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# A STUDY ON THE USE OF CARTOON IMAGE FOR REGIONAL REVITALIZATION: FOCUSING ON HOKUEI-CHO, TOTTORI

CHUNG, SUNJU

KIM, KYOUNG HEE

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF GLOBAL CULTURE AND CONTENTS

HANKUK UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Ms. Chung SunJu  
Prof. Kim Kyoung Hee  
Graduate School of Global Cultural Contents  
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies,  
South Korea.

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Focusing on Hokuei-cho, Tottori**

**Synopsis:**

This is a study on the use of cartoon image for regional revitalization of Hokuei-cho. Based on the local survey, this study examined the applying method of cartoon to regional revitalization of Hokuei-cho and the success factors as a travel attraction. Since the regional revitalization case of Hokuei-cho is a success case in terms of tourism, it may suggest an implication of regional revitalization strategy of Korea.

# A Study on the use of Cartoon image for Regional Revitalization : Focusing on Hokuei-cho, Tottori

SunJu Chung

Kyoung Hee Kim(*corresponding author*)

Graduate School of Global Cultural Contents, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

## 1. Introduction

Hokuei-cho is at the central area of Tottori where the regional revitalization has been carried out by using a Japanese manga called "Detective Conan" (also known as "Cased Closed") (1994)<sup>1</sup>. Hokuei-cho has carried out a regional revitalization by using 「Conan Community Development」 which began before the merger between Hojo-cho and Daiei-cho in 1997. On May 18, 2007, 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」, a memorial museum of Gosho Aoyama from Hokuei-cho, the author of 『Detective Conan』 was open.

Since its opening, the number of tourists continued to increase but it had problems such as lack of attractions and decrease of revisit ration. Thus, Hokuei-cho has made every effort to solve such problems by hosting various events and by creating ‘Beika Shopping Street’ a place of representing buildings in the cartoon.

Based on the local survey, this study analyzed the method in which Hokuei-cho applied a cartoon to regional revitalization and factors of being a tourist attraction. The case of regional revitalization of Hokuei-cho is a success in terms of tourism. Therefore, it may suggest an implication of regional revitalization using cartoons of Korea.

## 2. Birth of Conan Community and Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory

The idea of Conan Community Development by Hokuei-cho began with the policy proposal of 「Chamber of Commerce Regional Vision」 developed by the Chamber of Commerce of Former Daiei-cho in April 1997. In December 1999, with the refurbishment of Tottori Prefectural Route 167:Yura-teishajo Line as its start, 「Conan Street」<sup>2</sup> and 「Conan Bridge」 were constructed. It was followed by the refurbishment of Conan Street with an annual plan. In February 2005, Hojo-cho and Daiei-cho Merger Committee developed a 「New Community

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<sup>1</sup> A detective manga published at SHOGAKUKAN's Weekly Shonen Sunday from 1994 to present in 2017.

Its total number of published books in 2017 reached 200 million and it is used as various OSMUs in animation, film and game. Books are published and popular not only in Japan but also in Asia, Europe and North America.

<sup>2</sup> It is 1.4 km from JR Yura Station to Roadside Station Daiei(Daiei Michi-no-Eki).

Creation Plan」 which has major plans to make travel route and hub using 『Detective Conan』 as a tourism promotion plan. In July 2005, Daiei-cho History Culture Center held special planning exhibit 『Detective Conan』 to commemorate the merger and the 30 years of anniversary of Japanese Sea Newspaper. In October 2005, Hokuei-cho was created by the merger between Hojo-cho and Daiei-cho, and Hokuei-cho has carried out new community creation plan actively and powerfully. In 2007, they started a facility with the hometown of Gosho Aoyama, the writer of 『Detective Conan』 with higher name value nationwide and they carried out 「Conan Community Development」 as a common theme of the community. As a result, on March 18, 2007, they renewed 「Daiei History Culture Center」 that had decreasing number of visitors and then opened 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」.

