# Otaku Tourism: imaginary and motivations of a new typology[1]

Dionisio de Almeida Brazo[a]

Ari da Silva Fonseca Filho[b]

## Abstract

This article aimed to show the results of studies about the Otaku Tourism typology, which is understood as a segmentation of cultural tourism. The specific objectives were: to raise bibliographic productions about Otaku Tourism and globalization; to investigate the motivations of these tourists regarding their behavior, interests and consumption; finally, to analyze this typology of tourism, highlighting its potential and the main destinations visited. The study was exploratory, based on bibliographical research, with authors that address Tourism, such as Molina (2003), Rodrigues (2001), Urry (2007); cultural tourism was based especially on Pereiro Pérez (2009); the Japanese Pop Culture in Sato (2007), Nagado (2007), Oka (2005), the Territorialization, Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization (TDR) processes in Ortiz (2000/2006) and Otaku Tourism in Simon (2015) and Fernandes (2013). We also conducted a virtual search, through a questionnaire, with open and closed questions, to outline the profile, interests and motivations of the public in question. However, we highlight the difficulty in bringing tourism closer to investigations on Japanese pop culture, given the restricted literature on the subject.

**Keywords:** Otaku tourism; Japanese pop culture; Globalization; Japanese animation and comics.

## Resumo

### Turismo Otaku: imaginário e motivações de uma nova tipologia

A proposta do presente artigo foi demonstrar os resultados dos estudos acerca da tipologia Turismo Otaku, sendo esta compreendida como segmentação do turismo cultural. Os objetivos específicos foram: levantar as produções bibliográficas acerca do Turismo Otaku e mundialização; investigar as motivações destes turistas no que tange seus comportamentos, interesses e consumo; por fim, analisar essa tipologia do turismo, destacando seu potencial e principais destinos visitados. A pesquisa foi de cunho exploratório, pautada em pesquisa bibliográfica com autores que abordam o Turismo, tais como Molina (2003), Rodrigues (2001), Urry (2007); o turismo cultural foi embasado especialmente em Pereiro Pérez (2009); a Cultura Pop Japonesa em Sato (2007), Nagado (2007), Oka (2005); o processo de Territorialização, Desterritorialização e Reterritorialização (TDR) em Ortiz (2000/2006) e Turismo Otaku em Simon (2015) e

a. Mestrando em Cultura e Territorialidades pela Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. E-mail: dionisioalmeida@id.uff.br

b. Doutor em Educação pela Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil. Professor do curso de Turismo da Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. E-mail:arifonseca@id.uff.br

Fernandes (2013). Realizamos também uma pesquisa virtual, por meio de questionário, com perguntas abertas e fechadas, para traçar o perfil, interesses e motivações do público em questão. Contudo, destacamos a dificuldade que é aproximar o turismo das pesquisas sobre a cultura pop japonesa, visto as restritas produções bibliográficas acerca do tema.
**Palavras-chave:** Turismo Otaku; Cultura pop japonesa; Mundialização; Animação e quadrinhos japoneses.

## Resumen

**Turismo Otaku: imaginarios y motivaciones de una nueva tipologia**

El objetivo de este artículo fue demostrar los resultados de los estudios sobre la tipología turística Otaku, entendida como una segmentación del turismo cultural. Los objetivos específicos fueran: buscar producciones bibliográficas sobre Otaku Turismo y globalización; Investigar las motivaciones de estos turistas en cuanto a su comportamiento, intereses y consumo; Finalmente, analizar esta tipología del turismo, destacando su potencial y los principales destinos visitados. La investigación fue de carácter exploratorio, basada en la investigación bibliográfica con autores que abordan el turismo, como Molina (2003); Rodrigues (2001); Urry (2007); El turismo cultural se basó especialmente en Pereiro Pérez, (2009); La Cultura Pop Japonesa en Sato (2007), Nagado (2007), Oka (2005), el proceso Territorialización, Deterritorialización y Reterritorialización (TDR) en Ortiz (2000/2006) y el Turismo Otaku en Simon (2015) e Fernandes (2013). También realizamos una encuesta virtual, a través de un cuestionario, con preguntas abiertas y cerradas, para delinear el perfil, los intereses y las motivaciones del público en cuestión. Sin embargo, destacamos la dificultad de acercar el turismo a la investigación sobre la cultura pop japonesa, dada la limitada literatura sobre el tema.
**Palabras clave:** Otaku Turismo; Cultura Pop Japonesa; Globalización; Animación japonesa y cómics.

## INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian academic production on Japanese pop culture in Tourism is still very incipient, with some publications aimed at events, especially Anime Friends[2].

Due to the scarcity of publications and the significant number of people participating in events related to this culture, this study becomes relevant, aiming at showing the globalization process of Japanese pop culture to promote the understanding of a culture from such a distant place but capable of promoting tourist flows in Brazil. Thus, the general objective of this article was to carry out a study about the Otaku Tourism, considering it a segment of cultural tourism, based on the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Japanese pop culture in Brazil. In addition, the public's motivations regarding the consumption of products that characterize the individuals from the otaku group, as well as the displacement to attend events or to visit specific places of the culture in question were considered. The specific objectives were: to raise bibliographic productions about Otaku Tourism and globalization; to investigate the motivations of Otaku tourists in relation to their behaviors, interests and

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2. Anime Friends is the biggest anime convention in Brazil and takes place in the city of São Paulo.

consumption; finally, to analyze this typology of tourism, highlighting its potential and the main destinations visited.

