



Perspectives on Japanese and American Fandom Practices and Culture

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"Fandom" is defined as:

(noun) the fans of a particular person, team, fictional series, etc. regarded collectively as a community or subculture

Example: The Star Wars fandom is divided on their opinions on the recent sequel series by Disney

Outline

- Research Questions
 - Significance of the Study
 - Review of Literature
 - Research Method
 - Data Findings
 - Summary of the Findings
 - Conclusion
 - Limitations of the Study
 - Acknowledgements
 - Works Cited

Research Questions

Question 1

In what ways do
fandom spaces
vary between
Japan and
English-speaking
countries?

Question 2

In what ways does
the monetization of
fanworks vary between
Japan and English-
speaking countries
and why?

Significance of the Study - Raven

- Longtime fandom participant
- Started using Twitter for fandom in 2020
- Observed Japanese fans on Twitter interacted in different ways than English-speaking fans
- Became curious about the differences in fandom spaces between the two cultures

Significance of the Study - Richard

- Invited into a private rhythm game fandom in 2022
- Community was made up of western (mostly European) fans of a Japanese fandom
- Brought into question the differences between the Western fandom and the original Japanese one

Literature Review

- History of Fandom
 - Early Fandom Internet Trends
 - Conventions
 - Monetization
 - Copyright

History of Fandom

- Technological changes in the 20th century allowed fans to create their own content, even before the internet
- In the 60's and 70's, fans of sci-fi shows started producing zines, or self-published magazines. Many see this as the first sign of organized fandom
- Fan creations in the 70's & 80's were mostly physical: zines and amateur press associations
 - In Japan, emergence of "Otaku" culture - a name given to those deeply immersed in the culture of media such as animation and video games.
- In the 90's, fans took to the internet ushering in what some call "The Second Wave of fandom"

(Nagai, 2002; Reagin & Rubenstein, 2011; Versaphile, 2011)

Early Internet Trends

- Online fandom first appeared on Usenet in the 80's
- Mid-90's saw the rise of fan fiction archives
- Mailing lists for fandom started to get popular in the 90's
- Due to many issues people transitioned away from mailing lists to newly popular online journaling websites, notably LiveJournal
- LiveJournal was still the predominant home for fan activities and creations on the internet in 2011

(Versaphile, 2011)

Conventions

- Kington distributed an online survey in order to study fan interests and participation in online and in-person fandom spaces (conventions)
 - Most fell under 18-25 or 26-35 age group
 - 84% of respondents actively attend conventions; 15% don't attend
 - Top 5 popular activities:
 1. Dealer's Room (89%)
 2. Artist's Alley (83%)
 3. Attending fan panels (77%)
 4. Attending quest panels (74%)
 5. Taking pictures of cosplayers (66%)



(Kington, 2015)

Monetization

- Ichikohji and Katsumata conducted a survey to find connection between fanwork creation and monetization
- Results:
 - Consumers who create works in one category tend to create in the other category
 - Same trend exhibited with monetization
- Aida conducted field research on the purchase and sale of fanworks at Comiket (Comic Market) - the largest zine market in Japan and in the world for printed material not published by commercial presses.
 - Most fanwork vendors operate in the red, as they themselves also purchase zines at the event just as the general participants do

(Aida, 2004; Ichikohji, & Katsumata, 2015)

Copyright & Fandom

- Rights holders would obtain Cease & Desist orders and site hosts would remove works, whether or not they were in violation, in fear of further litigation - Anne Rice was notorious for this
- American Law
 - A story is more copywritable than a character
 - Fair Use laws look at: purpose of use, nature of original work, amount used, and effect on the potential market
 - If the purpose of use is profit, that point will be found in favor of the original rights holder
- Japanese Law
 - No Fair Use laws, but extensive permitted uses
 - Non-profit uses are permitted

(Peaslee, 2015)

