Japan. 2018. "Shimajī official website: Biography."
Accessed December 12, 2018. https://sp.wmg.jp/symag/.
[36] Avatar retriever from Maechan. "*Utaite SymaG (Shimajī) no jōhō matome! Kao ya nenrei nado wa kōkai sarete iru…* ?" Nankuri (blog), February 5, 2017. Accessed December 12, 2018.
https://nancreator.com/symag-1099.

experience as "after uploading his / her singing videos on the video-sharing website(s), he / she gained popularity (…)." This trend has continued until now (August 2019). There is a strong possibility that the powerful images of "otaku," "hobby," and "amateur" of *utaite* is the reason for the omission. Some people who were previously *utaite* have called their past *utaite* life a "dark past" (*kurorekishi*), which means that their experience as a *utaite* was something that they want to forget or not mention. Gero, however, a famous male *utaite*, in his interview with *Livedoor news*, said that "It's not a dark past (*kurorekishi*). All *utaite* activities are important treasures for me" (Terunuma 2018).

In an interview with the famous male *utaite* Soraru, which was published on the *Netorabo* website on March 6, 2019, the interviewer and writer Hīko stated: "When I look at the media or article that [contained information] about *utaite*, some used the word '*utaite*' in front of the name, some used the word 'artist,' or 'vocalist;' I think *utaite* is still an existence that is difficult to categorize [for people in the entertainment industry]" (Hīko 2019.) Soraru replied, saying, "I agree. I have been called 'artist,' 'singer songwriter,' and other various names. (…)" Soraru then stated that he personally doesn't pay attention to what people call him; rather, the important thing was what he was doing (ibid.)

He further stated in the same article that in the past, the word "*utaite*" was first used to denote someone as "not a singer," "not having reached that level." Recently, however, people have almost forgotten these meanings of the word, since *utaite* can do things similar to major debut artists. Nevertheless, one significant point of difference should be stated: most *utaite* focus on uploading their videos and live streaming, which is not the case with other major debut artists (ibid.)

I have examined three factors regarding the identity of *utaite* after their major debut, and have found that most *utaite* have attempted to keep a good perspective of the identity they have created before their debut for their existing fans, and also compromise with the

general public regarding the negative images of the word "*utaite*" or "Niconico" by mentioning them indirectly.

5-4-3 Resolving Dilemmas (after 2015)

In recent years, after the boom of social media and YouTubers in Japan, the Japanese entertainment industry has become more positive with regard to the Internet appearances of idols. When I read the article about Soraru above, I realized there was a change that is currently occurring with regard to *utaite* and the Japanese entertainment industry.

During my main observation period from 2011 to 2014, the dilemmas that occurred were very much stronger than they are now. At that time, I heard that some *utaite* had refused major debuts, or had talked about the fear of a major debut on account of the strict rules regarding Internet appearances, and that they might have to drop their *utaite* activities. Although a major debut was certainly something positive to aim for, in that it brought fame and a lot more exposure and financial reward, there was also the negative aspect of a lack of freedom attached.

Recently, however, it is usual to see *utaite* who have made a debut also continue their activities on Niconico or YouTube. Moreover, more professional and talented people from the media industry have also participated as circles in Comiket, such as the singers Takanori Nishikawa as well as the TV celebrity Kanō shimai. It may be presumed that previous dilemmas for *utaite* are gradually being resolved at the time of writing (August 2019). Not only *utaite*' creative works, but also the images of "selves," also created by *utaite*, have been circulating in the media ecology.

5–5 Summary

Up to this point, I have examined peripheral activities of *utaite* in online and offline spaces. The focal point of this chapter, however, is the *utaite* themselves and their activities, apart

from the production process of their videos, in the "tried singing" categories, which has been analyzed in the previous chapter.

Starting from the Vocaloid song "Magnet," which examined how *utaite* have formed their online identities through their manga caricatures and their creations, I then focused on their usage of social media. The result of the analysis of interviews with three *utaite* informants indicated that they use Nico Live and Twitter as their main tools to communicate, and form communities, with fans. While Nico Live is an instant communication that ends after a short period of time, Twitter is a tool that strengthens relationships, not only between *utaite* and fans but also between fans and other fans.

I subsequently moved to social places and categorized *utaite* activities into two main types: *dōjinshi*-related and idol-related activities. The former is grounded within the *dōjin* culture while the latter is grounded in the Japanese idol culture. Following the definition of *dōjin ongaku*, I examined *utaite* creations at Comiket, the distribution routes of their *dōjin* CDs, and the ethos of *dōjinshi*. The result has shown how *utaite* have attempted to compromise and adapt to overcome the conflict generated by the different ethos in different cultures. For *utaite*, idol-related activities are more familiar and are less conflicting in terms of ethos in comparison with *dōjinshi*-related activities. To summarize, activities in social places are necessary for both *utaite* and their audience, since *utaite* want to expand their activities, have the interpersonal communication with fans to strengthen the relationship, and to show their actual performances by conducting live concerts. At the same time, their audiences are seeking the "real" *utaite.*

In the last section, I have illustrated the flowchart of *utaite* activities, starting from posting on Niconico until their major debut. While most *utaite* conduct their activities only on digital platforms, some of them expand their work to social places and eventually make a debut. I have found how they circulate and expand their work into digital platforms, social

places and mainstream media. Moreover, apart from their creative work, this chapter has highlighted the *utaite* as producers in the age of social media.

I then showed the position of *utaite* creative culture in the conceptual model. Up to the end of 2014, when the power of social media had not yet been widely recognized by Japanese society, the commercial media industry controlled the images and activities of *utaite*, especially their usage on social media. To avoid the difference of ethos and to resolve their dilemmas, some famous *utaite* left or neglected *utaite* activities as part of their life history and focused on their commercial media activities as professional singers. However, after 2015, it was obvious that with technological innovations the former distinct line drawn between the hegemony of "celebrity culture and professional-commercial media" and the counter-hegemony of "*dōjin* culture and amateur-UGM" has now become blurred. Also, during the period 2014 to 2016, I witnessed several *utaite* who had already debuted return to Niconico, start to post videos, and once again collaborate with other users.

So far, Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation have described and analyzed the data to answer the aim of this dissertation with regard to how *utaite* have produced and circulated their creative works. In Chapter 6 I shall conclude with the findings of this dissertation, and suggest how to adapt my conceptual model to the current creative culture of other creators on other platforms in the age of social media.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6-1 The Creative Culture of *Utaite*

Having witnessed the *utaite* phenomenon at 79th Comiket that I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, initially I was surprised with the way the *utaite* were treated by their fans, who venerated them as though they were idols or celebrities rather than as their equals as circles. I then began to observe *utaite'* behavior on Niconico. I found that most of what they produced were derivatives of Vocaloid songs and that their production involved collaboration with other users.

However, from observation only, it was difficult to understand how they worked, both from the structural point of view (with regard to community and human relationships) and also from the functional point of view (with regard to their role as collaborators with other people). Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, no prior studies have examined *utaite* as their main research subject, despite their popularity online and offline.

This dissertation, therefore, aims to investigate how the creative culture of *utaite* has changed and transformed in the age of social media by examining what they produce and how they circulate their creations across both offline (social places) and offline (digital platforms). The study has employed ethnographic fieldwork methodology, including in-depth interviews with *utaite*, as well as participant observation from 2011 to 2019, both offline and online, in order to understand the production and circulation processes in detail, together with the human relationships inside the *utaite* community, the media usage and personal history of the informants.

6-2 Reflection on Previous Chapters

The dissertation is divided into two main parts. The first half, from Chapters 1 to 3, describes the background of this research, including the methodology utilized, and the history of the Comic Market and Niconico.

In Chapter 1, I have reviewed previous research regarding *utaite* and Niconico. I have then examined the literature with regard to six elements that relate to *utaite* from cultural, economic, and political perspectives. At the end of Chapter 1, I have proposed a conceptual framework and model for examining *utaite'* creative culture and have named it 'The Triangular Prism of Creative Culture.' This conceptual model consists of three vertical lines with two triangles at the top and bottom. The top-down of the triangles show the hegemony and counter-hegemony of creative culture. Celebrity culture, commercial media, and professional people indicate the creative culture in the dominant media ecology such as mass media, whereas, *dōjin* culture, UGM, and amateurs are indicative of the creative culture in the alternative media ecology, which exists within social places such as the Comic Market and on digital platforms such as Niconico.

On the one hand, celebrities are produced by professional people within commercial media. The latter are senders who conduct a one-way communication channel to receivers in the mainstream, mass media ecology, and who focus on the consumption of passive fans and other consumers. On the other hand, amateurs are a bottom-up movement of ordinary people who engage in participatory culture. They embrace the *dōjin* culture and employ UGM to display and share their creations with people who have the same interests as themselves.

In Chapter 2, I have explained important terms used in this dissertation as well as the demographic and unique characteristics of the research subject. *Utaite* attempt to disguise their real selves in both virtual spaces and in the physical world. They hide their identities

by not showing their faces and camouflage themselves by using manga caricatures. In this chapter I have also described the research methodology that I have used in this dissertation and its limitations.

In Chapter 3, I have described the historical background of both the Comic Market as a social place and Niconico as an emerging digital platform. *Utaite* have participated in both these arenas. I have also explained the differences between the ethos of the Comic Market and the ethos of Niconico, which have led to conflicts and dilemmas for *utaite*. At the end of this chapter I have argued that, based on the historical backgrounds of the Comic Market and Niconico, the creative culture of *utaite* should be positioned in the middle of my conceptual model, since *utaite* participate in both the Comic Market and Niconico. In the Comic Market, *utaite* are positioned within the *dōjin* culture and fans treat them as circles; however, when they participate in the Niconico conference series, they are produced by others as "business" entities. Here, fans treat them as idols rather than as circles at events organized by this online organization.

After participating in the Comic Market, organizing live concerts, receiving financial benefits from Niconico Creators Support Program,[1] as well as participating in various other *utaite* activities, some *utaite* began to make a living with their *utaite* activities. Some *utaite* who have participated in Niconico conferences have also appeared on commercial media such as television.*Utaite* move between two cultures, use two different types of media, and produce their work both for personal pleasure and financial remuneration. They adapt themselves to two different types of ethos and alter their behavior to conform to the usual practices of social places and digital platforms.

The latter half of this dissertation, from Chapter 4 to the end of Chapter 6, has focused

---

[1] Niconico Creators Support Program pays money to creators whose work appears on Niconico. The organization started on December 13, 2011.

on the analysis and utilization of the data obtained. To achieve the research aims, in Chapter 4, I assessed the creative works of *utaite* on Niconico made by them on singing clips to examine the production processes of *utaite* and other users on digital platforms. The findings of this chapter render the production process of *utaite* and how they circulate their creations online, visible, with regard to both the functional and structural aspects of their work. The chapter also describes the networked creative culture of *utaite* across various online platforms. At the end of Chapter 4, I have paid attention particularly to the beginning of Niconico and have shown how *utaite* originated from a users' grassroots movement and utilized digital platforms to produce, share, circulate, and collaborate with other users, and how they were focused on producing their creations rather than on financial considerations and monetary gain. At this point in time, *utaite* can be said to exist on the counter-hegemonic side of my conceptual model.

In Chapter 5, I have shown how *utaite'* identities have changed and the way in which this has affected the way in which they have produced their creative work. A number of *utaite* have moved from the *dōjin* culture to the celebrity culture. The results of my analysis show how *utaite* form their identities, how they use social media and move their work to social places, and also how the flow of their activities on Niconico until their debut performance expands. I also show how *utaite* resolve their dilemmas of interacting between different social media, each with a different ethos, both virtual and actual, that they encounter. I have found that during the early years of Niconico until the end of 2014, *utaite* who had been successful in making a major debut tended to decrease the frequency of their *utaite* activities and focus more on acting as professional singers. For example, they have decreased the frequency of posting new video clips on Niconico or have stopped their collaboration with other creators. I have then determined that the position of *utaite* after their major debut was fairly close to the hegemonic side of my conceptual model.

6-3 Limitations of this Study

There are two main limitations to this study, apart from the limited number of subjects that I was able to get to agree to be interviewed for my research. The first is that although this research has investigated and described an in-depth ethnographic fieldwork study of *utaite*, including the production process, community and relationship between other collaborators which has not yet been undertaken in previous studies, it has not been able to establish a comprehensive theoretical examination of previous research in cultural studies. Recent research undertaken by Marc Steinberg in 2017 examined Niconico from the point of view of the Japanese media mix ecology as a counter-platform to global platforms such as YouTube (Steinberg 2017, 91–113), while Mizukoshi Shin and his colleagues recently started a project entitled "A New Literacy for Media Infrastructure" to examine the infrastructure that supports social media as it shapes content and the communication phenomenon (Media Biotope 2019). This research, however, has focused solely on the platformization of Niconico without comparing it to other studies of a similar nature.

