

The Influence of the Anime Industry's Growth on China-Japanese Cultural Interactions

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Abstract. With the increasingly obvious trend of globalization and the continuous progress of productivity promoting people's spiritual needs, cultural integration is flourishing, and animation has also become one of the important ways. The animation industries of many countries, such as China, the United States, and Japan, have gradually come into the view of each country. Meanwhile, their animation exchanges have certain influences on their economies, cultures and even military affairs. The main research method of this study is through literature review and case analysis, aiming to explore the influence of animation on China and Japan in many aspects such as economy, culture and history. It is hoped that this study can provide an additional way for cultural exchanges between the two countries, which is animation.

Keywords: Animation, Economy, Cultural exchange, Globalization

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of productivity, people pay more attention to the satisfaction at the spiritual level. When walking through the streets and alleys of Shanghai, one can see anime-related stores everywhere. Even in some boutiques and stores, anime-related products are on sale. This shows that anime is deeply loved by people, especially the younger generation. And a large part of these anime comes from Japanese and domestic IPs in China. The generation born in the millennium has been deeply influenced by Japanese anime, such as Doraemon with an all-purpose pocket, the cute and naughty crayon Shin-chan, and the intelligent and smart Detective Conan. Young people have always been influenced by Japanese anime and have learned about Japanese culture imperceptibly, such as Tsuchiya and carp flags. Moreover, based on the huge market scale and the influence of the animation industry, many classic characters of Japanese animation are well-known worldwide, thereby shaping a new image of Japan internationally [1]. At the same time, the most obvious sign of the animation industry chain is the peripheral products. Many people do not understand why a tinplate brand can be sold for tens or even tens of thousands of yuan, yet there are still many people flocking to it. This is the energy brought by IP. Although China's animation industry started relatively late, it has flourished in recent years. As a pillar of the cultural industry, animation holds a position that cannot be underestimated in China's cultural industry. As early as 2011, the total duration of animation production in China had surpassed that of some major animation countries around the world, becoming the world's number one. With the continuous

enhancement of China's social and economic strength, the development scale of China's animation industry is constantly expanding, and the quality of animation products is also constantly improving. In 2019, China's online animation industry reached 18.42 billion yuan. In 2020, the total output value of China's animation industry reached 217.2 billion yuan [2]. It can be seen from this that the impact of animation on the economy is also huge.

By reading the works of many scholars, one can see the influence of animation on a country's culture, economy and the world. Scholar Yang Yuwei proposed that the animation cultures of China and Japan have always been in the process of recognition and assimilation, adaptation and resistance, and at the same time have a huge impact on the world [3].

This research mainly studies the influence of animation on the impressions of China and Japan through a literature review and case analysis. To a certain extent, it has contributed to the research in this field and is expected to provide some referential suggestions.

2. The influence of animation on the cultures of the two countries

Culture plays a huge role in life. It can not only lead the trend and educate the people, but also enhance international influence and elevate international status by spreading excellent culture. With the rapid development of the Internet in recent years, animation has become an important way to disseminate and promote culture.

In fact, anime as a medium for spreading culture is not a new concept. Japan has long been exporting its culture through anime. Japan's anime culture is renowned worldwide, mainly due to its early start. Japanese anime began to take shape as early as the beginning of the 20th century and flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. The manga artist Osamu Tezuka created the globally popular anime character Astro Boy, which became the childhood of many Chinese people born in the 1970s. By the 21st century, the Japanese animation industry had become highly mature. Every year, a large number of animations were introduced to China, and many teenagers were deeply involved.

Through various Japanese anime, audiences can learn about their culture, such as sitting on the floor when eating, lying on the ground when sleeping, and being very fond of restraining themselves.

However, cultures are all self-centered. In the early stage of cultural contact, each culture considers itself superior to the other. In a prolonged cultural conflict, the ideas of the powerful party will be preserved and passed on [3]. In view of this situation, when both sides understand each other's cultures, they should set aside prejudices and put themselves in each other's shoes to love and appreciate each other's cultures. And animation precisely has the role of reducing historical stereotypes and promoting culture in a way that people can accept and even love.

Looking at Chinese animation again, the "Journey to the West" animation, which was aired in 1999, integrated the four Great Classical Novels of China into the animation and presented the Taoist and Buddhist cultures of China through the form of animation. This anime not only vividly portrays the characters but also reflects the spiritual core of the Chinese people since ancient times. The critical spirit that everything has two sides is also embodied in it. When this anime was released, it was at a time when Japanese anime was in the limelight. To stand out among the mature and sophisticated Japanese anime, it was not only due to its meticulous animation production techniques, but also because of its unique cultural core that is exclusive to the Eastern country from ancient times to the present. At the same time, this anime has been exported overseas, and people in various countries have praised it, which has sparked their strong interest in exploring Chinese culture. Moreover, the cross-century handshake between Astro Boy and Sun Wukong has promoted a turning point in the relations between China and Japan, and they have been steadily improving.

The box office of the hit film "Nezha: The Demon Child's Uproar in the Sea" at the beginning of 2025 has been soaring. Movie fans all over the world are not only moved by Nezha's righteous friendship but also shocked by the profound cultural connotations it contains. The Yuxu Palace of Taoism in China is entirely crafted from Hetian jade, presenting a grand and imposing appearance. Among them, the emerald green glazed tiles, the ridge spines and overhanging eaves in the shape of divine birds, and the cloud-patterned dougong brackets are particularly exquisite and unique. The ancient and elegant architecture fully demonstrates the dignity and grandeur of Chinese aesthetics. As one of the producers, Chen Lingxiao, put it, "The traditional culture of Fujian and Fuzhou is profound and extensive. The folk tales, myths, fables and so on here are all excellent creative materials." The five-thousand-year-old historical heritage and cultural development are the inexhaustible source of inspiration for original Chinese animation.