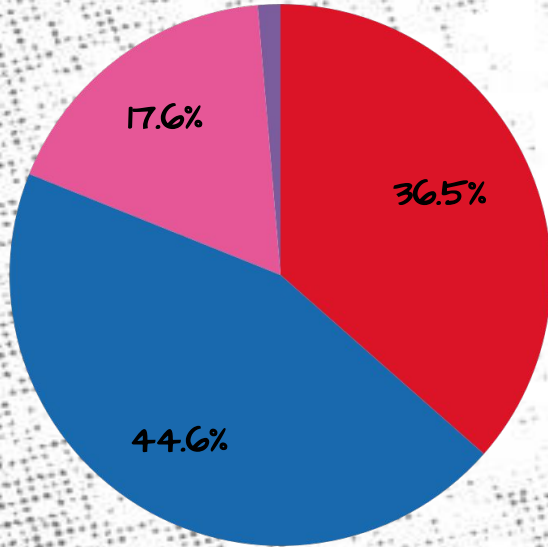
Research Method

- Survey Respondents
 - Final Total: 74 Japanese & 74 American survey responses were used, for a total of 148 responses
 - Over 1,000 responses on English survey including many non-Americans
 - Excluded respondents under 18 years of age per University rules
- Data collection method: online survey (Google Forms)
 - Two surveys, one each in English and in Japanese
 - Spread through Discord, Tumblr, and Twitter
 - English survey was initially distributed across the above channels more evenly
 - Later it went mildly viral on Tumblr and so later responses became skewed toward Tumblr usage
 - Japanese survey was largely distributed through Twitter

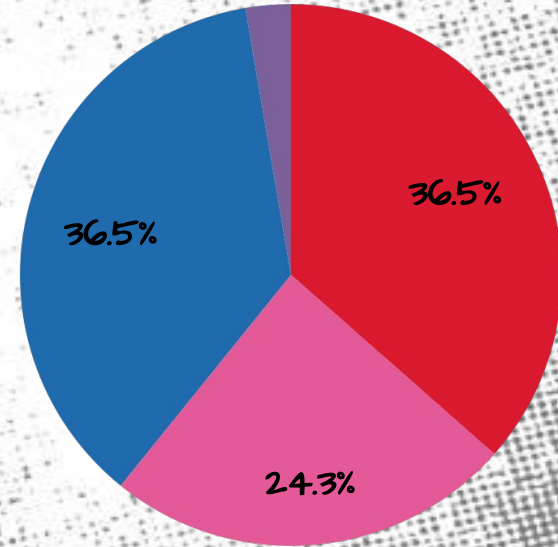
Data Findings

Age Range

USA



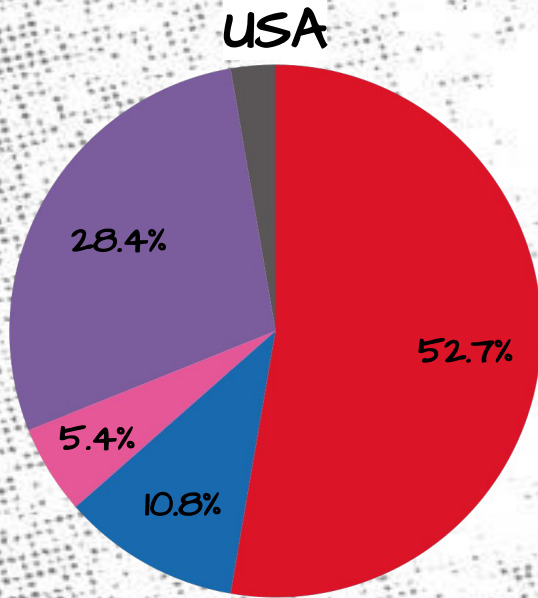
Japan



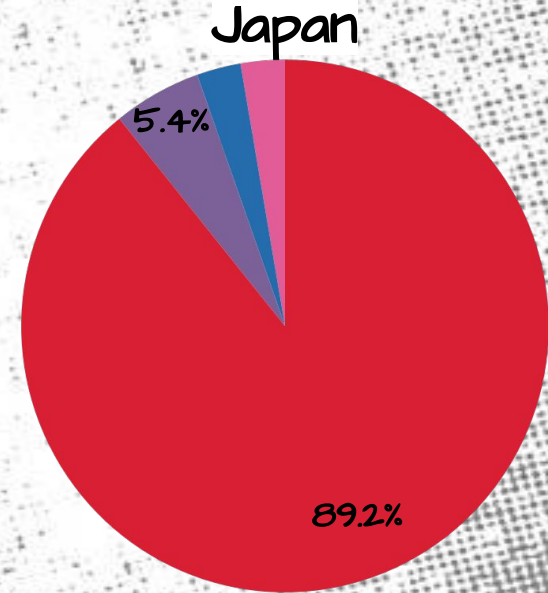
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54

