

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANIME CULTURE ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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Abstract : Presenting the impact of manga and anime products in the current economical environment, this article reviews the state of knowledge in the field and aims to highlight the appropriate market segment.

The importance of the anime culture for the economy and the ability of the comic image to overcome the cultural barriers are the two goals that we want to highlight here. Consequently, the need for the optimal strategies, to promote the manga and anime products on the Romanian market.

An example of this is the Nijikon Convention, one of the biggest media event of "pop culture" in Romania.

Key words: anime, culture, cosplay, doujinshi, economy

Introduction

The marketing environment is specific to each country, the marketers are forced to develop different studies in the research field, on the promotion, distribution, price, products and markets. Specialists say that the consumer behavior is an interdisciplinary science, which borrowed concepts developed in other scientific disciplines. The components of the consumer behavior are: seller, buyer, transmitting information from the buyer to the seller, the seller of information processing, the consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Danciu, 2001).



Figure 1. *Nijikon in Romania(2015). Source: author's.*

We are all tributaries to our own culture and often overlook the behavior patterns that determine the manner and means by which we are influenced. Anyone who has had contact with a civilization that is clearly distinguishable from that in which he is part, immediately notices the significant cultural differences between the structure and the behavior of the individuals in that civilization. Not only the language, values and habits are outstanding, but how to interpret the data of the reality and the behavior (Dinu, 2007).

The significant differences between cultures can be found in the system of values, beliefs and behavior patterns which an individual is used throughout its existence, with aid of the language, stories, myths and its own observations about the behavior of the others. Many values and beliefs are relatively permanent cultural issues, even if they change with the passage of time because of the social changes.

Linguistic and cultural skills acquired constitute a "symbolic capital" represented by the cultural preferences, the manifested myths that we believe in, the values we accept. This "symbolic capital" can become a premise of the persuasive process, meaning that the agent correlates his arguments and his persuasive proposals with the recognized amounts. Consequently, every individual is educated in some certain cultural patterns that constitute its essence and imposing rules that govern all his actions, rules at which every individual reacts instinctively, without acknowledging their existence. The cultural premise is based on education and the persuasive agents use discreetly and inspired this premise, since it expresses the greatest confidence.

The paper contains four chapters as follows:

- 1. Emergence and Development**
- 2. Correspondence between cultures**
- 3. Transmission . Crossing the cultural barriers**
- 4. Events in Romania**

1. Emergence and Development

In case of the campaigns for a new product, one of the first binding sequences becomes the structuring of an identity in the minds of the consumers and the potential converts. Many products offer a *graphic symbol* or a *logo* to make the desired identification in the public mind.

Ensuring the legitimacy is another important sequence when talking about promoting a product. The products prove their legitimacy in different ways, one of which is proving the efficiency. Devoted adhesion helps also to prove the products legitimacy and the demonstrations reinforce the legitimacy by emphasizing efficiency in solving consumer problems. Brands acquire their legitimacy through association with a good cause, as it happens in the situations where the various manifestations of a community are sponsored by them.

Anime have emerged, being structured and identified in the minds of the consumers through their own artistic language (Denison, 2010) and the treatment of complex subjects.

They also have influenced and inspired western writers, as a result, many of the existing themes and reasons in anime can be seen in the western culture. In addition, many products derived from anime made their way to the western market, such as: "Pokemon" figurines, and, recently, "Hello Kitty" branded products (Lamerichs, 2013).

In the context of globalization, this culture makes more and more its presence known, in the world. For this reason, we believe it is important to analyze the cultural and economic flows caused by the anime phenomenon, and the patterns of behavior of its fans. Such a study can show the benefits of accommodating this culture in an existing cultural context, and the economic and social benefits which may derive from this (Acuff, 1999).

"Anime" is a generic term that represents all the animations produced in Japan. For the Japanese, anime is a term that defines all the worldwide produced animations. In this paper, we use the term in the first of these conceptual approaches. Anime differs from the other animation by its specific artistic features and the richness of themes (Steiff, 2010).

2. Correspondence between cultures

The "anime" culture draws for its fans some milestones, targets that we intend to present and widely analyze. These milestones promotes a cultural identity, which we see reflected indirectly in many successful cinematographic

creations. The best known such creation is the movie "Matrix", whose subject, few know, has as the main source of inspiration, the anime film "Ghost in the Shell", alongside other animes, such as: "Mega Zone 23 ", " Dragonball Z "(Clements, McCarthy, 2010).

Although it is the most relevant example in this sense, it is not the only one. It can be said that taking a part of the anime motifs and themes that have served them as inspiration, many successful contemporary Hollywood movies bring to the public some of these reasons. So, the consumer mainstream movies, can take part in the cultural identity created by the anime without having awareness of this (Patten, 2004).

The "anime" culture as a product of the post-Hiroshima Japanese culture, having at first only slightly influences of the traditional art of the Japanese, has matured into a virtual environment, characterized by an specific artistic style, taking motifs and themes from the literature and the universal culture, along with reasons and specific topics, achieving, most often, social allegories and even answers to some of the contemporary social problems.