The methodology used for conducting this study was characterized as exploratory, with aspects of quantitative research to construct the profile of this public and to perform qualitative analyses based on the bibliographic research. Thus, the central theme of this article is the globalization of culture investigated by Ortiz (2000-2006) and the understanding of the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Japanese pop culture. The bibliographic research was composed of studies by authors including: Molina (2003), Rodrigues (2001), Richards (2009), Pereiro Pérez (2009), Urry (2007), Sato (2007), Gravett (2006), Nagado (2007), Luyten (2014), Featherstone (1997), Oka (2005), and Gusman (2005). Finally, a survey aiming at presenting the profile, interests, and motivations of the public of Otaku Tourism was conducted using virtual questionnaires, through the Google Forms application.

## CONTEMPORARY TOURIST MOVEMENT

Human displacement is a practice occurring since the dawn of mankind. However, according to Molina (2003), the concept of tourism derived from the Grand Tour, which consisted of trips through Europe, made by aristocrats, students, and members of wealthy families who lived in idleness. These trips became regular, with an average duration of three years, and were focused on learning languages, traditions, and habits of other peoples to complement education, in addition to visiting historical monuments and buying works of art (Rodrigues, 2001). Considering that, we realized that the encounter of cultures is one of the oldest motivations of tourism.

Cultural tourism, according to Richards (2009), is one of the oldest segments of Tourism and is considered, in recent years, the segment of greater global growth and an alternative to destinations that seek diversification in the tourism market. In other words:

> ...the current tourism should be considered basically a result of culture in the broadest sense of the word. Therefore, the economic explanations used to understand the transcendence of tourism are, obviously, not enough although significant, because they do not encompass or consider the diversity of dimensions of the phenomenon (Molina & Rodriguez, 2001).

Thus, we emphasize the understanding of tourism as a result of culture. That is, the cultural approach is broader and more meaningful for the understanding of the tourism phenomenon, since culture is a motivating factor, triggering tourism flows and awakening interests for the establishment of tourism activity. Thus, economic explanations are adopted to understand the behavior and consumption of the public under study.

In recent times, we face new paradigms faced by tourism; this period is called Postmodernity. Urry (2007, pp. 117-118) points out that:

> ...postmodernity involves the dissolution of borders, not only between high and low cultures, but also between different cultural forms, such as tourism, art, education, photography, television, music, sport, purchasing and architecture.

Postmodernity is also characterized by technological development in information technology and in the transport industry. This change originated a new tourist, known as a post-tourist (Molina, 2003), who is marked by the hegemony of the sight to the detriment of the other senses (Gastal, 2005).

Urry (2007: 28) states that "... post-tourists enjoy the multiplicity of tourism games. They know the tourist experience does not exist, it is only a series of games or texts that can be exercised or interpreted". Linked to the new technological resources, these tourism games can be exploited to create alternative realities or to reconfigure the existing ones for a singular tourist experience. Molina (2003: 72) states that:

> ... by using the virtual reality technology, to create sophisticated experiences related to the exploration of fantastic but possible worlds or real scenarios with the added value established by interconnecting several people simultaneously in a virtual reality experience that would probably be difficult to find in "real" reality.

Then, thinking about the tourism segmentation traditionally based on age, socioeconomic level or schooling and nationality becomes inefficient, while segmenting it considering lifestyles is more attractive (Molina, 2003). Bringing new ways of thinking about tourism segmentation, Molina (2003), through his provocations related to post-tourism, encourages us to think about Otaku Tourism.

We proposed the Otaku Tourism as a subcategorization of the cultural tourism segment. The word "otaku" refers to fans of Japanese pop culture products in Brazil (Issa, 2013 & Schüler-Costa, 2014). Given this, our approach is focused on the anthropological bias, highlighting culture as a form of ". . . reducing ethnocentrism and elitism by affirming the universalism of human culture and the particularism of cultures, hence respect for cultural differences should be the basis for a just society" (Pereiro Pérez, 2009, pp. 104). Here, culture is understood as complex and dynamic and characterizes a society encompassing material and immaterial, physical or constructed, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects (Barroco & Barroco, 2009).

To value the cultural diversity of Brazil and to spot trends in the segmentation of the tourism market, the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism points out the following concept of cultural tourism: "...[tourism market] comprises tourism activities related to the experience of the set of significant elements of historical and cultural heritage and cultural events, valuing and promoting the material and immaterial goods of the culture" (Brasil, 2006, pp.13).

In a study on the displacement to Washimiya Town by fans of the Lucky Star animation, Yamamura (2009) states that this public is motivated to know the Japanese cultural heritage, whether material and/or immaterial, through the interaction with the products of the Japanese pop culture, and anime is the main vehicle for the propagation of heritage. Constant visits from this public created a strong emotional bond, making these individuals support the culture. This

situation also contributed to the development of products by the local trade to meet such demand (Yamamura, 2009; Okamoto, 2009).

Okamoto (2009) states that this tourist is mainly focused on taking pictures of the landscapes that appear in an anime or are similar to these places, since the precision of the latter not always can be determined. The studies by Yamamura (2009) and Okamoto (2009) converge by pointing out that the behavior of this tourist is typical of the 2000s, when the internet allowed the individual to search for information autonomously, creating an itinerary and sharing it with his/her peers.

