The Power of Anime: A New Driver of Volunteer Tourism

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Abstract: In Japan, many academics and practitioners have focused on anime-induced tourism as one of the new alternative forms of tourism in the 21st century. Many fans have visited locations that have appeared in anime as film-induced tourists. Regarding the behavior of anime-induced tourists, many tend to be willing to contribute to the destinations they visit as eco-oriented volunteers, different from purely film-induced tourists. Therefore, anime-induced tourists possess a complex character that entails both an interest in film-induced tourism and volunteer tourism, which may conceptually be opposed to one another. This study reveals anime’s potential as a driver of new volunteer tourism and theoretically contributes to tourism research by redefining anime-induced tourism by relying on the concept of film-induced voluntourism. Using a comparative case study of the behavior of anime-induced volunteer tourists at three destinations, this study found that while anime-induced volunteer tourists have a feeling of gratitude for their host communities with a vacationer’s mindset, they can realize positive outcomes, including economic benefits and problem solutions by engaging in cleaning-up activities at the destinations they visit. In conclusion, this study clarifies that anime tourism is one of the significant alternative forms of tourism that can achieve community development associated with film-induced voluntourists, resolving the negative effects of film-induced tourism and volunteer tourism.

Keywords: film-induced tourism; volunteer tourism; anime-induced tourism; film-induced voluntourism; Japan

1. Introduction

At present, contemporary alternative tourism has become more popular globally than traditional mass tourism. As a result, governments, tourism industries, and visitors have focused on film-induced tourism as an advantageous form of alternative tourism because they have become aware of the attraction of films and TV programs and how they have enhanced tourism [1,2]. In Japan, anime-induced tourism has become a significant alternative mode of tourism in the past two decades.

A huge number of high-quality anime works are produced every year. The market size has gradually been increasing both domestically and globally. Since 2014, the number of televised anime works has reached more than 300 [3]. Japanese anime productions have globally achieved a considerable market position through their excellent production techniques [4]. Since the end of the 1990s, it has become normal to depict live-action scenery in the background of anime. This method of production has generated anime-induced tourism and anime-fan tourists. This type of tourism is normally called anime pilgrimage in Japan [5]. Academics and practitioners have paid attention to this new tourism phenomenon due to the rapid increase in demand for alternative forms of tourism [6].

It is very interesting that anime-induced tourism can create volunteer tourists. In fact, several anime-fan tourists prefer to engage in environmental protection activities at their destinations rather than the behaviors of ordinary film-induced tourists, who can negatively impact the environment of tourist destinations. The previous research on this topic has not yet adequately responded to an important question: Why and how do these tourists choose to undertake such positive activities during their holiday visits?
This research discusses anime’s potential to create new volunteer tourists and theoretically contributes to developing an improved approach to describe anime-induced tourism by redefining it in terms of the concept of film-induced voluntourism while critically considering previous relevant tourism studies. Conducting a comparative case study, this research elucidates the motivations and behavior of anime-induced tourists and their impacts on their destination communities.

2. Theoretical Backgrounds

2.1. Film-Induced Tourism

Film-induced tourism, or film tourism, has globally attracted a great deal of attention as an important aspect of tourism development during the last few decades. Film tourism is defined as a “tourist activity induced by the viewing of a moving image” [7]. In line with Beeton [2], this includes two types. The first is on-location tourism. This involves visiting sites where movies and TV programs have been filmed. The second type is off-location tourism, which involves tours of production studios and film-related theme parks. Connell [7] considered a more multi-faceted nature of film-induced tourism, which includes various sides of tourism: visits to portrayed locations, tours of studio sets, film-themed attractions, watching filming taking place, and film festivals.

Although several researchers have proposed various concepts to explain tourism phenomena, such as movie-induced tourism and screen tourism, the word “film” has already achieved recognition from not only academics but also business communities, because it is the most comprehensive. Films include motion pictures, TV series, videos, DVDs, Blu-rays, and digital media [2,7].

Films have become a popular topic in the tourism research community. Prior studies concerning film-induced tourism have argued that a film is an important source of information in creating a viewer’s image of a destination [2,8]. This image can make tourist destinations attractive through place branding [9]. Tourism advertising is normally expensive. On the other hand, films can inform viewers of the attractions of the places that have appeared in them in a very short amount of time with romantic scenarios and perfectly shot scenes [10]. A film cannot always contribute to the branding of a destination. In short, it can be a successful medium when a film’s storyline and the filmed sites are interrelated, or when it involves viewers in the story, providing emotional experiences linked with the locations depicted [11]. The reason why many countries and cities have invested their resources to establish film commissions and promote location scouting is that they are aware of the huge benefits of films.