6-4 Contributions of this Dissertation

Up until now, I have analyzed and described how the creative culture of *utaite* has changed and has been transformed in the age of social media. I conclude the research findings using the triangular prism of the creative culture model that I have proposed and elaborated on throughout this dissertation (Figure 6-A on the following page). The model showing the position of *utaite* after analyzing their production and circulation processes, including their activities both offline and online, exemplifies the method of adapting the conceptual model so as to understand *utaite'* creative culture.
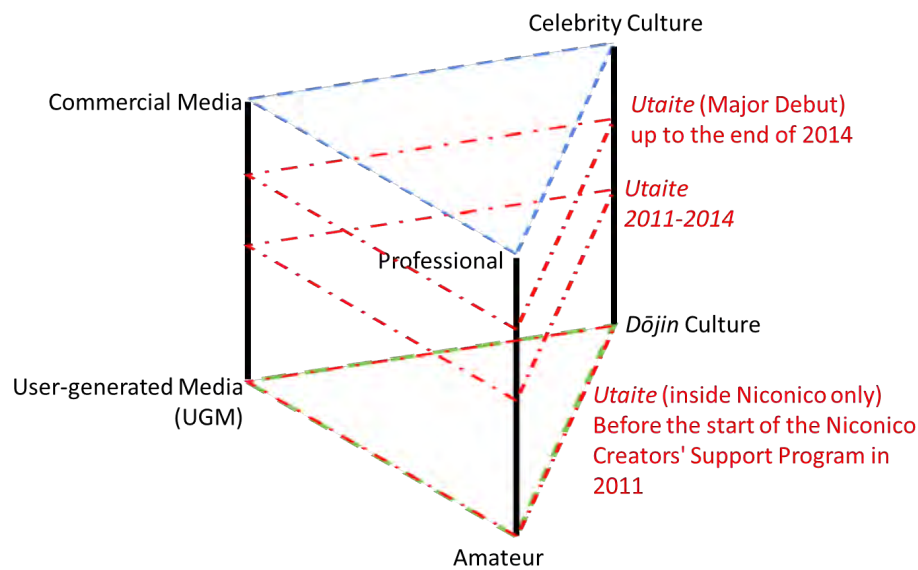
Figure 6–A: The creative culture of *utaite* at different periods of time and in different circumstances inside the Triangular Prism of Creative Culture.

As a result, I found the existing creative culture magnified utaite' possibilities of utilizing social media. Niconico created not only the digital platforms for exhibiting their works, but has also encouraged users to share, communicate, and collaborate with others. During the early period of Niconico (before the Niconico Creators Support Program started in December 2011), when users did not receive any financial benefits from Niconico, *utaite* focused on creating and collaborating without any financial gain on the Niconico platform. The pleasure of creating and receiving comments about their creations were considered to be sufficient. This media ecology stimulated users to become producers. Each user took responsibility for their role, which matched their preferences and skills. UGM has disrupted the dominant power of commercial media and has provided users with an equal opportunity to exhibit and express their creative works without concerns about sponsorship or airtime. The position of *utaite* during this time may be said to have remained stationary within the bottom triangle in Figure 6–A.

However, when *utaite*' primary motivation shifted from the satisfaction of creating and sharing to making a profit, the media ecology also gradually underwent a shift and

transformation (shown in Figure 6–A with the middle red line). The more *utaite* attracted attention, the more they adopted the attitudes and lifestyles of celebrity culture. They were taken over by professionals who determined their output and how they were perceived by their fans and other users (see the upper triangle). Major record companies now scouted some of the famous *utaite* and persuaded them to become professional singers (see the upper red line in Figure 6-A). A few *utaite* made major debuts within the Japanese idol (celebrity) culture on commercial media and became professional, rarely participating in UGM again until 2016.

Furthermore, professional singers, such as Kobayashi Sachiko, together with her professional team, joined as *utaite*. Niconico started to share its profits through Niconico Creators Support Program with popular users and began to act like commercial media by inviting some famous users to join its live concerts. Its business vision became clearer, especially after the company merged with KADOKAWA CORPORATION in 2014. The influx of professional and skilled creators has led to a higher quality of creative works on Niconico. As informant C stated, she felt reluctant to show her own works because she considered them to be a hobby rather than something she created seriously. Also, because of the high demand for skilled users for *utaite* to collaborate with, it became difficult for newcomers in the field to find collaborators.

During the early years on Niconico, most collaborators worked free of charge. Around 2016, however, some users such as sound-masters, started to assume their work should be paid for. Figure 6–B on the next page indicates emerging steps towards the monetization element among Niconico creators for parts of creations that cannot be "borrowed."
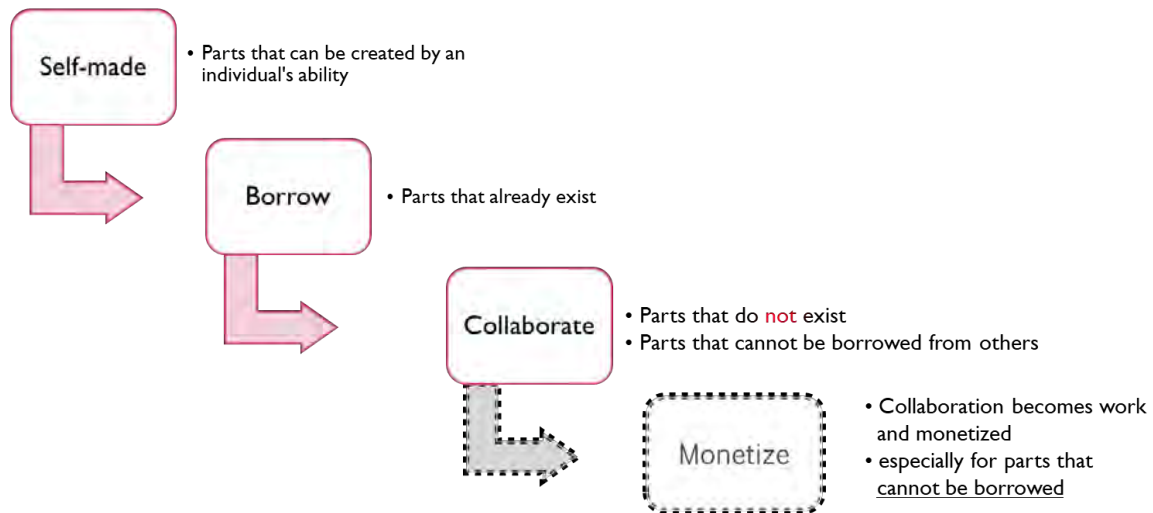
Figure 6–B: Emerging steps of the production process and increasing monetization on Niconico.

It may be assumed that the emerging element of monetization may lead to a decrease in new creators as the newcomers would not be able to afford and give up. It is reasonable to think that this, in turn, might lead to the decline of the Niconico platform. It is important to emphasize that monetization is not something bad for creative culture, since creators have to earn money to make a living, and that "something" might as well be their creative work. Comiket has shown how to maintain the *dōjin* ethos among amateur creators, even though people trade (distribute) their works to others. What needs to be pointed out, however, is that the invasion of hegemonic elements (commercial media, the professional approach, and celebrity culture) into the area of counter-hegemonic elements (UGM, amateurs, and *dōjin* culture) might lead to the transformation of creative culture, and it is imperative to stress that the creative culture of *utaite*, even at the beginning of Niconico, was at least to some extent influenced by hegemonic elements. The platformized Niconico for amateurs, non-profit-oriented in the *dōjin* culture, has disappeared and has been reshaped by the advent of commercial media, professional producers and celebrity culture.

6-5 Possible Future Work

It is clear from the findings of this dissertation that the creative culture of *utaite* was affected by the proliferation of digital platforms in the age of social media. Major digital platforms such as GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon) have gradually become the infrastructure of our daily life. This trend has affirmed the power of social media in various ways. However, it is not a one-way relationship. The creative culture of the amateurs also has an effect on platform creation and design. The feature in Niconico which allows characters to be overlaid onto videos to create "pseudo synchronism"[2] is a phenomenon. It encourages the feeling of belonging and stimulates participation among users, and now similar features on Facebook Live and Twitter may be observed. YouTube has also introduced tags onto its platform design, and links to original works, in order to connect original and derivative works like the tag system in Niconico. It is suggested that a further study of how existing creative culture shapes emerging digital platforms should be undertaken.

---

[2] For more information about "pseudo synchronism", please see Chapter 2.

Appendices

Appendix #1:   The interview set used in this dissertation (In Japanese)

Appendix #2:   Five Ages of the Comic Market

Appendix #3:   Genre codes at C95 in each hall

Appendix #4:   Eight subgenres in "digital (others)" of the Comic Market

<u>グラフの書き方</u>

グラフは<u>**全部で３種類**</u>あります。
１．折れ線グラフ
２．レーダーグラフ
３．関係図

ファイルを印刷し、３つの色（黒、青、赤）で書いていただければ、幸いです。
色の使い方や、書き方の手本などは、例のグラフをご参考下さい。

<u>ゆるゆる点＋説明ポイント：</u>

① 折れ線グラフの年齢の間隔は均等じゃなくても、大丈夫です。例：9,14,15,23,24,25,28...
② 折れ線グラフで縦線が足りないと思ったら、自分で書いても構いません
③ 節目になった年（進学、結婚、初参加）を中心として書いた方が、わりと書きやすいと思います。
④ 完全に自由なので、スタイル等をあまり気にせずに、ご自由に書いてください。
⑤ グラフは論文や発表に引用することがありますが、全て名前を出さずに番号に変わります。ご安心下さい。責任を持って個人情報を守ります。

問い合わせ：ルジラット・ヴィニットポン（ギフト）東京大学大学院学際情報学府　博士課程
メール：happyarthy@gmail.com

①☆あなたの**歌に関する情熱度**と年齢の折れ線グラフを書いてください☆

歌は黒の線で、　音楽活動（ライブ・イベント・同人即売会・路上ライブ等）は青で、

そして、**ニコニコ動画は赤**で書いてください（**ニコ動全体**：　ドット線　ーーーーーーーーーー　で、**歌い手**としては**普通の赤線**です）

＊X軸の年齢は自由に記入し、特に自分の節目になった年を書いてください＊

あなたの歌の履歴

情
熱
度

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

年齢

☆あなたの**歌に関する情熱度**と年齢の折れ線グラフを書いてください☆

歌は黒の線で、　**音楽活動（ライブ・イベント・同人即売会・路上ライブ等）は青で、**

そして、**ニコニコ動画は赤で書いてください（ニコ動全体：ドット線 ----------で、歌い手としては普通の赤線です）**

＊X軸の年齢は自由に記入し、特に自分の節目になった年を書いてください＊

228

例

あなたの歌の履歴
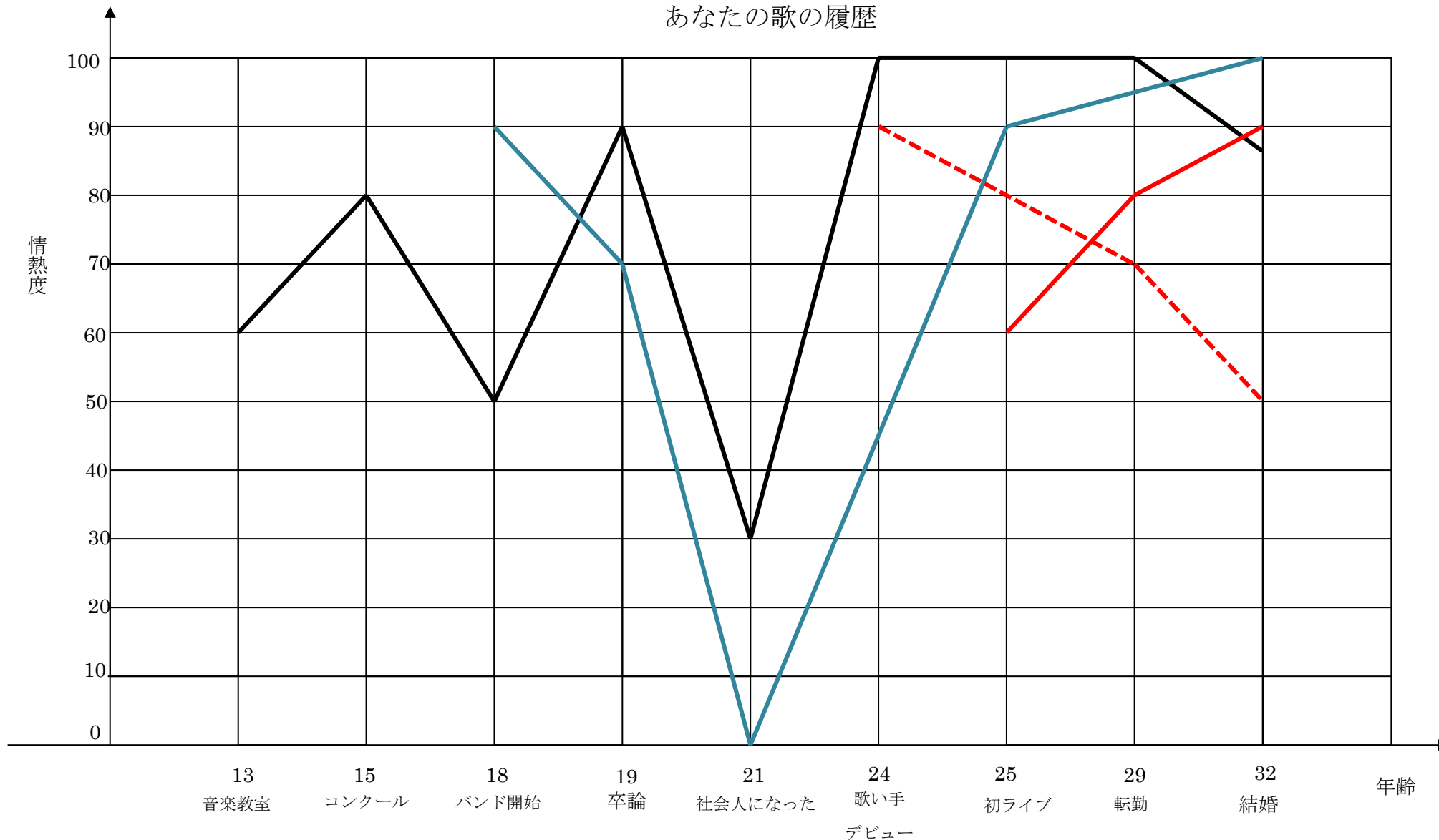
情熱度

| 100 | 90 | 80 | 70 | 60 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 0 |