「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 is not a simple 『Detective Conan』 exhibition center but shows charm of Gosho Aoyama with various attractions including the art world and works of local born Gosho Aoyama. Hokuei-cho created Conan Community with 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 at the center. At present, to develop Hokuei-cho, they focus on strengthening connection between Tottori and tourism facilities and active PR activities.

### 3. Use plan of Manga 『Detective Conan』 by Hokuei-cho

Since the start of Conan Community Development in 1997, there were many changes in Hokuei-cho. It had once no charm as a tourist attraction, but became a famous travel site of Tottori through regional revitalization using 『Detective Conan』. The most significant factor for the regional revitalization of Hokuei-cho was the use of 『Detective Conan』. Hokuei-cho has carried out regional development with 『Detective Conan』. The plan of use can be categorized into 3 including building, statues and events.

First is the use of building. In Hokuei-cho, there are two buildings related to 『Detective Conan』. It includes 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 as a community hub and 「Conan's House Beika Shopping Street」 founded in 2017. Founded in March 2007, 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 exhibits the world and artworks of Gosho Aoyama together with the exhibit of 『Detective Conan』. 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 carries out exhibits with the world of cartoon inside together with the exhibit using 『Detective Conan』. Launched in March 2017, 「Conan's House Beika Shopping Street」 was established to solve lack of attractions of Hokuei-cho. Hokuei-cho constructed a commercial complex 「Conan's House Beika Shopping Street」 in the demolished area of driving license test course by representing buildings in the 『Detective Conan』 with an aim to attract tourists in conjunction with 「Gosho Aoyama Manga

Factory」<sup>3</sup>. The inside and outside of the building accommodate interior and menus that remind the cartoon which gives visitors a sense as if they are in the world of Conan's. As such, 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 and 「Conan's House Beika Shopping Street」 were built to reflect images and contents in the cartoon and it heightens satisfaction for visitors who could experience the impression as if they are inside the cartoon.

Second is installation of statues in various area of the village. In Hokuei-cho, the images of Conan were actively used such as manhole, wrapping railway operation and Conan image station. At present, there are 19 statues, 30 stone monuments and 7 Conan Street signposts, 12 Character signboards, 12 Bronze panels installed at Conan Bridge in Hokuei-cho. In particular, Hokuei-cho has carried out installation of statues actively. With 6 objects installed in December 1999, total 19 statues were installed by October 2017. Statues of cartoon characters welcome visitors from JR Yura Station to 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」. To meet cartoon characters in the community is another method of enjoying Hokuei-cho. As such, Hokuei-cho uses 「Detective Conan」 character statues to give joy to visitors.

Third is events using image. Hokuei-cho prepared participating events for visitors such as Stamp rally, Huge maze escape and Detective Conan Mystery Tour. Visitors can participate in the Stamp Rally through Conan Street Guidebook published by Hokuei-cho Tourism Association. The Guidebook includes description of attractions, objects and stamp rally places in Hokuei-cho. It is widely used to attract participation in various areas, and Hokuei-cho also adopts it using Conan. Visitors wander here and there for Stamp Rally and feel a sense of achievement with memory. Next is the event held from 2012 to 2017 called 「Find boy detectives in the huge maze of Detective Conan!」. It is a participating event to solve mission and to approach the goal by running the checkpoints in the maze. With a concept of completing mission in the maze, 「Find boy detectives in the huge maze of Detective Conan!」 is an event that used the material as a detective story. Finally, there is 「Detective Conan Tottori Mystery Tour」<sup>4</sup> held in 2015. It is a participating event that was favorably received. In this tour, the participants solve riddles of Detective Conan with original story. In 2015, 「Detective Conan Tottori Mystery Tour」 was carried out to enhance the number of visitors to Tottori.<sup>5</sup> The number of visitors to 2015 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 carried out to domestic tourists was total 108,134, which was about 35% increase over the previous year. And, there is an event for foreign tourists. The number of foreign visitors increased from 9,432 in 2015 to 15,319 in 2016 at a time when Mystery Tour was carried out, which showed about 61% increase. In fact, many Korean tourists visited Tottori in order to participate in 「Detective Conan Tottori

