

# Cultural Intermediaries on Anitube: Vernacular YouTube Anime Reviewers and Critics

Michael D. High

## Vernacular reviews as a form of co-consumption

The user-generated review videos on YouTube

Maarit Jaakkola

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### Abstract

Reviews of arts and culture are typically focused on legitimate forms of art rather than popular and consumer culture. Looking beyond such institutionalized reviews, this article inquires into the online-native, bottom-up forms of reviewing. The aim is to identify user-generated reviews of popular cultural objects, defined through the user reviewers' position as cultural consumers and the size of their audiences. The objects of study are YouTube channels that include a regular output of review videos. First, the 5,000 most-subscribed channels are analysed to identify content creators who establish a relationship to cultural objects. Second, types of reviewing are identified, and the methods and boundaries of 'vernacular reviewing' are discussed. User-generated reviewing on YouTube presents a meta-practice related to cultural objects for young audiences that is marked by the use of hybrid genres, humour, irony and the idea of co-consuming, reflected in the concept of intramediation.

### Keywords

reviewing, criticism, cultural mediation, cultural intermediaries, user-generated content, YouTube

## Useful Creativity: Vernacular Reviewing on the Video-Sharing Platform Vimeo

By Maarit Jaakkola

### Abstract

This article intends to cast light on the phenomenon of non-institutionalised or vernacular reviewing by studying the review videos published on the video-sharing platform Vimeo. The data were automatically retrieved by searching for videos provided with the hashtag #review. The majority of these review videos (N = 1,273) were related to the technical equipment of filming and produced by filmmakers and enthusiastic amateurs interested in camera equipment and digital filming quality. The analysis describes the forms of reviewing in these videos and attempts to place them in the conceptual framework of reviewing, which, as is suggested in the article, reaches beyond the professional reviews commissioned by legacy media. Central questions are the delivery of an opinion or judgement, the imagined audience and the establishment of authority. Vimeo reviewers are characterised as both "professional vernacular" and "amateur vernacular" reviewers, reflecting a two-direction approach to reviewing, the one from cultural production (produsage) and the other from cultural consumption (presumption). The findings call for more conceptual elaboration of vernacularity in cultural critique.

**Keywords:** Online reviewing, user-generated content, cultural engagement, cultural production, cultural intermediation, cultural produsage

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## From Re-viewers to Me-viewers: The #Bookstagram Review Sphere on Instagram and the Uses of the Perceived Platform and Genre Affordances

*This study looks at the emerging forms of reviewing cultural products by investigating #bookreviews on Instagram. The multiple-case study focuses on characteristics of book-review posts in global and national contexts. First, the global community is outlined, with the help of quantitative data (N=163,269 entries). Second, a local book-reviewing community (N=645 entries) is studied, with a thematic analysis of platform and genre affordances. Instagram-native formats identified include textual reviews, metacoverage of reviews, video reviews, reviews with visual effects and facilitated reviews. The findings have implications for the conceptualisation of user-generated reviewing as part of cultural critique, which requires the incorporation of the consumption/prosumption paradigm into the understandings of cultural intermediation.*

**Keywords:** Review, Vernacular Reviewing, Book Cultures, Reading, Cultural Engagement, Instagram, Bookstagram

### Introduction

Re-examining a cultural product once it has been made available to the public, with the intention of judging whether it is good or bad or to 'criticize' it – from the Greek verb *krinein*, 'to decide' – has long constituted a central element in the formation of audience's opinions, tastes and lifestyles (Wright 2015). However, the power to address cultural products in the public sphere has never been so much in the hands of cultural consumers and citizens as it is now. Traditionally, the institution of criticism allowed only a limited group of cultural connoisseurs selected and legitimized by media and cultural institutions to make public and informed assessments to educate audiences, based on their alleged superiority in the refined taste (Hohendahl 1982, Titchener 1998, Blank 2007). The recent participatory turn of cultural analysis and theory has directed increased scholarly attention to non-institutional cultural voices (Jenkins 2006, Bruns 2008), simultaneously giving rise to notions of the end of the institutionalized cultural or arts criticism as a closed form of production, implying that the post-industrial cultural criticism is now open to everyone (Kammer 2015, McWhirther 2016). This calls for studying the versatile ways of how new cultural products are presented, assessed and judged in a wide repertoire of social media.