Although there are a range of motivational drivers behind film tourism, previous studies have predicted a huge difference between the behaviors of purposeful tourists and incidental tourists [12–14]. Purposeful tourers whose priority is to visit a favorite film-shooting location are seeking nostalgia and security [7]. In other words, they put a value on authentically reliving the world they have seen on screen [1,12].

Most previous studies on this topic did not attempt to identify the behavioral characteristics of film tourists because these tourists primarily aim to enjoy the attractions of filming locations. Ordinary film-fan tourists tend to undertake sightseeing activities, such as seeing landscapes, escaping from their daily lives, and taking photos [13,14]. However, Kim revealed that the re-enactment of scenes from a film is a unique behavior of film tourists [15]: for example, so-called cosplaying—i.e., dressing up as a favorite protagonist—is an important attraction for fans. However, these re-enactments are mainly performed by purposeful tourists. Different from incidental tourists, purposeful visitors are more likely to undertake actions associated with a scene they watched at a former filming site. The more film fans are emotionally involved in a film work, the more likely they are to seek active on-site experiences [16].

The actions of visitors can have a broad range of outcomes for filming destinations. Most researchers of this topic have investigated not only the economic benefits obtained through destination branding but also the drawbacks that are caused by a sudden increase
in tourism. There can be a range of negative outcomes, including traffic congestion, increasing prices, privacy infringement, and environmental destruction [1,7,17]. Wearing, Buchmann, and Jobberns indicated that, depending on the situation, an aquatic life tour, such as whale-watching, which entails curiosity and the desires of humans enhanced by films they have viewed, might have negative impacts on the natural environment at a film’s shooting destination [18]. On the other hand, according to Heitmann [19], who argued that the relationship between film crews and host communities can hugely influence the success of tourism, filming or film crews’ behavior might result in negative attributes of film tourism [20].

2.2. Volunteer Tourism

Wearing defined volunteer tourists as tourists “who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” [21]. Volunteer tourism has frequently been mentioned as a newly emerging form of alternative tourism by many researchers and tourism industries.

Volunteer tourists are motivated to travel in order to undertake activities to solve problems that occur at a destination. Most researchers of this topic have focused in particular on international trips aiming to provide assistance to developing countries—e.g., [21,22]. Prior studies have repeatedly questioned the motivations of volunteer tourists. Some researchers have stressed the importance of motivations based on pure altruism, but others have indicated the importance of self-improvement [23,24]. Although the former motivation primarily aims to solve problems at a destination, the latter focuses on developing and improving skills and abilities that could contribute to achieving career advancement and academic credit. According to Wearing and McGehee, many volunteer tourists have the common motivation of helping other people, but demographic attributes can possibly lead to differences in motivations [22].

Unique motivations affect the behaviors and beliefs of volunteer tourists. According to prior studies, the true test of volunteer tourism is whether guests can experience positive exchanges with hosts, going beyond commodified tourism [21,25–27]. In volunteer tourism, a guest means a volunteer activity participant. The level of host–guest interaction can be affected by the needs and minds of volunteers. Often, a distinction between the types of volunteer tourist is proposed: “vacation-minded” and “volunteer-minded” tourists [22,28]. Vacation-minded tourists can be called “shallow” volunteer tourists, whereas volunteer-minded tourists can be called “deep” volunteer tourists [29]. The former may participate in commodified tour programs and, as a result, may not interact with host communities. On the other hand, the latter may prefer decommodified projects and deeply be involved in local communities [22,29].

Given the diversity of volunteer tourism or tourists, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of volunteer tourists on a continuum from strongly volunteer-minded to strongly vacation-minded. However, in line with Tomazos and Butler [30], the commodification of volunteer tourism has already been prevalent in several forms, such as eco-tourism. This situation is derived from the fact that volunteer tourism programs are normally offered by third-party service agencies or so-called volunteer tourism organizations (VTOs). Considering this trend of commodification, Tomazos and Butler criticized VTOs for tending to focus on market growth rather than problem solving in particular destinations [30]. In other words, the previous argument indicated that volunteer tourism should essentially be associated with decommodification and a moral aspect contributing to the benefit of local communities [25,27]. Thus, it is important to focus on volunteer-minded tourists to deepen our understanding of volunteer tourism.

