

The Japanese Anime One Piece Drives Chinese Teenagers to Engage in Cross-border Consumption of Its Anime Peripherals

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Abstract:

As *One Piece* has evolved into a global cultural phenomenon, particularly resonating with a strong fan base in China, it has become increasingly essential to delve into the underlying factors driving Chinese teenagers' cross-border consumption. This exploration is particularly relevant within the broader context of globalization and the rapid growth of digital commerce. This study investigates the impact of the Japanese anime *One Piece* on the cross-border consumption behavior of Chinese teenagers, with a particular focus on their purchase of anime peripheral products. Through a combination of questionnaires and interviews, this study employs thematic analysis to decipher the potential factors driving this behavior. The findings suggest that Chinese adolescents are motivated to purchase *One Piece* by several factors, including the convenience and accessibility of international shopping, the allure of unique, rare, and collectible merchandise, and the symbolic status conferred by the high prices of cross-border products. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the cross-cultural consumption patterns prevalent among Chinese adolescents.

Keywords: Peripheral, cross-border, teenagers, consumption

1. Introduction

Japanese anime has long been a powerful cultural export with an influence that extends far beyond Japan's borders [1]. *One Piece*, created by Eiichiro Oda, is one of the most successful and enduring anime series [2]. Since its launch in 1999, *One Piece* has attracted millions of viewers around the world, becoming a cultural phenomenon that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries [2]. The cartoon's intricate storyline, compelling characters, and unique art style have given it a global appeal, cultivating a large fan base that spans all continents [3]. In particular, China has become an important market for *One Piece*, and the popularity of the anime continues to soar in China, especially among the younger generation [4]. These fans are not only exposed to the anime through traditional media, but are also actively involved in the consumption of related merchandise, which often comes from international markets. As global e-commerce and digital platforms make cross-border shopping easier, Chinese teens are increasingly purchasing *One Piece* peripheral products, ranging from figurines and apparel to limited edition collectibles, from Japanese and other international sellers. This trend is part of a broader pattern of cross-cultural

consumption, with fans seeking authentic, high-quality products that resonate with their personal and cultural identities [5]. However, the motivations driving these cross-border purchases remain under-explored, especially in the context of young Chinese. Understanding these motivations is critical, as it not only sheds light on the economic behavior of this demographic, but also provides insight into the impact that cultural phenomena like *One Piece* have on global consumption patterns. It also provides insights into the broader impact of cultural phenomena such as *One Piece* on global consumption patterns. The purpose of this study is to examine how the cultural influence of *One Piece* affects the cross-border purchasing habits of Chinese teenagers, with a particular focus on their consumption of anime peripherals. By investigating the key factors that motivate these purchases- such as the lure of perceived quality, authenticity, and rarity-this study aims to deepen the understanding of the intersection between cultural influence and economic behavior in a globalized world. In contrast to previous research, which has generally focused on the broader cultural impact of anime, this study takes a more nuanced approach, analyzing cross-border e-commerce activity driven by an influential anime series [6].

2. Literature Review

The impact of Japanese anime, particularly *One Piece*, on global audiences has been extensively studied, focusing on cultural exchange, economic impact, and consumption behavior. A search of previous studies reveals that most previous studies have stayed within a broad framework, with few researchers conducting detailed case studies of individual regions, and even fewer studies of the Chinese region. Detailed case studies were missing from the three existing research papers that contributed to this study. Firstly, Yamamura and Shin's study highlights the social and economic impacts of consuming imported cultural products, but the full paper does not provide a detailed regional sample for analysis [7]. Secondly, Lam explores Japan's use of 'soft power' through cultural exports such as anime, providing an in-depth analysis of the attractions and limitations of this strategy and its impact on the purchasing habits of transnational populations [8]. However, the limitation is that the article does not go into detail to study the buying habits of a specific regional population. Thirdly, Hernández-Pérez examines the transnational consumption of Japanese media culture, describing the global appeal and marketing strategy of anime peripheral goods similar to *One Piece* [9]. While transnational consumption has been studied, generalizations have been made about various media forms and there has been no combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to adequately capture the unique behaviors of transnational consumption by national populations or the impact of emerging technologies [10]. A review of prior literature reveals that the existing literature does not have specific case and regional analyses. This study aims to fill these gaps by focusing on the motivations and behaviors of Chinese adolescents purchasing *One Piece* merchandise across borders, providing new perspectives on the interplay between cultural influences, perceived value, and consumer trust, and contributing to a deeper understanding of how global media influence local economic activity.