Discussions concerning the cultural 'produsage' (Bruns 2008) or 'prosumption' (Toffler 1980), in which ordinary users or consumers not only receive, but also actively accomplish an input of their own, have been dedicated to review blogs (Kammer 2015, Steiner 2008, 2010) and specific amateur review platforms (Verboord 2010, Frey and Sayad 2015). A predominant question in studying the new forms of reviewing is how the traditional or classical critical literary genres have been adapted to new digital platforms (Domsch 2009, Miller and Shepherd 2009). Also, social influencers or promotional reviewers have been studied (Abidin 2017, Schwemmer and Ziewiecki 2018, AUTHOR, 2019, forthcoming). Less attention, though, has been paid to the online-native or emic understanding of the genre of reviewing on social networking sites and how this transforms the audiences' – not the least



### Pre-Interview Questionnaire

What is your age?

In what country do you reside?

What is your gender?

What is your educational background (diplomas, degrees, and subjects)?

Do you create anime content part time or full time? If part time, what is your other occupation(s)?

How long have you been creating anime videos on YouTube?

How many hours a week do you typically spend making videos? How many videos do you make typically make a week?

Are you part of a team of anime content creators? If so, what are the different roles of the team?

Do you create content on other platforms? If so, what kind of content and on which platforms?

### Semi Structured Interview Questions

Question	Prompt
Why did you begin making anime videos?	Convey Reaction Aim
What were you doing before?  AND  Do you plan on doing this indefinitely?  OR  Do you want to be full time content creator?	
What kind of videos do you make?	Informative Reaction Review Lists Commentary recommendations
What are you trying to elicit from your audience?  AND  What do you get out of making videos?	
Has anitube changed while you have been making videos? How?	Kinds of videos produced Amount of people producing/watching
Is it important for you to keep up with and learn more about the anime industry and anime production? Why or why not?	Move to Japan Work fulltime Work in the industry Better videos
How do you feel about the mainstreaming of anime fandom?	Isekai



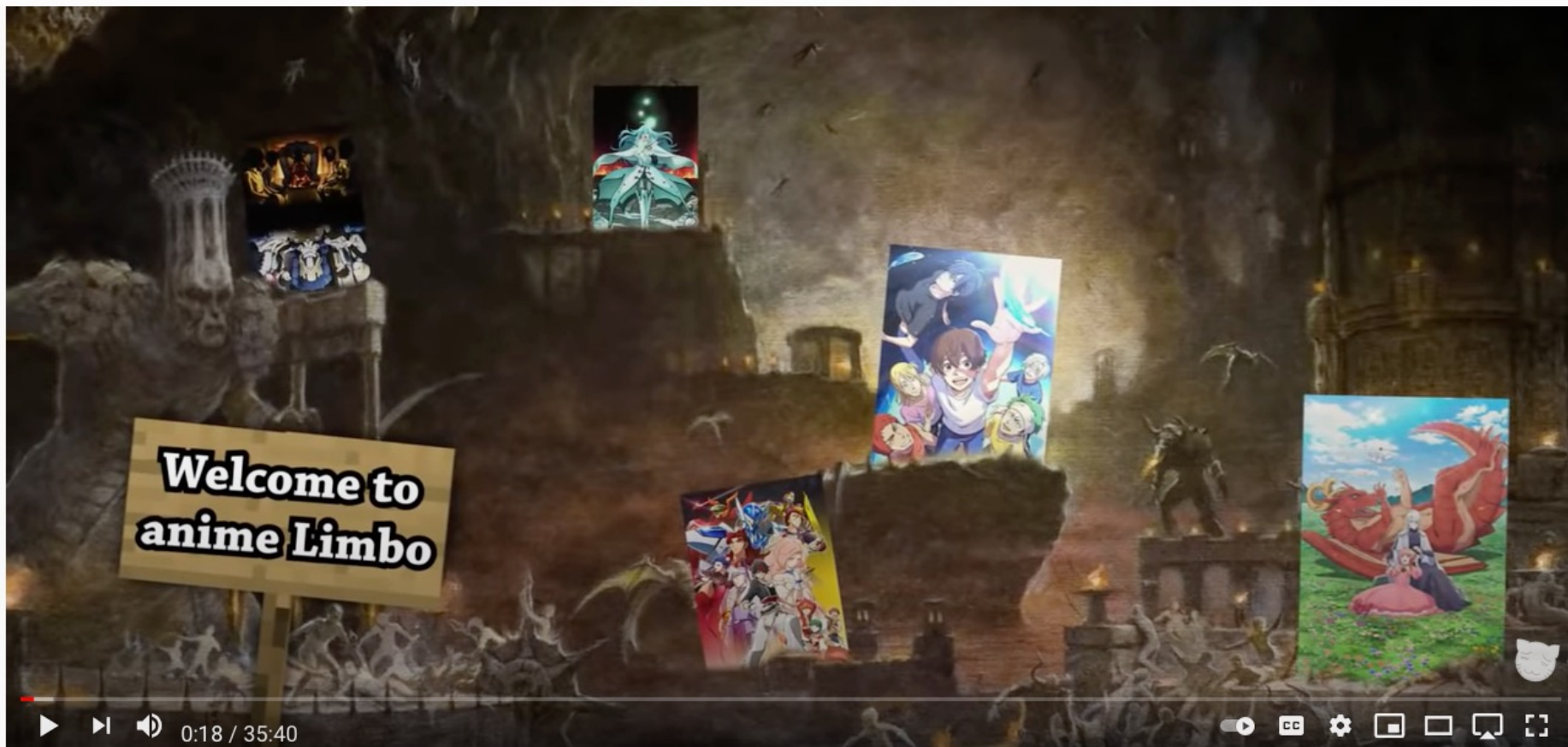
<b>Age</b>		<b>Country</b>		<b>Gender</b>		<b>Time Creating</b>	
min	21	USA	11	Male	23	min	2.5
max	39	Australia	2	Female	0	max	11
mean	25.1	UK	2	Gender Neutral	1	mean	5.1
median	22	Canada	5			median	4

