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# The implementation of a new pop cosmopolitanism concept in the process of mediatization of Japanese mass culture

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## Abstract

This academic work deals with a concept of a new pop cosmopolitanism presented by Henry Jenkins and scrutinizes the ways it implements in the process of mediatization of Japanese mass culture. The paper highlights a local and comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism as characteristics of recipients of Japanese mass culture, e.g. anime, manga and games. Mediatization of Japanese mass culture provides a cultural convergence, when people perceive parts of foreign culture as their own, and become the cosmopolites. In addition, other countries start using the elements of Japanese mass culture to fulfill the needs of its own and the Western audiences, for instance Chinese game company develops a game in Japanese anime style to sell it to the West. We analyze the spreading of Japanese mass culture in two directions: channels of spreading and techniques of entering the global level. Our research represents the manifestations of a new pop cosmopolitanism on examples of games, online anime-styled characters, e.g. vocaloids and virtual youtubers, anime and manga franchises and anime streaming services. This piece of work aims to show how mediatization makes Japanese language a brand in terms of cosmopolitanism and cultural exchange. The paper is of current importance due to a broad spread of diverse elements of Japanese mass culture around the world and steady rise of its popularity within people of all nationalities. The results of the research can be useful for further explorations of Japanese and international media discourse.

**Keywords:** local cosmopolitanism, comprehensive cosmopolitanism, globalization of Japanese pop culture, anime and manga franchises, virtual anime-styled characters

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, cosmopolitanism (from Greek *kosmopolitēs* – ‘citizen of the world’), in a wide sense, is a variety of important views in ethic and socio-political philosophy that describe the idea that human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, are citizens of a single community (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019). As a core approach, the authors used that of Henry Jenkins who introduced two terms describing the results of global mediatization and intercultural interaction: a pop cosmopolitanism and a new pop cosmopolitanism (Jenkins, 2004a, p. 117).

The scholar explains the necessity of such division by the actualization of global convergence, which allows a cosmopolite to widen a sphere of cultural experience and not only to go beyond one’s own cultural background but also to think globally, to consume an international product both at the level of high culture and e.g. in everyday life, in mass culture. Jenkins (2004a, p. 117) uses the term ‘pop cosmopolitanism’ to define the ways “that the transcultural flows of popular culture inspire new forms of global consciousness and cultural competency”, emphasizing that “younger Americans are distinguishing themselves from their parents’ culture through their consumption of Japanese anime and manga, Bollywood films and bhangra, and Hong Kong action movies”. It should be

pointed out that Jenkins states that pop cosmopolitanism equals neither technological utopianism of ‘global village’ by Marshal McLuhan (1964 cited in Jenkins, 2004a) nor ideological fears of media imperialism. ‘New pop cosmopolitanism’, except for Jenkins, is also considered by Constance Steinkuehler (2006) referring to the work by James Paul Gee as “a discourse, or ‘way of being in the world’, marked by a willingness and ability to navigate an increasingly globalized, diverse, networked, socio-technical world” (Gee, 1999). Confirming this viewpoint by examples, Jenkins tells how he met an American girl with a Japanese name who was a fan of anime culture. He uses this image to define the term pop cosmopolitanism: “She is what this essay calls a pop cosmopolitan, someone whose embrace of global popular media represents an escape route out of the parochialism of her local community” (Jenkins, 2004a, p. 152). The scholar states that with the development of new technologies, a new epoch of media communications comes, and together with it, a new pop cosmopolitanism appears. As an example, the researcher described the combination of western and Asian cultures: “A new pop cosmopolitanism is being promoted by corporate interests both in Asia and in the West” (Jenkins, 2004b, p. 41). Jenkins believed that cultures of different countries mix with each other the way that people begin to take the elements of a foreign culture as a part of their own because these elements surround them since childhood and thus, become ordinary for people. A famous character of video games Super Mario is referred to as an example. American children know him and consider as a part of their native culture because they have played the games about him since childhood. However, Mario, according to the plot, is an Italian; the game about him is designed by a Japanese company Nintendo. Thereby, a cultural convergence happens, which Jenkins (2004b) describes as a new pop cosmopolitanism that creates common cultural space for people sharing interests (e.g. anime) from different cultures.

Apart from Jenkins in the West, eastern scholars also explored concepts resembling to the new pop cosmopolitanism. Thus, Iwabuchi (2002) presented the theorization on the dissemination and globalization of Japanese popular culture and studied the concept of *mukokuseki*, which means nationless or stateless, or describes a person or a phenomena that does not belong to any country or nation as well as does not have any membership anywhere: it is ‘a country-neutral quality’ (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 78). Iwabuchi believes that “... the international spread of *mukokuseki* popular culture from Japan simultaneously articulates the universal appeal of Japanese cultural products and the disappearance of any perceptible ‘Japaneseness’” (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 33). Such a feature of Japanese anime, manga and games helps to understand the new