3. Methods

This study uses quantitative surveys (questionnaires) and qualitative interviews to explore consumer behavior related to the Japanese anime *One Piece*. Surveys can provide statistical significance and general trends by obtaining extensive data from large samples, but may lack depth and depend on the quality of the questions and the accuracy of the respondents. On the other hand, in-depth interviews can provide detailed insights into personal experiences and motivations, revealing complex behaviors that surveys may overlook, but this method is time-consuming and less generalizable. This study combines these two

approaches to address their respective limitations and gain a comprehensive understanding of how *One Piece* drives cross-border consumption among young Chinese.

3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire titled "How *One Piece* drives Chinese Teenagers to Consume Its Anime Peripherals Across Borders" was designed specifically for this study. This research questionnaire was developed entirely in-house to fulfill the unique research objectives and to capture the specific behaviors and motivations of Chinese teenagers as *One Piece* fans' specific behaviors and motivations. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions divided into several categories: personal information, introduction to *One Piece*, exposure to anime, purchasing behavior, and cultural influences of anime. The structure of the questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, which allowed for both the collection of quantitative data and the exploration of participants' personal experiences and opinions. The closed-ended questions were designed to collect data on participants' demographics, spending habits, and preferences, such as the questions, "What types of *One Piece* merchandise do fans purchase?" and "How often do people buy *One Piece* merchandise? Also, the questionnaire includes open-ended questions designed to gain insight into how *One Piece* influences their daily lives and social interactions, such as the question, "How does being a fan of *One Piece* influence people's daily life and social interactions? The questionnaire was distributed and collected online, targeting Chinese teenage fans of *One Piece* through the WeChat fan exchange group. The target audience was Chinese teenage fans of *One Piece* who had participated in cross-border consumption of *One Piece* products. The survey was disseminated through social media platforms, online fan communities, and e-commerce websites where *One Piece* products are frequently discussed and purchased. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 120 were completed and returned, representing an 80% response rate.

3.2 Interviews

Based on the results of the questionnaire, five interviewees were selected for in-depth interviews in this study (as shown in Table 1) to further understand their experiences and motivations. These interviewees were selected because of their deep connection with *One Piece* and their extensive experience in purchasing *One Piece* merchandise across borders. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility in exploring personal experiences while ensuring that key topics were discussed coherently. Interviews lasted around 30 minutes each and were conducted via a WeChat online video call, depending on the

time and location of the participant. After obtaining consent from all participants on the interviewee information sheet in Table 1, all interviews were recorded to ensure accurate analysis. Interview transcripts were then analyzed and coded through a thematic analysis approach to identify recurring themes and insights.

The interview questions were designed to explore various aspects of participants' involvement in *One Piece* events and their purchasing behavior. Some of the key questions included: Where do teenage fans typically purchase *One Piece* merchandise? This question was designed to provide an opportunity to identify preferred channels for purchasing *One Piece* merchandise both domestically and internationally, as well as to understand where participants shop to help analyze the availability of *One Piece* merchandise

and the role of cross-border e-commerce in their purchasing decisions. A similar question was asked: Do teenage fans prefer to purchase licensed or unlicensed *One Piece* products? Why? This helped explore participants' preferences for officially licensed merchandise versus fan-made or non-licensed products. The aim was to understand how brand legitimacy and authenticity influence purchasing decisions. These interviews provided rich qualitative data that allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how *One Piece* influences the purchasing decisions and cultural identities of Chinese youth. These detailed responses help contextualize the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Table 1. Interviewee Information Sheet

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation
Carter	male	19	College Students
Enzo	male	18	College Students
YuTao Lin	male	16	High school
Eric	male	17	College Students
Benson	male	19	College Students

4. Results

An in-depth analysis of the cross-border purchasing habits of Chinese teenagers influenced by *One Piece* was conducted based on the results of a questionnaire survey and interviews. The results are organized according to the key themes identified in the data and are supported by quotes from the interviewees where relevant. 150 respondents filled out the questionnaire, revealing several key trends in the purchasing behavior of Chinese *One Piece* fans.

