

# Customer engagement: Anime stylized advertisement

## Introduction

Day by day customers demand more and more comparing with those in the past. This fact is an obvious, taking into account variety of services and products are eligible now all over the world. In the present time everybody can find tens of variations for every category of products. They will be in county of production, color, size, brand etc. That makes customers confused and sets them the task to choose one of offered goods. Here is the key point.

Choice is the key point daily raises question by marketers that is 'How to engage customers?'. There is such a way as to make product unique by functions, design, shape or whatever else. It is one of possible solutions. The other one is advertisement. Quite often it plays key role in good's selling. By means of advertisement company is bringing to the people its vision of product and product's concept. At the same time depending on advertising itself, people will be interested in advertising product or not. Will an advertisement be interesting, will it be colorful or shocking, will marketers use natural advertisement, storytelling or anything else? The way is analyzed in this article is using Japanese style of animation called 'Anime' in advertisements for catching people's attention from the first sight and holding it.

- The scientific problem researched in this article is presented in a question form:
- how to engage more customers by means of anime stylized advertisement.
- Consequently, the object of the research is the customer engagement. The article's aim is to identify the potential of using anime stylized advertisement in order to engage more customers.
- Research methods used in this article is secondary data analysis.

## Theoretical insights

The term 'engagement' is commonly used and exists in other fields as social psychology (Achtherberg et al., 2003), organizational studies, sociology (Greenwood, 2007; Saks, 2006), educational researchers (Bryson and Hand 2007; London, Downey, and Mace 2007), politics, cognitive sciences etc. However, in case of every definition it is or unidimensional (behavioral; emotional; cognitive) or multidimensional (cognitive/behavioral; cognitive/emotional/behavioral; cognitive/emotional) (Avnet and Higgins, 2006a; Brodie et al., 2011; Linda D. Hollebeek, Mark S. Glynn, Roderick J. Brodie, 2014).

Despite the fact the 'engagement' is an old notion 'customer engagement' as the concept appeared on the beginning of XXI century. There are a lot of difference interpretations of it made by researchers from all over the world. However, the most extensive definition was implemented by R. J. Brodie and others only in 2011, that makes it quite new one in the marketing field (Brodie et al., 2011; Haurum H., 2018):

"Customer engagement (CE) is a *psychological state* that occurs by virtue of *interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object* (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a *dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that co-create value*. CE plays a *central role* in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or

consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a *multidimensional concept* subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions” (p. 260).

Provided term was formulated by Roderic J. Brodie (2011) after content analysis of more than 50 articles on relations with customers in business-to-customer (B2C) relationships (2/3 of analyzed articles) and business-to-business (B2B) relationships (1/2 of analyzed articles). Conclusion was that in B2B relations ‘engagement’ describes cocreation, process and solutions of service exchange. Within the B2C relationships it was mostly about customer or/and brand experience, learning, creativity, emotions, collaboration or/and (brand) community interaction as well.

Following the concept of the relationships itself it is bonding. In other words, ‘customer engagement’ is one of the steps of creating strong bond between customer and brand and further creating of brand loyalty (Avnet and Higgins 2006a, b; Bowden, 2009, Pham and Avnet, 2009; Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould, 2009), that is one of the tasks set before marketers. It is being reached by means of various tools as segmentation, targeting, pricing and its variations.

To make it clear, ‘customer engagement’ could be analyzed within such a tool as ‘Content marketing’ that is one of the most prominent modern marketing concepts. According to the Kucuk & Krishnamurthy (2007, p. 49) “content marketing attracts potential consumers and increases their engagement and empowerment”. Moreover, different types of content impact on customer engagement in different ways. Be more precise, the question is what relations between different types of appeals and customer engagement are? Sheehan and Morrison (2009) mentioned the creativity of the content is key success factor encouraging consumers engagement in order to produce desired brand outcomes. It is possible to achieve using as well social as traditional media. Advertising is one of it.