It is worth noting that a tourism demand with similar motivations is also present in Brazil, not only related to the interest in visiting Japan, but also aimed at attending events and visiting Brazilian locations that have elements of the Japanese culture.

## JAPANESE POP CULTURE: MANGA AND ANIME

According to Ortiz (2000), one of the historical perspectives presented on Japan is that the cultural influence of China and of the West would have marked the culture of the country. The search for importing exogenous elements was part of the process of modernization of the country during the Meiji Revolution (period between 1868 and 1900). In addition, the modernity of Japan was also characterized by the rearticulation of the internal elements of society, promoting its integration. Its construction was geared to a Western form, but a Japanese content (Sato, 2007; Gravett, 2006).

The history of the pop Japanese corroborates such influence. Influenced by the Japanese tradition, it translates techniques from other countries, making its products competitive in the world market previously dominated by the hegemony of the American pop culture. Pop culture has managed to territorialize itself in Japan, transforming the exogenous influences in such a way that even the elements that did not originate in Japan, such as the cosplay[3], seem to be originally Japanese. Among the products from the Japanese pop culture, manga and anime are considered the icons; however, videogame, cosplay, and pop music are quite expressive.

As Sato (2007) and Nagado (2007) pointed out, the first person to use the term was Hokusai, in 1814, to denominate his "irresponsible pictures". It was a series of 15 volumes of comic drawings that made him become known as Hokusai Manga. Manga is the name given to comics imported from Japan or to publications that preserve the Japanese aesthetics. The manga as a comic, that is, with fixed characters and storyboards and serial stories, was introduced between the late 19th century and the early 20th century by Kitazawa (Nagado, 2007).

Anime are Japanese animations or the ones preserving such aesthetics. The term is the contracted form of the way the Japanese people speak "animation" (animeeshon) and means animation (Sato, 2007). This term started being used in

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3. Cosplay is the art of dressing up as and interpreting characters from games, animations, comics, and from other products of the world's pop culture. Its origin is linked to science fiction conventions in the United States; during the 1st *World Science Fiction Convention* (1939), in which two youths were the only ones to go to the event wearing costumes. In Brazil, one believes that it emerged in 1996, with the first convention of mangas and anime, the Mangacon, held in São Paulo (Barboza & Silva, 2013).

the post-war period with the US invasion in the country. Previously, it was called dõga, image, or drawing that moves or manga eiga, which means comic book film. Anime has become one of the most famous and renowned Japanese export products, helping in spreading the Japanese heritage around the world (Nagado, 2007; Sato, 2007). After the North Americans left the country, the Japanese pop industry grew exponentially. Sato (2007) argues that the moment was favorable to the emergence of popular forms of entertainment, once the population was exhausted from war and sought to amuse and renew hopes for the years to come.

Osamu Tezuka is the responsible for anime and manga as we know them today. Influenced by the Walt Disney's works - especially Bambi and the Takarazuka theater - he introduced the characters with big and bright eyes that help in showing emotions, which became one of the most remarkable characteristics of Japanese animations (Sato, 2007 & Gravett, 2006).

According to Gravett (2006, pp. 28), ". . . Tezuka wrote and drew a record of 150,000 comic books, distributed into 600 manga titles and 60 animations." On Osamu's pioneerism, Gravett (2006, pp. 34) states that ". . . his national and international success has established the almost symbiotic relationship between manga and anime, which has sustained both industries ever since."

Tezuka was the first to export an anime series (Sato, 2007), representing the landmark of the deterritorialization of the Japanese pop culture. The activities of Mushi Productions, an animation producer founded by him, began in 1961 as well as the broadcast of anime on television. With high audience ratings in Japan, other producers soon began to copy it, which became anime increasingly popular.

## IDENTIFICATION WITH THE JAPANESE POP CULTURE IN BRAZIL

In postmodernity, identity, even being described as millenary and traditional, is also fragmented and composed of many other identities[4], which may be contradictory or unsolved. It becomes a "moving celebration", because it is not lasting or essential (Hall, 2015). This new paradigm dislocates the idea of national culture in the late 20th century. Hall (2015, pp. 39) states that this dislocation comes from "...a set of processes and drivers of change that, for the sake of convenience, can be summarized by the term 'globalization'".

Globalization is a complex phenomenon with multiple dimensions, which, despite being reinforced by the neoliberal economic discourse, has social and political dimensions, among others. For the sphere of culture, we prefer to focus on the globalization of culture. According to Ortiz (2006), the technological advances and the informational system would be used to convey the elements of

4. The statement related to the existence of several identities can be explained by brief events of the recent history of Japan. According to Oda (2011), the composition of the "Great Empire of Japan" aggregated many Asian territories, with the presence of many nationalities (especially of Chinese and Koreans) living there until 1945. With the end of the Second World War, a great migration wave started, making many of these Asian immigrants come back to their home countries. The United States occupied the territory of Japan, taking "...all the defense roles and building many military bases around the country" (Oda, 2011, pp. 106). Thus, based on the author cited, we believe that these movements require a reinterpretation of identity and of the Japanese culture itself.

the globalized culture, since "... it is a civilization whose territoriality has become globalized" (Ortiz, 2006, p. 31).

