

Analysis of Nico Nico Live in Nico Nico Douga

Literally meaning “Smile Video”, Nico Nico Douga (NND) is a video sharing website that is the thirteenth most viewed website in Japan as of September 2014 (Alexa Internet, 2014). NND has a unique function where comments are displayed on the video itself in a form of asynchronous communication. The website has also enabled Mandarin and English interfaces in order to cater to wider audiences. While NND does have many video player applications for the mobile platform, the official version is exclusively for users residing in Japan. Also, in addition to the video sharing service, NND offers other services such as communities, as well as a live broadcasting service called Nico Nico Live. In NND, users are separated into two categories, those with free membership and those with premium membership. Premium members are given priority in live broadcasts, where the number of seats available depends on the level of the community, and are also able to view broadcasts that had been held within a week, if the host had allowed it.

As shown in Figure 1, the number of registered users in NND has increased rapidly since its debut on 12 December 2006 (Nico Nico Pedia, 2014). As of September 2013, it has over 36 million registered users, of which 2.11 million users have paid for the premium membership (Dwango, 2013). In the period of July to September of year 2013, it was calculated that, on average, the play count of videos per day were about 125.95 million, with 104.5 minutes spent daily on the website, and a traffic of 8.46 million users per month (Dwango, 2013).

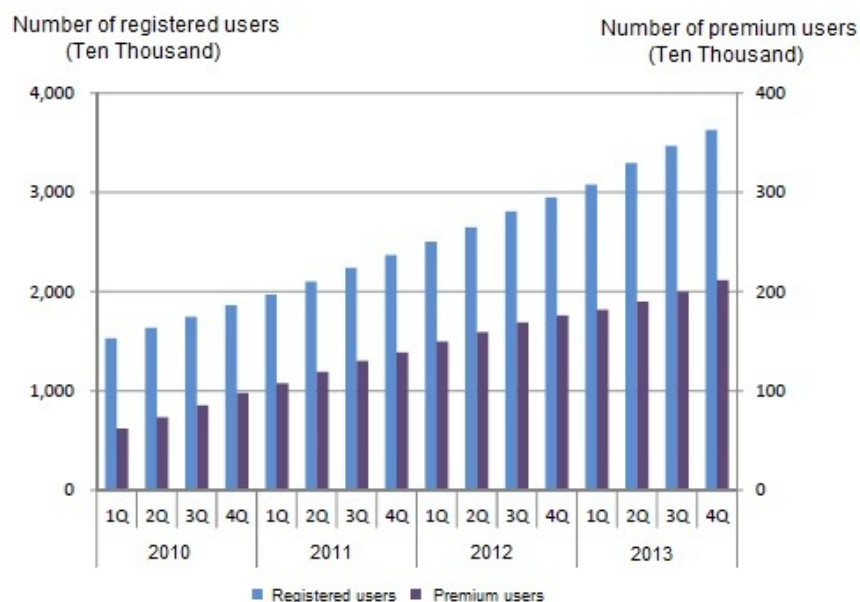


Figure 1. Changes in member registration (Dwango, 2013).

Within the same timeframe, Nico Nico Live had an average of 16.26 million broadcasts watched per day, with users spending an average of 76.7 minutes daily, and about 3.32 million people using the service per month (Dwango, 2013). As shown in Figure 2, the bulk of NND members are in their twenties, thirties and teens respectively. The percentages of consumers in their twenties did not change much from 2011 despite a jump of 13 million in account registrations (Dwango, 2011). This suggests that young adults are likely to be the main consumers of NND.

