

# Research on Consumer Behavior and Loyalty in the Japanese Anime Industry

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**Abstract:** *This study focuses on the issue of consumer behavior and loyalty in the Japanese anime industry, aiming to deeply analyze the various factors that affect the loyalty of anime consumers, and explore the role of brand culture, emotional identification and fan economy in this process. Through literature review and case study, the study found that the loyalty of anime consumers is not only due to their love for the works, but also driven by brand culture and emotional resonance. Through long-term interaction with brands, fan groups have formed a deep emotional dependence, enabling anime brands to maintain a high market share worldwide. Anime works represented by "One Piece" and "Demon Slayer" show how brands can enhance consumers' brand loyalty by shaping unique cultural values and emotional connections. Research shows that fan economy plays a key role in promoting consumer loyalty, while brand culture and emotional identification are the core driving force behind this phenomenon. Through the analysis of these successful cases, this paper provides practical guidance for the animation industry and a new research framework for the academic community, further enriching the theoretical system of consumer behavior and brand loyalty.*

**Keywords:** Japanese animation industry; Consumer behavior; Loyalty; Brand culture; Fan economy.

## 1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Background Issues at the Social Level

The Japanese animation industry has developed rapidly since the end of the 20th century, especially its cultural influence has been increasing worldwide. With the process of globalization, Japanese animation has not only become an important form of export of Japanese culture, but has also gradually penetrated into all parts of the world, affecting the cultural and entertainment markets of many countries and regions [1]. According to the research of some scholars, as an important part of global cultural products, the success of Japanese animation in markets such as Europe, America, Southeast Asia and China marks the rise of this industry in the global entertainment industry. The globalization of the industry has promoted the integration of Japanese culture with the culture of other parts of the world and promoted cross-cultural exchanges, especially among young people. Japanese animation has become an important element of cultural identity for young people around the world. With the globalization of the animation industry, especially in the Internet era, the younger generation has gradually become its main consumer group. Animation is no longer just a simple form of entertainment. It has gradually become a part of cultural identity, affecting young people's values, aesthetics and lifestyles. Some scholars pointed out that the impact of the animation industry on young people's consumption behavior is not only reflected in content consumption, but also more profoundly reflected in the surge in secondary consumption such as animation peripherals and Cosplay [2].

The emotional resonance created by animation has made it an important carrier of global youth culture, further promoting the diversification and globalization of related industrial chains. As the Japanese animation industry gradually grows and develops, consumer loyalty to brands and content has become increasingly important. Loyalty is not only reflected in the love of animation works themselves, but also in the purchase of derivatives and the recognition of brand culture [3]. Some scholars point out that with the rise of fan economy, the loyalty effect of the animation industry has not only promoted consumer behavior, but also reversely promoted the changes in social consumption culture. The improvement of loyalty makes consumers stickier to brand culture and promotes the long-term development of the cultural industry.

### 1.2 Academic Background and Research Status

In recent years, the research on consumer behavior in the animation industry has gradually increased. Scholars have explored the impact of factors such as consumer purchase decision-making process, emotional dependence, and cultural identity on the animation industry from multiple perspectives. Some scholars point out that consumer behavior in the animation industry shows obvious diversity and regionality, especially cross-border cultural

exchanges make consumer preferences vary greatly between different regions. In addition, with the rise of fan culture, consumers' emotional dependence and influence are becoming more and more significant. Research shows that the emotional value of the brand, the continuous innovation of the work, and the interactive relationship with fans have become key factors affecting consumer loyalty [4].

Loyalty and brand culture have always been important research topics in the entertainment industry, especially in the animation industry. The combination of the two has a profound impact on consumer behavior. Some scholars have proposed that brand culture not only shapes consumers' value recognition, but also determines their long-term consumption behavior. The brand culture of the animation industry has formed a strong consumer loyalty with fans through its unique narrative method and visual style. Research shows that the depth of brand culture and the quality of animation works directly affect consumers' purchasing decisions and continued participation [5].

Domestic and foreign scholars have done a lot of research on consumer behavior and loyalty in the animation industry, but there are also certain differences. Foreign research focuses more on cross-cultural comparisons of marketing, brand culture and consumer loyalty. For example, Brown et al. (2021) explored the differences in consumer loyalty to animation brands in different countries. In contrast, domestic research focuses more on the relationship between animation and cultural identity, emotional marketing, and especially how to achieve loyalty. For example, the study by Li et al. (2020) pointed out that brand culture construction and emotional dependence of fan groups in the animation industry are important factors in improving loyalty [6]. This cultural difference provides different perspectives for domestic and foreign academic circles and promotes the diversified development of this field.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 Main Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to deeply explore the characteristics and development trends of consumer behavior in the Japanese animation industry, especially the consumer loyalty factor. By analyzing the behavior patterns of different consumer groups, revealing their purchase decisions and loyalty motivations, and providing data support and theoretical basis for the marketing strategy of the animation industry. In addition, the study will also deeply explore the role of brand culture and fan economy in the formation of consumer loyalty, and further clarify the market demand and development direction of the animation industry.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

The core issues of this study are mainly focused on the main patterns of consumer behavior and their motivations in the Japanese animation industry, especially the factors that form loyalty. The study will explore the differences in loyalty among different consumer groups and analyze the key factors that affect loyalty, such as brand culture, emotional resonance and fan economy. In addition, it will also explore how to improve consumer loyalty through effective marketing strategies, thereby promoting the sustainable development of the industry.