| 13 | 15 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 24 | 25 | 29 | 32 | 年齢 |
| 音楽教室 | コンクール | バンド開始 | 卒論 | 社会人になった | 歌い手デビュー | 初ライブ | 転勤 | 結婚 | |

②あなたが歌活動にどのぐらい力を入れたかを教えてください。

ニコニコ動画の歌い手活動は赤ペンで、ニコニコ動画の歌い手活動と関係ない歌活動（別名等）がある場合は青ペンで、書いてください。

吹き出しの中に、ニコニコ動画の歌い手活動でどんなメディアやツールを使ったか、教えて下さい。

生放送

動画作成

交流

100

80

60

40

20

0

告知

販売
（イベント、
店委託等）

コラボ

音楽・動画
視聴、CD購入、
ライブ行く、
音楽情報獲得

演奏

その他（練習など）

あなたが歌活動にどのぐらい力を入れたかを教えてください。
ニコニコ動画の歌い手活動は赤ペンで、ニコニコ動画の歌い手活動と関係ない歌活動（別名等）がある場合は青ペンで、書いてください。
吹き出しの中に、ニコニコ動画の歌い手活動でどんなメディアやツールを使ったか、教えて下さい。

230

例

ニコニコ動画、Ustream

Macbook, メール（本家・絵師と連絡）、スタジオ、Mix

Skype, ツイッター, Mixi, ブログ, Facebook, 2ch、オフ会

ブログ、ツイッター、生放送、ニココミュー

携帯電話、メール、ゆうメール

ニコニコ動画、スタジオ Mixi、Singlink

ニコニコ動画、テレビ Mixi, iPad, 携帯

ライブハウス、ニコニコ動画

ニコニコ動画、スタジオ

生放送
動画作成
告知
コラボ
その他（練習など）
演奏
音楽・動画視聴、CD 購入、ライブ行く、音楽情報獲得
販売（イベント、店委託等）
交流

100
80
60
40
20
0
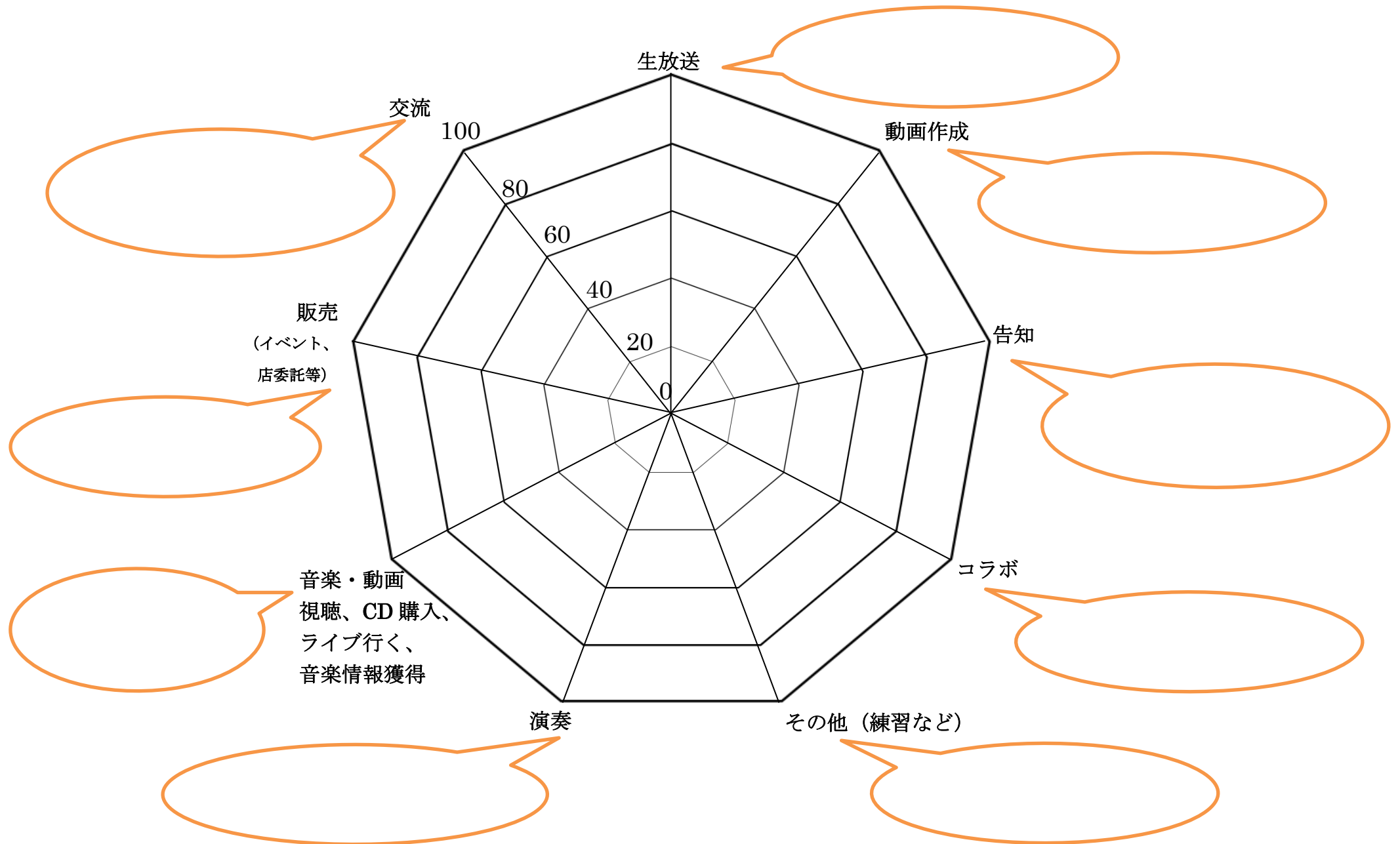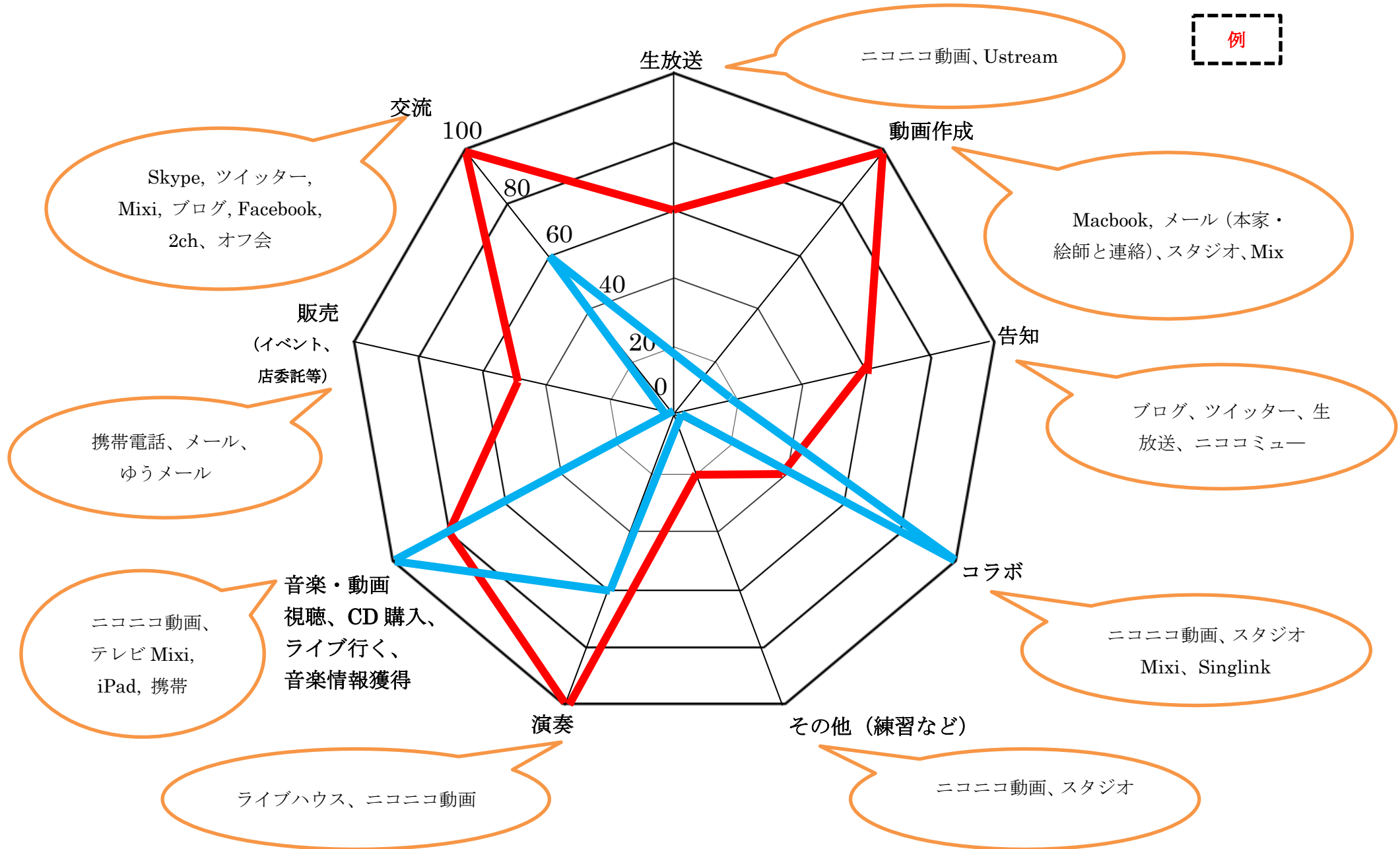
③**関係図**：1．あなたの<u>歌い手の活動</u>における関係図を書いて下さい。（**例**：自分、リスナー、他の歌い手、生主、ニコニコ社、事務所、ＭＩＸ師、絵師、動画師、ボカロＰ等）★スタイルは全て自由、彩り自由、自分が真ん中ではなくも可能、テキストも絵も可能★

③関係図：２．１　<u>動画をアップロードするまで</u>の簡単なプロセスを教えて下さい

例：

| 歌を録音 | → | Mix 師に連絡 | → | 動画師に送る | → | 動画完了 | → | 本家連絡 | → | ニコニコ動画、ＹｏｕＴｕｂｅにアップロード |

↘　　　　　　↗

絵師に連絡
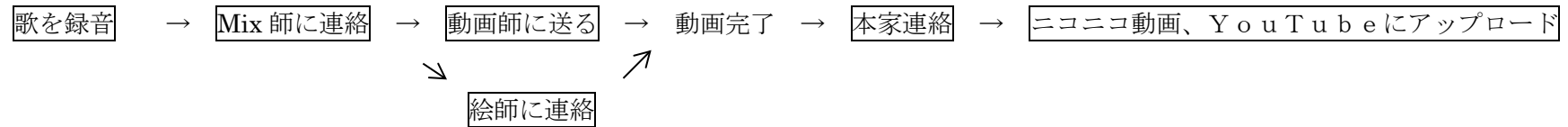
③関係図：２．２　もしＣＤを作ったことがある場合、<u>ＣＤを出すまで</u>の簡単なプロセスを教えて下さい

