

The Role of YouTube in Accessing Popular Music in Japan

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Abstract

YouTube was launched in 2005 as a site for people to share their home videos, but has expanded to become an unprecedented archive of freely available sound and visual material, as well as a platform for accessing the latest pop music releases. YouTube is also a major social networking site and is facilitating the exchange and appreciation of creative work both within and across national borders. These functions of YouTube will be discussed in relation to the findings of a two-stage research project with Japanese university undergraduates that investigated how and why they use YouTube to access pop music. An initial survey of over 2,000 first-year undergraduates was followed up by interviews with 51 students to find out the ways in which they use YouTube in their daily lives.

Keywords: Popular music, music video, YouTube, audience studies, popular culture

INTRODUCTION

Since the launch of YouTube in 2005, the number of people accessing the site on a regular basis has increased phenomenally throughout the world (Snickars and Vonderau, 2009: 10). In Japan, mobile telephone services provide Internet access and people can watch and upload YouTube videos while on the move as well as on a computer screen at home, or in an office or classroom.

YouTube has grown from a site allowing people to share home videos to an unprecedented archive of sound and visual material that the general public would not otherwise have been able to access. As such, it is a rich resource for teachers, students and researchers. Moreover, it is a vital platform enabling independent professional and amateur musicians and video makers to reach a wider public.

Rather more contentiously, YouTube is also a free source of commercially produced music and video. Files can be downloaded and shared with no royalties reaching the creators of the music and video. For this reason, some see YouTube as a potential threat to the recording industry. Others see it as a challenge to be met and have started to re-think marketing strategies in the realization that YouTube or similar sites are already integrated into the fabric of daily life on a worldwide basis (Arewa, 2010).

Furthermore, with its comments and recommendations functions, YouTube is a major social networking site and is facilitating the exchange and appreciation of creative work both within and across national borders.

Burgess and Green (2009) argue that to understand YouTube's cultural and social impact, it is necessary to place the audience at the centre and to take into account the ways people use media in their everyday lives. They explain that YouTube acts as a coordinating mechanism between individual and collective creativity and meaning production. At the same time, it is "a mediator between various competing industry-oriented discourses and ideologies and various audience- or user-oriented ones" (Burgess and Green, 2009: 37). For these reasons, the author has chosen to focus on university students, a section of the Japanese population that makes great use of YouTube, in order to explore the role it plays in providing access to popular music.

This two-part study aims to find out how YouTube is used by Japanese young people to access pop music, based on the daily experiences and activities of Japanese university undergraduates. It aims to provide insights and a rich description that will endorse the recognition by many social scientists that a globally shared technology "is not independent of a social and cultural setting" (Ito, 2005: 6). In other words, this study will demonstrate that many of the ways in which YouTube is used by Japanese young people may not differ from their counterparts elsewhere in Asia, Europe, or Anglophone countries, nevertheless some practices and attitudes are shaped by Japanese cultural influences as well as the actions and decisions of the government and music industry.

This paper has four sections. First, there is an overview of the Japanese popular music scene in order to show the context within which YouTube operates in Japan. This is followed by information about the spread of the Internet and YouTube in Japan and issues related to copyright. Next, is an outline of the research methods, based on both a survey of over 2,000 Japanese university undergraduates (aged 18-21) at a medium-sized private university, and on interviews with 51 students from the same university. In the fourth section, the findings are reported and discussed. The interview findings form the basis of this present discussion and will be followed up with future additional survey work to determine the statistics of the trends that they have revealed.

THE JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC SCENE

This section will give an overview of the Japanese pop industry and the way Japanese au-

diences purchase and access music in order to provide a context with which to discuss the author's findings about the ways in which Japanese young people consume music through YouTube. The overview starts with recent data on the size and health of the Japanese music industry. It then discusses direct purchasing of music through CD sales, CD rental shops, and electronic music delivery. This is followed by a discussion of the influence on these sales of radio and TV, TV commercials, karaoke, live shows, and recording and management agencies. To sum up this section, the ways in which the Oricon charts measure record sales are explained.

The size and reach of the Japanese music market

According to the Recording Industry Association of Japan (RIAJ), Japan is the second largest music market in the world following the USA. Sales reached US\$4,422.0 million (442,376 million yen) in 2012 and accounted for 26.8% of worldwide sales. Japanese music clearly dominates with 81% of units sold of Japanese origin. (<http://www.riaj.or.jp/e/information/faq/index.html>).

In spite of the overall sluggishness of the Japanese economy, the Japanese music market is currently expanding. In 2012, the total production value of recorded music (including audio and music videos) achieved double-digit growth of 10% to 310.8 billion yen for the first time in 14 years and the total value of recorded music and digital music sales increased 3% to 365.1 billion yen for the first time in five years (ibid.). Teenagers and people in their twenties purchase the greatest number of records, but there has also been a growth of sales in recent years among the 30-59 years age group (ibid.).

