

Cultural Narratives and Global Impact: Analysing the Sociocultural Factors of *One Piece* (1999) in Japanese Manga

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the significant sociocultural factors represented in Japanese Manga, with a focus on *One Piece* (1999), within the context of Japanese culture. The research seeks to establish the implications of these factors on the Manga's reception and cultural transmission on a global scale. Through content analysis of nine scholarly literature reviews, key sociocultural factors within various fields were identified. These factors were then applied to analyse the case study of *One Piece* (1999), particularly its portrayal of Japanese culture and its contribution to global cultural dissemination. A total of 14 key elements were highlighted from the reviewed literature. The case study revealed three prominent elements cultural, societal, and linguistic that contribute to the immersive experience and compelling storyline of the Manga. The intricate relationship between culture, language, and society in *One Piece* (1999), serves as a powerful tool for connecting Japan with a global audience, making the Manga a significant cultural artifact that reflects and communicates Japan's rich cultural heritage to the world.

1. Introduction

Here Japanese Manga has not just evolved, it has become a global cultural force over the last few decades, drawing attention for its unique features, diverse storytelling, and distinctive design elements. Its influence has transcended cultural boundaries, making it a powerful and emotional visual storytelling medium that resonates with people worldwide. The unique features of Manga, such as character expressions, frame layouts, and a wide range of subjects, contribute to its universal appeal. Tanaka (2020) notes that these elements create a storytelling experience that is entertaining and emotionally resonant. Manga's ability to vividly represent characters' reactions to feelings sets it apart from other forms of storytelling, enhancing its global popularity.

As highlighted by Levi (2013), Manga's diversity showcases its various genres, creative storytelling, and unique artistic techniques. Manga spans a broad spectrum of themes, from high-tech settings to fantastical realms, human dramas, and complex characters with emotional and inner growth. Including robot personalities, supernatural elements, and strong female characters adds to its richness, making it a versatile and dynamic form of artistic expression. Beyond its role as a pop culture phenomenon, Manga is a cultural product that reflects, influences and is impacted by significant sociocultural factors. Sociocultural factors, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, encompass a society's traditions, values, and way of life. Through its narratives and portrayals, Manga provides a lens through which these factors can be examined. Prabhakar Singh (2021) posits that Manga offers captivating tales and insights into Japan and its culture, evolving beyond the confines of traditional norms.

The varied genres within Manga present an advanced view of the complex structure of social behaviours, norms, and values that define Japanese culture.

Moreover, Manga extends its influence beyond the pages of books, permeating various facets of popular culture. When Manga is adapted into movies or shows, it allows a global audience to explore Japan's stories and values, fostering mutual understanding. The relaxed styles depicted in Manga are not confined to books; they shape fashion trends worldwide, influencing how people dress and express themselves. In the realm of art, Manga serves as a wellspring of inspiration for artists globally, acting as a bridge that connects different cultures through shared stories and visual narratives. In summary, Manga is more than just a form of entertainment; it is a global storyteller transcending borders, sharing Japan's culture's rich tapestry with a diverse and international audience. Manga's narratives, designs, and cultural reflections promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, contributing to a more colourful and exciting world.

Despite Manga's global impact and cultural significance, there is a pressing need for more research on how sociocultural factors affect Japanese Manga. This gap underscores the importance of detailed studies to explore how Manga influences social and cultural aspects. According to Mamat *et al.* (2022), few studies have shown how Malaysian university students engage with Manga and anime and how much Japanese popular culture affects their lives. To address this gap, the present study aims to identify the significant sociocultural factors of Japanese Manga based on previous research. By doing so, it seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how these factors contribute to Manga's global appeal and cultural transmission, with *'One Piece'* (1999) serving as a focal case study.

The objectives of this study are to identify and analyse the sociocultural significant factors represented in Japanese Manga, particularly in *'One Piece'* (1999) analyse the portrayal of these factors within the Manga and their significance in the context of Japanese culture and establish the implications of these factors on the Manga's reception and cultural transmission on a global scale.

2. Literature Review

The concept of sociocultural factors encompasses various elements that influence societal functioning and identity. Mahbub (2022) defines these factors as encompassing cultural norms, traditions, and economic conditions, which collectively play a pivotal role in shaping societal identity and functioning. Stefanidis *et al.* (2022) further elaborate on this by highlighting how sociocultural factors influence emotions, attitudes, and behaviours across diverse communities. The impact of these factors on societal trends, advancements, and population dynamics is emphasised by Ahmad (2023), who underscores their importance in understanding the evolution of societies.