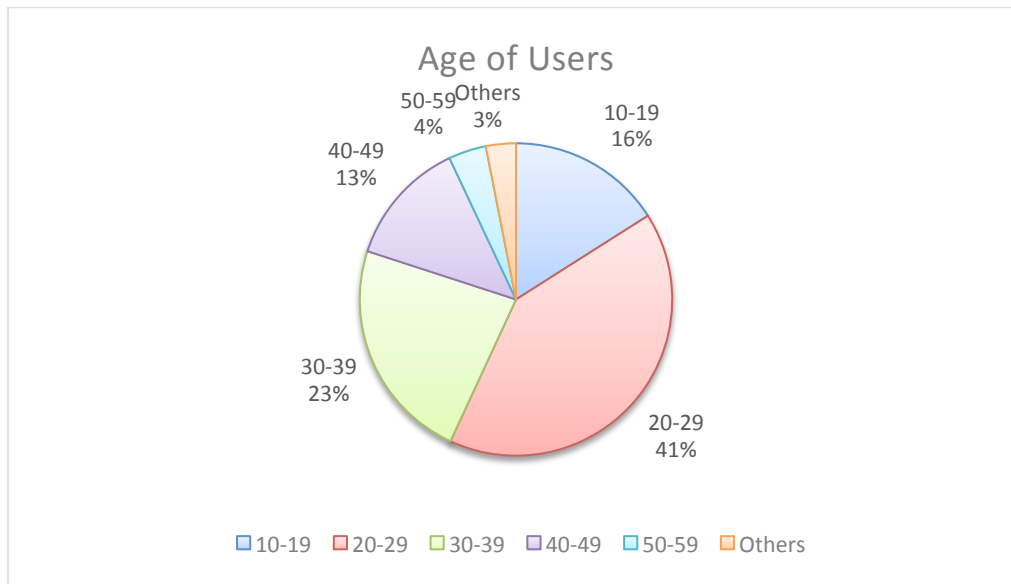


Figure 2. Age of Users (Dwango, 2013).

Nico Nico Douga has a variety of affiliates to suit the many needs of its users. Ranging from Nico Nico Pedia, a dictionary site for definitions concerning the Nico Nico franchise, to Nico Nico Appli, a gaming platform, and Niconi Commons, where users can share items such as their song creation or cover with the public and allow them to be used as materials for creating Manga Anime Doujinshi (MAD) videos.

Much research on Nico Nico Douga have discussed its asynchronous comment feature, where even though the timeframe of their comments differ, watching the video playback with all those comments gives one a sense of unity because it feels as though everyone is watching the video at the same time (Kawai, Shizuki and Tanaka, 2008; Oono, 2010; Kamei, Toyota and Kushida, 2012). However, this can be both a good and a bad thing. Oono (2010) argues that should a comment not fit the general atmosphere of the video, other users may criticize the comment and a comment war may start on the video. In fact, this has happened

with videos of singers who cover an original song. It takes just a few comments that another person has a better cover for the situation to spiral to uncontrollable degrees. However, this has been mostly manageable due to the comment deletion function. An interesting study by Uchiyama (2010) analyzed the Japanese used in 2channel and NND, and noted that 2channel had influenced the Japanese used in NND. He then discovered that orthographical category had the most expressions, followed by those of vocabulary, such as abbreviations, and style, with baby talk and emoticons as examples (Uchiyama, 2010). Orthographical expressions ranged from errors, intentional or accidental, to the use of half-width characters, symbols, and numbers (Uchiyama, 2010).

While the live broadcasting service, Nico Nico Live, will be compared to speech and text in this paper, the video sharing and community service of NND will be primarily introduced as Nico Nico Live contains the features of the video sharing service, and the community service is required for viewing some live broadcasts.



Figure 3. Screenshot of Nico Nico Douga.

The video sharing service of NND allows users to freely express themselves. As shown in Figure 3, users are able to comment on the video through the use of Japanese emoticons, symbols and words. Users are also able to customize their comments through choices such as font size, comment location and time on video, as well as color. In addition, users are able to add tags onto the video and delete offensive comments as well. The video player also has

settings that allow the different language speakers of English, Chinese and Japanese to post their comments in their own language community.