3. The influence of animation on the economies of the two countries

The ways in which animation influences the economy can be roughly divided into two types. One is the sale and use of its original content, such as licensing to different video websites to collect licensing fees and box office revenue. The other is the huge "peripheral" economy. "Peripheral products" refer to the use of character or animal designs from works such as animations, comics, and games. Goods made with authorization. Many people who are passionate about an IP tend to purchase its "peripheral" products. Usually, each IP develops around twenty to thirty derivative items, including acrylic pendants, badges, water cups, bookmarks, and transparent cards [4]. The prices of these products mostly range from tens to hundreds of yuan. Of course, with the popularity of peripheral products, various unique types of peripheral products are emerging, and their prices also vary. However, it can be seen that products with IP effects are priced tens or even thousands of times higher than those of the same type without IP effects. Therefore, the peripheral market can almost be said to be a highly profitable business.

It is reported that in 2024, cultural new business form enterprises in Beijing achieved an operating income of 1,590.69 billion yuan, an increase of 11.1% year-on-year, accounting for 70.7% of the total operating income of cultural enterprises in the city [5]. Among them, the new cultural business forms mainly include digital content services for animation and games, Internet game services, multimedia, game animation and digital publishing software development, etc. As a pillar of the cultural industry, animation holds a position that cannot be underestimated in China's cultural industry. As early as 2011, the total duration of animation production in China had surpassed that of some major animation countries around the world, becoming the world's number one. In recent years, with the continuous enhancement of China's social and economic strength, the development scale of China's animation industry has been constantly expanding, and the quality of animation products has also been continuously improving. In 2019, China's online animation industry reached 18.42 billion yuan. In 2020, the total output value of China's animation industry reached 217.2 billion yuan, as shown in Figure 1 [2]. It can be seen from this that animation plays an important role in driving the economy.

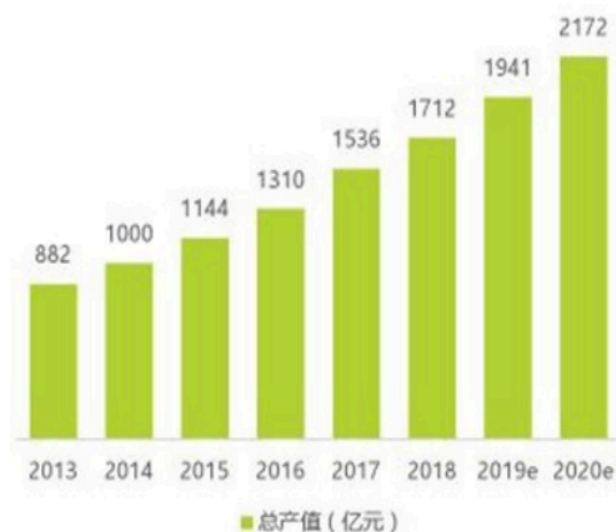


图1 2013—2020年中国动漫行业总产值规模

Figure 1. Total output value scale of China's animation industry from 2013 to 2020 (in billions of yuan) [2]

For Japan, which has already formed a mature industrial chain, the economic growth brought about by the animation industry is related to the economy of the entire nation. According to the "2024 Animation Industry Report" released by the Japan Animation Association, the scale of the Japanese animation market reached 3.3 trillion yen (approximately 157 billion yuan) in 2023, with a year-on-year growth of 14.3%. Set a new historical high. The market size of peripheral sales was 700.8 billion yen, increasing by 4.71% year-on-year [6]. Peripheral products of Japan are sold far overseas, resulting in a trade surplus.

4. Case analysis

Through comprehensive summary of this research, the author can categorize different groups of people based on their attitudes towards anime.

The first group is core anime enthusiasts (the younger generation), who usually actively recognize the power of cultural dissemination and are easily influenced by the content to form a national impression. For example, Japanese anime fans' identification with the "craftsman spirit" and "cherry blossom culture".

The second type is the casual audience (general entertainment consumers), who are more passive in accepting cultural symbols but have limited influence on the underlying image. For instance, they perceive Chinese elements through "Kung Fu Panda" but do not delve deeply into it.

The third type is cultural researchers/educators, who pay more attention to the rational analysis of communication effects and the risk of stereotypes, such as exploring the suitability of the romanticizing treatment of the earthquake-stricken areas in Japan by "Suzume's Journey".

The fourth type is the conservative cultural group. They often resist the infiltration of foreign cultures and believe that animation distorts the image of their own country.

In conclusion, through this research, it can be seen that animation can effectively enhance a country's understanding of "creativity" and "cultural uniqueness", especially making it more likely

to evoke a sense of closeness among the younger generation. As a means of cultural dissemination, it can indeed change the perception of people from different countries towards it and shape an international image.

5. Conclusion

This study mainly focuses on the influence of animation on cultural export and economy between China and Japan, and finds that animation can serve as a medium for cultural communication between the two countries and occupy the position of cultural exporter, which is conducive to enhancing the international image. At the same time, animation also has a positive impact on the economy.

However, this study did not delve deeper into the negative effects of animation output, which may have certain flaws and lack universality. Future research can further explore its dual nature when conditions permit. Based on this research, the author suggests that animation can be regarded as an important carrier of cultural export and a new force to drive the economy. The purchasing power and consumption capacity of the "second dimension" group can be re-examined to formulate relevant policies and guidelines for better handling the relations between the two countries.

Nowadays, there are many differences in China-Japan relations. It is hoped that this research can better analyze whether animations will affect the overall impression of other countries of those who watch these animations.

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