‘global consciousness’, and proves that nowadays Japanese pop culture becomes more and more cosmopolitan, and there is no wonder that non-Japanese audience such as American kids described by Jenkins, could easily misinterpret its cultural origin. This way, the further exploration of the concept of *mukokuseki* is very useful in understanding transcultural reception at the local level. On this occasion, the cultural origin of a certain piece of mass culture, such as Mario game, becomes unimportant for the recipients: they are Americans and they consume a foreign pop culture as American, despite it is not American. On the contrary, Jenkin’s new pop cosmopolitanism concept is more useful in understanding the dissemination of international media at the global level. Jenkins describes a global pop cosmopolite as an American girl he met in the grocery store during his trip. “The grocery clerk, a white girl with a broad southern accent, was trying to explain why she had a Japanese name on her employee badge and found herself talking about an alternative identity she assumes through ‘cosplay’, the practice of anime fans dressing up like their favorite characters” (Jenkins, 2004a, p. 152). Unlike those kids who did not consume the Mario game as a Japanese one (which made it *mukokuseki* at the local level of cultural reception), this girl fully understands that the pop culture she consumes belongs to Japan, and she likes it. Thus, at her local level she receives the foreign culture as a global piece of information. In that case, her nationality becomes unimportant: she is an American, but it does not matter for her. She uses a Japanese name and likes Japanese anime and manga and thus she is the part of the global community and the anime fandom. The nationality of the information unit recipients there becomes unimportant because they are united by a common culture that is a mixture of different cultures, languages, literatures, fictions, characters and media content. While at the local level these processes might be taken as just misinterpretation of the exact culture the character or work belongs to, in global terms it is a complicated interaction between media cultures of different countries, creation of branched franchises that sell media content not only inside the country but also beyond its boundaries, as well as not only inside the countries but also inside cultural communities of people with general interest where a nationality does not matter. Only their preferences matter.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework

Jinni Pradhan (2010) offers to divide the term pop cosmopolitanism into two types: local pop cosmopolitanism and comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism. The first type represents a local cosmopolite – a person “... who explores a foreign culture while still rooted in their local, everyday culture of which their interest in global popular culture is a part” (Pradhan, 2010, p. 86).

A local cosmopolite “... always has one foot in their local culture and one foot in the foreign culture, consuming the foreign culture through the frame of foreign popular culture which has been absorbed into their local culture and identity” (Pradhan, 2010, p. 86). The second type represents a comprehensive cosmopolitan – a person completely absorbed into a foreign culture and “... willingly letting go of their connections to their local culture to achieve this” (Pradhan, 2010, p. 86). Pradhan stresses that “Comprehensive pop cosmopolitans can happily live with both feet in a foreign culture, but they know that they have the ability to go back to their local culture at any time – they maintain a full perspective of both the local and the foreign cultures that compose their identity” (Pradhan, 2010, p. 86). Hence, a local pop cosmopolitanism is the first stage that can lead to the second – a more deepened into a foreign culture stage of comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism, if a person wants to accept a foreign culture from inside not only through one’s own culture. In a mediatized global society, the consumption of Japanese mass culture starts with manga as a product of mass culture, which successfully functions poly-format space (anime, video games, franchises, merchandizing, etc.). Pradhan (2010) states that manga became pop cosmopolitan by approbation and localization of Japanese anime series by American TV. Anime boom in the USA started at the end of the 1990s. In September 1998 anime *Pokemon* was shown on American TV, in 2001 – *Yu-Gi-Oh*. Anime, dubbed in English, was broadcast in the afternoon (after school ends) and on Saturday mornings. Approximately at this period, anime appears in Europe with the translation into national languages. For example, on Ukrainian TV anime series *Cardcaptor Sakura* was broadcast on New Channel from 2 June till 1 November 2002, and from 29 April till 7 August 2003. Also, New Channel showed anime *Digimon Adventure* and *Pokemon*. According to Shikimori (2021) website, for the last 18 years in Ukraine anime was broadcast by New Channel, Tonis, QTV, Malyatko TV, 1+1, 2+2, NLO TV, UA:Pershy, TET, K1, ICTV. A single generation grew up taking anime as a harmonious part of national Ukrainian TV-content. In this process, anime audience almost do not think of Japan as a country of production. The stage of plunging into a foreign culture begins with the consumption of mediawork in the original language with the use of translation in the form of subtitles. Pradhan (2010) emphasizes that nowadays Japanese media content on YouTube, including that connected with anime and idols, has subtitles in different languages that are added by ordinary users from various countries. Thus, it is possible that a foreigner translates a certain video from Japanese into English and/or one’s native language. “It is important to think about not only how native audiences are consuming their media, but how culturally non-native audiences are consuming these globalizing media texts”, – stated Pradhan (2010, p. 9).

Iwabuchi (1999) in his work ‘Returning to Asia: Japan in the cultural dynamics of globalisation, localisation and Asianisation’ analyzed the concept of ‘a Japanese transnational cultural power’. It describes the global spread of Japanese audiovisual cultural forms on global markets. Thus, it illustrates the current globalization of Japanese anime, manga and games throughout the world as the manifestation of the new pop cosmopolitanism examples we studied further in this paper.