While some live broadcasts are viewable to everyone, others such as those hosted by users, only becomes available after one has joined the host's community. Community pages usually consist of a profile space and a message board. The community profile usually has some eye-catching graphics and information about the host, such as their song covers, CD debuts, contact information and a friend's list. The language used for these information tends to be casual with a tendency to use exclamation marks to convey excitement. However, some hosts do set ground rules for their listeners and fans to follow, which tends to be in a more formal language due to their serious content. The community message board is often only used when a new community member decides to inform the host that he has joined the community, and the posts rarely goes beyond four lines.

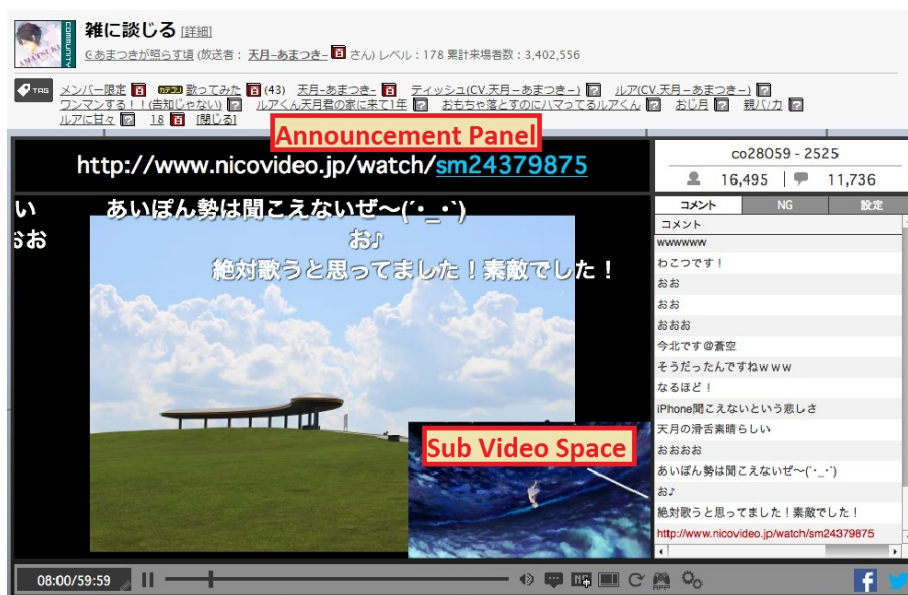


Figure 4. Screenshot of Nico Nico Live.

In addition to the aforementioned features of the video sharing service, Nico Nico Live has four additional features. When used, the announcement panel replaces the original Nico Nico Douga logo in the video player as shown in Figure 4. As the name suggests, it is used when the host has an announcement to make, usually announcing a link to their website or uploaded video, asking questions for the survey feature, or to communicate with guests if there is a problem with the sound. The survey feature usually contains at least two choices for the listeners to pick. After a certain period of time, the votes are tabulated and scores are

shown as percentages. The third additional feature is the sub video space. These features are often used to promote a video uploaded by the host, like a song cover for instance. Occasionally, the host may video call another person during their live broadcast and, depending on the guest, the person's face will appear in the box instead. The final feature is timeshifting. Timeshifting allows users to watch the broadcast when users are next available during a seven day period. Premium users are able to watch any broadcast that the host has allowed to be timeshifted without prior booking for seven days.

In order to compare Nico Nico Live against both speech and text, seven properties introduced by Crystal (2006, Ch 3–6) has been used. The results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Seven properties of speech and text by Crystal (2006, Ch 3–6).

Speech like	Text Like
Time-bound	Space-bound*
Spontaneous	Contrived*
Face-to-face	Visually decontextualized
Loosely structured	Elaborately structured
Socially interactive	Factually communicative
Immediately revisable*	Repeatedly revisable
Prosodically rich*	Graphically rich

Firstly, Nico Nico Live is time-bound as both the host and the listeners have to be present during the live broadcast in order for communication to occur. However, it is also space-bound as the host does not know the identity of most of his listeners, and those listeners do not know who the other listeners are when they are commenting on the live broadcast. Although the main partner of communication for listeners in a live broadcast is with the host, there is often comment interaction between the listeners as well. For example, a listener may answer a question that another listener has.