4.1 Preference for the Original Version

Preference for licensed *One Piece* merchandise was the main tendency of the respondents. The data shows that the majority of respondents (mainly teenagers) have a strong preference for officially licensed unique merchandise, especially those imported directly from Japan. The main reason for this preference is that these products are perceived to be of higher quality and authenticity, which is considered an important part of their value as collectibles and representations of beloved anime. For example, Eric, a 17-year-old college student shown in the Interviewee Information Sheet in Table 1, emphasizes the obsession with authenticity: "Eric always buys from Japanese websites or official stores because people know that these products are authentic, with logos and details of the original characters,

so that the teenage fans are sure that what they're buying is not a pirated version." All respondents cited authenticity as a key factor influencing purchasing decisions. Eric further noted, "Fans, especially teenage fans, don't want any fakes, authentic products from Japan feel better, and people can often hear the fan community discussing in social software or privately that a lot of what they buy on Chinese platforms are pirated products. This emphasis on authenticity is closely related to fans' desire to own merchandise that accurately reflects the *One Piece* that fans hold dear. Authentic products are seen as a direct link to the original material, providing not only a physical representation of the anime, but also a tangible connection to its narrative and cultural significance. Preference for the original work is also linked to the social dynamics of the *One Piece* fanbase, where owning licensed merchandise can enhance one's status and credibility as a devoted fan.

4.2 Motivations for Uniqueness, Rarity and Collectability

Uniqueness, rarity, and collectability are considered strong motivations for cross-border purchases. According to the questionnaire survey, 85% of respondents cited these factors as the main reasons for purchasing *One Piece* items, especially limited edition items. The results of this survey show that *One Piece* fans' consumer behav-

ior is dependent on one-of-a-kind merchandise. Limited edition merchandise has a special appeal to collectors. Carter, a 19-year-old college student (as shown in Figure 1, Interviewee Information Sheet), explains, “Carter likes to collect *One Piece* items, especially rare or limited edition ones. Rare *One Piece* items are difficult to purchase online and need to be snatched up at local stores across the border. It’s a special feeling to have something that not everyone has, and it makes Carter’s collection the envy of more people”. This statement reflects a wider trend amongst fans that owning rare items is not only a personal achievement but also a source of pride for the fan community. Interviews further revealed that these fans viewed cross-border shopping as a valuable investment, especially when it came to purchasing items that were unavailable or of superior quality at home. Enzo, another 19-year-old university student (As Table 1 shown), summarized this view by stating, “Buying from Japan may be more expensive, but it’s worth it for the quality and authenticity.” This view highlights the symbolic value of one-of-a-kind and rare items, which transcends the physical attributes of the item and taps into the emotional and cultural significance of the *One Piece*. The concept of collecting is deeply ingrained in the buying habits of *One Piece* fans. Collectors often look for items that are likely to increase in value over time, and they view their purchases not only as expressions of fandom, but also as long-term investments.

4.3 The Role of Price in Purchasing Decisions

Price is an important factor influencing the purchasing decisions of Chinese *One Piece* fans, with 60% of respondents admitting that although they are price-sensitive, they are willing to pay a premium for products they perceive to be high quality or rare. This result suggests a complex relationship between price and perceived value, with the willingness to pay a higher price closely linked to a product’s authenticity, uniqueness and potential for future appreciation. For many fans, the higher cost associated with cross-border purchases is due to the superior quality and authenticity of the item. This sentiment was clearly expressed by Lin Yutao (as shown in Table 1), a 16-year-old high school student: “*One Piece*’s fans don’t mind spending more if that can get a better product or a rare item. This willingness to invest in high-priced items reflects fans’ broader understanding that quality and rarity often come at a price, and that this price is worth bearing for the added value these attributes bring. The interviews also highlighted the perception among fans that Japanese *One Piece* merchandise, despite its higher price, has a level of craftsmanship and authenticity that is unmatched by domestically produced or unlicensed products. Japanese models are more expensive, but that’s because they use

better materials and pay more attention to detail,” Benson (as shown in Figure 1) said. “People know that to get the money’s worth.” This belief that Japanese-made products are good value for money reinforces the notion that price is not just a barrier to purchase, but a reflection of the overall value of the product. In addition, the potential for appreciation of certain *One Piece* products adds an investment dimension to the purchasing decision. Fans like Benson recognize that the price they pay today may lead to financial rewards in the future, especially for limited edition or highly sought-after items. This perspective is further evidenced by their willingness to pay higher prices, as fans view these purchases as more than just consumer goods, but as valuable assets in their collections.