Appadurai (2010) in his work ‘Modernity at Large’ believes that media globalization creates affective relationships between different people from different countries and with different jobs, and forms a cultural flow of ‘mediascape’. It could be used as a representation of how Japanese pop culture unites people who share the same interests throughout the world.

All the processes mentioned are influenced by the phenomenon of mediatization that, on the one hand, is a peculiar scientific trend, but on the other hand, remains rather disputable in a world scientific discourse. The world science has been studying the phenomenon of mass culture mediatization since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Different levels and aspects of mediatization (mediation, medialization, mediatization) have become the centre of scientific interest for the following scholars: Harold Innis, Marshal McLuhan, Norm Freisen, Theo Hug, Lynn Schofield Clark, Nicklas Luhmann, etc. Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp trace the development of the concept since 1933 when Ernst Manheim published his own thesis ‘The Bearers of Public Opinion’ where he comprehended “mediatization of direct human relationships” (Manheim, 1933 cited in Couldry and Hepp, 2013, p. 195), and base on the research results of Jean Baudrillard (1976 cited in Couldry and Hepp, 2013), Jurgen Habermas (1984 cited in Couldry and Hepp, 2013), Ulf Hannerz (1990 cited in Couldry and Hepp, 2013). Proceeding with the analysis of a scientific discussion around the phenomenon, it is impossible not to mention Winfried Schulz (2004) who connected mediatization with three main communicative functions of media: retransmission, semiotic and economic functions, and singled out the processes of social transformations where media have a key role. According to Schulz (2004), they include extension, substitution, amalgamation and accommodation. First, media technologies blur a traditional understanding of space–time boundaries, often destroying them. They also help overcome the barriers of information encoding. Consequently, they broaden humanity’s communicative possibilities actualizing, as Schulz (2004) stated, McLuhan’s statement that media are “the extensions of man” (McLuhan cited in Schulz, 2004, p. 88). Second, media either partially or completely substitute certain types of people’s activity. At the same time, “in the process of mediatization not only non-media activi-

ties have assumed media form, but also new media have substituted traditional forms of communication". This process can also be traced in social and cultural phenomena (video sermon, digital diplomacy, online education, virtual art, e-commerce, etc.), as well as in media environment (immersive technologies VR and AR, convergent, cross-media practices, trans-media story-telling, etc.). As for the merger, the process of media and non-media technologies unification, interpenetration of various types of people's activity and their interconnection with communicative environment, according to Schulz (2004), lead to "the media's definition of reality amalgamates with the social definition of reality". Finally, "the mere fact that communication media exist induces social change ... the various economic actors have to accommodate to the way the media operate" (Schulz, 2004, pp. 89–90).

Knut Lundby (2014) in his grounded work 'Mediatization of Communication' differentiates:

- a notion of cultural mediation, referring to Jesús Martín-Barbero's work (Martín-Barbero, 2006),
- a socio-constructivist approach of Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp (2013; 2016) as "one of the two main traditions of scientific study of mediatization" (Lundby, 2014, p. 10);
- institutionalist tradition of Stig Hjarvard (Hjarvard and Petersen, 2013; Hjarvard, 2014), who considers mediatization as a social process;
- his own materialist approach, which is based on the technological factor of mediatization (Lundby, 2014).

Obviously, scientists interpret chronological borders of the concept 'mediatization' in different ways. Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard and Knut Lundby (Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby, 2015), as well as Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone (Lunt and Livingstone, 2016) criticize David Deacon and James Stanyer's views (Deacon and Stanyer, 2014; 2015) as for including 'mediatization' in the phenomena of 'modern times'. Basing upon the works of Friedrich Krotz (2001; 2009), they consider mediatization as an old basic meta-process that is closely connected with civilizational development. Knut Lundby (2015) gives a generalized characteristics of mediatization, which we accepted as a basis in this article: "Mediatization research is not about media effects but, as noted above, about the interrelation between the change of media and communication, on the one hand, and the change of (fields of) culture and society, on the other hand." (Lundby, 2015, p. 320).

While researching mediatization of mass culture, we were guided by the work of Johan Fornäs (2014),

which, first of all, contains a clear definition of mediation – "mediation is when something functions as a linking device between different entities, for instance between human subjects or between social worlds across a distance in space or time", media as "socially organized technologies made for use in such mediating communication practices", and mediatization through understanding it as "a historical process whereby communication media become in some respect more 'important' in expanding areas of life and society, as media technologies, texts, and/or institutions are experienced to become involved and influential in increasingly many spheres and contexts" (Fornäs, 2014, p. 484). In addition, Fornäs connects mediatization with culture by understanding its specific regime that concerns institutional technologies of culture, but not its other aspects (e.g. sense). Finally, in our opinion, the research has a useful understanding of 'mass culture', which defines it "not as any fixed and logically bounded essence or set of works and genres, but rather as a dynamic sociocultural construct" (Fornäs, 2014, pp. 489–490). Fornäs performs an analysis of mass culture on different forms of its realization: graphic, printed, audio-visual and digital, which allows us to make assumptions as for the expediency to analyze Japanese manga and anime as a mass culture phenomenon, using this approach and the works of Lukas R. A. Wilde (2019), Robert Fraser (2018), Marc Steinberg (2012), Dean Chan (2008), Sharon Kinsella (1999), etc.