In addition to ‘creativity’ advertisement also has to impact on customers emotions, memories and experience to ‘engage’ them (Bobby J. Calder, Edward C. Malthouse, Ute Schaedel, 2009). Taking into account that all counted factors are specific on different levels, as regional, religious, national, cultural and individual as well, means advertisement should be designed for precise segment or individual customer (Kenneth C. Hite et al., 1995).

Following named features, was analyzed the way of customer engagement by means of visual part of advertisement, especially by videos. Outward of videos is vary by influence of plenty of factors. One of the key ones is cultural aspect. Preferences and traditions of every culture are making visual content culturally sensitive, that requires from marketers make deep environmental analysis of marketing environment, including educational level, religion, language, social organization etc. (Chee and Harris, 1998).

Moreover, there are common trend in advertisement, that are changed according to the market requirements, and there are trends that unique for every culture. Such trends are created within precise country and usually not extending outside of that country, because of its irrelevance for other markets. One of such trends is Japanese that uses ‘anime’ style animation in advertisement.

‘Anime’ is an originally Japanese animation, that is characterized mostly by dynamic characters, fantastic themes and colorful graphics. ‘Anime’ is the word created by Japanese people by abbreviating of English word ‘animation’. First commercial anime was produced in 1917 and further production was continuing in geometric progression. In 1960s anime got its own characteristic art style by Osamu Tezuka’s works, that was spread in the late 20<sup>th</sup> (Mark W. MacWilliams, 2008). However, while one some features of anime were changing from decade to decade, main ones were staying same.

‘Anime’ has as well as common genres for filming area as drama, thriller, comedy etc., it also has its unique genres as ‘shoujo’ (target is young girls and women), ‘josei’ (target audience is adult women), ‘shounen’ (target audience is young boys and men) etc (Norris CJ, 2009).

Nowadays ‘Anime’ is worldwide spread phenomena that involves as Japanese as foreigners in Japanese culture and reflects it (Napier, 2005). Popular anime characters can be seen all over the Japan on TV-shirts, accessories, toys and stationery. Also, anime characters are used by different companies for attracting young people to their brands (Xie Qing-guo, Cao Yan-hui, 2011).

Based on provided facts it is seen that during 100-yers of existing, ‘Anime’ evolved into the subculture within Japan. Statistics shows that in 2016 the number of constant anime viewers in Japan was 32% of population, that equal to 31,2 million people (Gzbrain Inc., 2017).

All provided facts makes clear the decision to use anime style in advertising within Japanese market. It is used in the advertisement of Japanese companies with no precise field or targeting of the company. Such

advertisement was produced by Japanese bakery called ‘Francois’ (フランソア), also, was launched advertising company by ‘Toyota’. Moreover, there was the advertisement of building construction company ‘Taisei Corporation’, that was created by famous Japanese animator Makoto Shinkai. And plenty of less famous commercials in vary fields.

However, not only Japanese companies use this tendency in their commercials. During last years international companies started to make their advertisements in anime style for Japanese market. For example, there are anime stylized advertisement of McDonald’s (USA), Mercedes-Benz (Germany), KFC (USA), Ford Motor Company (USA), PepsiCo (USA), Edgewell Personal Care (USA), Microsoft Corporation (USA), The Coca-Cola Company (USA) etc. Mostly anime commercials are made by using storytelling concept, that makes it even closer to anime itself.

It was the case of Japanese market. In case of international market this trend perceives senseless and not profitable as ‘Anime’ is not the part of cultural aspect for other counties. However, following the 2017 year’s statistics of The Association of Japanese Animation (AJA), Japan’s profit in 2016 from selling anime abroad was 767,6 million ¥, that is equal to 5,8 million € (AJA, 2017, p. 6). It shows that rate of involvement in anime culture in today’s world is higher that is seems from the first sight.

Such a perception of such trends in advertising as using anime style despite all existing data and numbers is causing lack of researches on the purpose how narrow-focused tendencies would influence on the customers from other countries.