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<sup>3</sup> Hokuei-cho assembly. 「News from Council」, Vol. 41, 2016.08, p.2

<sup>4</sup> JR West Japan Homepage, <https://www.westjr.co.jp/>

It is an event hosted by JR West Japan from 2001 onward and a tour that collects clues and solves throughout travel spots in the event place.

<sup>5</sup> 「Detective Conan Tottori Mystery Tour」-Domestic tourists: 2015.04.29~11.23, Foreign tourists: 2016.04.01.~2017.02.28.

Mystery Tour」. Many reviewed that it was more impressive tour as they participated in the tour voluntarily instead of simple sightseeing. Hokuei-cho held various events to attract more tourists.

As such, Hokuei-cho applied 『Detective Conan』 to buildings, statues and events. Rather than events that use simple building, statues or images, they carried out regional revitalization with an understanding of contents of the cartoon and with a manner to represent the world in the cartoon.

#### 4. Achievement and tasks of regional revitalization using cartoon

Since the birth of 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」, there are a great deal of changes in Hokuei-cho which had little tourist attractions. According to a study by Yuji Chiba (2014), the regional effect related to 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 resulted in the economic effect more than invested fund in Hokuei-cho and it had huge effects on Tottori.<sup>6</sup> 「Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」 has accommodated a steady number of visitors since its opening in 2007. In 2016, they reached its peak with total 110,000 visitors. In March 2017 at the 10th anniversary of the opening, the number of visitor was 800,000. The number of foreign visitors increased remarkably from 659 in 2007 to 15,139 in 2016. However, in the behind of such success of Hokuei-cho, there are problems of lack of attractions and decrease of revisit ratio. Hokuei-cho has made efforts to solve such problems in diverse ways as follows.

First, they made effort for community creation plan and refurbishing for the development. Hokuei-cho is carrying out maintenance of "conan street" and "Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory" for town development. The "conan street" attracts new object installations, hosting recreational facilities, and "Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory" is connected to the visitor's growth through regular exhibitions.

Secondly, they promote the settlement of cartoon culture in the community. Hokuei-cho has made effort to settle the cartoon culture with the Manga Terakoya Club in the local in order to produce the 2nd Gosho Aoyama.

As such, Hokuei-cho encounters problems of the community and has suggested many methods to solve such problems such as refurbishment of Conan Street, special exhibit of Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory and cartoon culture settlement for the regional development. Through community refurbishment plans, the increase of revisit, community revitalization and regional economy improvement can be expected.

#### 5. Conclusion

Hokuei-cho has carried out a regional revitalization using a Japanese manga 『Detective Conan』. Once it had no tourist attraction, but now it became a representative attraction point of Tottori. The success of regional revitalization in Hokuei-cho is heavily indebted to

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<sup>6</sup> Yuji Chiba, 「Policy effect of attraction facilities – Regional effect of Gosho Aoyama Manga Factory」, 2014 Regional Innovation Studies, 7-10, 2014, p.9

『Detective Conan』. No matter how popular it may be, the success or failure is dependent on its use. Hokuei-cho pay attention to work images and worldview such as buildings, statues and events and carried out regional revitalization with own factors. Such points caused curiosity to people and made people to visit Hokuei-cho. And, they make continual effort to improve weaknesses which indicates that Hokuei-cho would develop more.

It is hoped that the case study of regional revitalization of Hokuei-cho in this study would serve as a suggestion for Korea's future regional revitalization strategy. And the city level and state level must continue to seek a method of applying cartoons to regional revitalization for continual development instead of showing-off way of regional revitalization.

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