3. Transmission . Crossing the cultural barriers

The anime culture created two of its fans cultural events, events that have produced significant consequences, both economic as well as social, namely "doujinshi" and "cosplay".

In a simplistic perspective, "doujinshi" represents works of fiction in the form of texts and comics, made by fans inspired from anime, and more recently, from manga sites. As a result, the filmmakers of "doujinshi" can be artists, writers, or simply fans, which are expressing through these artistic creations.

The first meeting of the creators of "doujinshi" was held in Japan, in 1975, in Tokyo, at a convention called Comiket. At this Comiket have participated 32 artistic groups and approximately 700 participants. Currently, the convention takes place twice a year in Tokyo, and about half a million visitors participate at each edition, some of them are not Japanese, so they come to this event from all parts of the world. The magnitude of "doujinshi" gave rise in the world to other events related with Comiket.

The first size is Otakon, in America, where, in addition to the works of fiction made in manga style, you may notice a new hybrid form of art, combining the manga style with the classic Western style (Napier, 2007). In this case, we can see the emergence of a new product, born from the encounter of two cultures, one considered from Western specifics, the other coming from the Japanese culture (Jenkins, 2006).

The meeting between the classical art and the characteristic style of manga and anime, can be considered, from the Western perspective, as the meeting between a mass culture and a classical one, resulting in a form of a new art, which could generate in a possible future, its own adjacent culture.

The "doujinshi" phenomenon begins to manifest in European countries such as Germany, England, Holland, France, where they are already taking steps to accommodate this phenomenon into the social and economic environment.

In Europe, there was the emergence of a subsidiary trend of the "doujinshi" phenomenon namely, works of original fiction, created by the independent artists, in manga style, because many anime and manga Japanese sites are not known throughout Europe, although the TV series like Pokemon, Dragonball Z and Sailormoon have already formed communities of fans, and the products derived from them have experienced significant sales.

A second form of manifestation of the anime culture is the "cosplay" phenomenon. Initially inspired by the "science fiction" conventions of the StarTrek series fans from America, where its fans wore costumed similarly or identically as the characters in the series, the phenomenon of "cosplay" has taken different dimensions and its own personality only after being picked up by the Japanese.

The term "cosplay" was first defined, officially, by the Japanese game designer Nobuyuki Takahashi, who observed the habits of the American fans, during his visit to the United States (Steinberg, 2012).

Although the "cosplay" outfits are worn especially at events and conventions, they have become an indispensable accessory in a new form of photography, more than that, they began to influence some current fashion trends.

Due to the size of this phenomenon, in Japan, they were even established rules of conduct for the "cosplay" business. It takes place in special locations, and the participants are not allowed to wear their costumes on the street.

In Comiket they are made available to participants, booths and storing clothing customary to change in the specially designed "cosplay" outfits. Use of these cabins fee is 800 yen per person.

In America, Germany, and other countries(Figure 2) in which this phenomenon occurs, there are not rules in this regard, yet.



Figure 2. Nijikon in Romania (2013). Source: nijikon.ro

There are also "cosplay" competitions, both in Japan and in America and Europe, with national and international participation, in which participants compete in accurate costumes of their own creation, and how appropriate their behavior resembles with the chosen character. Where the competitions are not formally organized, they are carried out online, via the social sites, especially Facebook, but also through some specialized sites such as *cosplay.com*. (Ito, 2012)

4. Events in Romania

In our country, the first edition of the convention was held in October 2007, at the National Museum of Contemporary Art. The event managed to attract about 1,500 visitors, enough to allow the organization of another edition, next year, in a more professional manner.

Over the years, Nijikon held in the Children's Palace, the Turbohalle, and this year took place at Crystal Palace Ballrooms (Figure 3), enrolling over 3000 square meters of exhibition and presentation for about 4,000 visitors.



Figure 3. Poster Nijikon Romania 2015. Source: www.facebook.com/nijikonromania/

Nijikon is one of the largest manifestations of *pop culture* in Romania. Its purpose is to gather the anime fans from all over the country, attracting manufacturers, distributors and operators in the field.

The age targeted by this event is between 12-30 years. Although the beginning of the event is the Japanese *pop culture*, especially anime and manga, the event addresses also to the lovers of comics, video games, movies(Figure 4):



Figure 4. Source: nijikon.ro

The organizers and researchers in the field of marketing are directly interested in the study of all the significant informations, in order to promote the anime products, using the research data. They also study the existing marketing strategies in US, France, Germany, and other countries, in order to achieve the most appropriate strategies for the Romanian market of the anime and manga products.

Conclusions

From these observations we conclude that the phenomenon called "cosplay" is not identically manifested wherever met. When this cultural event meets and interacts with an existing cultural framework, the results can be different, and also the perception of this event. These cultural interactions are of a particular importance, because, as we noted, it may appear new economic and cultural perspectives.

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