Purchase and rental of CDs

Unlike many other capitalist economies, where CD prices can fluctuate considerably, there is a unique Japanese resale price maintenance system whereby prices are fixed by record companies and there has been no noticeable change in prices for over ten years. A full priced new CD album costs between 2,500 - 3,000 Japanese yen (US\$25 - US\$30).

Many consumers, however, choose to rent CDs rather than buy. The rental system began in 1980 when college students in Tokyo set up their first shop and the idea was enormously successful (Hosokawa, 1991: 25). It costs only 250 Japanese yen to rent a CD. "Lending rights" in Japan were established in 1984, in response to the proliferation of rental record and CD shops in that period and the need for copyright protection. The length of record protection, since 1990, is thirty years; record copying is permitted for personal use in Japan (Stevens, 2008: 117).

To offset CD sales losses for recording companies, new releases cannot be rented for a fixed period (usually one month after release). This system provides consumers who are prepared to wait with a more economical alternative to purchasing CDs. It also discourages widespread illegal file sharing, along with public information campaigns that raise awareness of the losses incurred by artists and recording companies when copyright is infringed (Stevens, 2008: 119).

There are about 2,760 record rental shops in Japan and more than 85% of these rent CDs along with film DVDs and game software. The shops pay a use fee to recording companies in accordance with their contracts and, according to the RIAJ, the system is working smoothly (<http://www.riaj.or.jp/e/information/faq/index.html>).

Interestingly, CDs with promotion videos (music videos) included are not rented. DVDs with video clips can only be purchased from record stores and are expensive to buy. This means that for many young people the free alternative of watching on YouTube is the only viable alternative.

Electronic downloading of music

There has been a steady increase in downloading music from the Internet to both computers and smartphones. RIAJ notes a double-digit growth of 26% on a unit basis and 43% on a value basis (<http://www.riaj.or.jp/e/information/faq/index.html>). There is also a growing trend to download from the Internet rather than mobile phones. This tendency can be seen in the percentage of sales of Internet downloads and mobile which was 34% and 66% in 2012 compared with 18% and 82% in 2011 (ibid.).

The influence of radio and television in music sales

“Arguably, since the 1980s, television has replaced radio as the most far-reaching mediator and conveyor of popular music culture in Japan” (Stevens, 2008: 93). Manabe explains that this low radio listenership is related to the lifestyle of Japanese young people who mostly use public transportation and rarely drive to their campus or workplace (Manabe, 2008: 84). Portable music devices, such as Walkmans, iPods and mobile phones, with their personalized play lists, are the preferred music platform for young Japanese on the move, and listening to the radio is not part of their daily routine (De Launey, 1995: 214). For young people living alone, television provides company. They also have complete freedom to choose what programmes to watch and when. This includes late-night music shows that they may not have access to when sharing the TV set with other family members.

Television has a very great influence on record sales in Japan not only through specialized music programmes, but also through prime-time viewing. According to Stevens (2008: 91), a survey conducted in Tokyo by the RIAJ in early 2005 found that television dominated the list of channels influencing music purchases. About 51.5 per cent said they were influenced by music television programs, 39.4 per cent by theme songs for dramas, 35.8 per cent by television commercial themes, and 33.8 per cent by commercials promoting musical products (Haw, 2005 quoted in Stevens, 2008: 91). The use of music in TV commercials is unique in Japan. As opposed to an anonymously composed and performed jingle, an image song used for a TV commercial is performed (often by an established singer) and this credit appears in the corner of the screen during the commercial. The performer frequently appears in the commercials as the main actor. Similarly, theme songs for television dramas are usually credited on the screen. This high level of integration between the pop music industry and the television industry in Japan explains, to a large extent, why the Japanese music market is so large. It is because proportionally more people watch TV in Japan than in other countries (Stevens, 2008: 93).

The most important music show on Japanese television is the annual *Kōhaku Utagassen* (Red and White Song Contest) broadcast live by NHK every December 31st since 1951. This family-oriented show provides a broad overview of current and classic tastes because it targets both young and older audiences. For artists, being asked to perform is a mark of success (50 Years of NHK Television Website http://www.nhk.or.jp/digitalmuseum/nhk50years_en/categories/p54/).

Karaoke and live shows

Japanese hit charts change frequently, largely due to promotion through tie-ups with television, as explained above. This shortens the sales life of a CD, but is offset by the extensive networks of karaoke establishments which purchase the rights to broadcast music as karaoke. A composer can make more money on karaoke royalties than CD sales royalties, especially if the song is considered a “classic” and has staying power. This has to be taken into consideration when analysing a new recording’s overall income potential. Karaoke is very popular as a pastime for a wide age range of groups of friends, work colleagues, or school and college classmates.