## 2. Research methodology and conceptual framework

The article defines the specificity of Japanese pop-culture products representation in media environment (manga, anime), their globalization and realization on the level of pop cosmopolitanism conception. We consider anime and manga as Japanese pop-culture products, basing on Fornäs's theory. The research regards mass culture and pop culture as equivalent. The term 'pop cosmopolitanism' is interpreted based on Henry Jenkins's understanding (Jenkins, 2004a), and its introduction to a Japanese media model is based on Jinni Pradhan's publication (Pradhan, 2010). The concept of nationless Japanese pop culture (mukokuseki) is taken from Koichi Iwabuchi's work (Iwabuchi, 2002), as well as the analysis of soft-power theory in application to Japanese pop culture (Iwabuchi, 2015) and from William Spencer Armour (2011). As a core factor, we chose the process of mass culture mediatization according to Fornäs (2014). In this paper we, according to Jenkins (2004a), situate the concept of new pop cosmopolitanism on participatory culture and media convergence in a global context. We also situate the new pop cosmopolitanism in transcultural and postcolonial media

communication studies according to Koichi Iwabuchi (1999; 2002; 2015). In this research we consider the terms ‘mass culture’ and ‘pop culture’ as equivalent, and by that we mean manga, anime, games, their franchises, which are an empiric material of our work.

This paper aims to show how the new tendencies in the field of mass culture mediatization are implemented on the global level. It also touches upon the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1. Is it important to consider what country produces a mass culture product on the global level?

RQ2. What role do Japanese national markers serve in a process of a global mass media product spread?

RQ3. How does Japanese mass culture enter a global level and is there a scheme of its interaction with domestic and global audiences?

RQ4. What technics of mass media spreading can be considered effective?

In this work, we used the following methodological research framework to make our contribution:

- Described a theoretical background of the research by juxtaposing the theories of the new pop cosmopolitanism and mediatization.
- Applied the systematic analysis to create a schematic representation of a typical Japanese mass culture franchise as a starting point of our research.
- Chose 13 franchises by the purposive sampling method, which, in the authors’ opinion, are the examples of the new pop cosmopolitanism concept realization. These 13 franchises include Fate, Kantai Collection, Azur Lane, Mahjong Soul, Nier, Genshin Impact, Love Live!, Uzaki-chan wa Asobitai, Sword Art Online, Tower of God, Re:Zero, Devilman and Baki. Such franchises are suitable for analysis because they are up-to-date cross-media platforms, popular all over the world. Some of them originated from Japan, some are from China, and others are cooperation between different countries, e.g. Japan, South Korea and the USA. However, all of them have something in common: they all exploit a concept of a Japanese pop culture to attract their audiences.
- Distinguished five segments which include the most important representations of mass culture and the new pop cosmopolitanism in Japan and abroad: game trend (gacha games, visual novels), online anime-styled characters (vocaloids, virtual youtubers), manga and anime franchises, anime streaming services (Crunchyroll, Funimation, Netflix), transcultural anime fandom (fan labour and works: fansubbing, doujinshi, cosplay).
- Within each segment, defined the most popular and important pieces which reflect the current tendencies within their group.
- Analyzed each piece within its segment to schematize the following aspects of its functioning: development of franchises on domestic markets, structural aspects of Japanese mass culture (e.g. analysis of particular pieces of pop culture, such as anime), technical aspects of globalization (e.g. by which means they enter a global level, such as streaming services), new media tendencies and what makes these franchises pop-cosmopolitan. The analysis of mass culture products is performed on the following levels: channels of spreading and technics of entering a global level.
- Created new figures and schemes to summarize our findings and new information.
- Discussed how Japanese language becomes a brand in terms of mass media products and the new pop cosmopolitanism.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Structure of anime franchise

No doubt, a modern Japanese media system is not limited by traditional analog media. On the contrary, press, radio and TV are combined into complicated cross-media systems involving online technologies, Internet-platforms and even elements of augmented reality. Besides, the role of media representing mass culture has greatly increased: anime closely connected with TV, manga that is a part of printed media, games and mobile applications market, which broaden the franchise of different mass media and integrate it into a cross-media system. A modern mass culture consumer is surrounded by the content due to one’s favorite media through a great number of communication channels. Here we focus on the structure of a typical popular anime franchise, its channels of spreading and the technics to enter a global level. We distinguish four possible types of franchise development (see Figure 1). Left column represents a chain ‘anime-manga-visual novels \ mobile games \ video games-merchandise’ which depicts a subsequence of the appearance of certain media on the market. In other words, a studio creates an anime, then it is turned into manga comics, after that – into visual novels or games,



or even both, and finally franchise owner makes different merchandise with characters of one's series: plastic figures, goods, clothes, etc. Respectively, the following columns represent similar processes, but in the different order: franchise could start from manga, game or any other original project, even a music CD. As a particular example of franchise development, we take a popular franchise Fate created by a Japanese author Kinoko Nasu, and represent its subsequent genesis. It is originated from visual novel Fate / Stay Night by a Japanese company Type-Moon in 2004. Next, an anime adaptation of the novel happens with a further broadcasting on TV channels Chiba TV, AT-X, TV Aichi, Tokyo Metropolitan Television, Sun Television, Kyoto Broadcasting System, TV Saitama and TV Kanagawa. Later, the anime was released on eight DVDs and rereleased in Blu-ray format. After that, based on the