歌い手に関するアンケート：次の質問に答えてください。

<u>答える前に</u>

● 答えられない質問は、答えなくても構いません

● 詳細な情報を知らない場合、何人、何年、いくつ等は、「大体」の数でいいです。

● 分からない質問があったら、インタビューの時改めて説明します。それでは、ゆっくり気楽に答えて下さい。

A) PC・インターネットの利用全体について

1. いつからパソコンを使い始めましたか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿年

2. いつからインターネットを使い始めましたか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿年

3. 一週間に何時間ぐらいインターネットを使いますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿時間

4. インターネットを使うとき、どんな端末を使いますか？（複数回答可）

   □携帯（普通）　□携帯（スマートフォン）　□ノートパソコン　□デスクトップ　その他＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

5. あなたがよくアクセスするウェブサイトの名前を教えてください

   ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

6. <u>携帯メールも含めて</u>、メールアカウントはいくつ持っていますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

   6.1　メールプロバイダーを教えて下さい　（複数回答可）

   □　Yahoo!　□ Hotmail　□ Gmail　□ 携帯アドレス　　□　他のプロバイダー　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

   6.2 メールのチェック頻度はどれぐらいですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

B) ウェブサイト・ブログ/ウェブ日記のことについて

7. あなたは**自分のウェブサイト**を持っていますか？

    □　はい　（7.1~7.4　に答えてください）　　□　いいえ　（8番へ移動）

  7.1 「はい」と答えた方、いつからウェブサイトを始めましたか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿年

      7.1.1　<u>自分で作成・管理</u>しますか？

        □　いいえ　　□　作成だけ　　□　管理だけ　□　両方

  7.2 「はい」と答えた方、あなたのウェブサイトは<u>どんなジャンル（歌、日常、マンガ等）</u>のサイトですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

  7.3 「はい」と答えた方、自分のウェブサイトは<u>歌い手活動と関連</u>していますか？

      □　はい　　□　いいえ

  7.4 「はい」と答えた方、**ウェブサイトの**<u>更新頻度</u>はどれぐらいですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

8. あなたは**自分のブログ/ウェブ日記**を持っていますか？

  □　はい（8.1~ 8.4 に答えてください）　　□　いいえ　（9番へ移動）

  8.1 「はい」と答えた方、いつから始めましたか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿年

      8.1.1　<u>自分で作成・管理</u>しますか？

    □　いいえ　　□　作成だけ　　□　管理だけ　□　両方

    8.1.2 ブログ/ウェブ日記サービスを利用する場合、プロバイダー名を教えて下さい（複数回答可）

      □　アメブロ　□　ライブドア　□　fc2　□　ミクシィ―日記　□　その他　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

  8.2 「はい」と答えた方、あなたのブログ/ウェブ日記は<u>どんなジャンル（歌、日常、マンガ等）</u>ですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

8.3 「はい」と答えた方、自分のブログ/ウェブ日記は歌い手活動と関連していますか？

　　　□　はい　　□　いいえ

8.4 「はい」と答えた方、**ブログ/ウェブ日記の**更新頻度はどれぐらいですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

9. 他の人のウェブサイト／ブログ・ウェブ日記を閲覧しますか？

　　　□　はい　　（9.1, 9.2 に答えてください）　　□　いいえ（10 番へ移動）

9.1 「はい」と答えた方、普段誰のウェブサイト・ブログ／ウェブ日記を閲覧しますか？（複数回答可）

　　□　他の歌い手

　　□　芸能人、有名人

　　□　仕事・学校・アルバイト・会社関係のブログ

　　□　自分のファン（感想・レポート等）

　　□　インターネットにおける友達、知り合い（ネット友）

　　□　友達、知り合い（リアル友）

　　□　全く知らない人

9.2 「はい」と答えた方、他の人のウェブサイト／ブログ・ウェブ日記にコメントを投稿したことがありますか？

　　　　□　はい　　□　いいえ

C) 音楽の消費について

10. あなたは一日何時間ぐらい音楽を聴きますか？ _____時間

    (ア) 好きな音楽のジャンルは何ですか？_____

    (イ) ボカロイドを聴きますか？　　　　　□ はい　□ いいえ

    「はい」と答えた方、好きなボカロイドがあれば、名前を教えて下さい(例：ミク、KAITO) _____

    (ウ) 他の歌い手の作品を聴きますか？　　　　□ はい　□ いいえ

    「はい」と答えた方、好きな歌い手がいれば、名前を教えて下さい_____

11. あなたは音楽に関する情報はどのように手に入れますか？

    □ インターネット（PC）　□ インターネット(携帯)　□ テレビ　□ ラジオ　□ 雑誌　□ 新聞

    □ チラシ、掲示板　□ 知人　□その他 _____

12. あなたは商業で販売している CD/DVD を購入しますか？「はい」と答えた方は 1 か月に何枚ぐらいかを教えて下さい

    □ はい_____枚　□ いいえ

13. あなたは他の歌い手の CD/DVD を購入しますか？「はい」と答えた方は 1 か月に何枚ぐらいかを教えて下さい

    □ はい_____枚　□ いいえ

14. あなたは一般のコンサートやライブを見に行きますか？「はい」と答えた方は 1 か月に何回ぐらいかを教えて下さい

    □ はい_____回　□ いいえ

15. あなたは他の歌い手のコンサートを見に行きますか？「はい」と答えた方は 1 か月に何回ぐらいを教えて下さい

    □ はい_____回　□ いいえ

16. あなたは歌い手関係のイベント(同時即売会等)に参加しますか？「はい」と答えた方は **1 年間に何回ぐらいか**を教えて下さい

    □ はい_____回　□ いいえ

D) SNS・掲示板・ツイッターのことについて<u>(ニコニコ動画を除く)</u>

17. あなたは SNS を使っていますか？ （複数サイトある場合、「はい」の後ろにその数を書いて下さい）

　　□ いいえ（18 へ移動）

　　□ はい_____（以下の(ア)～(ウ)までの質問に答えて下さい）

　　　(ア) 参加している SNS の名前は何ですか？

　　　□ Mixi　□ Facebook □ Ameblo □ Singlink　□ モバゲ □ グリー □ その他_____

　　　(イ) 複数に参加している場合、<u>一番よく使っている SNS</u> は何ですか？_____

　　　(ウ) <u>一番よく使っている SNS</u> の**訪問頻度**はどれぐらいですか？　_____

　　　(エ) <u>一番よく使っている SNS</u> で承認した**友達の数**を教えて下さい_____人

　　　(オ) <u>SNS（参加している SNS 全体)</u>で**自分のコミュニティ**を持っていますか？

　　　　　　□ はい（以下の 17.1, 17.2 に答えてください）　　　　□ いいえ（18 番へ移動）

　　　　　17.1　<u>自分で作成・管理</u>しますか？

　　　　　□ いいえ　　□ 作成だけ　　□ 管理だけ □ 両方

　　　　　17.2　あなたが管理しているコミュニティの中で<u>一番参加者の多い</u>のは何人ぐらい参加していますか？_____人

18. <u>掲示板を閲覧</u>していますか？

　　□ いいえ （19 番へ移動)

　　□ はい (掲示板の名前を教えて下さい:_____)

　　18.1 掲示板を<u>閲覧頻度</u>はどれぐらいですか？_____

　　18.2 普段掲示板に<u>書き込み</u>ますか？　　　　　□ はい　　　　　□ いいえ

19. あなたはツイッターアカウントを持っていますか？（複数ある場合、「はい」の後ろに数を書いて下さい）

　　　□　はい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　　□いいえ

20. あなたは歌い手活動用のツイッターアカウントを持っていますか？

　　　□　はい（以下の (ア)～（キ)に答えてください）□　いいえ

(ア)　いつツイッターを始めました？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　年＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　月

(イ)　現在フォロワーは何人ぐらいいますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿人

(ウ)　現在何人ぐらいをフォローしていますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿人

(エ)　ツイッターをチェックする頻度を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

(オ)　一日どれぐらい呟きますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　回

(カ)　これまでどれぐらい呟きましたか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿回

(キ)　呟く内容は何についてですか？（複数回答可／一番よく呟く項目に○を付けて下さい）

□　実況　□　日常生活　□　告知　□　フォロワーとの会話　□　公式リーツイート　□　友達探す（拡散希望、フェス参加等）

□　その他＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

E)　ニコニコ動画のことについて

21. ニコニコ動画に初めて参加したのはいつですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

22. ニコニコ動画の訪問頻度を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

23. ニコニコ動画の一日の平均訪問時間を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

24. ニコニコ動画の中でよく利用するカテゴリを教えて下さい**(5 つまで)**

　□　生放送　□　エンタ・音楽・スポーツ　□　教養・生活　□　政治　□　アニメ・ゲーム　□　殿堂入りカテゴリ　□　R-18

　□　やってみた(歌ってみた)　□　やってみた(演奏してみた)　□　やってみた(踊ってみた)　□　やってみた(描いてみた)

　□　やってみた(ニコニコ技術部)　□　静画　□　アプリ　□　チャンネル　□　コモンズ　□　大百科　□　市場

　□　実況　□　ニコニコ広告　□　コミュニティ　□　ニコニコDVD　□　ニコニコ直販　□　ニュース

　□　その他＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

25. ニコニコ動画に初めて作品を投稿したのはいつですか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　25.1　その作品は「歌ってみた」の作品でしたか？「いいえ」の場合作品のジャンルを教えて下さい

　　　　□　はい（26 番に移動）　□　いいえ(＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　)

26. **「歌ってみた」**の投稿作品に関する質問です

　　(ア) あなたが「歌ってみた」に投稿した作品はどれぐらいありますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　　　※ソロー作品＿＿＿＿＿＿個　※コラボ作品＿＿＿＿＿＿個

　　(イ) あなたが「歌ってみた」に投稿した作品の最高再生数を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　(ウ) あなたが「歌ってみた」に投稿した作品の過去最高位を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　(エ) あなたの「歌ってみた」への投稿頻度を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

27. ニコニコモバイル使っていますか？□　はい　　□いいえ

28. ニコニコ動画においてコミュニティに参加していますか？

　　□　はい(よく利用するコミュニティの名前:＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　)　　□　いいえ

29. ニコニコ動画には自分のコミュニティを持っていますか？□　はい（以下の 29.1 に答えてください）□　いいえ(30 番へ移動)

　　29.1　ニコニコ動画において**コミュニティ**を自分で作成・管理しますか？

　　　　　□　いいえ　　□　作成だけ　　□　管理だけ　　□　両方

30. ニコニコ動画で生放送をしていますか／したことがありますか？

    ☐ はい　（ア 〜 オに答え下さい）　　☐ いいえ（31番へ移動）

    (ア) 生放送をする頻度を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    (イ) 生放送の平均時間を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    (ウ) 生放送でニコ電を使ったことがありますか？　　　　　　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

    (エ) 生放送で Skype を使ったことがありますか？　　　　　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

    (オ) 他の歌い手の生放送の BSP を持っていますか？　　　　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

31. **ニコニコ動画以外**のサイトで(Ustream 等)生放送したことがありますか？　　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

32. **ニコニコ動画以外**のサイトで歌ってみたの作品を投稿したことありますか？　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

F)　音楽活動のことについて

33. ニコニコ大会議に出演したことがありますか？　　　　　　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

34. 自ら主催する／他の歌い手とライブを主催したことがありますか？　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

35. 同人音楽サークルとしてコミックイベントに参加したことがありますか？　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

36. 自分のCDを作成し、販売したことがありますか？　　　　　☐ はい　☐ いいえ

37. メジャーデビューしたいと思いますか？ (もししている／していた場合、デビューする前の気持ちでお願いします)

    ☐ とても思う　☐ 思う　☐ あまり思わない ☐ 思わない

38. ソロデビューしたいと思いますか？ (もししている／していた場合、デビューする前の気持ちでお願いします)

    ☐ とても思う　☐ 思う　☐ あまり思わない ☐ 思わない

39. あなたの**歌い手としての満足度**を教えて下さい＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿％

ご協力ありがとうございました！

① **The Early Age of Comiket 1975–1981 (C1–C18)**

Comiket changed venues six times during the early stages of its existence. The organizers borrowed conference rooms or halls from institutions such as the Ota Ward Trade Center in Tokyo.