The majority of both groups fall in either the 18-24 & 25-34 range

Gender

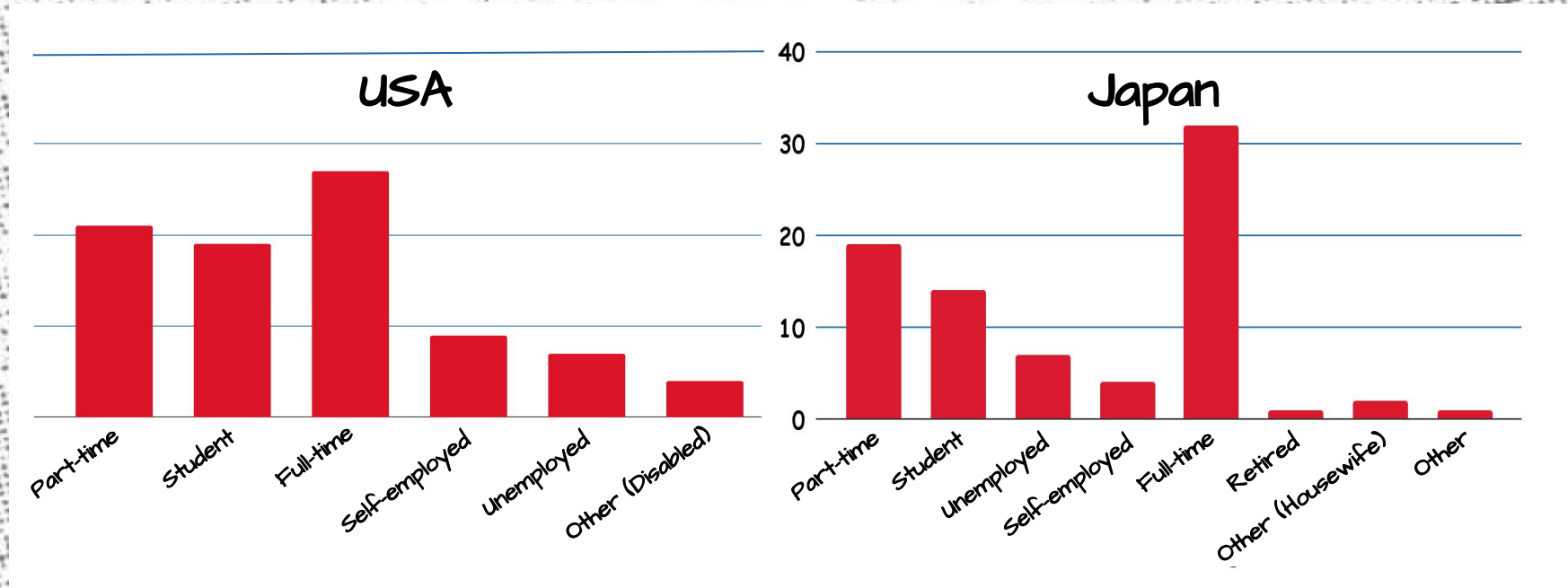


- Woman
- Man
- Non-Binary/ X-Gender
- Prefer not to say
- Other



In both groups women were the largest group
More diverse on the US survey with over a quarter non-binary

Employment



Majority of participants said they worked full-time

Data Findings I

Research Question I

In what ways do fandom spaces vary between Japan and English-speaking countries and why?

When you see a fanwork you enjoy, what actions do you take most often?

USA Top 5

1. Like it/give kudos: 97.3%
2. Share it within that site (e.g. reblog, retweet): 70.3%
3. Comment/give feedback: 62.1%
4. Bookmark it: 59.5%
5. Save it/download it: 45.9%

Japan Top 5

1. Like it/give kudos: 98.6%
2. Bookmark it: 64.8%
3. Save it/download it: 54%
4. Share it within that site (e.g. reblog, retweet): 54%
5. Comment/give feedback: 22.9%

Over 95% of both groups like fanworks they enjoy
Almost 40% fewer Japanese fans replied compared to American fans

What websites do you regularly use to participate in fandom?

USA Top 5

1. Tumblr: 91.9%
2. Archive of Our Own (AO3): 91.9%
3. YouTube: 47.3%
4. Twitter: 44.6%
5. Reddit: 27%

Japan Top 5

1. Twitter: 97.3%
2. Pixiv: 85.1%
3. YouTube: 70.3%
4. NicoNico: 47.3%
5. Instagram: 37.8%

Over 90% of Americans use Tumblr and AO3 as their homebase for fandom. For Japan, fandom lives on Twitter and Pixiv

When considering joining a new website for fandom, what features do you consider important?