novel, manga Fate / Stay Night was published in magazines Shonen Ace and Young Ace in Kadokawa Shoten publishing house in 2006. Then, a great number of anime with the franchise Fate appeared in the period 2006–2020. The most significant ones were Fate / Zero (prequel), Fate / Stay Night Unlimited Blade Works (remake), Fate / Kaleid Liner Prisma Illya (spin-off), Fate / Apocrypha (spin-off), Fate / Extra (spin-off), Fate / Stay Night Heaven's Feel (alternative story), Carnival Phantasm (parody that unites the characters of various author's works into a single media space) and Fate Grand Order (spin-off). The majority of spin-offs also got manga-version. Later, a film was on at the cinemas that was an adaptation of another plot part Unlimited Blade Works from the studio Deen in 2010. After that, a mobile game spin-off Fate Grand Order from Aniplex anime and music production company

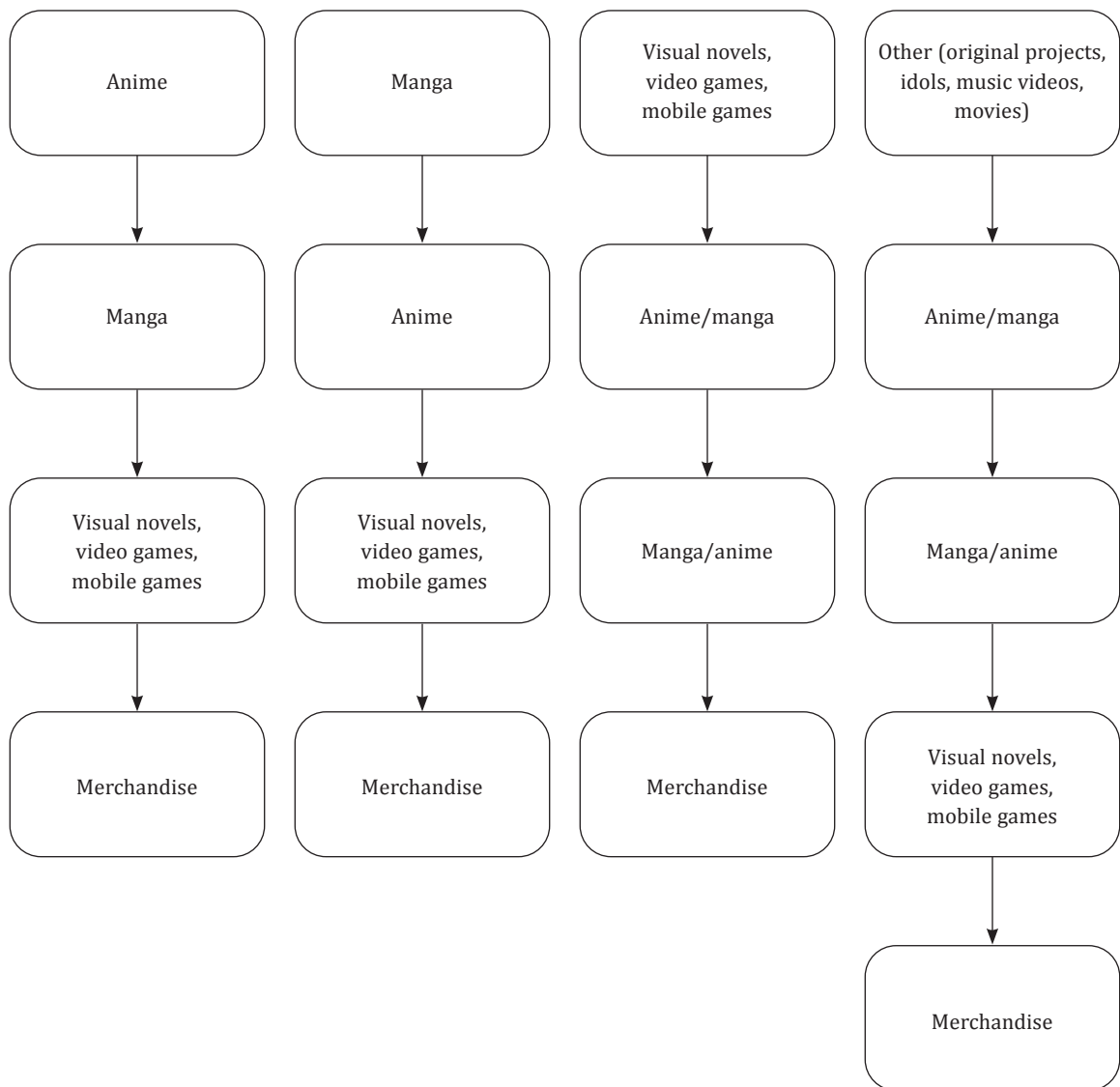


Figure 1: Typical variants of the development of Japanese pop-culture franchise

appeared in 2015. It was significant because it united the characters of all the parts of the franchise into one game and became a vivid example of trans-media narration. In 2016 a Chinese version appeared, and in 2017 versions for the USA, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea. In 2018 the improved version for Japanese arcade machines appeared. The game is free-to-play, but optionally, it is possible to spend real money on it. In 2017 Fate / Grand Order earned 982 million US dollars, in 2018 1.2 billion, in March 2019 3 billion, and at the beginning of 2020 a total profit of the game exceeded 4 billion US dollars. An American version Fate Grand Order has its *own radio* that tells about game events, news, stories, etc. The game has more than 8 million gamers in the USA. There is a limited access to the game for other countries apart from Canada and Singapore. Japanese and Chinese versions are also limited for their countries, which does not prevent them from making huge profits. Fate / Stay Night Heaven's Feel in the format of three full-length anime films was shown not only in Japan and the USA cinemas. Spin-off Emiya-san Chi no Kyou no Gohan is available in Original Net Animation (ONA) format that is spread through the Internet. Thus, franchise Fate is represented in different media formats and is broadcast through all media channels.

### 3.2 Anime formats according to the channel of spreading

- TV – anime series that is broadcast on Japanese channels. An episode lasts on average 24 minutes and is divided into two blocs, each of 12 minutes, with commercials between them. Advertising is also shown at the beginning and at the end of an episode on special insertions.
- Web – the same TV-anime but it is broadcast through paid streaming services on the Internet both in Japan and beyond the country. No advertising.
- BD/DVD – TV-anime, but it is released on disks after the TV broadcast completes. It is of high quality, often with additional or improved scenes. In erotic or violent anime, in this case, there is no censorship. Rather expensive (up to 40 000 yens for a set), no advertising. DVD costs cheaper and has a maximal quality 480p, BD – 1080p.
- OVA (Original Video Animation) – anime format that is released only on disks. The OVA-anime is not broadcast on TV. Also a so-called special is marked this way. It is an additional, e.g. 13<sup>th</sup> episode in a 12-series TV-anime, that is released as a bonus only on disks and only for those who bought BD/DVD-version.
- OAD (Original Animation DVD) – anime format that has an additional exclusive episode released only on DVD and in a set with manga Tankōbon, available for those who bought a certain volume of manga with it.