According to the author, a culture needs to tread two pathways to be considered globalized: the pathways of deterritorialization and reterritorialization:

> The first is that of deterritorialization, composing an abstract, rational, dis-localized type of space. However, as pure abstraction, the space, social category par excellence, cannot exist. For this purpose, it should "locate" itself, filling its existential emptiness with the presence of globalized objects. Thus, in its abstraction, the world becomes recognizable. (Ortiz, 2006, pp. 106-107)

This process involves the nonexistence of space. This space is abstract, rational, and delocalized, filled with globalized elements, objects that can be recognized and identified. However, it does not mean that we are living in a homogenized culture (Ortiz, 2006).

Ortiz (2006, p. 107) points out that "... transnational corporations mark the global space with their globalized products and easily identifiable brands". These corporations end up creating the phenomenon of deterritorialization, since their products are no longer linked to a single territory, but to several of them (Ortiz, 2006).

As the market becomes globalized, implementing techniques that are accepted is necessary, and the excessive territorialization is undesirable (Ortiz, 2000). According to Ortiz (2006), to become attractive to the world public, Toei's producers (Animation or Company, the world's largest anime studio[5]) need to eliminate overly oriental traits. Reinterpreting the aesthetic codes and the language of the video is required to become them common to the consumers of the international market, since the industrial production methods of culture and markedly national products do not support globalization. Thus, by appropriating the Japanese tradition of manga, Toei turns them into globalized cartoons (Ortiz, 2000).

That is why reterritorialization is necessary. That is, it needs to locate itself and be rooted in social practices, because the globalized culture incorporates these practices, which also contradicts the discourse of a homogenized culture (Ortiz, 2006). However, we cannot consider that the global and local dichotomies "... are separated in space and time. It seems that the processes of globalization and localization are inextricably connected nowadays"(Featherstone, 1997, pp. 144). We add the process of globalization of culture, because thinking in a dualistic way reinforces the frontiers between internal and external, presupposing that culture is centralized. For a globalized culture, the displacement of territoriality is required. Localisms that are re-territorialized can also be mentioned. Due to the migratory processes or the tourist flow itself, cultural traits are carried and sometimes adopted by other peoples.

Otakism in Brazil, albeit in its initial form, is dated from the beginning of the Japanese immigration in 1908, being restricted to the colonies. Mangas were imported and distributed in São Paulo by second-hand bookshops of the Liberdade neighborhood, and sent to the state's countryside and to Paraná (Vasconcellos, 2006; Lourenço, 2009).

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5. Information obtained from the Toei Animation website. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/1tkeZrp

In the 80's, a more systematic import of manga began, and the United States was the intermediary. However, Gusman (2005) states that the Brazilian public showed resistance because of the changes made in the Japanese manga to serve the North American public. The North American publishers reversed the pages of the manga to adapt to the way of reading of the Western, and, thus, ". . . it was common to see people wearing a watch on their right arm and greeting one another with their left hand" (Gusman 2005, p. 79).

This only changed when Conrad Editora began to intermediate the import of mangas. In 2000, he imported the titles of *Dragon Ball* and *Knights of the Zodiac*. Gusman (2005) points out that fans were satisfied with the novelty, because "... it was read in the Eastern read order and the onomatopoeias were kept in Japanese for being part of the animation, ushering in a new era in the Brazilian comic market" (Gusman 2005, p. 79).

Oka (2005) presents the viewpoint of the Japan Brazil Communication (JBC), the largest manga publisher, which owned six of the twelve mangas found on newsstands back then. According to the author (2005, p.86), JBC believed that "...the manga is not only a Japanese comic book, but also a link between Japanese and Brazilian cultures". Therefore, when translating the mangas, the publisher was concerned to maintain the main characteristics of Japanese publications, such as size, format, Eastern read order and original onomatopoeias; however, the number of pages was reduced, corresponding to half of a Japanese publication to adapt to the Brazilian readers' economic conditions.

The reterritorialization process presupposes the consumer public's identification with the product. Therefore, the product of the world culture will have a local aspect somehow. Oka (2005) mentions a Chinese proverb he heard from the anime Zillion to exemplify this process. The proverb was "*Koketsu ni hairaneba koji woezu*", which was translated as "If you do not enter the tiger's cave, you will not get the tiger's cub" (Oka, 2005, p. 89). The author states that, in fact, the translation is not wrong, but that the Brazilian public will be poorly acquainted with it. He affirmed that, for a better understanding, it could have been translated as "Quem não arrisca não petisca" (something equivalent to 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained').

## OTAKU TOURISM: IMAGINARY AND MOTIVATIONS OF TRIPS

During the displacement, people can experience new sensations, search for what is different and enjoy some time breaking out of their routine. This "break" of routine or "escape" from reality allows the otakus to enter the "anime world".

Acquaintance with anime usually begins in childhood/youth. Although the products of the Japanese pop culture are not restricted to children, the individual creates imaginaries that he/she can carry with him/her until the adult life, being created a motor reservoir. According to Silva (2003), quoted by Gastal (2005, p. 74), this reservoir is composed of ". . . images, feelings, memories, experiences, visions of the reality that make the imagined come true, readings of life, and, through an individual/collective mechanism, it strengthens a way to see, to be, to act, to feel and to aspire in the world".

Gastal (2005) states that trips and imaginary have always been together and, thus, it is so important for tourism. The imaginary can make the tourist be

distant from or nearer the place to which he/she wants to go. Simon (2015, p. 52) tells us that after realizing that anime can ". . . motivate and instigate the otakus' imaginary, public and private institutions developed several itineraries in Japan aimed at the otakus", as it was the case of the *Japan Anime Map*[6].