- **Number of participants:**
  Circles: 32 → 512; Ordinary participants: 700 → 10,000

- **Important incidents and trends:**
  ➢ At C1 (winter 1975): more than 90 percent of participants were fans of young girl's comics. They were mainly female junior high school and high school students.
  ➢ From C5 (spring 1977): The *Space Cruiser Yamato* boom resulted in an increase in *dōjinshi* as fans of anime.
  ➢ C6 (summer 1977) was the first attempt to organize a two-day Comiket event, but subsequently this once more returned to a one-day event.
  ➢ In 1979 there was a *Mobile Suit Gundam* fan boom among both male and female participants (broadcast in April 1979). Congestion and numbers of circle applications also drastically increased from this year onwards. There were not enough spaces for circles and a selection system for circles was set up.
  ➢ At C11 (spring 1979), for the first time anime and manga circles were separated and took place in different halls.
  ➢ At C12 (summer 1979) for the first time male participants at the Comiket started to increase.
  ➢ With C15 (summer 1980) there was a rapid increase in costume players participants ("cosplayers").
  ➢ At C16 (winter 1980) the "*Lolicon*[1]" boom resulted in the rapid increase in male participants.

- *Dōjinshi* **situations**
  ➢ Technology and environment: offset printing was expensive. There were only a few small printing centers that catered for *dōjinshi* publishing. The major printing machine was whiteprint, using a diazo chemical process.
  ➢ *Dōjin* circles: there were large groups of membership-type circles. Most *dōjinshi* were original rather than parodies or derivative works.

---

[1] "*Lolicon*" is a Japanese term indicating a Lolita complex (sexual attraction to young girls). In Comiket the word refers to pornographic manga, anime, or suchlike relating to young or prepubescent girls.

② **The First Harumi Age 1981–1986 (C19–C30)**

"Harumi" is the name of where a large convention center called Tokyo Kokusai Mihonichi Kaijō was located. Comiket used this venue from C19 to C30.

- **Number of participants:**
  Circles: 600 → 4,000; ordinary participants: 9,000 → 35,000

- **Important incidents and trends:**
  - ➢ Moving to Harumi created several new operational changes for the staff (for example, with regard to the response to the rules of the metropolitan police, fire department, etc.).
  - ➢ At C21 (summer 1982) the Comic Market Catalog started to be sold.
  - ➢ From 1982 there was a Rumiko Takahashi (manga artist) boom with male participants.
  - ➢ At C23 (spring 1983) cosplayers were forbidden to walk outside the venue because of a request from the police. (The police were concerned about public morality being corrupted.)
  - ➢ From C26 (summer 1984) the spring Comiket became defunct. (Comiket changed from being held three times a year to being held only twice a year.)
  - ➢ In 1985 a legal public entity was established to support CMC operations.
  - ➢ From C28 (summer 1985) there was a *Captain Tsubasa* mega boom among female participants, which resulted in the rapid growth of circles creating *Yaoi*[2] *dōjinshi*. This resulted in an increase of ordinary participants to 35,000.
- ***Dōjinshi* situations:**
  - ➢ Technology and environment: offset printing became more affordable. There was an increase in small printing centers that catered for *dōjinshi* publishing.
  - ➢ *Dōjin* circles: changed from large group membership to small groups. The *Captain Tsubasa* boom resulted in the decrease in the average age of *dōjinshi* creators. Female creators focused more on the appearance of *dōjinshi*, such as being particular about the use of color.

③ **Explosive Growth Age 1986–1990 (C31–C39)**

The economic bubble that occurred in Japan during the late 1980s created a difficulty in securing a venue for Comiket. During 1986 to 1990, Comiket moved from the Tokyo Ryutsu Center (C31–C33), returned to the Harumi center (C34–C36), and then moved to Makuhari Messe, the largest Japanese convention center at that time in the Chiba prefecture (C37–C39). The most important incident that occurred in relation to Comiket

---

[2] "*Yaoi*" is an abbreviation from *Yama Nashi, Ochi Nashi, Imi Nashi* ("no climax, no resolution, no meaning"), also known as "*June*" (ju-ne), "boys' love" or "BL." It is a genre of the media featuring romantic sexual relationships between male characters. Most of the *Yaoi* creators and readers are female.

was the advent of the serial child killer Miyazaki Tsutomu, also known as the "Otaku Murderer," in 1989, which triggered a strong criticism of otaku and the potential harm comic books might create for children with their explicit sexual images. At the same time, this incident resulted in Comiket being exposed to the general public, as a result of which the event became better known than previously.

- **Number of participants:**
  Circles: 4,400 → 13,000; ordinary participants: 40,000 → 250,000

- **Important incidents and trends:**
  - The number of female participants at Comiket continued to grow with the *Saint Seiya* boom and the *Samurai Trooper*s mega boom up to the end of this period (C39, winter 1990). This resulted in women and girls comprising almost 70 to 80 percent of Comiket participants.
  - From C31 (winter 1986) Comiket started to become a two-day event and genre codes were introduced to categorize circles.
  - At C32 (summer 1987) the queue of ordinary participants who wanted to enter the venue grew to two kilometers in length.
  - At C34 (summer 1988), the use of a personal computer to manage office work created twice the previous number of circle participants.
  - C35 took place in the spring of 1989 as the venue was not available in the winter of 1988. This was the last time the convention was held at this time of the year.
  - From 1990, the *Bishōjo* (beautiful young girls) boom reignited among the male participants.
- At C38 (summer 1990) there was a large increase in the number of ordinary participants. The overall number of participants increased from 120,000 to 230,000.

- ***Dōjinshi* situations:**
  - Technology and environment: *Dōjinshi* printing centers began to send printed *dōjinshi* directly to the Comiket venue. Medium-sized *dōjinshi* conventions, such as Comic City, Comic Live and Comic Revolution, were started. These conventions enabled *dōjinshi* creators to earn a living solely by creating *dōjinshi*.
  - *Dōjin* circles: Individual (single author) circles increased.

④ A Difficult Time for Comiket 1991–1995 (C40–C49)

I call this period "a difficult time" for Comiket, *dōjinshi* creators and also otaku in Japan after the Miyazaki's incident. Otaku were now perceived to be people who were anti-social, who had mental disorders, and who might develop into serial killers. Moreover, the notion of manga as harmful reading material escalated in Japanese society. Before C40 (summer 1991), police raided bookstores selling *dōjinshi* and *dōjinshi* printing companies on account of obscenity charges in March 1991, and these incidents led to strong responses from the Chiba prefecture police.

As a result, Makuhari Messe refused to lend its venue to Comiket. This is believed to be one of the most serious incidents in the existence of Comiket. Fortunately, the Tokyo Kokusai Mihonichi Kaijō in Harumi allowed the Comiket to lease the venue on condition that all *dōjinshi* were checked to ensure that there was no obscene content. Later the Chiba prefecture revised the Prefectural Ordinance of Juvenile Protection and set stricter laws against potentially harmful books, which ensured that not only Comiket but also other comic events were unable to hold events at the Makuhari Messe for many years until otaku became better thought of in Japanese society. Thus, Harumi became the Comiket venue for the third time for four years consecutively before it moved to the Tokyo International Exhibition Center.

- **Number of participants:**
  Circles: 11,000 → 22,000; ordinary participants: 200,000 → 250,000

- **Important incidents and trends:**
  - With C48 (summer 1995) Comiket celebrated its twentieth anniversary and a three-day Comiket was organized for the first time before once more returning to a two-day format.
  - During this period there were several notable fan booms.
    - The *Sailor Moon* boom took place with both male and female fans, creating an increase in the number of male participants.
    - The *YūYū Hakusho*, *Slam Dunk, and Gundam W* booms took place with female participants (1993–).
    - *The Evangelion*, *Tokimeki Memorial* and other related works triggered an erotic fiction boom with male fans.
    - There was an emergence of erotic games.
  - There were struggles with crowd management: long queues developed, and there were participants who stayed overnight.
  - The number of Comic Market staff increased.

- *Dōjinshi* **situations:**
  - Technology and environment: communication through local dial-up BBS computer networks surged; medium-size *dōjinshi* conventions expanded countrywide; peripheral industries related to *dōjinshi* started. For example, *Dōjinshi* bookstores (consignment-based) opened, specializing in *dōjinshi*, as well as clothing stores catering for cosplayers.
  - *Dōjin* circles: individual circles increased.

⑤ **The Ariake Age 1996–now (2018) (C50–C95)**

"Ariake" is the name of the area in Tokyo where the Tokyo International Exhibition Center (Tokyo Big Sight; known as "Big Sight") is located. After the construction of Big Sight which was finished in 1996, the Harumi venue was dismantled and Comiket moved to Big Sight where it remains today. This venue has two halls: East and West. Since C51 (winter 1996) Comiket has rented both halls for its events. Both tComic Market Committee (2014) and Ichikawa (2009) divided Comiket at Ariake into three eras as

follows:

The First Ariake Era 1996−1999 (C50−C57)

- **Number of participants:**
  Circles: 18,000 → 35,000; ordinary participants: 350,000 → 400,000

- **Important incidents and trends:**
  - ➢ From C51 (winter 1996) Comiket started to set up a corporate area, which allowed people to participate in Comiket commercially.[3]
  - ➢ From C52 (summer 1997) the event was held for three days in the summer.
  - ➢ At C54 (summer 1998) a firebomb incident occurred during the day the event was being prepared. Later, Comiket received many threatening letters, which meant there had to be strict surveillance throughout this particular event.
  - ➢ C57 (winter 1999) was the first three-day winter Comiket before the number of days fluctuated between two to three days on account of the availability of the venue during the year end.
  - ➢ There was major reorganization of the Comic Market Committee departments (staff).
  - ➢ There was a mega boom in "gal-games" or video games featuring girls (aimed at male fans), which created a rapid increase in male participants. Famous games, such as *Sakura Taisen*, *Shizuku, Kizuato, Pia Carrot*, and *To Heart*, were subjects for the *dōjinshi* creators who created derivative works of these titles.
  - ➢ *Joseimuke* "for fangirls" genre[4] decreased in popularity.

- ***Dōjinshi* situations:**
  - ➢ Technology and environment: From 1997, DTP and full digital authoring of *dōjinshi* manuscripts became prevalent within male circles.
  - ➢ *Dōjin* circles: Tax issues (especially with regard to popular circles who sold books through consignment stores) and copyright issues arose.

The Second Ariake Era 2000‑2006 (C58‑C71)

- **Number of participants:**
  Circles: 35,000 → 35,000; ordinary participants: 430,000 → 510,000

- **Important incidents and trends:**

---

[3] Comiket allows only non-commercial people to apply as circle participants. There are some advantages in participating in the commercial sector. Larger spaces are provided for booths and participants may participate every day, which is not the case for circles because of the distribution of genres.

[4] *Joseimuke* means "for women," or "for fangirls" and in the Comiket was the genre of work that was created based on a female perspective. For example, manga were created about a harem full of men rather than women.

➢ In contrast to its scary image in the 1990s, otaku subculture now became a trend in Japanese society, which led to an influx of ordinary participants.
➢ There were problems with participants who acted like customers, which went against the ethos of the Comike.
➢ From 2001 there was congestion within the corporate area.
➢ Trends for female participants:
  ✧ From 2000, *Shōnen Jump* manga magazines became very popular. For example, *Naruto, One Piece, The Prince of Tennis, Reborn!*, etc.
  ✧ From 2003 *Gundam Seed* and *Fullmetal Alchemist* boomed.
➢ Trends for male participants:
  ✧ From 2000 the word *moe*[5] ("infatuation with cute girls") emerged. Famous titles in the *moe* boom were: *Di Gi Charat*, *Type-Moon*, *Lyrical Nanoha*, and *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*.
➢ There were increasing demands for a three-day winter Comiket.
➢ C71 (winter 2006) was the first time Comike took place on New Year's Eve.

● ***Dōjinshi* situations**:
➢ Technology and environment: There was an increase in DTP and full digital production of books; PC users increased among both male and female artists; there was also an increase in *dōjinshi* consignment bookstores.
➢ ***Dōjin* circles**: More were connected to the Internet and SNS usage increased for *dōjinshi* activities such as Mixi (Japanese SNS).
➢ From 2000 onwards there were several single genre events (known as "only events") for specific titles, such as the *Naruto* only event.

The third Ariake Era 2007‑2018 (C72‑C95)

● **Number of participants:**
Circles: 35,000 → 35,000; ordinary participants: 510,000 → 590,000

● **Important incidents and trends:**
➢ The otaku culture boom continued. The number of ordinary participants kept increasing until it reached a peak in C84 (summer 2013), before slightly decreasing after Comiket changed its method of counting people. Comiket rented all facilities in the Tokyo Big Sight.
➢ Many booms arose on account of the Internet, such as Hatsune Miku (Vocaloid), *Hetalia: Axis Powers* and the *Tōhō Project*.
➢ Niconico and Pixiv (SNS for illustrators) started to have an impact in Comiket from 2007. For example, at C84 (summer 2014) Kobayashi Sachiko, a famous professional singer, first participated in Comiket as a *utaite* circle after she appeared in Niconico. She claimed to be a *utaite* at the Comiket, not a professional singer.
➢ In October 2010, Yonezawa Yoshihiro, the second Comiket representative,

---

[5] "*Moe*" derives from the Japanese verb *moeru* (to burst into bud, to sprout; to burn; to have a crush). It is usually used by otaku to explain the affectionate feelings fans have towards their favorite characters.

died. The Comiket committee then changed to a co-representative system, whereby there were three representatives operating at the same time sharing an equal voice and the same amount of power on the committee.