- ONA – anime format released only through streaming services on the Internet. No broadcast on TV.
- Movie – a full-length anime film. It is on at the cinemas and later, on disks.

### 3.3 Variants of different franchises as the examples of the new pop cosmopolitanism

#### 3.3.1 Game trend

Gacha games are a Japanese game genre based on a principle of a slot machine where a gamer tries to get a virtual prize. Kantai Collection is a Japanese gacha game for browsers. In its case, one 'builds' ships in the form of girls. The more unique they are, the fewer chances are to get them. This game was released in 2013 and was available only in Japan. In 2015 it got an anime adaptation. The game became one of the first successful projects of the genre known beyond Japan (although it is possible to play in it only by connecting a Japanese VPN). Following its example, in 2017 a Chinese game Azur Lane for mobile phones appeared. There are also ships from all over the world divided into fractions according to the countries (Japan, the USA, Great Britain, Germany, etc.). The ships are represented in a form of anime girls. The basis of the game is also gacha where after getting a character, one has to make a fleet and annihilate enemies. The plot in the game is given on the principle of visual novel. There is a skin shop in the game, where players can purchase alternative outfits for game characters and the most expensive skins are animated with Live2D technology. In September 2017 a Japanese version appeared, in May 2019 an English one with servers in the USA, in October 2019 versions for Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The game is developed by a Chinese company Manjuu but dubbed in Japanese. In such games (there are a lot of them nowadays), characters address to gamers to a specific name. Indeed, in Azur Lane a gamer is called commander (from Japanese – shikikan). In a mobile game Fate / Grand Order a gamer is called master, in Arknights doctor. In this way, the author of the game creates a certain impersonal image of a gamer, which unites everybody who plays this game. In 2019 based on the game, the anime was released. The game also has a collaboration with the game World of Warships. The gamers optionally can download Japanese audio dubbing of real ships by the voices of anime girls from Azur Lane and anime liveries for them. Thus, it is possible to play an international game with Japanese audio

dubbing. On the Internet, virtual youtubers (vitubers) advertise a game Azur Lane, and then, during a game event they are added to the game as in-game characters who a gamer can obtain. After that, the virtual youtubers play this game on video streams and try to get themselves. The example of this interaction is available on YouTube (Azur Lane, 2021). Trans-media narration is formed this way, with the aim of promoting the game with the help of online communication channels.

Visual novels are mainly a dating simulator with anime characters, and most of them are 18+ and exist only in Japanese and only for the Japanese market. Despite secrecy, the genre has become popular in the West. Some novels are translated and sold through the platform Steam (the official game distributor in the West). However, in the West these games are censored, e.g. Nekopara in 2014, and Dies Irae in 2017. A reverse process is quite vivid, when western developers create their own novels in this genre, and some of them later become popular in Japan, and even dubbed in Japan. This reverse process is a part of globalization of Japanese media in the world when a certain media based on the original, created beyond Japan, comes there from the West and localizes. Examples include Doki Doki Literature Club in 2017, and Sakura Fantasy in 2015.