In the business context, sociocultural factors are equally significant. Masovic (2018) points out that cultural nuances, attitudes, and religion significantly affect the operations of multinational companies. For businesses to succeed in a globalised world, they must recognise and adapt to these sociocultural factors, which are crucial for effective cross-cultural interactions and sustainable business practices. The study of sociocultural factors is particularly relevant in Japanese Manga, a cultural product that has become a global phenomenon. Manga originated in late 19th-century Japan and has evolved to encompass a wide range of genres and topics, appealing to audiences of all ages both within Japan and internationally. The cultural significance of Manga is evident in its narrative styles and visual language, which reflect Japan's cultural identity. Tanaka (2022) discusses how different manga genres, such as shojo (targeted at young girls) and shonen (targeted at young boys), often engage with and sometimes challenge stereotypical gender norms. The practical aspects of manga production, such as its serialisation in black and white and the subsequent republishing in Tankōbon volumes, are also noteworthy. Mangaka, a term used to refer to manga artists, often collaborate with teams to produce these works, and successful series frequently inspire anime adaptations.

The relationship between Manga and anime is significant in understanding the global reach of Japanese culture. Hastuti and Dewi (2020) highlight how the internet has played a vital role in expanding the global manga fandom, making it more accessible to international audiences. This interconnectedness between Manga and anime exemplifies Japan's cultural influence on a global scale, showcasing a shared visual language and design that is embraced universally. Japan's sociocultural dynamics are shaped by a blend of local and global influences, affecting various aspects of life, including education, religion, healthcare, and sports. Ohnuki-Tierney (2001) explores how these dynamics are influenced by subcultures, which provide platforms for identity experimentation and the blending of global influences with traditional Japanese elements. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have further contributed to the fusion of Western and indigenous elements in Japan's cultural landscape, as noted by Chen (2022).

Intercultural communication challenges in Japan, particularly those arising from language disparities, underscore the distinctiveness of Japanese culture. Adamowicz (2021) points out that these challenges are often encountered in interactions between Japan and other cultures, necessitating a deeper understanding of Japan's

unique cultural context. Sociocultural education addresses language learning, social pedagogy, intercultural understanding, and cultural diversity awareness and is vital in navigating these challenges. Lelenkova (2019) identifies Manga as a key tool in sociocultural education due to its ability to convey cultural narratives and foster intercultural understanding. Japan's evolving sociocultural landscape continues to navigate the complexities of diversity, challenging traditional assumptions while embracing tradition and innovation. Petraroli (2022) emphasises that this journey reflects Japan's ability to adapt to global influences while maintaining a strong cultural identity. In this context, Manga, notably a series like *One Piece* (1999), is a form of entertainment and a cultural artefact that reflects and transmits Japan's evolving sociocultural dynamics to a global audience.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, with content analysis as the primary method to explore and identify the sociocultural significance of Japanese Manga. The qualitative approach was selected due to its strength in providing deep, contextualised insights into cultural phenomena, which aligns with the study's objective of understanding the underlying sociocultural factors influencing Japanese Manga. Content analysis was utilised as the primary analytical technique to systematically examine the existing body of literature on Japanese Manga. This method was chosen for its ability to interpret and analyse texts in a way that reveals patterns, themes, and meanings that may not be immediately apparent. By employing content analysis, the study aimed to distil complex sociocultural elements from diverse scholarly sources, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of Manga's cultural impact and significance in Japanese society.

The data for this study was collected through an extensive literature review, which involved selecting and examining a wide range of academic articles, books, and other scholarly works related to Japanese Manga. The literature was carefully chosen based on relevance, credibility, and the extent to which it addressed sociocultural factors. The selection process prioritised sources that offered critical insights into how Manga reflects and influences Japanese culture, identity, and social norms. In the data analysis process, once the relevant literature was compiled, the content analysis was conducted in several stages. Initially, the literature was reviewed to identify recurring themes and concepts related to the sociocultural significance of Manga. These themes were then categorised and analysed to discern broader patterns and relationships. Special attention was given to how these themes were discussed in different contexts, such as gender, class, and historical periods, to ensure a holistic understanding of Manga's sociocultural role.

4. Finding and Discussion

In-depth exploration of sociocultural factors in Japan required consulting with various experts and scholars. Their insights were carefully categorized into keywords to facilitate a comprehensive analysis. A thorough examination of nine literary works enabled the identification of sociocultural perspectives presented by each expert or scholar. The analysis revealed seven distinct viewpoints from the fourteen expert perspectives, as shown in Table 1. This illustrates experts' wide range of summaries on sociocultural factors through literature reviews, with the sociocultural factor's elements focusing on Japanese culture.