Live shows are expensive, with tickets often costing more than the price of a CD. However, they are extremely popular and represent a significant proportion of Japanese music consumption. The “idol phenomenon”, which started in the 1970s, is one reason for the popularity

of live performances. The word “idol” in Japan refers to “highly produced and promoted singers, models, and media personalities” (Galbraith and Karlin, 2012: 2). Idol groups such as the Tokyo-based AKB48 and its partner groups in different major cities put on daily shows (<http://www.akb48.co.jp/about/schedule/>). Foreign artists also attract sell-out shows, such as the November 2013 concerts in Osaka, Tokyo and Fukuoka by Paul McCartney (<http://www.paulmccartney.com/news-blogs/news/27697-paul-arrives-in-japan>).

At present, most mainstream Japanese popular music is firmly enmeshed in the chain of human relationships between male artist management companies like Johnny and Associates (usually called simply Johnny's), or female artist management agencies such as Nabe Puro, Oscar Promotion Inc., Yellow Cab, and record companies, rental stores and record retailers (Aoyagi, 2005, Stevens, 2008).

Oricon charts

There are several music charts published in Japan, but the best-known Japanese music charts are those published by Oricon magazine. (“Charted Waters - Getting a Handle on the Japanese Charts” 2005.06.04). “Oricon” is an abbreviation of “Original Confidence”. Oricon's role in the Japanese music industry is similar to that played by Billboard in the United States. Oricon publishes various types of charts, as well as news stories about the Japanese music industry. Unlike its American counterpart, however, Oricon also publishes a weekly magazine called Oricon Style, which is aimed at music fans rather than at music business professionals.

Most of the sales data used in collating Oricon's charts come from point-of-sales sources. About 2,800 retail outlets nationwide send sales data directly from their cash registers to Oricon, which then uses the data to compile its charts. Oricon has separate sales- and air-play-based singles charts, but unlike the American Billboard magazine, Oricon does not combine sales and airplay data into an overall singles chart. One Oricon chart that is unique to Japan is the rental CD chart (ibid.). This is based on the thriving CD-rental business explained above.

Singles and albums usually rise and fall much more quickly in the Japanese charts than in other major music markets. This is related to the fact that, as noted above, Japanese music consumers are generally younger than the music-buying public in other countries. The under-25 market is much more oriented towards current hits, which in turn, is related to the influence of television and television advertising in marketing music and the creation of short-term hits.

THE INTERNET AND YOUTUBE IN JAPAN

This section will provide background information on the spread of the Internet and YouTube in Japan. Issues relating to copyright are also discussed. The purpose of this section is to provide further background context for the author's research questions and findings.

The Internet in Japan

The Internet was introduced for private and commercial use in Japan in 1993. The number of registered users with Internet services providers was about 23 million as of March 2001 (18% penetration), but this number has increased to over 100 million users (79% penetration) over the last 12 years (The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>). This is a result of the penetration of broadband and wi-fi that enable consumers to access the Internet through their mobile phones and tablets as well as personal computers. (<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2013.pdf>)

“Official” websites (*kōshiki saito*) were soon set up in the 1990s to disseminate information and promote music by people in the popular music industry. Unofficial sites were also created by fans wishing to build on-line communities. “Official” sites are distinguished by the artists' participation in the design and content and are copyright protected both with respect to any music files that may be accessed there and the photographic images of the artists posted (Stevens, 2008: 115). Some “official” sites are hosted privately through a named server. For example, Imawano Kiyoshirō's site is <http://www.kiyoshiro.co.jp>, while other sites are hosted by record company servers. Matsutōya Yumi's “Yuming's Sound Library” is at <http://www.toshiba-emi.co.jp/yuming/>, while SMAP's site is through Victor Records (ibid.).

YouTube

YouTube first started in 2005, and was an instant success among Internet users. It expanded rapidly after being bought by Google for \$1.65 billion in 2006 (Arewa, 2010: 448). Now, more than 1 billion unique users worldwide visit YouTube each month (<http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html>). The number of YouTube users in Japan grew steadily from 201,000 at the end of 2005 to well over 2 million by October 2006, according to numbers from NetRatings Japan (“JASRAC Cracks the Whip on YouTube”, 2006). In 2007, YouTube created local language versions of the website for 14 countries, including Japan. The local homepages for each country were designed with specific functions and the localized version is selected according to the IP address of the user. This expanded the number of users in Japan, even

though the spread of broadband technology was initially slow.

More recently, with the steady spread of wi-fi subscription and hot-spot services, YouTube can be widely accessed in Japan. Moreover, with improved mobile phone technology, Japanese smart phones are capable of accessing YouTube videos. Japanese consumers have been able to benefit from developments such as when YouTube Mobile was launched in June 2007. Since then, YouTube's videos have also been available for viewing on a range of Apple products including the iPad, iPod Touch and the iPhone.