A classic Chinese game mahjong in anime style is available in the application Mahjong Soul since 2019 from Chinese developers Azur Lane. Two servers work in the game: one separate for Japan, the other global for China, the USA, Europe and all the world. The interface on the global server is available only in Chinese and English, voiced are only in Japanese. Again, the role of the Japanese language here is obvious; it is a branding technology. The lack of Japanese interface and the presence of Japanese audio demonstrate that a developer encourages anime fans to its game from all over the world, including local citizens, in Japanese, although the game is not Japanese.

A Japanese game Nier: Automata from 2017 told about the world where humanity had died, and to survive on the Earth, a human-like mechanic robots and androids fought. The main character was an android-girl 2B who traveled around the world annihilating robots and searching for the sense of her existence. Her image became so popular in the west that caused a lot of cosplay, fan-art, and became a trend of mass culture. However, the game itself in spite of a sex-symbol character, in fact turned out to be a philosophic parable about the search of a life sense, existential crisis. It considered the problems of existence and referred to famous European philosophers and the Bible. Indeed, the game had the following characters: Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Pascal, Adam and Eve. The

main plot thesis was based on Nietzsche's philosophy. Thus, we can observe a convergence of cultures (Jenkins, 2004a, 2004b) when a European philosophy becomes the basis of plot and is given through the prism of the Japanese worldview in a Japanese game, which unites aesthetics of the East and philosophy of the West.

A Chinese anime style game Genshin Impact from 2020 is a role-playing game in the open world where a gamer chooses where to travel by oneself. It is remarkable because it gives a player the opportunity to play on different platforms: mobile devices, PC, and game-console PlayStation 4, although usually mobile games do not have such option. The game is free-to-play, but it has a paid content. During the first four days, 17 million users downloaded it; during the first fortnight since the release, the game brought its developers more than 100 million US dollars. It is available with the audio dubbing in four languages: Japanese, Chinese, Korean and English, as well as with subtitles in many languages. Thus, China borrows the concept of Japanese mass culture and globalizes it, which, as a result, brings a great income and popularity.

Western game service Steam gives an opportunity to set Japanese audio dubbing if fans want, in some cases it costs money. In this case, the Japanese language is not only an element of branding but also an additional content of western media (e.g. The Witcher 3, 2015, and Life is Strange, 2015).

### 3.3.2 Online anime-styled characters

Vocaloids are voice synthesizers, the principle of which was introduced by Yamaha corporation in 2004. To create a vocaloid, a 'voice provider' (usually famous Japanese voice actors or vocalists) records each phonetic sound of the Japanese alphabet (or any other language) in a studio. Then, these sounds are transformed into voice samples of a music editor – vocaloid voicebank. It is possible to edit voice samples in the program: to change a key, pitch, and sound length. A complete vocaloid receives a name and anime-style avatar. Purchasing the program, everyone can create one's own music and use the vocaloid as a vocalist for one's instrumental tracks. This person is called a vocaloid producer. It can be both an amateur and a professional or sound recording corporation. The most famous vocaloid, who is no doubt one of the symbols of Japanese mass culture, is Hatsune Miku. Roseboro proves that by stating that "despite being a fictional character, Miku has opened for Lady Gaga's 2014 ArtRave tour (most notably at Madison Square Garden in New York), appeared on David Letterman's Late Show, collaborated with Pharrell Williams on a remix of 'Happy' for the film Jellyfish Eyes, has been



included in multiple iterations of the Just Dance video game series, and has served as creative inspiration for designs by Marc Jacobs” (Roseboro, 2019, p. 26). There are even concerts organized for Hatsune Miku where she sings from a large screen or as a 3D model or hologram (Miku, 2018). Other popular vocaloids are Megurine Luka, Kagamine Rin and GUMI. Vocaloids can be male or female. Unlike virtual youtubers, vocaloids are absolutely virtual characters that sing and talk with the help of the text typed in advance in a computer program.