➢ At C74 (summer 2008) threats were written on 2channel, a famous Japanese electronic bulletin board. Baggage inspection was instituted for all participants at this event only.

➢ From C81 (winter 2011) the number of cosplayers drastically increased.

➢ At C83 (winter 2112) there was an attack on the Kuroko basketball players, which took place at several conventions and manga-related places. Based on a police warning, Comike halted circle activities for the Kuroko basketball players on the days they played.

➢ There were concerns over the Revision of the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance regarding the Healthy Development of Youth Bill (156) in 2010, which included the subjects "fictional youth." Nowadays there are still movements against this revision, arguing that the revision violated the freedom of speech.

● *Dōjinshi* **situations:**

➢ Technology and environment: Twitter became a major tool for interpersonal communication between participants from 2010 onwards.

➢ *Dōjinshi* conventions for female participants (small-size conventions) sponsored by individuals decreased.

References for Appendix #2:

Comic Market Committee. 2014. "What is Comic Market?", Last Modified January, 2014, Accessed July 1, 2019. http://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/WhatIsEng201401.pdf.

Ichikawa, Kō-Ichi. 2009. "The Comic Market Today and Overseas Participants." Accessed July 1, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/C77/C77CMKSymposiumPresentationEnglish.pdf.

Table: Genre codes at C95 in each hall. This table is based on the information provided on *komikku māketto 95 janrukōdo ichiran* in Comiket's official page (Comiket Inc. 2018c)

C95	Block	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
East Hall (1-3)				
1	A01〜37	*GIRLS und PANZER*	TYPE-MOON[6]	for fanboys[7]
1	B〜L	anime (others)	TYPE-MOON[6]	critique / information
2	A38〜54	anime (others)	TYPE-MOON	for fanboys
2	M〜Z	*MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM* anime (young girls) *Love live School idol project*! FC[8] (*Jumps* (others)[9]) *Blood Blockade Battlefront*	game (others)	criticism / information

---

[6] TYPE-MOON is the name of a company which created beautiful young girl (*bishōjo*) games for both the general public and "adult" use. TYPE-MOON used to be a circle game before registering as a commercial company. Circles participating in this particular game created derivative work from TYPE-MOON games.

[7] "For men" or "for fanboys" (*danseimuke*) is a genre for works created based on a male perspective. For example, a manga about a harem full of women or lesbians.

[8] "FC" (fan circles) a collective genre of circles. FC (*Jumps*) means fan circles that created various titles from the manga magazine, *Jumps*.

[9] The word "others" means other titles in *Jump* magazine which have no specific genre.

3	A55〜91	*Blood Blockade Battlefront*	SQUARE ENIX (RPG)	for fanboys
	ア〜サ (*a – sa*)	*Hetalia: Axis Powers* FC (*Jumps* (others)) *WORLD TRIGGER Haikyū! ! The basketball which Kuroko plays*	*Tōken ranbu*	
East Hall 4-6				
4	シ 55〜91 (*shi 55-91*)	*YURI ON ICE*	*Touhou Project*[10]	*THE IDOLM@STER*
	ム〜ロ (*mu-ro*)	*Osomatsu san TIGER & BUNNY* anime (others) FC (novels)	game (RPG)	
5	シ 38〜54 (*shi 55-91*)	FC (novels)	game (RPG)	*THE IDOLM@STER*

---

[10] The *Tōhō project* is a *dōjinshi* series created by ZUN from one particular Japanese circle: Team Shanghai Alice. It is famous for shooting games, books, and music CDs. The *Tōhō project* is also famous on account of the original *dōjinshi* which triggered the creation of derivative *dōjinshi*.

	ネ〜ミ (*ne-mi*)	FC (young girls/ youth) cosplay	game (Love Story) game (social games for fangirls – *joseimuke*[11]) *ensemble stars!* digital (others)	gal-games[12] manga clubs at school or university (*gakuman*) original (young boys)
6	シ 01〜37 (*shi* 01-37)	cosplay *Attack on Titan* *Yowamushi Pedaru*	digital (others) *dōjin software*[13]	original (young boys)
West Hall 1-2				
1	に〜れ (*ni-re*)	original (young girls) original (JUNE/BL) history / original (literature/novel)	game (non-electronic) *Kantai kore kushon -kankore-*	for fanboys
2	あ〜な (*a- na*)	TV / movies / entertainment / *Tokusatsu* (special effects films) music (Western music / Japanese music / male idols) original accessories	*Kantai kore kushon -kankore- Azur Lane* games (internet / social games)	railways / travel / *Mekamiri* (mechanism and military)

---

[11] *Joseimuke* (for fangirls) is a genre of work created based on a female perspective. perspective. For example, a manga about a harem full of men.
[12] Video games featuring girls (aimed at fanboys).
[13] *Dōjin* software, including self-created game software / hardware, criticism of PC/IT and other derivatives of *dōjin* software.

Appendix #4: Eight subgenres in "digital (others)" of the Comic Market

(1) *dōjin ongaku* (*dōjin* music): original rock music; original techno/dance/club music; original others; arrangement music; sound effects/sound materials (including others/application/ information/critique/music score and the like);

(2) drama CD: (voice drama) and radio CD (web radio);

(3) Niconico: *utattemita* ("tried singing") (including fans of *utattemita*); *nikonamanushi*[14] (Niconico live streaming host on Niconico, including fans of *nikonamanushi*;) others/information/critique/commentary, and suchlike;

(4) YouTuber: (including fans of YouTuber) and Virtual YouTuber;

(5) Sound Horizon: including other books and media that are derivatives of *dōjin ongaku* (dōjin music);

(6) Vocaloid: music; books (including others / MMD / voice data);

(7) Other independent producers: live filming / movies and suchlike; and

(8) *go channeru* (5ch):[15] blogs and other Internet contents

---

[14] *namanushi* is a participant's role in Niconico for one who hosts the live streaming program in Niconico.

[15] A famous Japanese web bulletin board.

Bibliography (Literature)

Ahlqvist, Toni, Asta Bäck, Minna Halonen, and Sirkka Heinonen. 2008. *Social Media Roadmaps. Exploring the Futures Triggered by Social Media*. In Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy. Espoo 2008: VTT Tiedotteita. Accessed June 1, 2019. https://www.vtt.fi/inf/pdf/tiedotteet/2008/t2454.pdf.

Aida, Miho. 2005. "Komikku māketto no genzai--Sabukaruchā ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu." In *Studies In the Humanities and Sciences* 45, no. 2: 149-201. Accessed June 25, 2019. doi: http://id.nii.ac.jp/1080/00000846/.

Alexander, Victoria D. 2003. *Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2008. "Watching Television Without Pity: The Productivity of Online Fans." *Television & New Media* 9, no. 1, 24-46. Accessed August 8, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1527476407307241.

Aoki, Hidenori, and Homei Miyashita. 2008. "A Trial for Video Summarization and Chorus-Section Detecting on Nicovideo." *IPSJ SIG Technical Reports* 50: 37-42. Accessed August 14, 2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00055671/.

Azuma, Hiroki. 2009. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Translated by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono: University of Minnesota Press. Original edition, Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan: Otaku kara mita Nihon shakai.

———. 2012. "Database Animals." In *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, edited by Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji, 30-67. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Original edition, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*.

Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Baym, Nancy K. 2007. "The New Shape of the Online Community: The Example of Swedish Independent Music Fandom." Accessed June 6, 2019. doi: 10.5210/fm.v12i8.1978.

Barubora, and Momo Nonaka. 2017. *Nihon no jin ni tsuite shitteru koto subete: Dojinshi minikomi ritoru puresu jishu seisaku shuppanshi senkyuhyakurokuju nisenjunendai*. Tokyo: Seibundo Shinkosha.

Benkler, Yochai. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*: New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Biernacki, Patrick, and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling." *Sociological Methods & Research* 10, no. 2: 141-63. Accessed June 14, 2019. doi: 10.1177/004912418101000205.

boyd, danah. 2015. "Social Media: A Phenomenon to be Analyzed." *Social Media + Society* 1, no. 1. Accessed June 6, 2019. doi: 10.1177/2056305115580148.

boyd, danah M., and Nicole B. Ellison. 2007. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1, 210-30. Accessed June 4, 2019. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x.

Brandtzæg, Petter Bae, and Jan Heim. 2009. "Why People Use Social Networking Sites." In: Ozok A.A., Zaphiris P. (eds) *Online Communities and Social Computing. OCSC 2009. Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, Vol. 5621. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. Accessed June 6, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-02774-1_16.

Browne, Kath. 2005. "Snowball Sampling: Using Social Networks to Research Non-Heterosexual Women." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 1: 47-60.

Bruns, Axel. 2009. "From Prosumer to Produser: Understanding User-Led Content Creation." *Transforming Audiences* 2009, London, September 3-4, 2009.

Burgess, Jean Elizabeth. 2007. "Vernacular Creativity and New Media." PhD diss., Brisbane, Australia: Queensland University of Technology.

Burgess, Jean, Alice Marwick, and Thomas Poell. 2017. *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media.* SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.

Butsch, Richard. 2000. *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cervinschi, Cezar Liviu, and Diana Butucea. 2010. "Integration of Web Technologies in Software Applications. Is Web 2.0 a Solution?" *Database Systems Journal* 1. no. 2: 39-44. Accessed June 9, 2019. http://dbjournal.ro/archive/2/5_Cervinschi_Butucea.pdf.

Chen, Dominick. 2012. *Furīkaruchā o tsukuru tame no gaidobukku kurieitibu komonzu niyoru sōzō no junkan*. Tokyo: Film Art.

Coppa, Francesca. 2006. "A Brief History of Media Fandom." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet. New Essays*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 41-59. Jefferson: McFarland.

Consalvo, Mia. 2003. "Cyber-slaying Media Fans: Code, Digital Poaching, and Corporate Control of the Internet." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 27, no. 1: 67-68. Accessed August 27, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859902238641.

Cunningham, Sally Jo, and Matt Jones. 2005. "Autoethnography: A Tool for Practice and Education." Proceedings of the 6th ACM SIGCHI New Zealand Chapter's International Conference on Computer-Human Interaction: Making CHI Natural, Auckland, New Zealand.

Davis, Fred D. 1989. "Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User
    Acceptance of Information Technology." *MIS Quarterly* 13, no. 3: 319-40.
    Accessed June 8, 2019. doi: 10.2307/249008.

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall.
    Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

DiNucci, Darcy. 1999. "Fragmented Future." *Print*, 32, 221-22. Accessed June 1, 2019.
    http://darcyd.com/fragmented_future.pdf.

Donath, Judith, and danah boyd. 2004. "Public Displays of Connection." *BT Technology
    Journal* 22, no. 4, 71-82. Accessed June 8, 2019.
    doi: 10.1023/B:BTTJ.0000047585.06264.cc.

Driessens, Olivier. 2013a. "The celebritization of society and culture: Understanding the
    structural dynamics of celebrity culture." *International Journal of Cultural
    Studies* 16 (6):641-657. Accessed March 9, 2010 doi:
    10.1177/1367877912459140.

———.2013b. "Celebrity Capital: Redefining Celebrity Using Field Theory." *Theory
    and Society* 42 (5):543-560. Accessed March 9, 2010 doi: 10.1007/s11186-013-
    9202-3.

Dyer, Richard. 1998. *Stars.* London: British Film Institute.

Faugier, Jean, and Mary Sargeant. 1997. "Sampling Hard to Reach Populations."
    Journal of Advanced Nursing 26, no. 4: 790-97.

Fetterman, David M. 1989. *Ethnography: Step-By-Step*. Applied social research
    methods series, vol. 17. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Galbraith, Patrick W. 2018. "AKB Business: Idols and Affective Economics in
    Contemporary Japan." In *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*, edited by Alisa
    Freedman and Toby Slade, 158-67 London: Routledge.

Galbraith, Patrick W. and Jason G. Karlin. 2012. "Introduction: The Mirror of Idols and
    Celebrity." In *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, edited by Patrick
    W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin, 1–32. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave
    Macmillan.

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2000. *The Tipping Point : How Little Things Can Make a Big
    Difference*. London: Abacus.

Goto, Masataka. 2012a. "The Present and Future of CGM : The World Opened Up By
    Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO: 1. The CGM Movement Opened
    Up By Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO." *Journal of Information
    Processing (JIP)* 53, no. 5: 466-71. Accessed August 27, 2018.
    http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00081708/.

———. 2012b. "The Present and Future of CGM : The World Opened Up By Hatsune

Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO: 3. Hatsune Miku As An Interface."
Journal of Information Processing (JIP) 53, no. 5: 477-82. Accessed August 27,
2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00081710/.