USA Top 5

1. Ability to Search for Specific Content (e.g. a tagging system): 82.4%
2. Ability to be Anonymous: 68.9%
3. Pre-established Fandom You are Already in is on the Site: 66.2%
4. No Fear of Censorship: 59.5%
5. Ability to Block/Mute Specific Content and/or Users: 58.1%

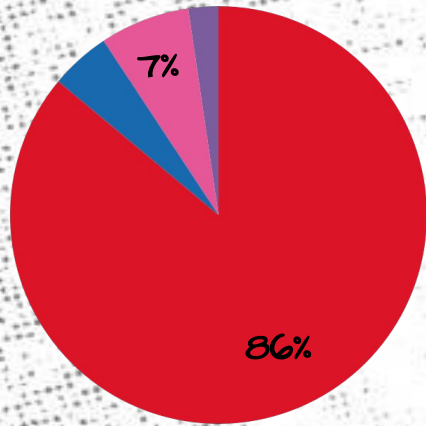
Japan Top 5

1. Ease of Use: 86.5%
2. Language of Website: 78.4%
3. Convenience: 78.4%
4. Ability to be Anonymous: 68.9%
5. Ability to Search for Specific Content (e.g. a tagging system): 68.9%

America largely care about tagging systems, Japan cares about ease of use and website language. Both care about anonymity equally

The most socially acceptable way to leave a comment/message about a fanwork on Twitter

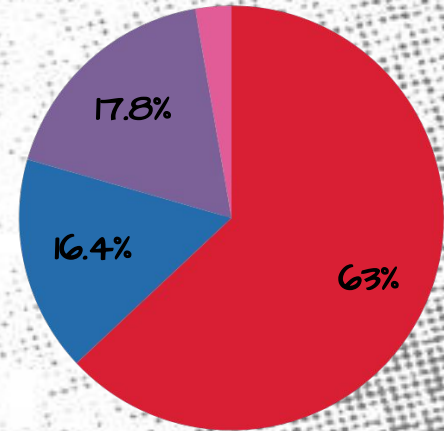
USA



37.8% of respondents said they did not use Twitter

- Replying
- QRTing
- DMing the creator
- Using a third party app to say something (e.g. CuriousCat, Marshmallow)

Japan



All others used Twitter

The majority of both groups saw replying as most socially acceptable

On *Twitter* what are the best 3 ways to express that you enjoyed a fanwork someone else made?

48.8%

1st Best: Retweeting

44.2%

2nd Best: Replying

53.5%

3rd Best: Liking

USA

America is more divided in opinion,

65.8%

1st Best: Liking

56.2%

2nd Best: Retweeting

34.2%

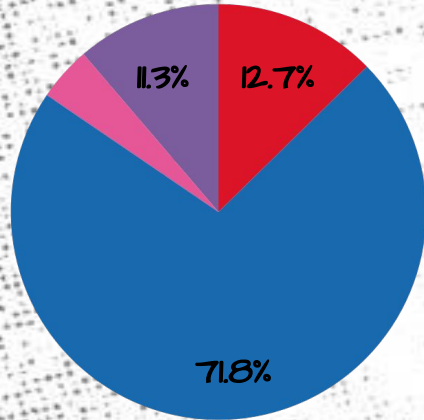
3rd Best: Quote
Retweeting

Japan

but Japan solidly saw liking as the best

The most socially acceptable way to leave a comment/message about a fanwork on Tumblr

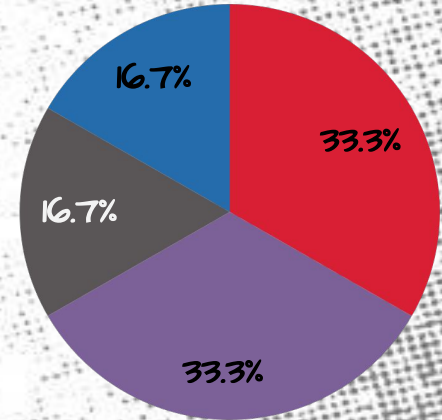
USA



2.7% of respondents said they did not use Tumblr

- Commenting on the reblog
- Commenting in the tags
- Saying something about it in the creator's ask box
- Replying
- PMing the creator

Japan



51.4% of respondents said they did not use Tumblr

The majority of America replied commenting in the tags, but Japan was split between replying and commenting on the reblog

On *Tumblr* what are the best 3 ways to express that you enjoyed a fanwork someone else made?