Table 1 Summary of Similarity in Sociocultural Factors Elements Through Literature Review and Scholars

No	Title	Author & Year	Summary	Elements
1	Motivation and Belief Associated with Japanese Language Proficiency in Sociocultural Perspective	Masako Nunn (2008)	The study emphasizes how cultural identity and family expectations impact students' motivation and proficiency in learning Japanese, stressing the need for culturally informed teaching methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethic • Cultural
2	The effects of the sociocultural context on heritage language literacy: Japanese-English bilingual children in Sydney	Kaya Oriyama (2011)	The study finds that societal context, community support, and formal schooling are crucial for maintaining Japanese literacy among heritage children in Sydney, with formal schooling being especially effective in counteracting negative societal influences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Culture

3	The influence of sociocultural and environmental factors on the adolescents' life and development: Japanese youth from a Western readers perspective	Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg (2007)	This article explores how young people in Japan adapt to the changing social and cultural environment. It covers the transition from school to work, educational changes, and youth culture. The analysis uses Western literature and previous research, incorporating recent studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Education
4	Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) among International Students in Japan	Yamashita <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Sociocultural adaptation focuses on interacting with the host culture, while psychological adaptation relates to well-being. Key factors include language fluency and communication competence. The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SeAS) measures adjustment difficulties and has shown high reliability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language
5	Japan: Sociocultural Aspects	Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (2001)	The paper discusses Japanese culture's nonlocalized nature and how local and global forces influence it. It explores various aspects of Japanese society, such as self-identities, minorities, education, religion, healthcare, youth culture, and sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Religion • Culture • Healthcare
6	Cultural Promote Economic Development under the Factor Analysis	Xiuli Yan, Zhiyong Wang (2015)	The analysis shows how Japanese culture, including anime, sports, and a solid cultural industry, contributes significantly to the country's economic development. Factors such as enterprise culture, national consciousness, consumer culture, and a focus on education and innovation drive economic growth and shape Japan's national economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Language • Social
7	Alexithymia and Sociocultural Factors in a Japanese Sample: A Study with the Rorschach	Akimoto <i>et al.</i> (2002)	Japanese education, religion, healthcare, youth culture, and sports have experienced significant changes due to the interaction between local and global influences. The statement emphasizes the dynamic and constantly changing nature of Japanese culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion • Healthcare • Culture • Sport
8	Japan: Cultural considerations	Elaine Haglund (1984)	Japanese culture blends old traditions and a willingness to embrace new concepts influenced by the country's geography, language, and historical events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Language • Social
9	Japanese Cultural Identity	Manabe Kazufumi, Harumi	Japan's culture blends long-standing traditions with a welcoming attitude towards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Language

Befu (1993)	fresh ideas influenced by geography, language, and history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical • Geography
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Based on insights collected from various academic sources, sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping a variety of aspects of Japanese society and the experiences of individuals within it. Nunn's research (2008) highlights how ethnic and cultural backgrounds, particularly among Japanese Americans and non-Asian students, influence language proficiency, motivation, and learning outcomes. Factors such as heritage-related motivation and parental aspirations are important influences on language learning, reflecting the impact of cultural backgrounds on educational experiences. Furthermore, Oriyama (2011) emphasizes the role of social and cultural factors in developing and maintaining heritage language literacy, noting the influence of societal context, community contact, and formal schooling on literacy outcomes and language maintenance. These findings underscore the interconnected nature of social interactions and cultural contexts in shaping language development and maintenance among Japanese heritage communities.

Kreitz-Sandberg's (2007) work further contributes to understanding sociocultural influences by examining how Japanese youth navigate their social and cultural environment about Western-language sources and societal norms. The study underscores the impact of family, peers, educational systems, and broader societal factors on adolescent behaviour and development, shedding light on the complex interplay between social and cultural influences on youth in Japan. Moreover, Ohnuki-Tierney's (2001) comprehensive review of sociocultural aspects in Japan highlights education, religion, culture, and healthcare as crucial factors in shaping Japanese society. The evolving nature of Japan's educational system, the blend of religious beliefs and practices, the nonlocalized nature of Japanese culture, and the dynamic transformations in healthcare reflect the intricate interplay between local traditions and global influences in shaping sociocultural dynamics.

Yan and Wang Zhi-Yong (2015) highlight the important role of Japanese culture in catalysing the nation's economic development. They emphasize the influence of anime culture, sports, and a well-established cultural industry as crucial contributors. Their research illustrates how elements such as corporate culture, national identity, consumer behaviour, and a strong commitment to education and innovation foster a conducive environment for Japan's economic growth. The study further elucidates the significant impact of sociocultural factors on various aspects of Japanese society, including language acquisition, youth development, cultural preservation, and economic advancement.

These findings reveal the intricate interconnections between culture, society, and language that shape the lives and future trajectories of individuals and communities in Japan. This complex interplay is vividly portrayed in the storyline of *One Piece* (1999), where cultural, linguistic, and social themes are seamlessly woven together, offering readers a deeply immersive experience that transcends entertainment. As a cultural and educational conduit, *One Piece* (1999) links Japan with a diverse global audience, highlighting the manga's profound sociocultural significance within the broader cultural landscape.