To fill this gap in research field and find out would anime stylized advertisement work for markets outside the Japan was conducted the pilot research (Andriukhanova & Klebanskaja, 2018) aimed to test theoretically distinguished ways to engage more customers using anime stylized advertisement, that were set as following questions:

1. Does Anime reflect cultural features, that influence on customer engagement?
2. How is Anime specified for different target audiences, that influence on customer engagement?
3. What unique features has Anime that influence customer engagement?

There was used qualitative research method that is personal in-depth interviews. According the design of research it was 6 respondents in age of 16–25 years old from Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Russia and Kazakhstan with interest in ‘Anime’ from ‘not interested’ to ‘interested a lot’, who were asked to answer 8 questions (Table 1):

Table 1

**The questions for in-depth interviews**

	Research questions	Questions
1.	Does Anime reflect cultural features, that influence on customer engagement?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Usually what the first thing do you notice in a video advertising and why?</li> <li>2. Do you notice the cultural features of your or foreign country and how is it influence on your attitude to this certain advertisement?</li> <li>3. Does it important to see the reflection of your culture and why?</li> <li>4. What will you think about the advertisement which are made in the anime style but has the features of your culture?</li> </ol>
2.	How is Anime specified for different target audiences, that influence on customer engagement?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. If you watch the advertisement of the product/ service which is well-known by you, will you be interested in this product?</li> <li>6. If the unknown product is advertised, will you continue to watch advertisement till the end and why?</li> <li>7. What if both well-known and unknown products have the anime stylized advertisement, will you be more interested in presented products?</li> </ol>
3.	What unique features has Anime that influence customer engagement? Anime has unique features, that influence on customer engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Can you provide some reasons why you watch the anime stylized advertisement? Or if not also?</li> </ol>

Source: O. Andriukhanova & N. Klebanskaja (2018)

After analyzing of conducted pilot research was discovered that using of anime stylized advertisement catches the attention of customers first by its 'Visual part'. Then respondents payed attention on the 'Plot' of the advertisement, and only after these 2 factors is going 'Product'. That means that interest of respondents to the product was much less than to the advertisement itself.

Summing up the results was concluded that anime style tendency could be useful in advertising of different products and services, If the aim is to increase customers awareness of the company/brand.

## Conclusions

To conclude the theoretical analysis and conducted earlier research was identified the potential of using anime stylized advertisement in order to engage more customers. The analyzed literature shows that the potential of influence by narrow-focused tendencies on the customers from other countries is not perceived seriously, that causes the lack of researches and data on following theme. For sure not every tendency could be implemented in every market in the world, but there are such trends that would be profitable depending on the goals set before the marketers.

Using of anime style in advertisement is one of those trends that are ignored by specialists outside the Japan. The made research, despite the fact it was pilot one, showed that anime style is could be useful as the tool for customer engagement in case the aim is to increase customers awareness of the company/brand, because of the fact that the advertisement itself is more engaging for potential customers than the product itself.

Moreover, the commercials produced by international companies for Japanese market are spread in the Internet and already causing the attention of people all over the world by its unusual style, that responds one of the modern demands of customers that is uniqueness.

To sum up all provided facts the narrow-focused tendencies in advertisement should have to be researched within the abroad markets, and the potentials of them have to be determined. In case of anime stylized advertisement, there are needed more extensive researches to define more precisely where it could be useful and what customer segment it would affect most of all.

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## **VARTOTOJŲ ĮSITRAUKIMAS: ANIMĖ STILIAUS REKLAMA**

### **Santrauka**

Straipsnis pristato atlikto pilotinio tyrimo rezultatus, kurie nagrinėja kaip animė stiliaus reklama veikia ne Japonų tautybės vartotojus. Siekiama išsiaiškinti, ar įmanoma tokią siaurą animė stiliaus reklamos tendenciją pritaikyti reklamos kompanijoms kitose šalyse. Remiantis gautais rezultatais, pateikiami galimi vartotojų įsitraukimo būdai kitose šalyse. Animė populiarumas Japonijoje paskatino Japonijos rinkodaros specialistus naudoti animė stiliaus reklamas, siekiant sulaukti daugiau dėmesio reklamoms ir pasiekti didesnę vartotojų įsitraukimą.