

Learning from The Experience of “Seichijunrei” to Promote China’s Tourism Diplomacy

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Abstract:

In recent years, tourism diplomacy has become the focus of foreign affairs of countries all over the world, how to effectively use domestic tourism projects as diplomatic tools has been further studied. China also attaches great importance to tourism as a channel to show the real image of China to international community. However, now China’s tourism diplomacy has problems such as lack of attraction to foreigners. It is need to learn from some foreign experiences to change the existing model and promote China’s tourism diplomacy. This paper focuses on tourism diplomacy and combines it with the Anime Pilgrimage culture in Japan, specifically analyze how the example of the Anime Pilgrimage activity in Numazu attract foreign tourists, create effective cultural output and enhance the sense of identity of local residents, then summarize common experiences from both internal and external processes. Based on these experience of Japan’s Anime Pilgrimage and concrete reality of China, this paper will point out some shortcomings of China’s tourism diplomacy and put forward some practical suggestions.

Keywords: Tourism Diplomacy; Anime Pilgrimage; Politics.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a major channel for facilitating cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding worldwide. After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, tourism was designated as the leading sector among China’s five major “happiness industries”. Globally, tourism diplomacy has emerged as a significant instrument for the projection of national soft power. In China, tourism diplomacy

has played an increasingly important role in recent years, aiming to present an authentic national image to international audiences and to counteract negative portrayals often found in Western mainstream media. As a result, tourism diplomacy has become a focal point of China’s contemporary diplomatic strategy. The purpose of this paper is to examine the mechanisms by which Anime Pilgrimage can serve as an effective tool for advancing tourism diplomacy. Utilizing a case study approach, this research focuses

on the Japanese city of Numazu to explore how Anime Pilgrimage contributes to enhancing local identity and projecting national soft power. Drawing lessons from such international experiences is essential for addressing the practical challenges faced by China in developing its own tourism diplomacy and for informing future strategic directions.

2. Literature References

Tourism diplomacy is a multifaceted research field that included national soft power, tourism politics, and people-to-people diplomacy. At the same time, the “Anime Pilgrimage” culture in the paper has been researched by many scholars from the aspects like economy and tourism industry. This paper will conduct a comprehensive discussion and analysis based on the above research.

2.1 Tourism Politics

Research on tourism politics originated in Western countries. Matthews(1978) pointed out the lack of political perspective in tourism research[1]. Odyniec(2019) showed the importance of travel to diplomacy during a time when communication is difficult[2]. Hall(1994) said tourism actions and decisions should be discussed by the high-level government officials, It is an important issue involving ideology, interest groups, and the role of the government[3].

Chinese scholars have also conducted some research, Yang Anhua(2010) said that must consider the question of “who get, how and how to get it” in research of tourism politics, and he also mentioned the role of tourism in promoting world peace and enhancing mutual understanding[4]. Tang Zhiming(2006) pointed out that the political environment and tourism development are closely related, and a good internal environment is beneficial to the development of the tourism industry[5]. Liu Yajun(2018) analyzed the development of regional tourism cooperation in Northeast Asia and Summarized that the regional international political environment and the regional tourism industry have a mutual impact[6].

From these research, tourism politics mainly related in the high-political, emphasizing the impact of government on tourism and the political environment. Tourism Politics provides a link between politics and tourism as the basis for the study of tourism diplomacy, but also can see that the content of tourism political research is different from that of tourism diplomacy. So we need more research on the role of multiple subjects and civil society.

2.2 Tourism Diplomacy

The difference between tourism diplomacy and tourism politics is that tourism diplomacy pays more attention to the role of Non-governmental entities. Baranowski, Shelley(2019) mentioned that “every tourist is a diplomats representing their homeland” and can establish people-to-people connections with other countries[7]. Mei Yi(2006) distinguished between tourism diplomacy and cultural diplomacy and shows that the main difference is that tourism diplomacy is mainly people-to-people exchanges without government involvement[8]. Wang Qingyu(2021) ‘ research of China’s tourism diplomacy under the background of the Belt and Road, summarized that tourism diplomacy and traditional diplomacy have the same official subjects, but the subjects involved in tourism diplomacy are more diverse. This research also proposed the operation mode of tourism diplomacy from a micro perspective such as “Sport + Tourism” [9].