5. Discussion

The results of this study provide a nuanced understanding of the cross-border purchasing behavior of Chinese teenage *One Piece* fans. The findings highlight three major themes: strong preferences for original and licensed merchandise; motivations driven by uniqueness, rarity, and collectability; and the important role of price in purchase decisions.

5.1 Strong Preferences for Original and Licensed Merchandise

The study clearly shows that authenticity is a central concern for teenage *One Piece* fans in China. Teenage fans’ preference for purchasing licensed merchandise, especially those imported directly from Japan, underscores the importance these fans place on quality and legitimacy. Interviews further confirmed this view, with Table 1 respondents consistently stating that licensed products provide a tangible connection to the *One Piece* world that teenage fans adore. For example, Eric, a 17-year-old university student, emphasized the need for authentic products, with many trusting only to buy products from Japanese stores or official stores to avoid counterfeits. This preference is not only for owning anime, but also for the social capital that comes with owning authentic products. Within the anime fan community, owning genuine goods enhances one’s status and credibility, thus reinforcing the notion that these goods are not just material products, but also symbols of one’s dedication and authenticity as an anime fan.

5.2 Motivations Driven by Uniqueness, Rarity, and Collectability

Uniqueness, rarity and collectability are the main driving factors for *One Piece* fans buying across borders. The survey shows that the vast majority of respondents (85%) prioritize these factors when choosing merchandise, especially limited edition items. This result highlights the

strong collector mentality among fans, where owning rare or unique merchandise is seen as a personal achievement and a source of pride for the fanbase. According to Carter, a 19-year-old college student who was interviewed which shown in figure 1, fans' excitement about acquiring rare items that are not readily available online emphasizes that these items add to the envy of the fan's collection. This collector mentality among *One Piece* fans is deeply ingrained in people's purchasing habits, and fans who regularly go out to snag limited edition items often view the purchase of *One Piece* as a long-term investment. peripherals as long-term investments. Over time, the potential for these items to appreciate in value adds a layer of significance to fans' purchases, transforming these products from mere souvenirs into valuable assets.

5.3 The Important Role of Price in Purchase Decisions

Price sensitivity is another key factor influencing the purchasing decisions of Chinese *One Piece* fans. While 60 percent of respondents admitted to being price sensitive, they also expressed a willingness to pay a premium price for products they perceive to be of high quality or rarity. This sentiment was succinctly expressed by Lin Yutao, a 16-year-old high school student, as teenage fans expressed a willingness to invest more in better or rarer products. The willingness to pay a premium price for products they perceive to be of high quality or rarity is a key factor in the purchasing decisions of *One Piece* fans in China. The willingness to pay higher prices reflects a broader recognition among fans that quality and rarity come at a price, and that this price is worth bearing for the added value these attributes bring. In addition, the interviews emphasized that fans perceive Japanese-made *One Piece* merchandise to have a level of craftsmanship and authenticity that is unmatched by domestic or unlicensed products, despite their higher prices. Another interviewee, Benson, further confirmed this view that Japanese-made models, despite their higher price, are worth the investment due to the superior materials and attention to detail. This view not only emphasizes the importance of quality in purchasing decisions, but also suggests that price is not only seen as a barrier, but also reflects the overall value of the product. Additionally, the potential for appreciation of limited edition or sought-after products adds an investment dimension to these purchasing decisions, further demonstrating that fans are willing to pay higher prices.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals the cross-border purchasing behavior of Chinese teenage *One Piece* fans, revealing a strong

preference for licensed merchandise, especially from Japan. Fans prioritize quality and authenticity and consider these products essential to their collection and cultural connection with the anime. Uniqueness, rarity, and collectability are key factors, and many fans are willing to invest in higher-priced merchandise because they see it as personally and financially valuable. However, this study was limited by its sample size and focus on self-reported data, which may not be fully representative of China's diverse *One Piece* fanbase. Future research should explore these behaviors across a broader and more diverse population, including comparative studies with other anime fan groups and longitudinal analyses to track changing consumption trends. This will deepen subsequent researchers' understanding of the relationship between fans, culture and consumer behavior in the global marketplace.

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