49.3%

1st Best: Reblogging

40.8%

2nd Best: Commenting
in the tags

23.9%

3rd Best: Liking

USA

America follows the same pattern here

as on Twitter

50%

1st Best: Liking

33.3%

2nd Best: Reblogging

33.3%

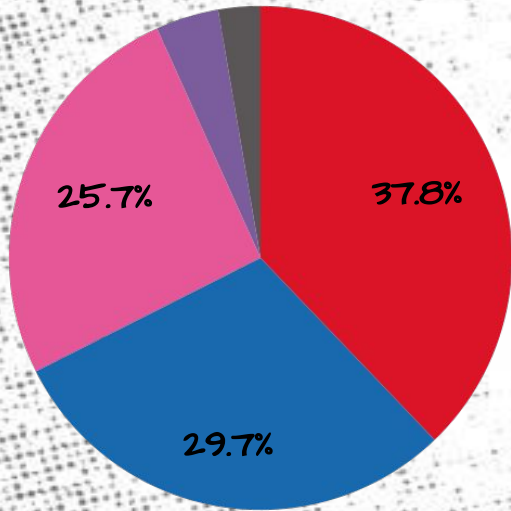
3rd Best: Commenting
in the tags

Japan

The same goes for Japan

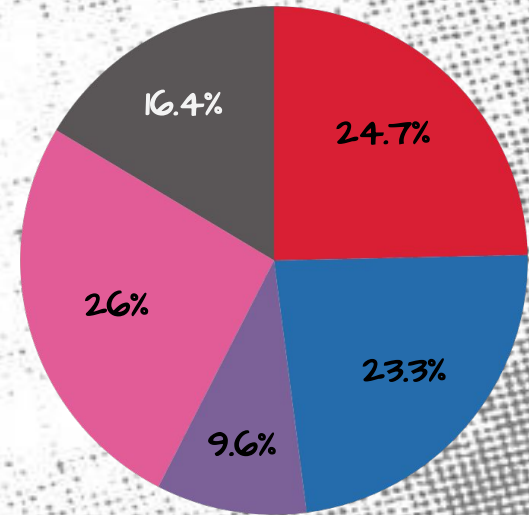
How often do you attend fan events/conventions?

USA



- I don't attend any
- Less than once a year
- 1-2 times a year
- 2-3 times a year
- 5 or more times a year

Japan



Japanese fans attend conventions more frequently than Americans

What types of fan events/conventions do you attend?

USA Top 3

1. General Fandom Conventions (e.g. Comiket, San Diego Comic Con): 43.2%
2. Anime & Manga Conventions (e.g. Anime Expo, Otacon): 37.8%
3. Events focused on a specific work or show and/or for a specific fandom: 24.3%

Japan Top 3

1. General Fandom Conventions (e.g. Comiket, San Diego Comic Con): 56.8%
2. Events focused on a specific work or show and/or for a specific fandom: 39.2%
3. Anime & Manga Conventions (e.g. Anime Expo, Otacon): 23%

Both groups choose the same top three, with general fandom events being the first

if you do attend fan events/conventions, what are your usual reasons for going?

USA Top 5

1. To see and/or buy fan merch (e.g. doujinshi, fanart posters, etc): 50%
2. For the general atmosphere: 48.6%
3. To meet other fans: 36.5%
4. To see and/or buy official merch: 35.1%
5. To see cosplayers: 29.7%

Japan Top 5

1. To see and/or buy fan merch (e.g. doujinshi, fanart posters, etc): 59.5%
2. For the general atmosphere: 51.3%
3. To see and/or buy official merch: 50%
4. Because it is focused on something specific I like: 32.4%
5. To meet other fans: 29.7%

The top 2 reasons for attending were the same for both groups
The other reasons were mostly the same, but prioritized differently

Summary of the Findings I

- **Japan** and **America** largely use different websites for fandom despite some overlap
- **Americans**: Share → Comment → Like
Japanese: Like → Share → Comment
 - Both usually believe the best way to comment is in a way that shares the work (e.g. Quote Retweeting, Commenting in the tags)
 - Commenting is far less common in **Japan**, however
- **Japanese** and **American** fans attend the same types of conventions for the same reasons



An example of cosplay

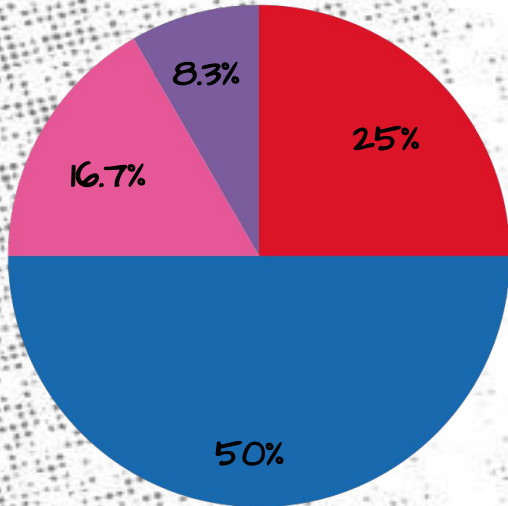
Data Findings 2

Research Question 2

In what ways does the monetization of fanworks vary between Japan and English-speaking countries and why?