### **2.3 Importance and Practical Application of the Study**

This study not only provides a systematic consumer behavior analysis framework for the animation industry, but also provides theoretical support for related companies to formulate precise market strategies. By deeply understanding the composition of consumer loyalty, companies can effectively improve brand stickiness and expand market share. In addition, the research results have important practical application value for promoting the dominant position of the animation industry in global competition, optimizing the layout of the industrial chain and improving the economic benefits of the industry.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

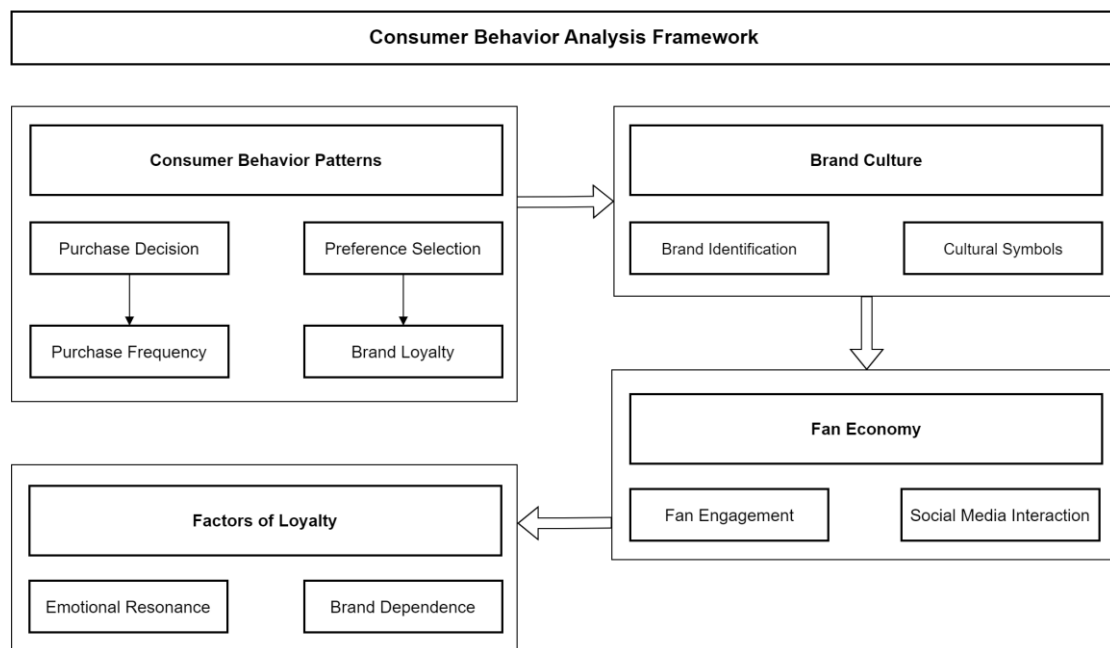
### **3.1 Literature Review**

By analyzing relevant literature, this study will explore the main topics, research methods and shortcomings of current research. The existing literature mainly focuses on two aspects: one is the characteristics of consumer behavior, and the other is the formation and maintenance of loyalty.

First, regarding the study of consumer behavior, scholars generally believe that the consumer behavior of the Japanese animation industry is unique. Unlike the traditional consumer market, the purchasing decisions of animation consumers are often deeply influenced by emotions and cultural identity [7]. Consumers' loyalty to animation brands is not only based on product quality or price considerations, but is more shaped by emotional dependence and brand culture. For example, some anime works form strong brand loyalty through emotional resonance with consumers. Fan groups not only participate in the consumption of works, but also actively participate in the construction and dissemination of brand culture [8]. In addition, the rise of fan economy in the animation industry is also an important direction of current research. Fans are not just simple consumers, but more of a promoter of brand communication. Through social platforms, fan communities, fan creations, etc., fan groups have formed a deep identification with anime brands, greatly enhancing brand loyalty [9].

Secondly, regarding the study of consumer loyalty, many scholars have explored the formation mechanism of loyalty from the perspective of brand culture and emotional identification. Brand culture encourages consumers to have long-term dependence on brands by providing unique cultural values and emotional connections [10]. For example, some anime brands have created strong emotional resonance through carefully designed character settings, storylines, and worldview construction, which has made consumers deeply loyal to the brand. This emotional connection is not only reflected in purchasing behavior, but also in the continuous participation and emotional support of fans [11].