In January 2009, YouTube launched "YouTube for TV", a version of the website designed for set-top boxes and other TV-based media devices with web browsers. Its videos could be viewed on the PlayStation 3 and Wii video game consoles. In June 2009, YouTube XL was introduced, which is designed for viewing on a standard television screen. YouTube is now the world's third most accessed social media site (after Facebook and Google+) used by 25% of active Internet users (New Media Trend Watch <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2013.pdf>).

YouTube and copyright

Many videos posted on YouTube are homemade, but there is also a lot of copyright material, posted primarily by individual users. YouTube is not responsible for the material posted by these third parties. Nevertheless, these days it uses a detection system to identify material that infringes copyright and to inform copyright holders (Gould Stewart, 2010). Consequently, companies exercise their rights and regularly instruct YouTube to delete clips that violate copyright laws.

Problems started to arise in Japan in 2006 when the Japan Society for Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers (JASRAC) demanded that YouTube take down roughly 30,000 copyright-infringing clips from its site.

Although YouTube yielded to the demand in October 2006, pirated Japanese-language content remained available on the website months later. In order to protect its interests, JASRAC also requested that YouTube enact a series of specific measures to deter copy infringement, namely that the online video service: (1) post Japanese-language notices warning against copyright infringement; (2) collect the names and addresses of uploaders; and (3) terminate the accounts of users who upload infringing material (Kim, 2007: 144).

The 23 companies supporting JASRAC's request included all of Japan's major TV networks, public broadcaster Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK), some regional and cable TV broadcasters, and other organizations including the Recording Industry Association of Japan (RIAJ) and Yahoo Japan ("JASRAC Cracks the Whip on YouTube", 2006)

The matter of copyright affects the reliability of YouTube as a free source of music because videos can be taken down suddenly. Although the removed videos are often uploaded again, they are posted under a different title to try to avoid detection. However, this makes it difficult for other YouTube users to find the video.

YouTube is not the only video-sharing site in Japan. Nico-nico dōga (ニコニコ動画) is also very popular as well as the Chinese site Tudou (土豆网). Nico-nico dōga is tailored more specifically to Japanese needs with Japanese translations of song lyrics and Japanese as the main language of communication. It is popular with users for covers and for making play lists or using the play lists of others. However, it does not have the sheer volume of material that YouTube can provide. Although Tudou is a Chinese-language site, Japanese users can navigate it fairly easily and reported to this researcher that the sound quality is often better than that of videos posted on YouTube. Nevertheless, YouTube remains the site most commonly used.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In view of the fact that the Japanese music industry is the second largest in the world and has long dominated the listening preferences of Japanese audiences, this study set out to investigate the role of YouTube as a means to access music and as an entertainment platform. In brief, the research question is: In what ways is YouTube used to access popular music?

Initial survey findings

In order to test whether watching music video on YouTube is a widespread pastime among the Japanese undergraduates at her university, the author conducted a survey in February 2010. Over 2,000 undergraduates (18-21 years old) were surveyed from 8 different faculties (science, computing, engineering, law, business, economics, international culture and foreign languages). The author's university is private and is located in Western Japan with a student population of around 13,000. The survey was carried out during a required English language test for all first-year students, apart from those majoring in English. Out of 2,217 students who took the test, 2,138 (96.4%) students responded to the two survey questions.

The response rate was probably very high because there were only two questions in Japanese with a brief explanation that the questions were for research purposes and not part of the test, and the students only needed to fill in 2 responses on their mark card at the end of the test. Moreover, there were a lot of invigilators at the test (including the author) who were informed about this and who checked that the students answered the survey. The questions and responses are below:

Table 1. Which of the following media do you use to listen to music? (Check each one that you use.)

iPod/MP3 files and player	38.8%
YouTube	18%
CD	17%
TV	13%
Radio	3.7%
MTV	2.5%

Table 2. If you use YouTube, which do you watch mostly? (Check one answer only.)