From the research of the above, It can conclude that the essence of tourism diplomacy is to output soft power through the “Tourism +” model, It can also be seen that the logic of tourism diplomacy in spreading soft power is bottom-up. The government plays a guiding, supporting and guaranteeing role, and the benefits of various entities in tourism diplomacy will also have a feedback effect on the government’s decision-making and cognition.

2.3 Seichijunrei

聖地巡礼 (せいちじゅんれい), In English, it is called Anime Pilgrimage or Seichijunrei, The original meaning refers to the religious pilgrimage process of believers, now it is mostly used by anime lovers to visit the scenes that appear in their favorite animations through travel. Research on Seichijunrei mainly focuses on the areas of economic effects and cultural communication.

Ryo Takahashi (2024) from Wasada University believed that “Animation holy land” is different from deliberate economic planning, but more of a spontaneous definition by fans and local residents. He investigate lighting data, urban population and other economic data to prove the effective role of the “holy land” in the development of a region[10]. Hernandez Perez(2019) studied the impact of the “Anime Pilgrimage” on British anime fans, On-site visits and long-term animation have promoted the formation of a “shared memory” as a kind of culture bond[11]. Okamoto Ken pointed out that about 40% of participants in Seichijunrei will become Returning Customers. By a investigated the French participants of Seichijunrei, Sabre(2017) found that some grassroots organizations can make special arrangements for fans from a certain country and Clear up misunderstandings caused by culture gap, It

can even make a high-level culture output that let foreigners like local life[12]. Hiroaki Mori(2018) affirmed the potential of Seichijunrei in interpersonal communication and emotional connection, while pointed out the lack of coordination among various departments of the Japanese government in its use as a diplomatic tool[13]. Generally, Anime Pilgrimage play an important role in the formation of common memory and collective consensus in aspect of cultural ideology. At the same time, Anime Pilgrimage also serves the local economic development and modernization construction and other practical fields. In summary, the reviewed literature suggests that tourism politics serves as a macro-level framework, while tourism diplomacy emphasizes practical engagement and implementation. Within this context, Anime Pilgrimage operates as a micro-level mechanism, functioning as a medi-

ing variable that bridges tourism politics and diplomacy. These theoretical perspectives provide a solid conceptual foundation for the present study.

However, current research on tourism diplomacy largely concentrates on broad initiatives such as the Belt and Road, while studies of Anime Pilgrimage primarily focus on regional economic impacts and the transmission of singular cultural elements. At the same time, this paper noted that in the past studies, the government had shortcomings in using Anime Pilgrimage as a diplomatic tool. So this paper hopes to combine the role of the Anime Pilgrimage in promoting cultural output and creating common memory, and study how the Anime Pilgrimage, as a tourism activity mode, can promote tourism diplomacy activities.

3. Theoretical Framework

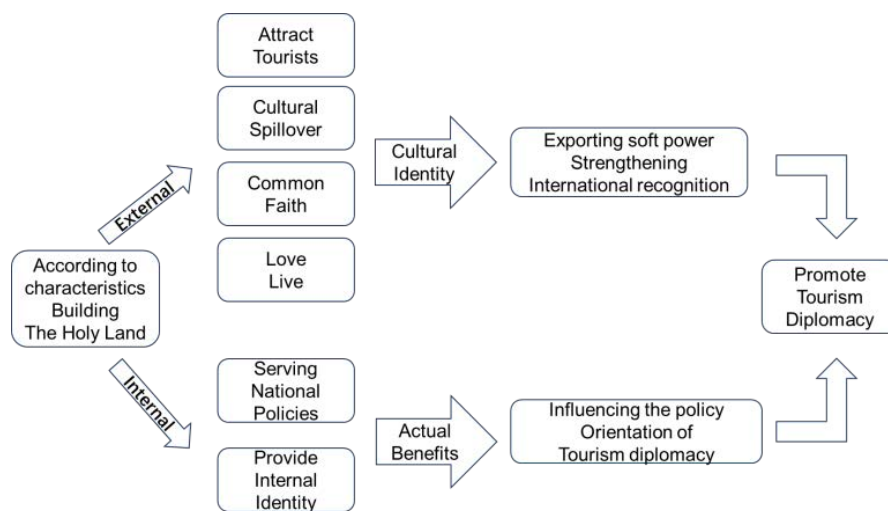


Figure. 1 Theoretical Framework
(Figure credit: Original)