A positive aspect of volunteer tourism is that tourists contribute to local communities by helping to resolve many problems, including engaging in environmental protection, cultural regeneration, and medical assistance programs. Of those domains, environmental
protection is very popular. Volunteer tourism can be seen as an alternative to emerging eco-tourism [24,27]. Some researchers have focused on volunteer tourism in terms of “volunteer eco-tourism” [25]. On the flip side, despite its positive aspects, there are a range of issues caused by volunteer tourists at their destinations, such as the dependence of host communities on outside volunteers and the kind of colonialism realized by participants from developed countries when engaging in aid activities in developing countries [22].

3. Film-Induced Voluntourism

3.1. Film-Induced Tourism and Volunteer Tourism

As reported above, film tourists look quite different from volunteer tourists with respect to their motivations and behavior during touring. Therefore, many previous studies have treated film-induced tourism and volunteer tourism separately. Table 1 shows the traits of both purposeful film-fan tourists and volunteer-minded eco-tourists. Regarding their motivations, film-induced tourists may be vacation-minded, but volunteer eco-tourism needs the participant to be volunteer-minded.

|                      | Film-Induced Tourism (Purposeful Fan Tourists) | Volunteer Tourism (Volunteer-Minded Eco-Tourists) |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Motivations          | Vacation-minded                               | Volunteer-minded                                 |
| Activities           | Sightseeing with re-enacting film scenes and protagonists’ actions | Voluntary activities at destinations |
| Host–guest interaction | Unlikely                                      | Likely                                           |
| Positive outcomes on host community | Destination branding                          | Problem resolution and alleviation               |
| Negative outcomes on host community | Deterioration of destinations                  | Disempowerment of destinations                    |
|                      | (e.g., privacy violation, traffic congestion, and environmental destruction) | (e.g., dependence on outside volunteers and colonialism) |

Source: the author.

Although film-induced tourists place importance on enjoying attractions at their destinations, volunteer tourists value fighting to solve problematic situations at their destinations. As a result, it is expected that film-induced tourism may conflict with volunteer tourism. Film-fan tourists are unlikely to be interested in the stresses caused by tourism development at their destinations because their primary motivation is to enjoy experiencing travel and reliving the story of their favorite films [13,17]. Even if film tourists were interested in and willing to learn about environmental problems through viewing films, it is possible that they would destroy local ecologies, which volunteer tourists want to protect [18]. It seems that film tourism and authentic volunteer tourism cannot go together, in line with previous arguments made by the tourism research community.

Many destinations, however, obviously intend to encourage both types of tourism, as they can make a difference to local development. In line with prior research, hypothetically, film-induced tourism and volunteer tourism are incompatible. On the other hand, it is important to clarify the theoretical framework in order to discuss the integration of both forms of tourism. The rest of this paper considers the concept of film-induced voluntourism and discusses anime-induced tourism as a new phenomenon, aiming to provide a comprehensive analysis of this topic.
3.2. Film-Induced Voluntourism

Shao and colleagues progressed research on film-induced voluntourism, relying on case studies focusing on audiences of Chinese TV dramas. Fans of these TV dramas traveled to the filmed locations and became involved in financial and labor support activities there. They revealed that their motivations were empathy for the characters and their desire to realize the values of the dramas [31,32]. According to them, their volunteer activities included donating to build a school and a library and having an exchange with children at the destination [31]. In short, fans were strongly motivated to interact with their destination community rather than merely donating to charity [32].

These researchers found that TV dramas are likely to drive audiences to undertake volunteer activities to embody the values promoted by the dramas they watch [32]. It is noteworthy that a film may result in fans voluntarily participating in activities that contribute to the destinations they visit. Shao and colleagues, however, did not identify whether fans traveled to their destinations first before volunteering or whether film viewers were already active as volunteer tourists before visiting these destinations. To further analyze this interesting phenomenon, this paper proceeds with a discussion on anime-induced tourism, which has rapidly developed over the last two decades in Japan.

3.3. Anime-Induced Tourism as Volunteer Tourism

Anime-induced tourism is defined as a form of tourism in which tourists visit the locations that appeared in anime works as well as places relating to anime [5,33,34]. Originally, this concept incorporated any tourism induced by exposure to anime works. In the current research, it is treated as just meaning visiting destinations that have appeared in anime. Thus, the concept of anime-induced tourism here is the same as the on-location tourism defined by Beeton [2]. Thus far, many fans of anime have visited former filming sites; thus, anime-induced tourism has become one popular form of tourism in Japan.