Next, live broadcasts by themselves are spontaneous. There is hardly any time lag between the host speaking and the various comments by listeners. Due to this near instantaneous speed of responses, the lengths of comments are usually short. As the interaction is in real time, if one types a really long comment, the moment will be over and the comment will seem

irrelevant. It is likely due to this reason that users in NND use a wide range of orthographical, vocabulary and style categories such as those found by Uchiyama (2010). Also, as Japanese people hold most, if not all, live broadcasts in the Japanese language, it is often frowned upon in the community to post comments in English. For instance, posting comments such as “I have no idea what he just said” will gather criticism from other commenters, asking why the person is there in the first place if they cannot understand Japanese. Some live broadcasts have an element of the contrived property on Nico Nico Live due to the feature of timeshifting. Hosts cannot edit the video that they have made available for timeshifting, although they can remove it. Thus, the hosts often take care not to release any sensitive information, or do something embarrassing during broadcasts if they want to allow timeshifting.

Following, while some hosts allow themselves to be shown during a live broadcast, they usually have no visual contact with their vast number of listeners. As such, it is said that Nico Nico Live has a visually decontextualized property. However, as this happens during real time for a number of listeners, if the meaning that the host wants to convey is unclear, they can ask for clarification through comments.

Interaction between the host and his listeners in Nico Nico Live tend to be loosely structured. A live broadcast hosted by a single person tends to switch between formal and informal language use. For instance, when speaking of events, in which the host is an amateur singer, polite Japanese tends to be utilized. When speaking about the hosts’ friends and family members however, informal Japanese language is used. For broadcasts held by two or more people, depending on gender and personality, the atmosphere is more relaxed and nonsense vocabulary, slang and even the occasional curse words may be used in speech. Commenters, on the other hand, tend to stay in the border between formal and informal language as there is an unspoken obligation to remain polite to the hosts.

The Nico Nico Live medium is also socially interactive. The different genres of live broadcasts each promote their own brand of social interaction with the host. The most frequent broadcast genres are of gaming, talking, and singing. Gaming broadcasts allows the listener to feel as though they are playing the game together with the host, while singing broadcasts allows input from listeners as to song suggestions. Talking broadcasts are perhaps the most interactive of all, as listeners are able to ask the host questions and comment on his thoughts. Live broadcasts always start with the commenters congratulating the host and getting the live

broadcast timeslot while the host often greets his listeners. Likewise, at the end of the live broadcast, listeners thank the host for his hard work and claps for him through the numbers “888888”.

Hosts and commenters alike are able to immediately revise their utterance as they see or hear what the other party says. Interruptions in the form of overlapping comments are frequent and can be very distracting as well. Hosts in particular sometimes cut themselves off in speech to follow another line of thought provided by their listeners.

Finally, Nico Nico Live is both prosodically and graphically rich as the hosts can make use of voice intonation, loudness, pause and so on to convey a variety of emotions while commenters can make use of any and all designs in text and colors available to express themselves, such as using musical notes as background comments when the host is singing.

Nico Nico Douga has created a platform for a more bonded online society. They have their own net language and netiquette that if not upheld, may cause the individual to be frowned upon. Such netiquette and net language has been observed, catalogued and made available in English, Chinese and Japanese fansites. During physical live concerts as well, such as Nico Nico Chokaigi, Nico Nico Live has been used in a way that internet users from all over the world are able to view and comment real time on the concert itself. These comments are actually laced across the concert screens.

An effect of the medium on society is such that even normal people can become distinctively famous across the world. Game players become renowned and many people follow them on twitter. Amateur singers hold live performances at many places, some even overseas, and can form official bands together, and debut into the music industry. Also, a well-known song composer on NND has had their own anime produced (Anime News Network, 2013) due to their popular songs. In addition, Nico Nico Chokaigi, which is held every year, invites amateur dancers, singers and gamers to participate in their concert.

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