As shown in Figure 1, this framework pays special attention to the theory of Joseph Nye Jr(2004) that the power of the state depends on both the strength of the armed forces and the capacity of culture. The boundary between elegant culture and popular culture is increasingly blurred in a world with developed mass media so that even popular cultural symbols like fast food can create strong attraction[14]. This paper also focus on the bridge role of collective memory in connecting individuals, groups and society as Klaus Eder and Spohn(2005) said that we need to discuss the phenomenon of group identity based on collective memory from the perspective of functionality[15]. The design of this framework is based on these existing research on tourism diplomacy and Anime Pilgrimage, integrating the “Tourism + Pilgrimage” model mentioned above for theoretical integration and construction.

First, in the external process, this paper clarifies the strong export ability of Anime pilgrimage and divided it into “attracting tourists to gradually falling in love with daily life” at four levels. In the internal process, the effect of the Anime Pilgrimage is summarized as two ways representing the actual benefits: serving national policies and providing internal identity. Then, these characteristics of Anime Pilgrimage were incorporated with the functions of tourism diplomacy—spreading national culture internationally and informing policy development—to construct the theoretical framework for this study.

This study adopts a single-case qualitative analysis based on secondary data, policy documents, and prior literature, aiming to reconstruct the causal mechanisms through which subcultural tourism contributes to international perception shaping.

4. Case Study

4.1 Case Selection

Numazu is located in eastern Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan, with Mount Fuji to its north. The city's primary industries are agriculture and aquaculture. Owing to its relative distance from the Tokyo metropolitan area, Numazu experienced significant population decline prior to 2016. Even its picturesque natural landscapes, including Suruga Bay and views of Mount Fuji, were insufficient to boost its popularity.

This trend began to reverse in 2016, when the „LoveLive Sunshine“ project was set in Numazu, featuring the idol group Aqours. Both the municipal government and local community leveraged the Aqours brand, recreating scenes from the anime and developing themed tourist routes to attract both domestic and international visitors. Through the combined efforts of public and private actors, Numazu rapidly gained global recognition.

Numazu is chosen as a case study for several key reasons:

1. Leveraging the popularity of „LoveLive Sunshine,“ Numazu has been internationally recognized as an „anime holy land“, making it highly attractive to foreign tourists.
2. There is substantial research on the economic and demographic impacts of anime pilgrimage in Numazu, providing reliable empirical data.
3. The influence of Numazu's status traverses beyond tourism, with measurable effects on population migration, enabling a multi-level analysis of impact pathways.
4. The participation of „LoveLive Sunshine“ in official events such as the Osaka-Kansai World Expo demonstrates the bottom-up influence of pop culture on formal diplomatic platforms[16].
5. Prior to the emergence of „LoveLive Sunshine“, there were few external factors influencing local development,

making the project's impact a relatively isolated and observable variable.

Drawing on these characteristics and the proposed theoretical framework, this study will analyze both the external and internal processes by which Anime Pilgrimage shapes tourism diplomacy.

4.2 The External Process

The cultural symbols created by Lovelive Sunshine for Numazu are the basis of its soft power output, Anime Pilgrimage provides a practical way for the output of soft power. This paper will analyze the case according to the four levels of “external process” in the framework.

4.2.1 Attract Tourists

The most intuitive feedback of Anime Pilgrimage is the promotion of the local tourism industry. The holy land formed by combining the city and the “Anime culture” provides tourists with the “cultural reasons” to visit the local. It has broken through the original tourist city or metropolitan area effect. Let more tourists flow into cities with specific culture.

Take Numazu as an example, the reason why the city can attract more tourists can be attributed to internal and external factors, Using the popularity of animation itself, at the same time the government and the civil society build a city image close to the animation elements, provide tourists with the “reason” for Anime Pilgrimage.

It can be seen in Table 1, in 2015, a total of about 9,000 people visited the Sannoura tourism service center, but in 2016, after the Lovelive Sunshine broadcast, there were about 40,000 visitors to the center, and they continued to grow in 2017 and 2018. Its attraction also covers countries all over the world, with the largest number of tourists from China and South Korea. The United States and Europe, which are located far away, are ranked three or four[17].