Odaiba is one of the places shown in the Japan Anime Map as a destination for those who enjoy the anime *Digimon Adventure*. Odaiba is an artificial island - near Tokyo - where seven out of the eight main characters live, often appearing in the anime. It is the background for one of the fights with more emotional appeal. Using the example of the Digimon animation, more specifically of the episode 37 – called "Tailmon digivolves into Angewomon" – before the main fight, several scenes are composed with the presentation of real locations. Tokyo Big Sight, where the villain Myotismon[7] determined to arrest all the citizens until the eighth digi-destined is found, is presented[8]. This is the starting point for the development of an emotional plot, since all the adults of the city are asleep, leaving the children alone in the fight against the Bakemons (ghost Digimons), who sometimes separate them from their parents violently.

The epicenter of the episode will be in the Fuji TV tower[9]; after Kari shows up as the eighth digi-destined, Myotismon attacks her; Wizardmon[10] lunges out in front of her, receiving the villain's attack. With his death, Kari's feelings aroused, causing her digivice[11] to react. Picodevimon[12] cannot hold it, topples it, and her brother – Tai – catches it and throws it to Kari. Kari's Digimon partner, Tailmon, can finally digivolve (neologism for Digimon evolution) to Angewomon (species of angel Digimon). The character uses the power of her fight partners to create the "celestial arrow" to defeat Myotismon.

Returning to the contributions by Gastal (2005), she states that there is no right or wrong, because every imaginary as a feeling is and only is. In recent times, there is not one truth; there are several truths, which enables several interpretations of the world, whether personal or collective.

Odaiba has become an important place to anime fans. The Odaiba Memorial Day is celebrated on August 1, because it was the day on which the digi-destined were taken to the Digiworld[13]. In this month or in December, the *Comic Market* takes place (Figure 1). In the map launched by the JNTO in 2011, the Comic Market was presented as ". . . the biggest event for manga and anime fans "... today there are more than 30,000 exhibition groups and over 500,000 people that come to Comic Market".

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6. The map was launched in 2011 by the *Japan National Tourism Organization* – JNTO (a government body focused on promoting the tourism in Japan). Geared to the foreign otakus, it was fully written in English and shows several possibilities of tourism for the Japanese pop culture fans.

7. The main villain in the Myotismon saga, encompassing the episodes 22 to 39.

8. Neologism created from the words Digimon and destined: he/she is the person destined to be a Digimon.

9. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2YjGYY6

10. A sort of wizard Digimon who became Tailmon's friend since she was found by Myotismon.

11. Device used by the digi-destined children to make their Digimon evolve into a stronger level.

12. A sort of bat Digimon who helps Myotismon.

13. Virtual world where the Digimons live.

Figure 1 – Picture of the Comic Market event, held at Tokyo Big Sight



**Source –** Personal collection (2013)

The relevance of the main Japanese pop culture event – Comic Market – is unquestionable. It is held in two annual editions; one in August and the other in the last days of December. The August edition always has more participants, given that the year-end event competes with the New Year's Eve party, in which most of the Japanese go out of Tokyo to celebrate the turn of the year with their relatives. The event emerged in 1975, with only 500 people, and in 2016 it already counted on more than 500,000 participants in each one of the events held. These data do not distinguish between citizens of Tokyo and tourists, but one believes that the event has a large foreign audience, given its international relevance[14].

Few investigations on Otaku Tourism are found, but we identified two studies addressing the motivation of this group. They are the monograph by Fernandes (2013) and the thesis by Simon (2015).

Fernandes (2013), through participant observation and in-depth interview, mostly informal, sought to understand the experience sought by the tourists who visited the *Anime Friends*. In the study, the respondents' statements were often related to the imaginary this universe is capable of producing.

After the self-assertion that the cosplayers are the "soul" of the event, the author concluded that they represent the "...precept of 'living/experiencing' of the event, which is a quite important practice in 'post-tourism'. For us, it is a result of the postmodern spectacle consciously embraced by an event strongly constituted by imaginaries "(Fernandes, 2013, pp. 72).

The imaginary from this type of event must be fed constantly, but without standardization or mischaracterization. In blogs geared to the Japanese pop culture, there is no lack of criticism about the mischaracterization such events have been suffering. The focus of these meetings is on the otakus' socialization;

14. One of the researchers could attend the event (on December 2013) and verified the presence of participants from other Asian countries (South Korea and China), North America (USA) and South America (mainly Brazilians); however, for this study, finding official information on the participants' home country was not possible.

therefore, events aimed at the Japanese pop universe should not be mixed with other universes to attract more audiences (Fernandes, 2013).

One highlights that planners need to have the ability to interpret this variety of codes and signs. Unlike traditional tourists, who seek exposition to what is different when traveling, otaku tourists seek the encounter with their equals, that is why the identification through symbols is important.

Many of the issues raised in the study by Fernandes (2013) corroborate the investigation by Simon (2015). Simon (2015) reports that one respondent stated that the environment was unique and the ". . . fantasy present in the event was engaging, the universe itself was the greatest attention-getter" (Simon, 2015, p. 90).

Another respondent (2015) stated that she attended these events partly to meet people with whom she shares affinities, as well as to interact with the environment created. Before attending the event, she was afraid of wearing the shirts related to the Japanese pop universe and being ridiculed; however, this concern is over. When questioned about her motivation to attend the event, she told that she was motivated by the "universe created", ". . . there she could be herself, talk to people with similar preferences, wear cosplay costumes and amuse herself by being admired and not criticized'"(Simon, 2015, p. 92).