Japanese pop and rock music videos	37.5%
“Western” pop and rock music video	10%
A mixture of Japanese and “Western” pop and rock music videos	17.8%
Other kinds of video	34.7%

The results confirmed the author’s hunch that a sizeable number of the respondents (18%) used YouTube to listen to music. In view of the subsequent arrival of tablets (the iPad and its competitors) and the spread of wi-fi and mobile phones with Internet connectivity, this number may well be greater by 2013. It was somewhat surprising that so few (2.5%) used MTV. On further reflection, this could be explained by the fact that MTV is a cable channel which many households and students living alone probably do not subscribe to. The finding that so few (3.7%) listen to music mostly on the radio is in line with the data collected from 100 Japanese female undergraduates by Manabe (2008). She found that, “While the radio was the most broadly-used device for American students (93%), it was the least-used device for the Japanese, with only one respondent citing it as her favourite device. Such findings were in line with the national norms, where according to Internet Kyōkai (2006, 60, 63), 60% of Japanese rarely listened to the radio, and those that did were likely to be over 60 years of age”

(Manabe, 2008: 84). Whereas Americans listen to the radio a lot while driving, most Japanese students commute to their campus using public transportation, and so portable music players are extremely popular these days, especially as many students commute from 2 to 5 hours a day. As explained above, with the large number of CD rental stores in Japan, it is cheap and easy to rent CDs and upload them to an MP3 player or an iPod. This no doubt explains why over twice the number of students reported listening to music on their MP3 player rather than directly from a CD.

It should be noted that Question 2 did not include Asian pop music as a separate category. In hindsight, this was a missed opportunity because now the author is curious to know what percentage would have checked Korean Pop (K-Pop) or Asian music if they had been included in the list of options. Indeed, this highlights one of the main drawbacks to survey-based research. The results reflect only what has been asked by the researcher, and researchers can not be sure that all the right questions are being asked. For this reason, the author is also using an ethnographic approach in order to glean information that could be overlooked and to challenge her own assumptions.

Ethnographic research methodology

The main method of gathering data for this study into the role of YouTube in accessing music was through open-ended interviews with university students between the ages of 18-21. The interviews were recorded on an audio recorder and transcribed, translated, and analysed by the author. Of the 51 students interviewed, 29 (57%) were female and 22 (43%) were male. The respondents could choose whether to be interviewed individually, in pairs, or in a group of three people at a time. They could also choose whether to use Japanese, or English, or a mixture of both.

The volunteers were from a variety of faculties (sciences, social sciences, humanities). The interviews took place on campus in the office of the researcher in accordance with the ethics codes of the university and with the approval of the university. The volunteers were paid 1,000 Japanese yen for a one-hour interview. They were recruited through bilingual leaflets explaining the purpose of the research and the conditions (payment, audio recording, and guarantee of privacy). These leaflets were distributed initially through the ESS Club (English Studying Society) because the author is known to the members and was able to explain the research project in person. Also, the members are from all faculties in the university, not just language majors, and so were seen to represent a broad cross-section of Japanese young adults. Other respondents were recruited through colleagues teaching required English class-

es to non-English majors and by the author approaching students who had expressed an interest in using YouTube and in listening to music. In addition, anecdotal evidence from daily interactions (in and out of class) with university students has been recorded. It should be noted that the sample size is not large, and for this reason, the findings presented below provide the basis of a generalized discussion and concrete figures are not given in this paper. These findings will be followed up with further survey work in the future.

There are a number of challenges faced by a non-Japanese university teacher undertaking this kind of research with Japanese students that are related both to language and to the social dynamics and communication styles of Japanese society. For example, it is essential for the researcher to remain alert to unspoken nuances. Japanese tend to communicate largely through silence (*chinmoku*), in other words, through what is not said (Davies and Ikeno, 2002: 51 – 56). They also commonly exchange thoughts and feelings in an implicit way (*haragei*) (ibid., 103 – 106). Another factor requiring attention is the tendency of Japanese students to follow the cultural norm, which is to agree with a teacher rather than express a personal or a contradictory opinion (Cutts, 1997, Hendry, 2013, Yoneyama, 1999). This was especially the case when interviewing students who were meeting the author for the first time. Although the author was initially wary of interviewing students that were in her classes, in general, the students who knew the author better were more relaxed and open from the outset. More interview time was spent in gaining the trust and confidence of students for whom the author was an unknown foreign teacher.

Another concern related to Japanese social interactions is the influence of group dynamics. It is well known that in Japanese society open disagreement is avoided at all costs and personal opinions are closely guarded (Hendry, 2013, Sugimoto, 2010). The researcher thought that students would feel less intimidated if they could be interviewed with a friend, yet wondered if the presence of another would inhibit open and honest interaction. These fears seem to have been unfounded. It appears that when discussing a topic such as music, that is seen as fun, and in which it is understood that people have different tastes, friends are happy to disagree with one another in the presence of a researcher.

The only occasion on which group dynamics inhibited a relaxed discussion was when two sets of students had been accidentally double-booked for the same time slot. Two male friends and three female friends from different faculties joined as one group and the researcher was aware that all five students felt inhibited by the situation. For this reason, the maximum group size was generally three and fellow interviewees had to ask to be interviewed together.

The advantages of interviewing more than one person at a time are that each person can have more thinking time and can remind others of things they might have overlooked. On the other hand, in one-to-one interviews, the researcher can dig deeper, if the interviewee is willing, as there is more time available. It was essential for the researcher to learn to hold back and wait for the participants to relax and open up.