In Fig. 1, the examination of sociocultural factors explore into a cultural perspective, honing in on the Onigashima narrative and its profound connection to Japanese cultural elements. The meticulously crafted setting of Wano Kuni stands out, drawing inspiration from traditional Japanese culture with its architecture, aesthetics, and societal norms. Onigashima features a distinctive design that weaves together various cultural references, creating a rich tapestry for delving into cultural themes, traditions, and symbols that significantly shape the storyline and character interactions.

By The visual portrayal of the Land of Onigashima and Wano Kuni in Japanese culture reflects a complex interplay of historical narratives, cultural identity, and artistic expression. The Wano Kuni arc in the popular manga *One Piece* (1999) is a medium for exploring themes of reconciliation and historical reflection. It frequently critiques modern Japanese society while evoking a nostalgic view of pre-war Japan (Kim, 2022). This narrative constructs a vivid and imaginative landscape that resonates with readers, underscoring the cultural importance of these fictional settings.

Furthermore, with its meticulous organization and fusion of natural and cultural elements, the broader Japanese landscape significantly influences how these fictional worlds are perceived. Japan's unique visual ideologies shape the interpretation of landscapes, with cultural narratives deeply woven into the visual recognition of these environments (Leone, 2016). As a result, the visual elements of Onigashima and Wano Kuni not only entertain but also prompt critical engagement with Japan's cultural and historical identity.



Fig. 1 The visual of *Land of Onigashima and Wano Kuni*

When analysing the societal perspective depicted in Fig. 2, it becomes evident that the manga *One Piece* (1999) assumes the role of a valuable cultural compass, showcasing various aspects of Japanese heritage within the lives of its characters. Readers are presented with the characters' confrontations with adversity, their formation of friendships, and their personal development. Notably, the manga serves as a resource for international readers, aiding them in acclimating to and comprehending Japanese customs and ways of life. Sasada (2011) eloquently states that *One Piece* (1999) is a conduit for Japanese heritage, effectively portraying societal values and standards through the characters' journeys.

The protagonist, Monkey D. Luffy, personifies altruism and embodies the traditional Japanese hero archetype, embodying the virtues of aiding the vulnerable and confronting the mighty, aligning with historical accounts of justice and moral principles in Japan. Moreover, the characters' experiences of camaraderie, self-improvement, and triumph over obstacles offer readers worldwide a glimpse into Japan's intricate social dynamics and cultural customs, enhancing their comprehension of Japanese society. In conclusion, *One Piece* (1999) not only entertains but also enlightens its audience about the nuances of Japanese culture and societal principles, solidifying its status as a remarkable cultural artefact (Sasada, 2011; Mytnik-Daniluk, 2020).



Fig. 2 The visual of *One Piece (1999) Friendship*

Fig. 3 depicts the language representation in the manga series *One Piece* (1999). The captivating narratives and character dialogues in Japanese are a compelling incentive for readers to delve into learning the language. Manga is an invaluable educational tool, providing an immersive experience beyond language acquisition that encompasses an understanding of Japanese culture. Observing the interactions between characters aids readers in grasping the nuances of Japanese communication, fostering a sense of cultural connection. The visual representation in *One Piece* (1999) is a testament to the intricate interplay between linguistic and visual language, a concept thoroughly explored in academic studies. Unser-Schutz has underscored how manga frequently intertwines handwritten text and visual elements, resulting in a dynamic interpretive space that heightens reader engagement (Unser-Schutz, 2011). Similarly, Haryanti & Nurlatifah (2018) have emphasized how visual language in Japanese anime, including *One Piece* (1999) utilizes spatial arrangements and visual cues to convey narrative significance, ensuring that important elements capture the audience's attention. Hence, *One Piece* (1999) is a stellar example of how visual language effectively communicates complex narratives.



Fig. 3 The visual of *One Piece* (1999) portraying on language

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the intricate relationship between culture, language, and societal norms significantly influences various aspects of Japanese society. Through the lens of sociocultural factors, it is evident that cultural artefacts such as the manga series *One Piece* (1999) are impactful tools for connecting Japan with a global audience. The visual depictions within the series offer a glimpse into Japan's historical and cultural identity, highlighting the ongoing relevance of cultural themes in contemporary society. *One Piece* (1999) not only entertains but also educates readers about the complexities of Japanese culture, making it a powerful cultural artefact that reflects and communicates Japan's rich cultural heritage to the world.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** A.K.L. and H.R.; **data collection:** A.K.L. and H.R.; **analysis and interpretation of results:** A.K.L. and H.R.; **draft manuscript preparation:** A.K.L. and H.R. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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