Two respondents highlighted the imaginary is capable of spreading throughout the years. One of the individuals interviewed by Simon (2015) argued that, after years without attending the event, he remembers it fondly, thus being motivated to attend it again. Another one referred to the event as "magical and unique" because he could buy ". . . objects related to the media and games he enjoyed, listen to concerts of singers who marked his childhood and see people wearing costumes" (Simon, 2015, p. 93).

The studies by the authors cited corroborate the idea that individuals create images and imaginaries that can encourage or even discourage them to choose to go to a certain place. The events for this public have the important mission of maintaining this imaginary.

Simon (2015) states that most of the respondents said they wanted to see the locations of the anime in Japan in person and to experience the culture. However, as they do not have financial conditions, they use the events as a way to satisfy such desire.

## I WANNA BE THE VERY BEST, WHO HAS NEVER BEEN LIKE THIS?

The book Otaku – Os Filhos do Virtual shows an investigative reporting about the universe of the Japanese otakus made by Barral (2000). The publication became a reference for understanding the Japanese otaku and, to some extent, the Brazilian otaku, since some characteristics pointed out by the author remain present in Brazilian otakus - which served as the basis for constructing our research methodology.

Barral (2000) points out that the otakus are the first ancestors of "Homo virtuens", because they belong to the first generation living in a multimedia world, and, thus, an online survey with the group seems appropriate. The author also points out that the word "otaku" was first used in 1983 by Nakamori to denominate young people who ". . . have an aversion to deepening personal relationships, and prefer to be at home

in the bedroom, where they accumulate everything that can satisfy their passion" (Barral, 2000, p. 25). Therefore, Japanese otakus were characterized as young people with exotic hobbies, who kept "virtual contact" with reality and whose social relations were restricted between those who shared their preferences.

Thus, to trace not only the otakus' motivations, but also their profile and relationship with the Japanese pop culture and tourism products, we conducted two virtual surveys. The first one from October 18 to 31, 2016, obtaining 117 answers; the second from May 29 to June 4, 2017, obtaining 188 answers. For the release of the second edition of the survey, we made some adjustments that we considered necessary. For example, in 2016, the survey had 26 questions, six of which were not mandatory and two were distributed into two parts. In 2017, we changed the order of some questions and added one more mandatory question, asking whether the respondent considered himself/herself otaku or not.

The survey was divided into three parts: the first is related to the respondent's profile; the second concerns the respondent's relationship with the Japanese pop culture and their motivations for a displacement to interact with that culture; finally, the last part is related to the visit to the Liberdade neighborhood, in São Paulo, which will not be deepened for not being the focus of this article. The survey was released through a social network, starting with the identification of the researchers' personal contacts, considering the sympathizers or those who identified themselves with the otaku culture. Also, each respondent was asked to recommend the survey to acquaintances with similar profiles or sympathizers of the culture in question, applying the "snowball sampling" technique - this sampling being non-probabilistic, because the access to the individuals was difficult (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

At data tabulation, each respondent was enumerated, taking care to organize and highlight the answers to the open questions; however, only those relevant to the proposal of this study were presented.

A predominance of male respondents (55%) was observed in 2016 and of female ones (54%) in 2017, from the state of Rio de Janeiro (76% and 82%), followed by São Paulo (6% and 7%) in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Curiously, the state of Minas Gerais was prevalent in 2017 compared with 2016, jumping from 1% to 7%. The presence of young people was very significant, with 77% of respondents aged between 19 and 26 years, in 2016. In 2017, 75% of respondents were also in this age group. The monthly family income between one and three minimum wages was predominant, corresponding to 37% of the respondents in 2016 and 31% in 2017.

In 2016, in the first question, the respondents reported their definition of otaku. For most respondents, it is appreciating, interacting, being a fan of the Japanese pop culture (Figure 2). However, reports about not being identified with the term were also present, given its pejorative connotation in Japan:

> I dislike the definition "otaku", mainly because I know what it means to Japanese language speakers. When I talk about my preference (sic.), for example, I prefer expressions such as Asian culture lover or something like this. (Respondent 15, 2016[15])

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15. The name of the respondents were not requested in the questionnaire, then they were identified according to the number of their answer.

In addition, some reported that it was more than only interacting with or appreciating the Japanese pop culture, but it was a "lifestyle", a personal identity: "Engaging with the cultural product of which you are a fan, so as to absorb their particularities and show them to the world as your own personal identity" (Respondent 54, 2016).

**Figure 2 –** Wordcloud about the definition of otaku according to the respondents (in Portuguese)



**Source –** Elaborated by the authors

In the questions related to the Japanese pop culture, we verified that anime is the product most frequently mentioned. About 62% in 2016 and 63% in 2017 answered that anime is the product with which they have the most contact. In 2016, manga was the second ranked (21%). However, in 2017, video games were prevalent (19%) (Graph 1).

**Graph 1 –** Which product of the pop culture do you have the most contact with?



**Source –** Elaborated by the authors

Most respondents consumed anime and manga via internet16. In 2016, 42% and 26% of the respondents used the internet to watch anime and read manga, respectively. The data remained the same in 2017, with the respective percentages of 46% and 23%. When justifying their answers, the lack of television programs for this audience, especially on free television, was highlighted, which favors the increased demand via internet. This fact hinders the audience renewal, not only for children - since there are anime for all ages - but especially for adults who grew up during the anime boom, when broadcasting anime on television was usual.