Table 1. Number of visitors to the Sannoura tourist center[18]

Number of visitors to the Sannoura tourist center				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number	9000	39584	73807	79175
Growth Rate	—	439%	186%	107%

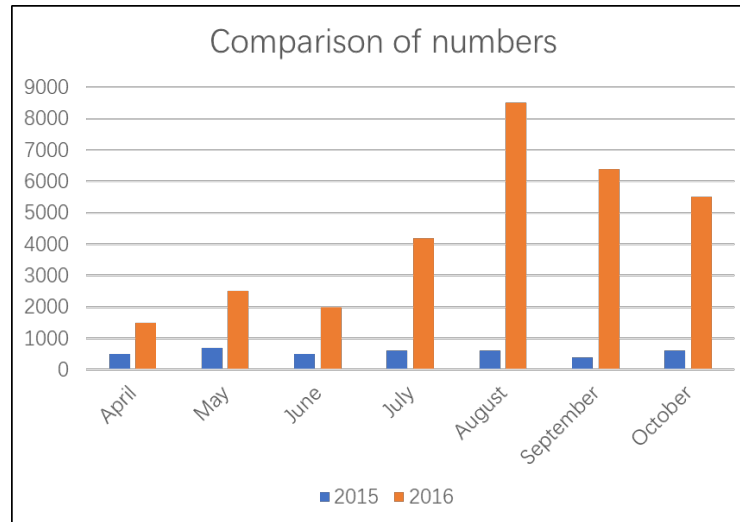


Figure 2. Comparison of Visitors in the Same Period of 2015 and 2016[19]

As can be seen at Figure 2, Anime Pilgrimage mechanism drives the tourism motivation with “cultural reasons”, increases the main communication object of “tourists”, and creates the basic conditions for Japan to spread its national image and carry out tourism diplomacy.

4.2.2 Cultural Spillover

“Anime pilgrimage” in Numazu has effectively promoted the dissemination of other local cultures. Through “project cooperation” and “tourism exploration”, it has stimulated the cultural potential of Numazu and better exported the city’s cultural soft power to the world.

4.2.2.1 Integration with Local Specialties: The Case of Mandarin Oranges

Mandarin orange is the proudest specialty of Numazu, they have famous local brand like “Jutaro Mikan”. In order to promote the Mandarin orange culture of Numazu to the world, Numazu chose to cooperate with Lovelive sunshine project, through the integration of Mandarin orange elements into the hobby and image of the role of Chika Takami and hire Anju Inami, the Cast voice of Chika Takami as the brand ambassador[20]. Numazu hopes to attract tourists from all over the world to come to Numazu to experience the city of Mandarin orange’s special charm.

4.2.2.2 Promotion of Shinto Culture

Anime pilgrimage combined with the Red Ink Stamp

trend, promoted the spread of Shintoism, and promoted the output of cultural diversity and identity construction. With the modernization of Japan, the existence of the Shinto shrine has become difficult. Numazu in order to better promote the existence of Shintoism culture, has relied on the popularity of “Anime pilgrimage” tourism, actively engaging in the trend of collecting limited-edition Red Ink Stamp among foreign tourists that emerged after 2020[21]. The city has established an “Omairi” website, which list 97 shrines and temples in Numazu that offer Red ink stamp and ranks them for tourists as reference.

The interaction between the Anime pilgrimage and other local cultures has produced a “cultural spillover” effect, which has promoted the diversity of cultural output, enriched the communicable content of tourism diplomacy, It is under the combined effect of multi-culture that the city attracts more tourists and deepened tourists’ cultural identification.

4.2.3 Formation of Common Faith and Shared Identity

Anime pilgrimage of Numazu relies on the Lovelive Sunshine to form a cultural bond, using the attraction of global communities to promote “pilgrimage” tourism and strengthen common Faith. In explaining the “New Pop Cosmopolitanism”, Jenkins (2004) took an American girl choose a Japanese name for herself as an example to explain the phenomenon of integrating into the global community unrelated to nationality with anime culture as the bond[22].