Goto, Masataka, and Hiroshi Okuno. 2012. "The Present and Future of CGM: The
World Opened up by Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO: 0.
Foreword." *Journal of Information Processing (JIP)* 53, no. 5: 464-65.
Accessed August 27, 2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00081707/.

Gramsci, Antonio. (1971). *Selections From The Prison Notebooks Of Antonio Gramsci*.
Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith (eds and trans.). New York: International Publishers.

Greenwood, Forrest. 2013. "A Spectral Pop Star Takes the Stage: Hatsune Miku and the
Materialization of the Ephemeral in Contemporary Otaku Culture." *Spectator*
33, no. 1, 10-17.

Griswold, Wendy. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 4th ed. Sociology for a
New Century. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013. Accessed
March 3, 2020. doi: 10.4135/9781452240534.

Grosseck, Gabriela. 2009. "To Use or Not to Use Web 2.0 in Higher Education?"
Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 1, no. 1: 478-82. Accessed June 1,
2019. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.087.

Hall, Stuart. 1980. *Culture, Media, Language : Working Papers in Cultural Studies,
1972-79*. London;: Hutchinson; Birmingham, West Midlands: Centre for
Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

Hamano, Satoshi. 2012. "The Present and Future of CGM : The World Opened Up By
Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO: 5. Focus On The Specifity of
'Nico Douga': 'Pseudo Synchronism', 'N-th Order Derivative Creation',
'Fluxonomy'". *Journal of Information Processing (JIP)* 53, no. 5: 489-
94.Accessed August 27, 2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00081712/.

Hamasaki, Masahiro, Hideaki Takeda, and Takuichi Nishimura. 2010. "Network
Analysis of an Emergent Massively Collaborative Creation on Video Sharing
Website Case Study of Creation Community of Hatsume Miku Movie on Nico
Nico Douga." *Transactions of the Japanese Society for Artificial Intelligence* 25,
no. 1: 157-67. Accessed August 16, 2018. doi: 10.1527/tjsai.25.157.

Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Hironaka, Shiori, Kosetsu Tsukuda, Masahiro Hamasaki, and Masataka Goto. 2017.
"Njisōsakudōga ni okeru kuriēta no koraborēshon ni kansuru bunseki."
Proceedings of the 11th ARG Web Intelligence and Interaction:17-22. Accessed
August 27, 2018. doi: http://id.nii.ac.jp/1117/00002011/.

Howe, Jeff. 2006. "The Rise of Crowdsourcing." *Wired Magazine* 14, no. 6, 1-4.

Ideguchi, Akinori. 2012. *Dōjin ongaku to sono shūhen: shinseiki no shingen o meguru*

gijutsu, seido, gainen. Tokyo: Seikyūsha.

Ito, Mizuko, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji. 2012. *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

———. 2006. *Convergence Culture : Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, Henry, Mizuko Ito, and danah boyd. 2015. *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce, and Politics*: Polity Press. Kindle edition.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. 2013. *Spreadable Media : Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, *Postmillennial pop / general editors, Karen Tongson and Henry Jenkins*. New York: New York University Press.

Kæothep, Kanchana, and Somsuk Hinwiman. 2017. *Saithan hæng nak khit thritsadi setthasat kanmu'ang kap su'san su'ksa*. Krung Thep: Inthanin.

Kaplan, Andreas M., and Michael Haenlein. 2010. "Users of the world, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons* 53, no. 1: 59-68. Accessed June 1, 2019. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003.

Karpovich, I. Angelina. 2006. "The Audience as Editor: The Role of Beta Readers in Online Fan Fiction Communities." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet. New Essays*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 171-88. Jefferson: McFarland.

Kenmochi, Hideki. 2010. "VOCALOID and Hatsune Miku Phenomenon in Japan." Interdisciplinary Workshop on Singing Voice, Tokyo, October 1–2, 2010.

———. 2012. "The Present and Future of CGM : The World Opened Up By Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO: 2. Singing Synthesis – Its Past, Present and Future." *Journal of Information Processing (JIP)* 53, no. 5: 472-76. Accessed August 27, 2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00081709/.

———. 2013. "Singing Synthesis and New Music." *The Journal of the Institute of Electronics, Information, and Communication Engineers* 96, no. 1: 6-9. Accessed August 14, 2018.

Kobayashi, Yoshihiro. 1999. "Terebianime No Medeia Fandamu MajokkoAnime No Sekai." In *Terebijon Porifonī: Bangumi Shichōsha Bunseki No Kokoromi*, edited by Mamoru Ito and Mafumi Fujita, 182-215. Kyoto-shi: Sekai Shisosha.

Koizuka, Akihiko. 2012. "The Present and Future of CGM: The World Opened Up By Hatsune Miku, Nico Nico Douga and PIAPRO: 4. Creativity of Nico Nico Douga: Five Years of a Video Sharing Community Website." *Journal of*

Information Processing (JIP) 53, no. 5: 483-88. Accessed August 27, 2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00081711/.

Komike utattemita sākuru risuto. 2011. *Utattemita no 2011 nen no sōkessan yattemita!* Tokyo: Gakken Publishing.

Livingstone, Sonia. 2003. "The Changing Nature of Audiences: From the Mass Audience to the Interactive Media User." London: LSE Research Online. Accessed April 23, 2018. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000417.

Mackellar, Joanne. 2009. "Dabblers, Fans and Fanatics: Exploring Behavioural Segmentation at a Special-interest Event." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 15, no. 1: 5-24. Accessed August 27, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766708098168.

Murakami, Naomichi, and Eisuke Ito. 2010. "Tag Hierarchy Analysis in Nicovideo Movie Service." *SIG Technical Reports (BIO)* 2010, 17: 1-6. Accessed June 6, 2019. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00071505/.

Marshall, P. David. 1997. Celebrity and power. *Fame in contemporary culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Marx, David W. 2012. "The Jimusho System: Understanding the Production Logic of the Japanese Entertainment Industry." In *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, edited by Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin, 35-55. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London : Routledge.

McQuail, Denis. 1997. *Audience Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Meyrowitz, Joshua. 1985. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morley, David. 1980. *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding*: London: British Film Institute.

Nagatani, Kunio. 2004. *Manga ni ai o sakenda otokotachi*. Tokyo: Seiryū Shuppan.

Nakamura, Shota, and Saneyasu Yamaguti. 2010. "A Study of Effectiveness of Movie Tags in Video Sharing Websites." zenkoku taikai kōen ronbunshū 全国大会講演論文集 72: 777-78. Accessed August 14, 2018. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1001/00140103/.

Nandan, Shiva. 2005. "An Exploration of the Brand Identity–Brand Image linkage: A Communications Perspective." *Journal of Brand Management* 12, no. 4: 264-78.

Ngai, Eric W. T., Spencer S. C. Tao, and Karen K. L. Moon. 2015. "Social Media Research: Theories, Constructs, and Conceptual Frameworks." *International*

Journal of Information Management 35, no. 1, 33-44. Accessed June 6, 2019. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2014.09.004.

Nieborg, D. B., and Poell, T. 2019. "The Platformization of Making Media." In M. Deuze and M. Prenger (eds.), Making media: Production, practices, and professions (pp. 85–96). Amsterdam University Press. Accessed March 21, 2020. http://www.gamespace.nl/content/NIEBORG_POELL_2019_PlatformizationCh apter.pdf.

Noh, Sueen. 2001. "Reading *Yaoi* Comics: An Analysis of Korean Girls' Fandom." In *Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies Annual Meeting*: Citeseer. Original edition, 1998. Accessed August 25, 2018. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.603.9530&rep=rep1& type=pdf.

Nozawa, Shunsuke. 2012. "The Gross Face and Virtual Fame: Semiotic Mediation in Japanese Virtual Communication." *First Monday* 17 (March 2012): Accessed December 7, 2019. https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3535/3168.

O'Reilly, Tim. 2007. "What is Web 2.0?: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software." *Communications & strategies*, 1: 17.

Qi, Jiayin, Emmanuel Monod, Binxing Fang, and Shichang Deng. 2018. "Theories of Social Media: Philosophical Foundations." *Engineering* 4, no. 1: 94-102. Accessed June 6, 2019. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eng.2018.02.009.

Shannon, Claude, E, and Warren Weaver. 1963. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*: Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Shifman, Limor. 2014. *Memes in Digital Culture*: Cambridge, MA: Mit Press.

Shimotsuki, Takanaka. 2008. *Komikku māketto sōseiki*. Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Shuppan.

Simpson, James. 2002. "Computer-Mediated Communication." *ELT Journal* 56, no. 4: 414-15.

Sinanan, Jolynna, and Tom McDonald. 2017. "Ethnography." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, edited by Jean Burgess, Alice Marwick and Thomas Poell: SAGE Publications.

Steinberg, Marc. 2017. "Converging Contents and Platforms: Niconico Video and Japan's Media Mix Ecology." In *Asian Video Cultures: In the Penumbra of the Global*, edited by Joshua Neves and Bhaskar Sarkar, 91–113. Duke University Press.

Steinberg, Marc. 2019. *The Platform Economy How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet*: Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Takahashi, Toshie. 2009. *Audience Studies: A Japanese Perspective*: London: Routledge.

Tamagawa, Hiroaki. 2012. "Comic Market as Space for Self-Expression in Otaku Culture." In *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, edited by Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji, 107-32. Newhaven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tamura, Yasuo. 2010. "Hito o arawasu meishi o hasei suru zōgo seibun ni tsuite." *Hiroshima daigaku ryūgaku-sei senta kiyō* (20):11-21. Accessed January 6, 2020. https://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/120002142565/.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2000. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy." *Social Text* 18, no. 2, 33-58.

Toffler, Alvin. 1980. *The Third Wave*. New York: Morrow.

Tsukuda, Kosetsu, Satoshi Nakamura, and Katsumi.Tanaka. 2011. "Proposal of a System for Searching and Recommending Video Clips Based on Viewers." 19th Workshop on Interactive Systems and Software (WISS 2011). Accessed August 26, 2018. http://www.wiss.org/WISS2011Proceedings/PDF/14.pdf.

Utatte mita no yarikata o shōkai shite mita. 2010. *Utatte mita no hon o tsukutte mita: nikoniko dōga no utatte mita fan ni sasagu. Entā burein mukku*. Tokyo: Enterbrain.

Van Osch, Wietske, and Constantinos K. Coursaris. 2014. "Social Media Research: An Assessment of the Domain's Productivity and Intellectual Evolution." *Communication Monographs* 81, no. 3: 285-309. Accessed May 30, 2019. doi: 10.1080/03637751.2014.921720.

Vickery, Graham, and Sacha Wunsch-Vincent. 2007. *Participative Web and User-Created Content: Web 2.0, Wikis and Social Networking*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Walther, Joseph B. 1996. "Computer-Mediated Communication:Impersonal, Interpersonal, and Hyperpersonal Interaction." *Communication Research* 23, no. 1: 3-43. Accessed September 26, 2018. Accessed September 28, 2018. doi:10.1177/009365096023001001.

Watanabe, Toshiro, Edmund R. Skrzypczak, and Paul Snowden. 2003. *Kenkyusha shin Waei Daijiten* (*Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*). Tokyo: Kenkyusha.

Weber, M. 1948. *The sociology of charismatic authority* (Trans: Gerth, H. H. & Wright Mills, C.). In H.H. Gerth, & C. Wright Mills (Eds.), From Max Weber: Essays in sociology (pp. 245–253). London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.

Williams, Raymond. 1989. "Culture is Ordinary." In *Resources of Hope: culture, democracy, socialism,* edited by Robin Gable, 3-14. London: Verso.

Winner, Langdon. 1978. *Autonomous Technology: Technics-Out-Of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*: Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Yamada, Keisuke. 2017. *Supercell's Supercell Featuring Hatsune Miku*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional. Kindle Edition.

Yang, L. 2009. "All for Love: The Corn Fandom, Prosumers, and the Chinese Way of Creating a Superstar." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12, no.5: 527-43.
Accessed November 3, 2017.doi:10.1177/1367877909337863.

Bibliography (Webpages)

Bieber, Justin. 2007. "YouTube Page. Artist's profile." Accessed August 23, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/user/kidrauhl/about.

Comic Market Committee. 2005. "Komikku māketto 30's fairu." Last modified October 1, 2015. Accessed July 9, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/archives/30th/.

———. 2011. "Komikku māketto 35 shūnen chōsa: Chōsa hōkoku." Accessed July 10, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/C81/C81Ctlg35AnqReprot.pdf.

———. 2014. "What is Comic Market?" Last modified January, 2014. Accessed July 1, 2019. http://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/WhatIsEng201401.pdf.

Comiket Inc. 2014. "Comic Market's Ideals and Vision." Last modified October 13, 2014, Accessed June 30, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/IdealsAndVision.html.