The creation of the extinct Rede Manchete de Televisão (1983-99) was the first great opportunity for broadcasting anime in Brazilian TV programs, which ended up linking the image of the broadcaster to the Japanese animations (Lourenço, 2009). The TV station was responsible for the first generation of otakus in Brazil. In our survey, in 2016, 33% of the respondents (aged between 16 and 20 years) interacted with these products, witnessing the exact moment of extinction of the broadcaster. In 2017, the scenario changed. About 29% of the respondents, aged between 6 and 10 years, interacted with manga and anime (Graph 2).

**Graph 2 –** How long have you been interacting with manga and anime?
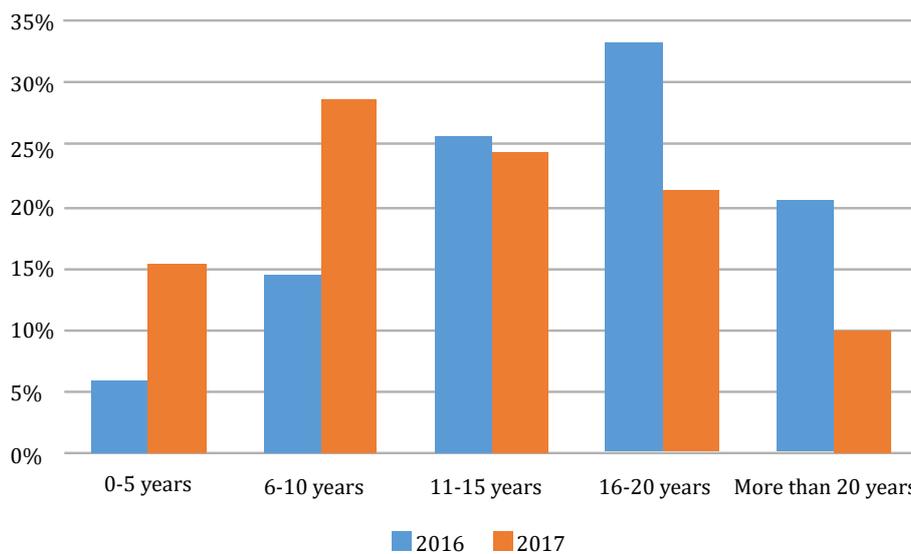


**Source –** Elaborated by the authors

We also observed the frequency of interaction of this public with manga and anime. About 79% and 66% watched an anime in the last three months in 2016 and 2017, respectively. A curious fact is that, in 2016, no one chose the option "I never watched an anime", contrary to what happened in 2017, when about 10% of respondents had never watched it (Graph 3).

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16. Possibility of choosing more than one option.

**Graph 3 –** The last time watching anime
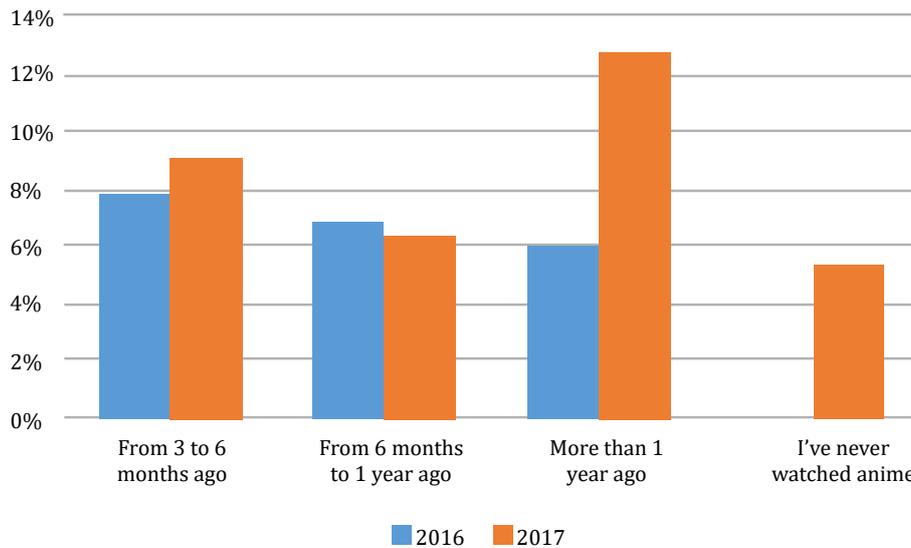


**Source –** Elaborated by the authors

Regarding the manga, 51% of the respondents in 2016 and 38% in 2017 read some manga in the last three months. Considering that television has a wider reach and that manga is increasingly difficult to find (besides the higher price), 4% of respondents, in 2016, had never read manga, which increased to 23% in 2017 (Graph 4).