Table 2. Statistics of videos related to the Anime pilgrimage of Numazu (incomplete)

(Table credit: Original)

Video Name	ID	Nationality
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Anime Pilgrimage to Numazu Love Live Sunshine Town!	Ginger Gaiden	USA
Findour Numazu	대파	South Korea
Guia lugares Love Live Sunshine en Numazu - Japón	Arashi in Japan	Spain
Let's Have Lunch in Numazu, Japan and Visit Love Live Sunshine Spots	Mogumogu Paradise	Australia
Love Live! Sunshine!! Numazu & Uchiura Pilgrimage 2019!	Elson Valencia	USA
Numazu Trip! Love Live! Sunshine!!	Naomi	Indonesia
LoveLive Sunshine[Real Life Anime Location]Numazu	いとうよう	Japan
[水团圣地巡礼] 全网第一! 超级干货! “Find Our 沼津” 全图巡礼!	静谧菌	China

By searching for keywords such as “Numazu” and “Anime pilgrimage” in the streaming media platform for statistics, its characteristics can be summarized as “Diverse sources” and “rich content”. As Statistics from YouTube (Table 2), video producers come from different countries, live in different cultures environment, and show the global appeal across regions. There are more than 200 videos of Numazu Anime pilgrimage on the bilibili, including hotel, transportation, food and other, which are even more detailed than publicity by government.

The video producers were attracted by the “Anime pilgrimage” to travel to Numazu, and the positive feedback effect brought by the charm of the same scenes in the animation push them to share their feelings and experience to people with same hobby all over the world. Under the effect of “Re-attraction mechanism” more and more anime-lover who attracted by these videos come to Numazu, this kind of common belief and common memory is constantly strengthening.

The mechanism that forms cultural bond and strengthens common faith caused by Anime pilgrimage strengthens

tourists’ identification of the city, making the tour to the anime holy land a common memory and special activity. At the same time, the spontaneous propaganda by tourists undoubtedly shows the positive effect of tourism diplomacy and strongly promotes the country’s tourism industry and foreign communication.

4.2.4 Attract Foreigners to fall in “Love” with Local “Live”

Falling in love with the daily life of a foreign city is a reflection of the high-level of soft power output. For Numazu, through the mode of “daily life + animation”, integrate animation elements into daily things successfully. This lifestyle identity has slowed down the loss of population and attracted more foreigners to live in Numazu.

Numazu follow the mode of “daily life + animation”, integrates Lovelive Sunshine elements into daily things such as shopping streets, schools and aquariums to build up the holy land. They break away from the Top-down mechanism, actively play the role of civil society and use the attraction of daily scenes for the sense of belonging, push foreigner to choose Numazu as a destination of migration.

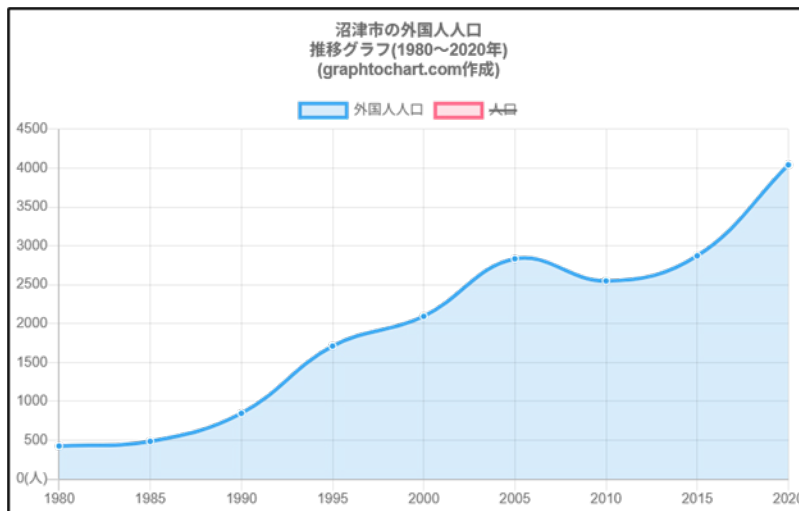


Figure 4. Change of foreign population in Numazu[23]

According to official statistics in Figure 4, the number of social populations in Numazu decreased by 933 in 2015. Since 2016, Lovelive Sunshine project has been implemented in Numazu, the negative trend of population growth has been reversed, in 2019, the population has increased after 37 years. Meanwhile, during 2016-2020, the number of foreigners migrating to Numazu continued to show an upward trend, in 2020, the number of foreigners in Numazu reached a peak of 4042, up 40.74% from 2872 in 2015. These five years correspond to the process of Lovelive Sunshine project's rapid development.