———. 2018a. "Information for Overseas Attendees in Comic Market 95 Catalog." Last modified December 10, 2018, Accessed July 7, 2019. https://www2.comiket.co.jp/info-a/TAFO/C95TAFO/C95eng.pdf.

———. 2018b. "Komikettoapīru 95." Last modified December 10, 2018, Accessed July 12, 2019. https://www2.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C95/C95Appeal.pdf.

———. 2018c. "komikku māketto 95 janrukōdo ichiran." Last modified November 2, 2018, Accessed July 10, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C95/C95genre.html.

———. 2019a. "Haichi tantōsha no hitokoto kōnā（bakku nanbā." Last modified Janurary 4, 2019, Accessed July 4, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/hitokotoBN.html.

———. 2019b. "Komikku māketto 79 haichi tantō sutaffu hitokoto kōnā." Last modified Janurary 4, 2019, Accessed July 16, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C79/C79hitokoto/hitokoto.html.

———. 2019c. "Komikku māketto 80 haichi tantō sutaffu hitokoto kōnā." Last modified Janurary 4, 2019, Accessed July 16, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C80/C80hitokoto/hitokoto.html.

———. 2019d. "Komikku māketto 81 haichi tantō sutaffu hitokoto kōnā." Last modified Janurary 4, 2019, Accessed July 16, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C81/C81hitokoto/hitokoto.html.

———. 2019e. "Komikku māketto 95 haichi tantō sutaffu hitokoto kōnā." Last modified Janurary 4, 2019, Accessed July 16, 2019.

https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-c/C95/C95hitokoto/.

———. 2019f. "Komikku māketto nenpyō." Last modified February 28, 2019, Accessed July 1, 2019. https://www.comiket.co.jp/archives/Chronology.html.

Crypton future media Inc. "Piapro (piapuro) hajime ni o yomikudasai." Accessed April 4, 2018. https://piapro.jp/intro/.

Digital Daijisen. n.d. "Otaku (otaku) to wa - kotobanku." Shōgakukan. Accessed June 21, 2019. https://kotobank.jp/word/%E5%BE%A1%E5%AE%85-452808.

DWANGO Co., Ltd. 2018. "Niconico Chōkaigi 2019 Exhibit Proposal." Last modified July 3, 2018, Accessed July 15, 2019. https://site.nicovideo.jp/sales_ads/data/ura/ENGLISHniconico_chokaigi2019_01.pdf.

FNN Prime. 2019. "*Naze, Kobayashi Sachiko wa netto no sekai e？ Geinō-kai kara kieta donzoko 3 nenkan kara no fukkatsu geki.*" Last Modified October 10, 2019, accessed November 28, 2019. https://www.fnn.jp/posts/00048477HDK/201910102250_shinsousakagami_HDK.

Gero. 2009. "Negerokikaku' magnet o futsū ni utatte mita hazu data 'Neru × Gero'." Niconico Video, 07:41. Last modified October 7, 2009. Accessed December 20, 2018. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm8440787.
———. 2019. "Gero niconico tōkō dōga." Accessed August 24, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/user/190917.

Gigazine. 2007. "'nikoniko dōga (γ)' no dōga saiseikaisū ga ichiokukai o toppa." Last modified April 5, 2007. Accessed August 5, 2019. https://gigazine.net/news/20070405_niconico_douga/.

Gurutamin 2010, "'Uruoboe de utattemita' only my railgun 'gurutamin.'" Niconico video, 4:17. August 12, 2010. Accessed July 22, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm11729204.

Hanatan. 2009. "✿Palette utattemita." Niconico Video, 3:50. Accessed January 1, 2011.https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm8378522.

Hīko. 2019. "'*Utaite* soraru' intabyū: Kono 10 nenkande '*utaite*' toyūsonzai wa dō kawatta no ka utaite '*soraru*' ni kiku '*utatte mita*' no kanōsei." Netorabo, Last modified March 6, 2019, Accessed August 20, 2019. https://nlab.itmedia.co.jp/nl/articles/1902/27/news134.html.

Hitori. 2009. "'Magnet' utatte mita 'Hitori and Che:sakurai'." Niconico Video, 04:00. Last modified June 6, 2009. Accessed December 20, 2018. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm7265930.

Ichikawa, Kō-Ichi. 2009. "The Comic Market Today and Overseas Participants." Accessed July 1, 2019.

https://www.comiket.co.jp/info-
a/C77/C77CMKSymposiumPresentationEnglish.pdf.

Institute for Information and Communications Policy. 2019. *Heisei 30 nendo jōhō tsūshin
media no riyō jikan to jōhō kōdō ni kansuru chōsa hōkokusho* (Survey report on usage
time and information behavior of information and communication media in FY2018).
Accessed December 12, 2019. http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000644168.pdf.

KADOKAWA CORPORATION 2019. "Kadokawa kabushiki kaisha 2019 nen
sangatsuki tsūki kessan." Last modified May 14, 2019. Accessed July 22, 2019.
https://ssl4.eir-parts.net/doc/9468/ir_material_for_fiscal_ym1/64531/00.pdf.

Kaishū. 2011. "'Nikokara' senbonzakura (offvocal)." Niconico Video, 4:04. Last
modified September 17, 2011. Accessed June 27, 2017.
https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15633620.

Kataoka, Ryo 2017. "Rankingujun no utaite ichiran." Accessed November 5, 2017.
http://nicodb.jp/u/bgm/alllist/1.

Kurousa. 2011. "'Hatsune miku' senbonzakura 'orijinaru kyoku PV'." Niconico Video,
4:04. Last modified September 17, 2011. Accessed June 27, 2017.
https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15630734.

Mafumafu. 2011. "'mafumafu' senbonzakura@utatte mita." Niconico Video, 4:04. Last
modified September 19, 2011. Accessed April 11, 2018.
https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15647338.

Media Biotope. 2019. "A New Literacy for Media Infrastructure." Accessed August 24,
2019. http://infra.mediabiotope.com/.
Metropolis. 2009. "Rock the House Tokyo's Live House Music Scene is Set to Go
Global." Last modified September 17, 2009. Accessed August 26, 2019.
https://metropolisjapan.com/rock-the-house/.

Minato (RyuseiP). 2009. "Magnet 'Hatsune Miku and Megurine Luka Original.'"
Niconico Video, 03:59. Last modified May 5, 2009. Accessed December 20,
2018. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm6909505.

Maechan. "Utaite SymaG (Shimajī) no jōhō matome! Kao ya nenrei nado wa kōkai
sarete iru… ?" Nankuri (blog), February 5, 2017. Accessed December 12, 2018.
https://nancreator.com/symag-1099.

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. 2012. *Heisei 23 nen tsūshin riyō dōkō
chōsa no kekka*. Accessed December 5, 2019.
http://www.soumu.go.jp/johotsusintokei/statistics/data/120530_1.pdf.
———. 2015. *Heisei 26 nen tsūshin riyō dōkō chōsa no kekka*. Accessed December 5,
2019. http://www.soumu.go.jp/johotsusintokei/statistics/data/150717_1.pdf.

Niconico. 2017. "Ninki no senbonzakura (kurousaP) dōga." Accessed June 27, 2017.
http://www.nicovideo.jp/tag/%E5%8D%83%E6%9C%AC%E6%A1%9C%EF%

BC%88%E9%BB%92%E3%81%86%E3%81%95P%29?sort=f&order=a.

———. 2018a. "'encode --1' jiyū-san no kōkai mai risuto." Accessed March 19, 2018. https://www.nicovideo.jp/mylist/19696212.

———. 2018b. "'Hatsune Miku' senbonzakura 'orijinaru kyoku PV' no kontentsutsurī nikonikomonzu." Accessed March 19, 2018. http://commons.nicovideo.jp/tree/sm15630734.

———. 2018c. "Ninki no senbonzakura (kurousaP) dōga." Accessed March 19, 2018. http://www.nicovideo.jp/tag/%E5%8D%83%E6%9C%AC%E6%A1%9C%EF% BC%88%E9%BB%92%E3%81%86%E3%81%95P%29?sort=f&order=a.

———.2019a. "Niconico douga" (〈) (Crescendo), English version. Accessed August 9, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/?header.

———.2019b. "Niconico Services. " Accessed August 6, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/top_service?header.

———.2019c. "Tōhō Bad Apple! PV kagee no kontentsutsurī nikonikomonzu." Accessed July 23, 2019. http://commons.nicovideo.jp/tree/sm8628149.

Nicopedia. 2018a. "Gaju-P" Accessed on April 19, 2018. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%81%8B%E3%81%98%E3%82%85%E3%83% BC(p).

———. 2018b. "Jiyū" Accessed on April 20, 2018. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E8%87%AA%E9%81%8A.

———. 2019a. "Nikoniko chōkaigi." Accessed July 20, 2019. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%83%8B%E3%82%B3%E3%83%8B%E3%82% B3%E8%B6%85%E4%BC%9A%E8%AD%B0.

———. 2019b. "Nikoniko dōga" Accessed July 19, 2019. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%83%8B%E3%82%B3%E3%83%8B%E3%82% B3%E5%8B%95%E7%94%BB

———. 2019c "Nikonikomyuniti." Accessed April 14, 2019. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%83%8B%E3%82%B3%E3%83%8B%E3%82% B3%E3%83%9F%E3%83%A5%E3%83%8B%E3%83%86%E3%82%A3.

———. 2019d. "Puremiamu kaiin." Accessed July 20, 2019. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%83%97%E3%83%AC%E3%83%9F%E3%82% A2%E3%83%A0%E4%BC%9A%E5%93%A1.

———. 2019e. "Shimajī." Accessed December 12, 2018. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E5%B3%B6%E7%88%BA.

———. 2019f. "Yūzānamahōsō." Accessed April 14, 2019.

https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%83%A6%E3%83%BC%E3%82%B6%E3%83%
BC%E7%94%9F%E6%94%BE%E9%80%81.

Nikoniko dōga fukyū iinkai 2007. "Nikoniko dōga (kari)." Last modified January 7,
2007. Accessed August 5, 2019.
https://web.archive.org/web/20070107083707/http://www.nicovideo.jp/.

Niwango, Inc. 2007. "Nikoniko dōga (Closed Gamma)." Last Modified March 31, 2007.
Accessed   August   5,   2019.
https://web.archive.org/web/20070331091450/http://www.nicovideo.jp/.

Nyao. 2013. "Otaku no kenkyū (1) machi ni wa otaku ga ippai." Mangaburikko, Last
Modified 2013/12/16. Accessed June 7, 2019.
http://www.burikko.net/people/otaku01.html.

Officialpsy. 2012. "PSY - GANGNAM STYLE (강남스타일) M/V." YouTube video,
4:12. July 15, 2012. Accessed August 23, 2018.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0.

Okada, Yuka 2008. "'deguchi ga nai' 'kenrisha wa dare' — — Hatsune Miku nijisōsaku
no kadai." ITmedia. Last modified March 27, 2008. Accessed July 22, 2019.
https://www.itmedia.co.jp/news/articles/0803/27/news128.html.

Otemoto 2008. "Nikoniko danmaku dai jiten" Niconico video, 11:39. April 5, 2008.
Accessed July 20, 2019. https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm2898941.

Picotaro Official Channel, 2016. "PPAP（Pen-Pineapple-Apple-Pen Official）ペンパ
イナッポーアッポーペン／PIKOTARO (ピコ太郎)." YouTube video, 1:08.
August 26, 2016. Accessed August 23, 2018.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E00Zuayv9Q.

Rirī 2019, "Danmaku asobi yozora no machinami to jidōsha." Niconico video, 1:04.
January 24, 2019. Accessed July 20, 2019.
https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm34520244.

Sachiko promotion. 2014. "Sachiko Kobayashi Official Home Page: *Komikku māketto
86 ni sanka sasete itadakimasu*." Last modified July 14, 2014, Accessed November
11, 2019. http://www.sachiko.co.jp/info/2014/07/14/2137/.

Team Entertainment, 2011. "Top Page. Moratoriamu｜Nem's Garden." Accessed July
12, 2012. http://www.team-e.co.jp/sp/nem/index.html.

Terunuma, Kenta. 2018. "Kuro rekishi nanka nai. Subete ga taisetsu na takaramono Gero
ga nikoniko dōga to kakenuketa 10 nenhan." Livedoor News. Last modified June
25,   2018.   Accessed   August   18,   2019.
https://news.livedoor.com/article/detail/14801050/.

TORANOANA Inc. 2019. "What is Toranoana?." Accessed August 19, 2019.

https://www.toranoana.jp/en/.

Warner Music Japan. 2018. *"Shimajī official website: Biography."* Accessed December 12. https://sp.wmg.jp/symag/.

XING Inc. 2018. "Karaoke Ranking Joysound." Accessed January 15, 2018. https://www.joysound.com/web/karaoke/ranking.