One reason why the tourism phenomenon has occurred is changes in the marketing of TV anime series. Okamoto [34] explained two changes that have occurred as follows. The first is the increase in demand to produce works that depict everyday backgrounds. Since the 2000s, anime works telling the stories of characters’ daily lives have gained increasing popularity. Therefore, anime production companies should seek to depict reality in anime works. The second change is the increase in the number of anime productions in the past two decades. This has led to a challenge in ensuring the high quality of productions. Consequently, anime productions have been likely to use real locations when drawing anime.

The current study focuses on anime TV series. The effects of the series format on visitors have been stressed by researchers [15,35,36]. TV series can repeatedly depict impressive stories taking place in scenic landscapes to audiences. The most recent anime works produced in Japan make viewers experience the universe of their stories for at least 5 to 10 h, because they are composed of approximately 10 episodes that are 30 min in length. Longer series generate a stronger level of affection for the screened location than shorter programs in viewers [10]. Of course, DVDs or Blu-rays of these anime works also have the advantage of longer exposure times.

Anime-fan tourists can be divided into two types: purposeful visitors and incidental visitors. According to prior studies regarding anime-induced tourism, many fan tourists are motivated to relive a story and re-enact a scene from an anime [37,38]. Of these tourists, purposeful tourists have an extremely unique motivation: they primarily aim to look for sites featured in anime by themselves and publish the information online. Okamoto [5] called these tourists “pioneers”. The reason why these pioneers exist is that most anime productions do not make the sites featured public before or after the release [39]. Even though anime productions have begun to release some information about places featured in the work in recent times, there are still many pioneers who attempt to search in depth for places that have appeared in anime. Once these pioneers put the information of the sites featured on their website, others can share it. This leads to further visitors to these
destinations. This trend indicates that anime-induced tourism is not a commodified form of tourism offered by tourism industries, but a tourism phenomenon created by the fans themselves. Thus, Yamamura, making a comparison with mainstream tourism, described anime-induced tourism as tourist-led tourism [40].

Until the late 2000s, governments, business communities, and even anime industries were not officially aware of this phenomenon. However, since the early 2010s, they have given it more attention, aiming to understand the growth of anime tourism. In the last couple of years, some travel companies have begun to offer tour programs. Nonetheless, because this kind of tourism is still niche, individual or smaller group-led tours are more common than those offered by travel agencies [41].

The on-site behavior of purposeful anime tourists often goes beyond the activities of ordinary mainstream tourists and even film-induced tourists. Of the arguments raised by Okamoto [5], this study finds the following most interesting. The first activity is tourists leaving a trace of their visit at their destinations. A typical behavior engaged in is dedicating Ema to shrines where an anime was set. An Ema, or votive tablet, is a wooden board offered to shrines on which one can write their wishes. Purposeful tourists describe characters or messages on their tablets and hang them in shrines (Figure 1). Additionally, it is interesting to leave anime-related goods at places that have appeared on-screen. Figure 2 illustrates the many goods left by anime tourists. A second type of activity is these tourists publishing information about the sites featured in anime on websites as well as photographs of these locations. These tourists aim to share their knowledge about the destinations and each site featured with fan communities. The third activity of these tourists is cosplaying and driving itasha, cars decorated with an anime character’s picture. Not all purposeful visitors engage in both or even either of these activities, but some fan tourists prefer doing so to show their deep affection for the anime [42]. The fourth point is that these tourists interact with the host community as well as with other fan tourists. According to Okamoto [5], it is common for purposeful anime tourists to converse with locals at their destinations. The more regularly fans visit the filmed place, the more likely they have an exchange with the host communities [43].

Figure 1. Ema dedicated to the shrine where the TV anime Love Live! was set.
Previous research has noted that anime-induced tourism generates a variety of benefits, including destination branding and tourism development. Different from live-action movies or TV dramas, anime does not need on-location filming projects. On-location shooting leads to both positive and negative outcomes for filming locations. One of the positive aspects is that it can generate before-release tourism by hosting large film crews. On the flip side, the most important negative outcome is that it can cause disruption and intrusion at the filming destinations, such as street closures [20]. Therefore, in terms of tourism destinations, anime-induced tourism is a less burdensome type of community development. Regarding after-release tourism, even though people at some destinations felt uncomfortable with the influx of anime-fan visitors, most locals at destinations said that they had a favorable impression of them because they were likely to do the right thing during visitation [5,34].