The daily life effect of Anime pilgrimage has formed a high-level cultural output, imperceptibly produces the effect of attracting foreign tourists to choose Numazu as a destination of migration, Achieved the soft power output and Multicultural integration in the same time. The increase in the number of foreigners has brought opportunities for the tourism service policy of Numazu, and they joined the "foreigner to foreigner services"[24].

Through analyzing the case of Anime pilgrimage in Numazu, concludes the external process of its service to tourism diplomacy including the basic one "Attract Tourists" to the high-level output "Love Live" four levels, raise the popularity and recognition of Numazu, a small city. It reflects that the experience of the Anime Pilgrimage in the aspect of external process can be used for reference in promoting the development of tourism diplomacy.

4.3 Internal Process

According to the logic of the effect on the internal in the framework, it is shown in the "serving the national policy" and "providing internal identity" two parts, which represent the actual benefits. This paper will show the effective influence of Anime pilgrimage on the internal process by analyzing the specific case of Numazu.

4.3.1 Fostering Internal Identity

Tourism diplomacy relies heavily on the active participation and internal identification of local residents and stakeholders. By directly addressing issues related to local livelihoods, the anime pilgrimage demonstrates a strong capacity to generate tangible economic benefits, thereby serving as a model for enhancing the internal foundation of tourism diplomacy.

Specifically, the anime pilgrimage in Numazu has strengthened local identity through both economic gains and industrial collaboration. According to estimates by Yu, Jingtian and K. Onishi (2020), the influx of anime pilgrims contributed between 5.08 billion and 6.14 billion Yen to the local accommodation and catering sectors[25]. In addition, the integration of anime motifs into local businesses has further amplified these benefits. For instance,

Shougetsu, a traditional confectionery store, renovated its storefront to feature Lovelive Sunshine elements as depicted in the anime. As a result, daily sales of its signature Mikan Dorayaki increased tenfold, now exceeding 500 units per day.

Such dual gains in economic growth and sectoral innovation have deepened the practical sense of identification among residents and local officials, fostering trust and collective support for the ongoing development of Numazu as an "anime holy land". The industry-tourism integration mechanism has proven pivotal in aligning the interests of diverse stakeholders and promoting their active engagement in the region's cultural revitalization.

4.3.2 Serving the National Policy

Anime pilgrimage of Numazu effectively serves Japan's national policies, The following will be analyzed from two aspects: "Hometown Tax" and "Cool Japan" strategy.

4.3.2.1 Hometown Tax

Through the institutionalization of anime-related cultural goods, the anime pilgrimage in Numazu has effectively supported Japan's "Hometown Tax" policy. This policy encourages urban residents to make voluntary tax contributions to local governments in exchange for tax deductions and unique gifts, thereby promoting the transfer of financial resources from urban centers to regional communities.

Since the launch of LoveLive Sunshine in Numazu in 2016, related merchandise has been included among the official Hometown Tax gifts. This initiative has attracted a large number of urban fans, motivated both by identity affiliation and tax incentives, to participate in the program. Data indicates that Numazu's total Hometown Tax revenue has consistently increased since 2016, significantly enhancing the city's fiscal capacity to support urban transformation, industrial revitalization, disaster relief, and public health measures such as the COVID-19 response.

In addition, the Numazu government established a dedicated "LoveLive Sunshine × Hometown Tax" section on its official website, combining anime pilgrimage publicity with policy promotion. This dual-incentive mechanism—integrating emotional consumption with institutional participation—strengthened public engagement and showcased how popular culture can activate local financial mobilization and drive institutional innovation. Thus, anime pilgrimage in Numazu has contributed to tourism development and to the transformation of cultural appeal into tangible economic and policy benefits.

Table 3. Hometown Tax Amount of Numazu[26]

Years	Hometown Tax Amount(Yen)
2015	110,440,031
2016	183,827,384
2017	233,598,470
2018	309,077,381
2019	287,209,000
2020	491,373,000
2021	1,175,862,100
2022	2,312,836,965
2023	4,496,719,438

4.3.2 .2 Cool Japan Strategy and Anime

Within the broader framework of Japan's cultural diplomacy, anime pilgrimage has emerged as a practical vehicle for advancing the objectives of the „Cool Japan“ strategy, a state-led initiative aimed at enhancing Japan's international image and expanding its soft power through the global promotion of pop culture. As articulated by then-Foreign Minister Taro Aso in 2006, the concept of “Animation Diplomacy” leverages the cross-cultural appeal of Japanese animation to cultivate positive perceptions of Japan and, crucially, to mitigate the lingering negative associations stemming from historical events such as World War II.[27] Consequently, animation diplomacy has become a foundational component of the Cool Japan policy, which seeks to exert influence abroad primarily through popular cultural exports.