	<b>Subscribers</b>	<b>Total Views</b>	<b>Total Videos</b>	<b>Work Status</b>	
min	508	50,662	22	Full	10
max	1,290,000	306,415,591	2,177	Part	10
mean	220,355	54,795,961	340	Part/full	4
median	32,200	3,966,035	103		
SD	352,678	92,687,781	543		



“One channel will do a review of literally any anime and manga that they can think of, like a separate video. That is no longer what people are looking for. Same thing with a Top ten list of basic stuff. And I think that's because more and more people are deeply involved in anime. They're not just looking for an anime to watch. They're looking for a detailed analysis, a detailed breakdown of something that they already watch and are interested in. So it's not just hey, here's my review of *Demonlayer*.”





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“Anitube is really, really, really bad at developing a flexible corpus. Anitube loves to talk about the exact same shows over and over again. There is a reason for this, because YouTube is a very, very harsh mistress when it comes to what it wants to push...I think you see that big content creators when they talk about shows that don't really have that big of an audience, you see those videos not doing as well and under-performing. And that's why you see those same people not make those videos on average. And then when they make a video about something that they care about and then they say, okay, I gotta bump this back up for the algorithm. Otherwise, YouTube thinks that I'm a dying channel.”



“If you ask me it's kind of split down the middle between people who have amassed these huge followings and then the people who haven't. There's a lot more of a kind of familial bond between those who haven't. And the very popular Anitubers kind of seem beyond their reach, I think. And that really hasn't changed since I've been in it. There's a very strong bond between the smaller creators, which is quite nice. So there's always new voices in the scene coming up. Whether or not they succeed is a different story.”







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## 'Get In The Robot' Anime Channel

CATEGORY: **TV & VIDEO: MULTIMEDIA**

TAGS: **\$ PAID** **NONUNION**

EXPIRES: June 29, 2019 7:59 AM

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### Company

**Frederator Digital**

Dan McQuade, Talent Coordinator

### Production Description

Casting hosts for "Get In The Robot," an anime YouTube channel.

Are you always caught up on the latest anime, from weird to mainstream? Can you passionately argue about subs vs. dubs? Do you ship Deku and Uraraka while encouraging them on their journey to become great heroes? If you love talking about anime (maybe a little TOO much), we want to hear from you! We're looking for hosts of all types that are engaged with and interested in anime. At the same time, our hosts love taking deeper dives into topics like design, story changes, etc.

Hosts should be flexible, energetic, and camera-ready. We're looking for hosts who can bring



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on vibe with a varied tone without overdoing the "excited anime fan" persona





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