The author has also learned that inviting the informants to take out their mobile music devices at the start of the interview is an effective ice breaker. Moreover, it is hard for the informants to recall all the artists they listen to and to remember how many songs they have on their mobile devices, but they can provide this information instantly with their mobile phone, iPod, or MP3 player in their hand.

One further observation on the research methodology is that Japanese students tend to wait for a teacher to take the lead and only to answer the questions they are asked. In view of this, the most effective kind of question is open-ended, such as: "What do you want to tell me about...?" Often the most interesting and unexpected information came when the researcher invited the interviewee to simply talk about the music they liked and the ways in which they used YouTube.

FINDINGS ON THE USES OF YOUTUBE

The interviews revealed that a common assumption that young people sit alone staring at a computer screen when watching YouTube is far from the truth. YouTube is watched in a variety of ways and on a variety of devices. Using YouTube is a social activity, with friends or family members watching together, as well as a solitary pastime. Moreover, for much of the time the users' eyes are not on the video screen. These findings reflect the observations of early television audience studies in the 1980s (Collett, 1986). Video cameras installed inside television sets revealed that family members were engaged in a variety of activities when the television was switched on and when they were ostensibly watching. Although watching the television programme was a primary media activity for some, for others it was a secondary or tertiary media activity. This was partly because not all people in the room had chosen to watch the programme showing at the time, and partly because they needed to carry out other tasks concurrently (Dutton and Mundy, 1995: 133).

YouTube is significantly different from broadcast television in the 1980s in that the individual user is able to choose what to watch and when. The author's interviews revealed that, in spite of this freedom of choice, using YouTube is, nevertheless, often a secondary or tertiary

media activity. Accordingly, this discussion will address three main topics from among the interview findings: 1) How YouTube is used by young Japanese people, 2) Reasons why YouTube users pay little attention to the visuals for much of the time, and 3) The role of the visuals on YouTube.

YouTube as a free and unlimited up-to-date music source

Now that YouTube can be accessed on mobile devices, it is commonly the preferred source of music for the young people interviewed. There are two main reasons that were reported. First, it is free, but more importantly, it can provide the newest music from all over the world. Users can hear the latest releases, make play lists and listen to this music while on the move. YouTube provides the chance to discover new music through its suggested links, the approval ratings for videos, the comments function, and the record of the number of times a video has been viewed. For those who make an account, a regular customised digest is sent. Moreover, unlike MP3 players, even those with a large memory, YouTube has unlimited capacity.

Interestingly, only a couple of interviewees expressed the opinion that free music is best. The majority were aware of copyright issues and, given the low cost of renting CDs and being allowed to copy the contents, this is mainly how they build their music collection. Television and YouTube together play an important role in advertising new music releases. New songs are often first heard on television, but then listened to subsequently on YouTube during the one-month delay before the newest CD releases can be rented. Most informants were willing to buy new CDs as well as rent older ones. In this way, YouTube can be seen to be performing a vital publicity function for both foreign and domestic music, even though new Japanese releases are regularly taken down at the request of recording companies. In contrast, many foreign recording companies have their own websites linked to YouTube and provide free access to the latest recordings as well as older music.

Music and YouTube in daily social life

Young people these days have grown up with the means to enjoy music as a soundtrack to their lives (Bull, 2007: 4). It provides immunity and security from the world. It enhances moods, emotions, and experiences. For example, one informant uses YouTube music as a soundtrack when he plays video games that are mechanical rather than problem-solving. Other interviewees reported listening to music as they walk or cycle to campus. It gives them energy. Those who live alone listen while doing chores as it helps make the work less

dreary. Many listen to pass the time on a long bus or train commute, or to relax between classes and at the end of the day in the bath or in bed. Although some find music interrupts their concentration, many find it stimulates their brain while reading and studying. Instrumental music is seen by some as a better study accompaniment as it is less intrusive. Interestingly, foreign pop songs are often listened to when doing homework because the lyrics are unintelligible and so do not break concentration. The same was reported about familiar music, as opposed to new music, which demands the attention of the listener.

Some interviewees listen to music with a particular purpose in mind, such as those who play in a band and who are learning a song to perform. Others are in dance groups and need to familiarize themselves with the music they will perform to. They reported that YouTube videos allow them to listen to the same track whenever they need to.

Another aspect of YouTube use that shows how it is a social activity as much as a solitary pastime is that students often watch videos together on their phones or computers. One girl also talked about how she, her sister and father watch together, taking turns to choose a video. In this way, she has become familiar with a lot of music from the 1980s and her father likes a lot of the current music that she and her sister know well. Another student has introduced his mother to the Korean group Girls' Generation through YouTube videos. It is a useful tool for expanding listening experiences and knowledge within and between generations.