**Graph 4 –** The last time reading manga
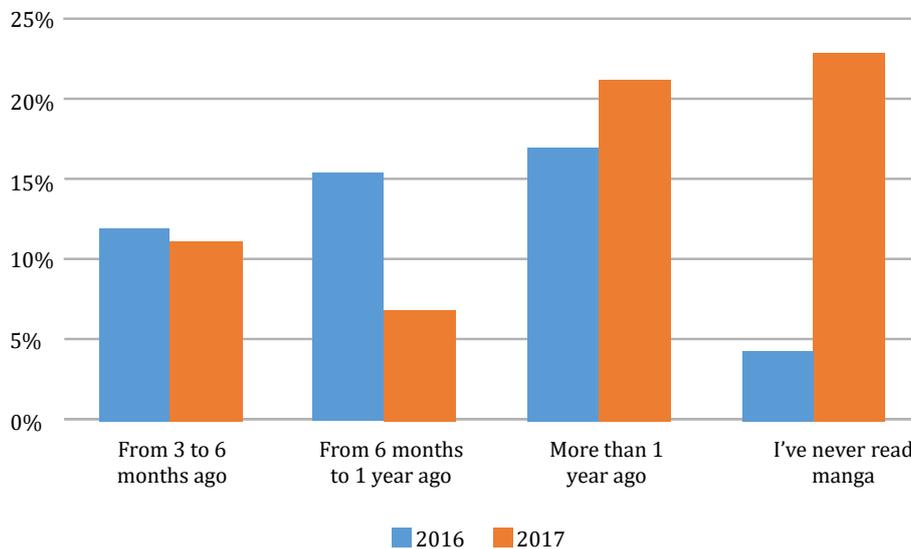


**Source –** Elaborated by the authors

Many of the places represented in the anime are places that really exist in Japan. Based on this data, in the question "Would you like to visit the Japanese locations that are portrayed in anime?", about 95% and 81% answered positively, in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Among the reasons that led the respondents to want to visit these locations are: to interact with the local culture, to understand the universe of creation of the anime, to feel inside an anime, and to travel to Japan.

> Most of the anime I watch is about the current everyday life, so their sceneries are the cities of Japan. Many of the places shown in them are real, and every time I watch an occasional reporting with someone visiting Japan or I see pictures of who people there, I can visually recognize the places and names quoted. This only increases my desire to one day visit these places in person to see them up close. (Respondent 19, 2016)

Thus, anime clearly arouses the interest of its public in making trips to Japanese landscapes that were locations of the animations. These individuals are potential otaku tourists. In turn, the participants of events, such as the Anime Friends, which is held since 2001 in the city of São Paulo, can be considered the real otaku tourists, for cases in which São Paulo is not their permanent address. Thus, 79%, in 2016, and 47%, in 2017, have already attended these events and would like to do it again. In 2017, a higher percentage of respondents reported that they had never attended any event, but that they would to do it (34%), compared with that of 2016 (12%).

Respondent 63 (2016) points out his lack of interest in attending these events again due to a mischaracterization of the purpose: "In my opinion, the events are no longer targeted at otakus only, because many people who are not interested in the Japanese culture also attend them" . As previously reported, nowadays, planning tourism involves looking closely. Adding the imaginary in tourism planning means marketing the various truths of the place to make the tourist experience unique, but without mischaracterizing the product.

An alternative to this demand is the Liberdade neighborhood, which strongly represents the Eastern culture, due to its historical formation that configured the Eastern identity in the capital city of São Paulo. On having already visited the neighborhood, in 2016, 38% of respondents point that they had never been there. Among those who reported that they had already visited Liberdade (62%), 88% affirmed that the neighborhood is a representative space for otakus. In 2017, 60% of respondents reported that they had never visited it. Among those who answered positively (40%), 73% pointed out that the neighborhood is a representative space for otakus.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to present the Japanese pop culture as a possible motivation for displacement, showing that Otaku Tourism is a growing segment among young people. Thus, we assume that anime and mangas can help in spreading imaginaries that promote the local tourism, since post-tourists are willing to consume symbols; therefore, the Otaku Tourism finds fertile ground for its dissemination.

Considering the general objective of this article, we made a bibliographical survey about the theme of tourism and Japanese pop culture, to reflect more deeply on the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the culture in question in Brazil. As a way to exemplify such theory, we conducted a virtual survey to identify the profile and motivations of the potential otaku tourist, focused on those interested in traveling to the landscapes from mangas

and anime and on the real tourists, subjects who travel to participate in events specific to the otaku culture.

To achieve our specific objectives, we searched for discussions of some tourism authors – emphasizing the cultural tourism segment – for establishing a new subcategorization within this segment, which is Otaku Tourism. Japanese pop culture was also addressed, aiming at understanding the process through which it became a globalized culture when it was deterritorialized from Japan and at how it was reterritorialized in Brazil, being able to be part of the otakus' identity. Finally, to investigate the motivations, behaviors, interests, and consumptions of the otakus, a summary of our virtual survey was presented.

Despite the limitations concerning the use of the snowball technique, we were able to identify characteristics of the otakus and to categorize them as potential or real tourists, both nationally and internationally. During the preparation of this article, we faced some difficulties, precisely due to the the lack of publications on the subject, which is still new in the field. Considering that, we emphasize that further studies on this subject in Tourism are required and we believe that this study can serve as an inspiration for new publications and investigations.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

**Dionisio de Almeida Brazo:** Formulation of the research problem and objectives, development of the theoretical proposition,conduction of the bibliographical review, choice of methods, data collection, data analysis, elaboration of tables, graphs and figures, critical manuscript review, writing of the manuscript, standardization according to the RTA.

**Ari da Silva Fonseca Filho:** Formulation of the research problem and objectives, development of the theoretical proposition,conduction of the bibliographical review and theoretical framework, choice of methods, data analysis, critical manuscript review, writing of the manuscript, standardization according to the RTA.