If you do sell fanworks, how much do you sell them for?

USA

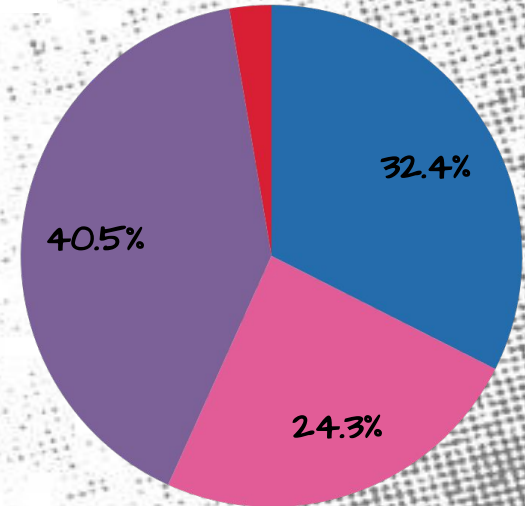


83.8% of respondents said they did not create and/or sell fanworks

75% of American fans sold their works for profit

Over half of Japanese fans sold their works for no profit

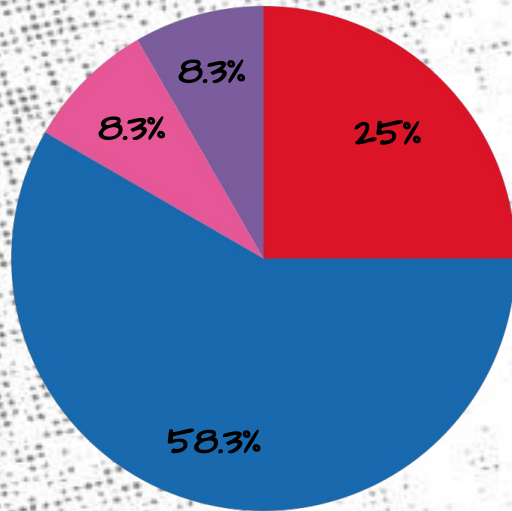
Japan



44.6% of respondents said they did not create and/or sell fanworks

If you sell fanworks, where do you sell them?

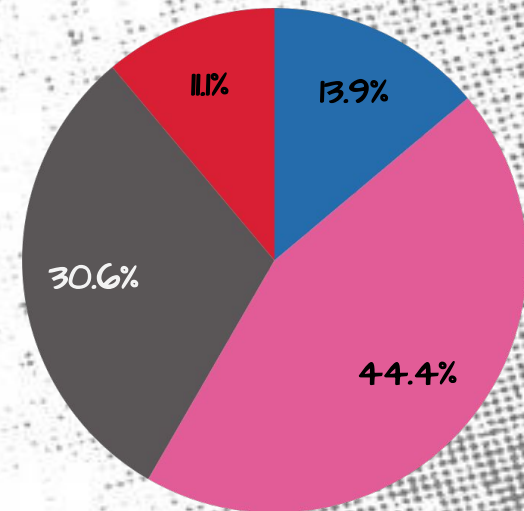
USA



83.8% of respondents said they did not sell fanworks

- Online only, on a store I maintain myself
- Online only, through a third party store (e.g. Booth, Etsy, etc.)
- In person only
- In person and online
- Other (Online peer-to-peer)