However, existing research also has some limitations. On the one hand, most studies focus on the Japanese domestic market, lacking analysis of consumer behavior differences in the global market, especially in other parts of Asia and the European and American markets. On the other hand, existing research tends to be quantitative, lacking exploration of the underlying motivations behind consumer behavior. For example, the specific role of factors such as emotional identification and cultural identification in the animation industry has not been fully revealed. In addition, there is relatively little discussion in existing literature on how brand culture can enhance consumer loyalty through precise marketing strategies [12].



**Figure1:** Consumer Behavior Analysis Framework in the Japanese Anime Industry

Figure1 represents the key factors that influence consumer behavior and loyalty in the Japanese anime industry. The framework highlights how consumer behavior patterns, loyalty factors, brand culture, and fan economy all interact and contribute to the development of brand loyalty, with special emphasis on emotional connections, brand identification, and fan engagement [13].

### 3.2 Case Study

In the case study section, this study will analyze several typical anime brands or works to explore the specific manifestations and formation mechanisms of consumer loyalty. By selecting some anime brands with outstanding

market performance and a large fan base, this study aims to reveal the multiple factors that affect consumer loyalty and provide practical marketing strategy references for the anime industry.

This study selected "One Piece" as a typical case. "One Piece", which has been serialized since 1999, has successfully attracted fans around the world with its rich plot, unique character settings and grand worldview. Through the analysis of fan communities, it can be found that fans' loyalty to the "One Piece" brand is not only reflected in consumer behaviors such as buying comics, peripheral products or watching animations, but also in long-term emotional dependence and brand recognition [14]. Fans not only actively participate in the dissemination of the brand, but also interact with other fans through social media to share their understanding and emotional identification of the work. Brands further deepen this emotional dependence by organizing online and offline fan activities, thereby increasing consumer loyalty. This case shows that anime brands can significantly enhance consumer loyalty through emotional resonance and fan interaction [15].



Figure 2: Changes in sales of Bandai's One Piece peripheral products in each quarter

The case shows that anime brands can significantly enhance consumer loyalty through emotional resonance and fan interaction. In fact, the fan base of "One Piece" is huge and enthusiastic, with more than 3.2 billion fans worldwide and more than 100,000 fans supporting it every month in Japan. On social media, the number of fans of "One Piece" 's social accounts has exceeded 1.036 million, and fans actively participate in discussions and interactions, further deepening their sense of identity and emotional dependence on the brand [6]. In addition, the derivative product market of "One Piece" is also very active, with sales of derivative products in Japan reaching 21.7 billion yen in the first half of 2023 (Figure 2), of which the popularity of the animated film "One Piece: Red-haired Diva" and the hot sales of OPGC cards are the main driving factors. These data fully prove that the loyalty of "One Piece" fans to the brand is not only reflected in emotions, but also reflected in actual consumption behavior [16].

Another case is "Demon Slayer". Since its launch in 2019, this work has quickly become a hotly discussed anime brand in the world. In particular, its animated film Demon Slayer: Mugen Train has attracted a large number of fans with its touching plot, exquisite pictures and delicate emotional expression. Through the analysis of fan behavior, the study found that fans' loyalty to Demon Slayer is not only related to the attractiveness of its plot, but also closely related to the emotional value conveyed by the brand. For example, the themes of "family", "sacrifice" and "growth" shown in the work have aroused emotional resonance among fans around the world. Fans expressed their deep identification with the work by purchasing movie tickets, peripheral products, participating in online activities, etc. This emotional resonance further strengthened fans' loyalty to the brand.

## 4. CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Research Summary

This study, through an in-depth discussion of consumer behavior and loyalty in the Japanese animation industry, reveals the uniqueness of consumer behavior in the animation industry and the multiple factors that form its loyalty. The study found that the behavior of animation consumers is not only attracted by the product itself, but also deeply influenced by brand culture and emotional resonance. Especially in the context of fan economy, the loyalty of animation consumers is often manifested as emotional dependence and cultural identification on the brand, which far exceeds the simple purchasing behavior in the traditional consumer market. In addition, brands have established long-term interactive relationships with consumers through emotional connections and cultural construction, thereby enhancing consumer loyalty. Cases represented by "One Piece" and "Demon Slayer" show that brand culture and fan participation have not only promoted the continued growth of the animation industry, but also shaped the loyalty formation mechanism in the context of globalization.

Nevertheless, the study also reveals the limitations of current research on consumer behavior in the animation industry. Existing literature has to some extent ignored the cultural differences in consumer behavior from a global perspective, especially the differences in other Asian regions and European and American markets. Although the research on the Japanese domestic market is relatively rich, the exploration of the relationship between consumer behavior differences, cultural identity and brand loyalty on a global scale is still insufficient. Therefore, on this basis, this study proposes the necessity of incorporating a global perspective into the research, aiming to provide new ideas and methods for future research.

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