The interaction between anime tourists and host communities can lead to voluntary actions by these tourists beyond maintaining mutual friendships and communication with one another. Simply speaking, a lot of tourists tend to get involved in volunteer activities at tourist destinations. In particular, environmental protection activities are very popular and common. Some research has found that the first case of this type of volunteering was generated by fan tourists of Kyukyoku Chojin R (released in 1991), which featured Iijima Town, Nagano. Several purposeful tourists organized a volunteer group aiming to clean up the filmed site in 1993 [44]. Since then, many cases of anime tourism have caused volunteer-minded tourists. Some projects have been fan-led, while others were run by entities within the destination, or by both parties. For example, many fans of Lucky Star (which was televised in 2007) engaged in clean-up activities at the destination by themselves [43]. On the other hand, the chamber of commerce at the destination that appeared in K-On! (first screened in 2009) hosted a clean-up event in which fan visitors participated [45]. In addition, in Chichibu city, the filming site of Anohana (The Flower We Saw That Day) (televised in 2011), the government organized a clean-up event to invite fans. Over 50 volunteers participated in the activity [46]. There is a great lack of quantitative research aiming to reveal the precise number of participants. However, according to various sources—e.g., [47–50]—this study predicts that a certain number of anime-induced volunteers can be found at many destinations. While the number of participants varies depending on the situation, they generally contribute to host communities. The existence of such volunteer-minded anime fans suggests that anime-induced tourism has elements in common with not just film-induced tourism but also volunteer eco-tourism. However,
prior researchers of anime tourism have not given a full picture of the situation or proposed any theoretical considerations.

4. Findings from Individual Locations
4.1. Method and Materials

This research identifies how anime-induced tourism can generate volunteer tourism. The method used here was a qualitative approach, utilizing a comparative case study. This study delineates tourism’s characteristics, the kind of voluntary activities undertaken, the motivations of the participants, and the outcomes for the host communities using an inductive approach. Three cases were selected in this study. The criteria for selecting these cases were the following “differences”: (1) the different types of organizers of volunteer projects; (2) the different geographical (prefectural) areas involved; and (3) the different storylines of the anime involved. In this research, the focus was on an inductive approach to find common conditions, activities, and outcomes, even though such objective conditions of tourist destinations are quite different. The first case this study focuses on is Omachi City, Nagano, which appeared in the TV series Please Teacher! and Please Twins!. The second is Kanonji City, Kagawa, which was shown in the TV series Yuki Yuna is a Hero. The third case is Numazu City, Shizuoka, which is where the TV series Love Live! Sunshine!! took place.

This research used multiple instances of data collection to ensure a high quality of case studies, in line with Yin [51]. Thus, documentation, archival records, and interviews were used as sources of evidence. Of these, documentation materials, including formal studies, news clippings, administrative documents, the minutes of local council meetings, information from official websites, and individual tourists’ diaries on the SNS, were relied upon most heavily in this study. Interviews were also an important source of data and were used to illustrate information for which there was no documentation, such as interviewees’ insights into or opinions about events. This study selected people who had in-depth information about anime tourists’ behavior as interviewees. Each interview was conducted online and lasted 60 to 90 min. Finally, the archive records used were mainly service records and supportive resources were used to interpret two other sources of evidence.

Table 2 delineates the strengths and weaknesses of the three sources of evidence used here according to Yin [51]. Documentation and archival records provide researchers stable and wide-ranging information, despite the authors’ bias and the limitation of accessibility. Interviews are very helpful for improving the performance of a qualitative study, though there may be biases and inaccuracies in the information provided by interviewees. Therefore, a case study should rely on the triangulation of multiple sources to make sure it is valid and reliable.

Table 2. Sources of evidence: strengths and weaknesses.

|                         | Strengths                  | Weaknesses                                      |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Documentation           | Stable can be reviewed repeatedly | Retrievability can be difficult to find |
|                         | Unobtrusive not created as a result of the case study | Biased selectivity if collection is incomplete |
|                         | Specific can contain the exact names, references, and details of an event | Reporting bias reflects (unknown) bias of any given document’s author |
|                         | Broad can cover a long span of time, many events, and many settings | Access may be deliberately withheld |
| Archival records        | [Same as those for documentation] | [Same as those for documentation] |
|                         | Precise and usually quantitative | Accessibility due to privacy reasons |
Table 2. Cont.

| Interviews | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| • Interviewed can focus directly on case study topics | • Bias due to poorly articulated questions |
| • Insightful provides explanations as well as personal views (e.g., perceptions, attitudes, and meanings) | • Response bias |

Source: Adapted with permission from Yin [51], Copyright 2018 Sage.