Japan

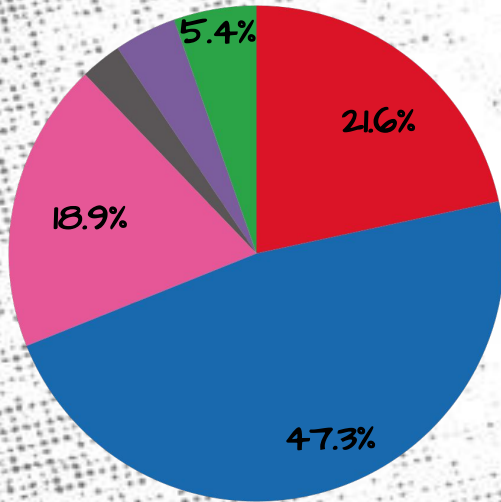


44.6% of respondents said they did not sell fanworks

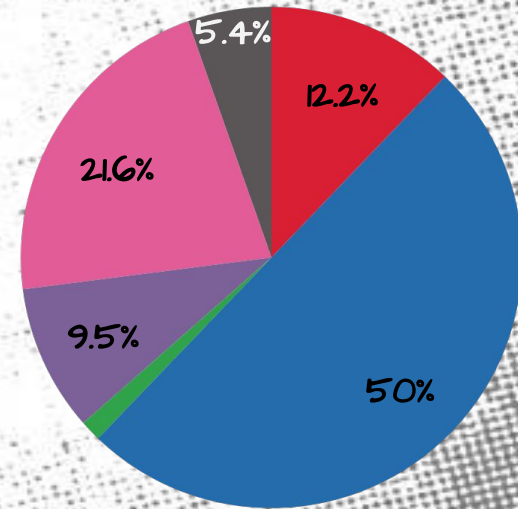
American fans almost exclusively sell their works online
 Three quarters of Japanese fans sell their works in-person

If you buy fanworks, how often do you buy them?

USA



Japan

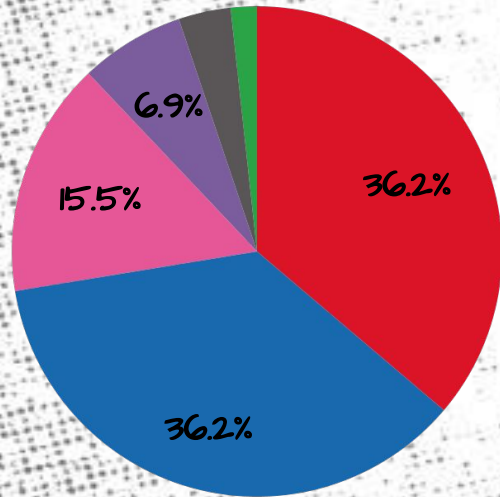


- Never
- About once or twice a year
- About every other month
- Almost monthly
- About 2-4 times a month
- Other

Japanese fans buy fanworks more often than American fans on average

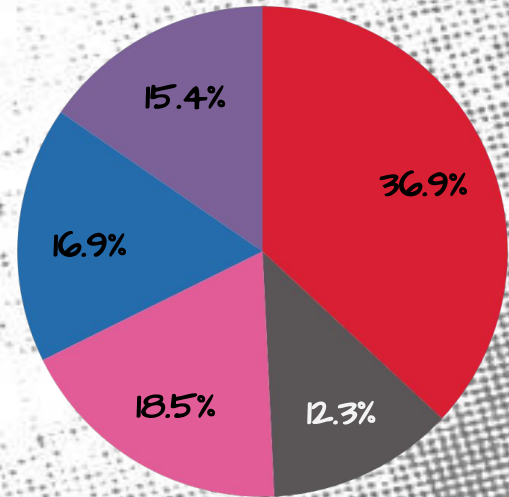
If you buy fanworks, approximately how much do you spend on fanworks in a year?