The roles of the YouTube screen

Given that YouTube is used a great deal of the time as a sound source, one wonders what roles the screen and the visuals play. Informants said that even when they are sitting in front of a computer screen, they sometimes prefer not to look at visuals when they listen to music. They choose YouTube videos which simply show the album cover, and look at that, or rest their eyes while they focus on the music itself.

On the other hand, the screen is the focus of attention when watching a popular kind of YouTube video that shows the lyrics or translations of the lyrics of the song in time with the music. Informants like to use these slides to help them study and understand the song, and to sing along, either for the sheer joy of singing, or to practice for a performance with a band or among friends at karaoke. Some students take their iPhones into the bathroom so that they can watch YouTube and sing along in the bath.

Many of the interviewees love the "promotion videos" or commercially produced video clips made to promote a song. They watch them closely because they believe the visuals can enhance their understanding of the song's message and mood. They enjoy videos which tell a

story and are happy to watch them repeatedly. They find that the scenes are replayed in their imaginations when they hear the music on other occasions without watching the video.

Videos which show live performances are also popular because the informants feel they can see different aspects of the artists, appreciate their techniques and share the excitement of the audience. Fans of pop 'idols' enjoy the appearance, fashion, and style of the performers. The dance moves and cute facial expressions are thrilling and are watched attentively. Aspiring musicians watch the musical techniques of the performers, and dancers get new ideas for their own moves.

It is interesting that opinion was evenly split on the merits of watching videos on the small window or using the full-screen mode. Those who like the full screen reported feeling closer to the artists, or more immersed in the story because there are no visual distractions. They can see details and are not too worried about the lower resolution of the full screen. Reasons for choosing the small window are equally interesting. Many say that they like the clearer quality of the picture. Others have additional reasons that reflect the way YouTube is consumed as a secondary or tertiary media activity much of the time. For example, the small window is convenient for the informants who check email, look at Facebook and other websites, or do their homework while they 'watch' YouTube. Another reason is that they like to look at the suggested links on the YouTube page to plan what to 'watch' next. A third reason is that, while they listen, they like to read the comments below the screen that have been posted by other users.

The comments function on YouTube

There were mixed reactions to the comments function of YouTube. Some feel upset when they read a negative comment about songs or artists they like. Others believe the comments influence their interpretations of songs. They help in understanding the meaning of the lyrics of songs or show alternative interpretations. For example, sometimes they have read a comment that has made their feeling about a video more positive. The comment has helped them to understand the video better or to see something they had missed before. Interestingly, this happens both with Japanese and non-Japanese videos. One informant commented that people from many countries write their opinions, but she doesn't see Japanese people writing about Western songs, only about Japanese songs. This observation was endorsed and explained by other students interviewed.

Whereas most students read the comments and think it is good to be able to share and exchange opinions, only two of the 51 students interviewed write comments. There are a num-

ber of reasons for this and most are not related to the traditional characterization of the Japanese as being shy. One informant explained that she wants to keep her feelings about a song private. However, another explained that she and other Japanese people don't write comments because almost all comments are in English and they don't want to write in English. Another interviewee pointed out that the style of English used is text-message style, using a lot of abbreviations, which are hard for Japanese young people to decipher, let alone write. A different informant explained that she doesn't write comments because you need to have a YouTube account to do this and she already has too many accounts with Twitter, Facebook, Mixi, and she doesn't want yet another password. Also, for her, YouTube is just for watching. She does not feel the need to participate and be part of a YouTube community in addition to the other social networks she belongs to.

The two students who write comments are both keen fans of certain performers. One is a big fan of the American artist Lil Wayne. He reads the comments on YouTube and writes comments in English about once a month because he can make friends and share his enthusiasm for Lil Wayne's music with others. The other student who writes comments is a fan of the Japanese female idol group Morning *Musume*. She says they have fans in Shanghai, Russia and Taiwan. The fans write comments on YouTube in English and Chinese. She feels part of this international community by writing comments, too. She also follows the international fans' comments on the very popular Japanese female idol group AKB48. She started writing comments when she saw a very exciting dance performance by them and felt moved to write and she was thrilled when she got a response. Some people wrote long negative comments in Japanese, but fans responded by writing good things and so they argued online. She enjoyed being involved in this. She reads comments from Korea or Taiwan, Europe, America, Russia. They are written in their native language or in English or Japanese. She thinks the foreigners are studying Japanese from the videos and is happy that Japanese musicians are known and appreciated outside Japan.

Giving YouTube recommendations

None of the students interviewed recommend videos to friends using the YouTube site itself. They mainly share recommendations by word of mouth. One interesting comment on the merits of music videos when sharing recommendations is that they provide a concrete means of talking about the music. Students can discuss a scene in the video more easily than a melody or rhythm. The visuals help recall the moment in the song that can be shared in

the discussion.