4.2. Case 1: Please Teacher! and Please Twins!

The series Please Teacher! and Please Twins! first aired in 2002 and were televised for a total of six months. These were school-based romantic comedies. Lake Kizaki in Omachi City was selected as one of the locations for the series. While there were several fans who visited the location, which generated economic benefits [52], they damaged the cherry blossoms that appeared in the anime while taking photos soon after broadcasting. Some visitors began organizing voluntary efforts to protect the trees and make sure that visitors behaved properly [53,54]. On the other hand, The Oneti Fan Club, which was organized by fans themselves, also called on visitors not to engage in embarrassing behavior at the destination and encouraged each other to communicate with residents [55].

It must be noted that a local nonprofit organization set up a project to preserve landscapes at the lake together with fan visitors who helped to conserve the cherry blossoms. At first, they offered their help to the place because they felt appreciative of the destination. The main purpose of this project was to keep the landscapes beautiful until 2017, the year in which the anime story was set [54]. The participants said, “Until 2017 and after as well, I hope that such a beautiful scenery should be kept. It will be my pleasure to be involved in doing volunteer activities” [56]. Although this project was run twice in total, since then many visitors have started picking up litter around the lake. Thus, the project functioned as an incubator for further volunteering efforts [54].

The host community positively appraised the behavior of visitors [54]. They also stressed the significance of the fan club’s role in encouraging moralization [57]. The local councilor officially showed gratitude toward the volunteers [58].

Fans and residents collaborate to clean up [at the screened place]. [...]. Notwithstanding it has passed over 10 years since the release, the fans have been coming here. [...]. I would think that they have already become fans of our community as well as the anime.

4.3. Case 2: Yuki Yuna Is a Hero

Yuki Yuna is a Hero (YYH) was first released in 2013. It was on air for a total of nine months. The story was based around the activities of Yusha bu (Heroes’ Club), in which the protagonists participated. The club was, in reality, established as an agency to search for and recruit soldiers to intercept enemies, whereas its outward aim was to undertake volunteer activities for the local community. The anime depicted the volunteering efforts made by the main characters. Kanonji City, Kagawa, was selected as a location for this series.

It is noteworthy that Kagawa University has been involved in establishing a platform for volunteer activities as part of a region-wide development program, in collaboration with Kanonji City, since 2016. It has provided fans with a clean-up project for a beach that appeared in the anime. This project was called the “Riaru Yusha bu” (the Real Heroes’ Club), based on the club’s name in YYH. The number of participants gradually increased every year. In 2019, approximately 160 fans took part in the program [59].

The motivations of the participants of these types of programs may vary. Among the motivations, the most noteworthy are to demonstrate gratitude to the host community and the desire to re-enact the lives of the main characters. Regarding the former, the fan volunteers expressed their motives as: “I wanted to thank the host community”, “Owing
the destination many things”, and “I will be so helpful to the place”. The latter desires were explained as: “I was interested in volunteer activities, because I loved YYH” and “the project’s name was so attractive to me” [60]. Many of them seemed to be vacationers who intended to enjoy sightseeing and buy souvenirs [61], because they had already visited the destination repeatedly [62]. Of those, there were several fans selected to participate in volunteering efforts. In addition, fans called on all fan tourists to encourage each other to adopt a more mindful attitude at the destination where the anime was set [63].

The host community’s residents welcomed and thanked the fans for their efforts. For instance, the local councilor officially described their positive impression as follows: “many fans actively involved in community development! How rare is it for us!” [64]. Additionally, residents called visitors “heroes” [59].

4.4. Case 3: Love Live! Sunshine!!

The Love Live! Sunshine!! (LLS) series aired for a total of six months starting in 2016. The storyline focused on students who tried to make their school more attractive, such as by organizing a girl’s idol group and rebuilding their school in the face of the possibility of it closing down. The anime used Numazu City, Shizuoka, as its setting. After the broadcast, lots of fans visited this location and brought economic benefits, as this became a very popular series [65,66].

Several fans became involved in clean-up activities on the beaches featured in the anime by themselves. This study can identify two cases of such efforts. The first case was a before-release volunteering effort. The organizers recruited participants using a photo of the contaminated beach on their website, comparing it to pictures of the beach without any garbage. They felt unhappy with the fact that numerous types of debris had washed up on the beach that had appeared in the anime, despite the rapid increase in fan visitors. Moreover, they expressed the reason why they planned this project as follows: “Our visitation must be done in gratitude for the destination” [67].

The second case involved fans participating in an annual project planned by the host community’s residents. They participated in it for two years [68]. The organizer of the activity stated the motive as “I want to show my gratitude to the destination that always welcomes me and provides me many fantastic things, including something tasty and enjoyable talking” [69]. In other words, this activity was based on the fact that s/he had enjoyed the high-level hospitality at the destination as a vacationer many times.