USA



21.6% of respondents said they did not buy fanworks

Japan

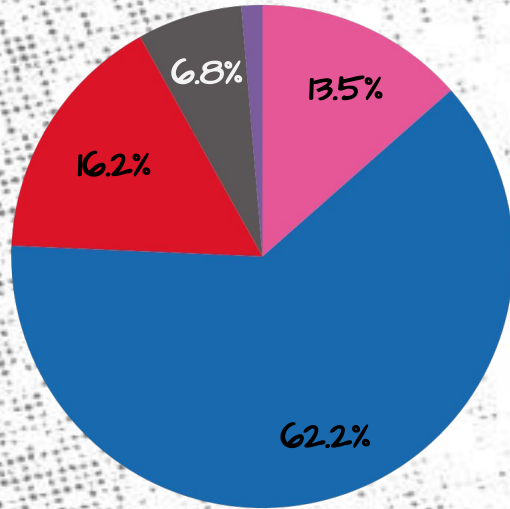


10.8% of respondents said they did not buy fanworks

Japanese fans tended to spend more on fanworks than Americans

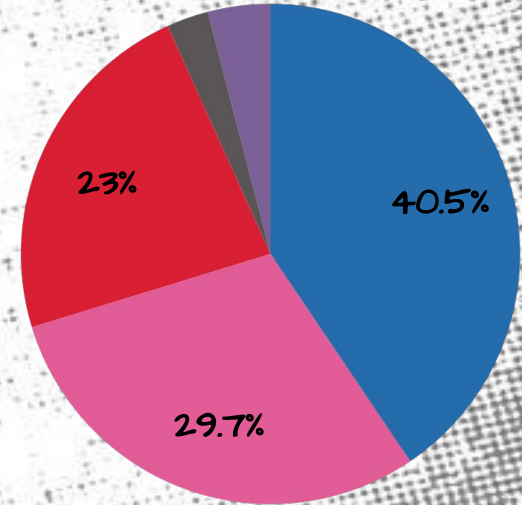
How worried are you about copyright affecting fandom in general?

USA



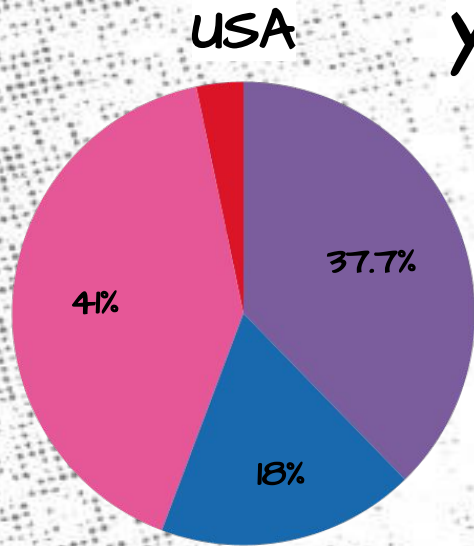
- Very worried
- Somewhat worried
- Not very worried
- Not worried at all
- I haven't thought about this issue

Japan



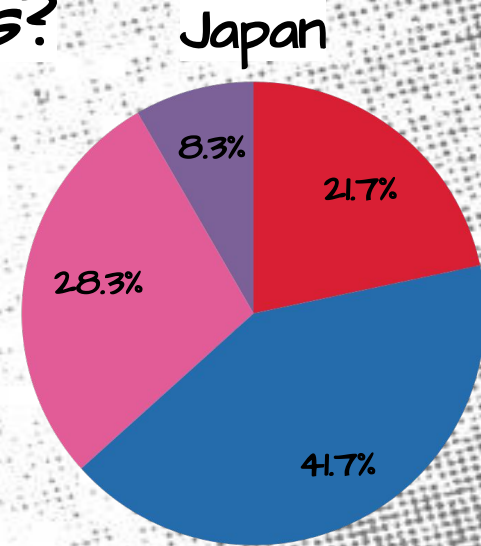
Over 75% of Americans were worried about copyright when it came to fandom in general. Only about 60% of Japanese fans were worried

How worried are you about copyright affecting your own fanworks?



14.9% of respondents said they did not make fanworks

- Very worried
- Somewhat worried
- Not that worried
- Not worried at all



16.2% of respondents said they did not make fanworks

About 60% of Japanese fans were worried, but only about 20% of American fans were worried compared to the previous 75%.

Summary of Findings 2

- Of fans that make fanworks, over half of the **Japanese** fans sold them when less than 20% of **American** fans did
- **Japanese** fans also buy fanworks more frequently and spend more money on fanworks
 - This can possibly be attributed to the fact that they sell them at lower prices
- **Japanese** and **American** fans differ significantly on issues of copyright in regards to fandom



Crowd at Comiket 62 in 2002

Conclusion

- The websites both groups are drawn to differ according to their preferences
 - **Japan** prefers sites that are easy to use and in Japanese (Pixiv, NicoNico, all others can be changed)
 - **Americans** prefer sites they can search or have a tagging system
- In regards to going to conventions
 - **Japan** does attend conventions more frequently, possibly due to the smaller country size
 - Also no **American** fans sold their works only in-person, whereas over half of **Japanese** respondents sold theirs in-person or both online and in-person
- **Japanese** fans are more worried about copyright affecting their own works which might be why they sell their works at lower prices
 - This is a reversal of the **American** fans who, though they were not worried about their own works in regards to copyright, also sold their fanworks far less often

Limitations of the Study & Future Research

English survey was largely shared through specific Discord servers and Tumblr

Japanese survey was largely spread through Twitter

There was confusion about how to answer on some questions. For example, on one question someone would answer they made fanworks, but on another they did not

Acknowledgements

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Our Families & Friends

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