YouTube as an archive of professional and amateur performances

In addition to participating in an international community online, students are using YouTube as an archive to access music from past eras that their parents or teachers have introduced them to. Many have a song or artist in mind when they start a search. Some prefer to watch only the established artists that they have planned to watch, while others like exploring new artists and amateur or professional cover versions using the links provided on the YouTube screen. Although cover versions annoy some viewers, they are popular with others for a number of reasons. Sometimes they are very high quality performances by artists who were not previously known to the informants. Sometimes the covers provide a fresh take on a familiar song, and sometimes an amateur version is encouraging for other emerging amateur musicians to watch and emulate.

Accessing and consuming non-Japanese music on YouTube

YouTube and the viewing practices outlined above have contributed to the popularity of foreign artists in Japan. Korean and Western musicians are often first seen on Japanese television and in magazines. For those who want to watch more, whole sections of rental shops are devoted to Korean and Western CDs, and record shops stock a wide range of DVDs as well as CDs. The DVDs are very expensive, however, and are not available for rent, but the informants said that they can find songs and videos by the artists they first see on television on YouTube. Some are attracted to the melodies and rhythms, which are different to Japanese pop music, but the visual aspects of their performances are also clearly important.

Many male and female students reported that not only are the Korean melodies catchy and memorable, but also the artists are sexy and dance very well. The female performers are admired for their long legs, shapely bodies and fashion style, and the male performers are said to be taller, more broad-shouldered and powerful than their Japanese counterparts. They often wear suits and look smarter than Japanese male artists who dress more casually. The Korean groups' dance moves are highly synchronized and mesmerizing. Several informants said they cannot take their eyes off the screen when watching a Korean music video. Given the large number of distractions these young people normally find while 'watching' YouTube, this is a notable phenomenon.

Many Western artists' videos are fascinating for the interviewees because they are so different in style and content to Japanese and Korean music videos. Those that tell a story are

especially popular because the informants believe they can get a fuller understanding of the meaning or the mood of the song through the video narrative. The visuals provided by YouTube videos seem to contribute in these ways to the consumption of non-Japanese music in Japan.

CONCLUSION

Although television is clearly the greatest purveyor of pop music in Japan, YouTube increases the opportunities for Japanese music consumers to access freely the music they wish to hear at any time, and to watch the performances of the artists they wish to see. It is used primarily as a source of music by the young people interviewed, and not as a platform for uploading content of their own.

YouTube videos are often used as background music, and the screen is not always the focus of attention. Nevertheless, the various types of professional and amateur videos that are uploaded enhance musical experiences in a variety of ways. They can suggest interpretations of the meanings of a song through the narrative, or emphasize the mood of the song through the visual effects. Videos that provide song lyrics allow audiences to understand and sing the songs. Other kinds of videos showcase the artists and provide visual access to live performances that fans may otherwise never see. The visual element helps make the performances of both Japanese and foreign artists more appealing, and together with the links to suggested videos, can encourage greater diversity in musical tastes.

Although most of the informants interviewed did not use the comments function, those who do can join an international online community to share their opinions about artists they admire. YouTube also allows friends and families to enjoy music together in addition to providing entertainment on an individual basis. The image of solitary young people staring at a computer screen has been shown to be contrary to the reality of YouTube consumption in contemporary Japan. Whether YouTube will undermine CD sales and Internet downloads remains to be seen. At present, it appears to be tolerated by the Japanese music industry and highly appreciated by young Japanese music consumers.

These initial findings need to be investigated through further survey work in order to gain a concrete, statistically-based understanding of the roles that YouTube is playing in the music industry and in the lives of music consumers in Japan.

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日本のポピュラーミュージックへのアクセス時における YouTube の役割

ギリス フルタカ アマンダ

要 旨

YouTube は 2005 年に人々がホームビデオを共有する場として出発し、その後、最新のポップミュージックにアクセスする場として、また、無料で入手できる音声・映像素材の前例をみないアーカイブとして発展した。YouTube は、また主要なソーシャルネットワークの場であり、国内、国外を問わず創作活動の交流と鑑賞を支援してきている。本論では YouTube のもつこうした機能について日本の大学生を対象とした 2 段階の調査結果からの知見を踏まえて論じている。学生たちがポップミュージックにアクセスするために、どのように YouTube を使用するか、また、なぜ YouTube を使用するかを研究している。第 1 段階のアンケート調査は 2000 名を超える大学 1 年生を対象としており、第 2 段階では 51 名の学生に面談して彼らの日常生活での YouTube の使用方法を調査した。

キーワード：ポピュラー ミュージック, ミュージック ビデオ, YouTube, オーディオエンス
スタディーズ, ポピュラー カルチャー