The host community was happy with the moral and altruistic contributions made by the fans. The CEO of Numazu’s destination management organization said, “I know that the fans were polite and had good manners and also involved in picking up waste at the summer festival” [70]. The neighborhood leader who invited fan volunteers said, “it is quite heartening news for us” [68]. In other words, it was obvious that anime fans had empowered the local community.

The local councilors also appreciated fans’ altruistic attitudes to the destination. Cr. Ozawa said, “It is incredible that participants from far places are coming here for cleaning up. Also, it is usually unlikely that visitors undertake voluntary actions at a tourism destination. Therefore, I am extraordinarily grateful for fans’ volunteering efforts here” [71]. Moreover, Cr. Ozawa stated that most visitors were always very keen not to bother the residents of the host community [72]. According to the community, the fans of LLS were mindful of the destination and the propriety of their behavior.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The current study revealed a couple of interesting findings related to the above cases, relying on an inductive approach. Anime-induced tourists have the potential to be volunteer tourists. Through various voluntary efforts, they are likely to become involved in environmental preservation at the destinations they visit. Although they have referred to this phenomenon, prior researchers have not yet discussed it adequately. In short, they have mainly just treated it as a small part of the mainstream behavior of anime tourists. Thus,
the concept of film-induced voluntourism provides the possibility to approach anime-induced tourism from the angle of volunteer tourism theory. Table 3 shows the results of this study.

Table 3. Findings of the case study.

| Anime-Induced Volunteer Tourism | Activities                      |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Motivations                     | Vacation-minded and             |
|                                 | a feeling of gratitude for host communities |
| Host–guest interaction          | Cleaning-up voluntary activities with sightseeing |
| Positive outcomes on host community | Likely                      |
| Economic contribution and problem solutions |
| Negative outcomes on host community | Unlikely                    |

Source: the author.

The first finding is that anime-induced volunteer tourists are initially vacation-minded. Experiences as a vacationer may result in taking volunteer-related actions. In other words, visiting places shown in anime causes volunteer-minded behavior. This finding is quite different from arguments made in other film-induced voluntourism research. According to the prior studies on this topic, film viewers aim to experience a value that the protagonist of a work represents. Thus, film fans might be volunteer-minded from the beginning because they recognize the possibility of offering financial or labor support to the destination viewed in a drama [31,32]. This study revealed that the common motive of volunteers was their desire to show their gratitude to the host communities. Former experiences during visitation resulted in tourists commencing volunteering efforts. In line with the above argument, it is important for researchers to discuss the motives of film-induced voluntourists from the point of view of a spectrum, from tourists who are purely vacationers to those who are purely volunteers. Participants’ motivations fall somewhere between these two points.

The second finding is that cleaning-up activities were popular volunteering activities in anime-induced tourism. After enjoying sightseeing activities, visitors who feel gratitude to their host communities are likely to become involved in clean-up efforts. Although the reasons why these fan volunteer tourists choose to participate in clean-up activities were not studied, this research can predict two reasons as follows. The first reason is the lower cost of participating in these activities. A simple clean-up program does not need participants with high-level skills and does not require any participation fees. The second is the preservation of the destination’s image. The destination’s image is an important factor motivating tourists to visit. Films and TV series can affect the viewers’ images of places [2,8,73]. In LLS, the planners of the before-release volunteering event referred to the arrival of visitors in advance. In other words, the planners were afraid of the mismatch in visitors’ before-visitation expectations and their experiences at the destination. If film tourists could not experience authentic things during their trip, they might feel disappointed about their visit to the destination [7,74]. In short, it is expected that fan volunteers will recognize the significance of clean-up activities that keep the filmed locations as beautiful as the scenery appeared to be in the anime.

The third finding is that anime-induced tourism involves host–guest exchanges and generates positive outcomes for host communities. Several anime-induced tourists have achieved wide-ranging benefits at destinations as both vacationers and volunteers. It is noteworthy that the tourists realized moralization and altruism that volunteer tourism research stressed [25,26]. In all cases, anime fans clearly recognized that their visit might damage host communities through immoral behavior. Thus, some active fans or fan groups have called on visitors to refrain from annoying host communities on their websites. Moreover, in Case 1, the fan group encouraged fan visitors to speak with locals. Fan visitors who
undertook volunteering were likely to become involved in local communities. As Mustonen stated, volunteering involves interaction between hosts and guests [75]. In line with the argument of Callanan and Thomas [29], these types of tourists tend to exhibit the characteristics of volunteer tourists who have more altruistic motivations in contributing to local communities rather than those of shallow volunteers. In terms of promoting problem solutions and altruistic exchanges, it is essential that volunteer programs are organized not by the third-party entities but by people living in the destinations and visitors. Decommodification may be intrinsic in anime tourism because fan visitors have avoided the commodification of this type of tourism by third-party institutions thus far [76,77]. As Wearing, Young, and Everingham stated that more research is necessary to elucidate practices using a decommodifying agenda to overcome commodification problems [27], anime tourism represents an ideal type of volunteer tourism involving a partnership between locals and volunteers.