The case of LoveLive Sunshine in Numazu exemplifies how anime pilgrimage can function as an effective tool for public diplomacy. Notably, Numazu has attracted substantial numbers of international visitors, with China and South Korea—countries historically affected by Japan's wartime actions—ranking as the top sources of anime pilgrims to the city. The significance of this phenomenon extends beyond tourism statistics: in 2019, the LoveLive Sunshine project organized large-scale performances in both Shanghai and Seoul, drawing numerous young fans and fostering direct cultural engagement across national boundaries.

This process demonstrates the strategic pathway by which Japanese anime pilgrimage transforms an abstract national image into a tangible, emotionally resonant cultural experience. By creating opportunities for shared memory, participation, and positive affect, anime pilgrimage facilitates a reframing of Japan's national image among foreign publics, thereby weakening entrenched historical prejudices through repeated and meaningful people-to-people interactions.

The enthusiastic participation of Chinese and South Korean fans in both local anime pilgrimage and overseas events points to the ability of pop culture-based tourism diplomacy to transcend geographical and historical barriers—effectively rebuilding Japan's soft power on new, affective foundations. In the case of Numazu, the local and national governments' active endorsement of the project—including its recommendation by politicians such as Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru, and its planned showcase at international events like the World Expo—underscores anime pilgrimage's recognized value as a diplomatic instrument. Thus, the empirical evidence from Numazu highlights anime pilgrimage not only as a driver of economic and local identity benefits, but also as a substantive mechanism for the implementation of Japan's soft power strategy.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Lessons from Anime Pilgrimage in Japan

The experience of anime pilgrimage in Japan highlights the country's ability to harness the universality of popular culture and to foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders in the development of specialized tourism industries. Japan has successfully integrated grassroots initiatives with official promotion, leveraging both local participation and governmental support.

5.2 Limitations in China's Current Approach

As emphasized by President Xi, the shaping of tourism through distinctive cultural narratives is essential for attracting international visitors. While China has developed a robust domestic tourism industry centered around unique cultural elements—such as Hongyan culture and Sanxia culture—these themes have primarily attracted local tourists and often fall short in resonating with foreign

audiences or fostering deeper identification. As a result, China's current "culture + tourism" strategy is limited in its ability to generate broad international appeal and to enhance soft power effectively.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

Based on the Japanese experience of Anime pilgrimage, we can establish a transfer mechanism to promote China's tourism diplomacy:

First, Japan has established a good civil society and official cooperation through activities like Anime pilgrimage. Transfer experience to China, the tourism should try to break away from the existing Top-down mechanism and enclosed tourist attraction model, highlight the role of multiple-participation and avoid rigid integration of culture and tourism.

Second, the experience of Japan's mechanism of rely on fans-economy to promote urban development enlightens China should also need to choose cultural images with global appeal such as Black Myth Wukong, and cooperate with the copyright owners of project, strengthen attraction, appeal to fans economy and promote tourism development.

Third, Japan's construction of Holy Land is mostly based on global community unrelated to nationality, to take advantage of this effect, it is important to target on selection of culture to create tourism. For example, choose the world famous Three Kingdoms culture and build cultural attractions such as Baidi city and Wuhou Temple into "Holy Land", provide reasons to foreigners for tourism culture.

Fourth, Japan shows good official endorsements through the mode of combining large-scale activities and cultural elements, such as Olympic and World Expos. This mechanism of government guidance is worth learning in China to highlight the role of government's support for tourism diplomacy as an official main body and more closely binding tourism destination and culture.

In conclusion, Japan's anime pilgrimage model offers valuable insights for China, indicating that the integration of popular culture, fan engagement, and governmental support can significantly strengthen tourism diplomacy. By adapting these strategies to the Chinese context, there is substantial potential to enhance national image, expand international influence, and foster more profound cross-cultural exchange.

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