The fourth finding is that in anime-induced tourism, negative outcomes are unlikely to happen. In general, incidents of fan visitors engaging in immoral behavior were very scarce [5,34,78]. Whereas volunteer tourism research stresses that unbalanced power relations between tourists and host community residents are likely to occur [21,22], anime-induced tourists have been shown to contribute to creating interdependent relationships between hosts and guests. Anime-induced travelers prefer to undertake cleaning-up activities that are unlikely to lead to patron–client relationships between volunteers and destinations. This study stresses that anime tourism is a significant form of alternative tourism used to achieve community development associated with film-induced voluntourists, resolving the negative effects of film-induced tourism and volunteer tourism. However, anime-induced tourism as a type of volunteer eco-tourism has some limitations. The first limitation is that it is not possible to predict how long this type of tourism will last. Although Hudson and Ritchie [9] argued that film tourism can endure for at least five years, in general the attractiveness of each destination is unlikely to keep on pulling many fans for a long time. It is likely that anime fans will prefer to visit new destinations that appeared in other anime. The second limitation is that anime fan tourists are likely to only undertake a simple task, such as clean-up activities, even though their motivation is very active. Destinations should not expect this type of tourist to engage in highly qualified volunteering efforts associated with special knowledge or technical skills, as has been shown in volunteer tourism research. The third finding is that anime fan tourists are not natural volunteer tourists. Anime tourists at first seek to re-enact scenes from the anime work rather than undertaking voluntary actions. The most significant aspect in this is the attractiveness of anime works, which fans can visit the featured destinations. In other words, if a film or anime cannot draw the audience’s attention to the filmed location, no tourism will happen. Furthermore, even if tourism is successful, it is necessary to transform visitors from simple vacation-minded tourists to volunteer-minded tourists. Thus, from the beginning, it is hard to organize volunteers from the anime-induced tourism industry. It should be noted that anime-induced volunteer tourists are sporadic and episodic.

This research considerably contributed to tourism research and knowledge of tourism destinations. Firstly, it revealed that film-induced tourism and volunteer tourism are theoretically connected to each other. In the future, researchers should develop comprehensive arguments bringing together different tourism phenomena. Secondly, it highlighted the potential of media-induced tourism for practitioners at destinations. The argument of this paper focused on the phenomenon in which the volunteering efforts of film viewers can empower local communities beyond ordinary tourist activities. Destination managers must pay attention to this tourism trend and engage in destination marketing to encourage volunteer tourism by vacation-minded travelers. In particular, a smartphone application would be a useful means to implement this type of marketing, as it has become a fundamental part of tourism infrastructure [79]. As modern people who experience a fast-moving lifestyle want to save time, a guide system helping tourists to quickly and accurately find places where they want to visit would be an important way to promote tourism behavior [80].
Although, at present, there are only applications that offer information about visitors’ destinations and some events relating to anime, such as Butai Meguri, it will be necessary to develop an application that provides integrated real-time information, including information on volunteering projects.

Several issues remain to be addressed in this area of research. The first issue with this study is the fact that it was limited to inductive description. In the future, it will be necessary to develop a deductive approach—for example, one that demonstrates a theoretical framework and hypothesis, which would help us to analyze the above cases. The second issue is that the attitudes or knowledge of each fan tourist were not investigated. Therefore, some of the findings of this research showed hypothetical information. Further study is needed to obtain more fruitful data from quantitative surveys as well as qualitative research. The third issue is the need to elucidate other volunteering activities outside the area of environmental conservation. Previous researchers of this topic indicated that anime tourists made donations and participated in preparing for local festivals at some tourism destinations. In the future, it will be important to reveal the motivations around conducting volunteering activities other than ones related to environmental protection. The final issue to be addressed is the need to clarify the characteristics of tourists who are fans of other media in comparison with those of anime-fan tourists. The theory of film-induced voluntourism can be developed through a comparative study approach.

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