Virtual youtubers are the authors of streams and video on YouTube who perform live broadcast and communicate with the viewers on behalf of a digital anime avatar. The avatar is generated in a real time with the help of computer graphics. A special equipment or web camera reads mimicry and movements of a real person. Therefore, the viewers get the impression that they are talking online with a real anime character. Professional seiyu (Japanese voice actors) as well as amateurs voice vituber characters and conduct streams on their behalf. Wilde (2019) believes that nowadays characters, such as vocaloids or vitubers, are the key elements of media convergence in Japan: “... many character theories in recent years are essentially thought of as transmedial: applicable to representations of characters through a variety of media (e.g. film, television, comics, video games, etc.)” (Wilde, 2019, p. 4). “Characters can not only be considered the ‘currency’ of and between different forms of media. In many cases, they also serve as a kind of ‘fuel’, as an incentive for both dynamics mentioned above” (Wilde, 2019, p. 4). The most popular Japanese virtual youtuber Kizuna Ai has more than 2.5 million subscribers on her channel. There is also a Japanese vituber agency Hololive, that manages Japanese, Vietnamese and English-speaking vitubers. The most popular English vituber Gawr Gura has over 1 million subscribers on YouTube. The main goal of vituber streams is an entertainment for anime fan audience. Vitubers sing anime songs, play games, discuss a wide range of topics relevant for anime fans. They often make absurd and even risqué jokes about themselves, make collaborations and use rude words in a cute way to attract audience. They also make different references to Japanese pop culture, which could be understood only by those who knows Japanese mass culture in depth. Thereafter, to be a successful virtual youtuber, a person must be a pop cosmopolitan, no matter one is Japanese or non-Japanese. Even English-speaking vitubers tend to learn or know Japanese language in order to be at the same level with their audience, and know a lot about anime, manga and games. Respectively, being a pop cosmopolitan becomes for them a professional requirement to do such a job. Therefore, the concept of the new pop cosmopolitanism can be useful nowadays, as it opens the new ways for people to work in media sphere.

### 3.3.3 Manga and anime franchise

Love Live! (2013) started with manga and music video clips. It tells about nine girls from a high school who become idols (Japanese young pop singers) to win a music contest, draw attention to their school and save it from closure. Later, two anime seasons and a full-length anime film were released. To increase the sales of anime disks, they were accompanied with a ticket to the actors’ concert (merchandizing). These actors voiced anime characters; in this concert, they performed on behalf of their characters. In addition, a mobile game was released where one had to gather anime characters and perform with them at the concerts. It was based on gacha principle and was a kind of rhythm game where one has to press the notes in time with the music. Afterwards, a sequel was released about nine other girls from another school, and in autumn 2020 an anime appeared about the third generation of school idols. In the sequel of Love Live! Sunshine the location is changed from Tokyo to a Japanese provincial town Numazu at the seaside. The main character Takami Chika has become an official Ambassador of tangerines sale of Nishiura Mikan (merchandizing). Moreover, due to the anime, a town Numazu has become so popular both with Japanese and foreign tourists that the locals even started to complain about some inconveniences caused by a great number of tourists. Sewer hatches painted with anime characters from Love Live! Sunshine were also installed in the town (merchandizing).

Uzaki-chan wa Asobitai is a manga in a romantic comedy genre, which was later adapted into TV-anime (2020). It was also advertised in vitubers style when the main character Uzaki Hana in the image of a vituber seemed to be playing a game and then called to buy a new volume of manga (Kadokawa, 2018). She has become an official ambassador of Red Cross in Japan (merchandizing). There were posters with the character in Tokyo where she called to donate blood (Uzaki Hana, n.d.).

### 3.3.4 Anime streaming services

Anime officially gets abroad through streaming services that license the official content, choosing which anime will be popular in certain regions. On American services Crunchyroll, Netflix and Funimation, anime is translated not only into English but also into European languages. In France and Russia there is a similar service Wakanim. Having a monthly subscription, a user gets an access to the archive of licensed anime. These services closely cooperate with Japanese anime studios, ordering and financing anime production, which according to their estimation will be popular in the West. For example, Netflix ordered remakes and sequels of old anime Baki and Devilman in 2018 that

are popular in the West. They are unlikely to be filmed by the Japanese because of financial non-profitability, as in Japan these shows did not gain the same success as in the West. Also in the West, so called live actions are filmed. These are anime screen versions with real actors, e.g. Ghost in the Shell and Death Note.

The largest streaming anime service with more than 55 million visitors monthly is Crunchyroll; 42 % of users are from the USA. The service specializes in anime with Japanese audio and subtitles in different languages. Its competitor Funimation specializes in sales of anime with English dubbing online and releases it on disks as well. The site traffic is 9.8 million monthly, 73 % of which is from the USA. In 2017 a Japanese company Sony purchased Funimation for 150 million US dollars. According to Khan (2021), in August 2021 Sony bought Crunchyroll for about 1.2 billion US dollars. This shows the desire of Japanese business to control the spread of anime all over the world because of the increase in its popularity, and they are ready to pay a high price.

Service Netflix mainly specializes on TV series and documentaries of their own production. There are not

many anime and it is not a priority, however, a Japanese branch Netflix Japan broadcasts anime for the Japanese making an alternative to anime viewing on TV. The second season of a popular anime Re:Zero, which is also broadcast on TV, became the most popular show on Netflix Japan in August 2020.

Korean online platform Naver has ordered from a Japanese studio TMS Entertainment the anime based on Korean manhwa Tower of God in 2020. Thus, the Japanese according to the Korean order made the anime based on the Korean comics. After the premiere in Korea, the anime was also shown in Japan on TV and in the West through the American service Crunchyroll for the western audience, demonstrating the efficiency of the new pop cosmopolitanism. Anime spreading in a national–global trend happens the following way: Japanese anime studio makes an anime, then it is broadcasted on TV in Japan (local level), next the series, licensed by western companies, with a minor delay after premiere on Japanese TV become available on streaming services such as Crunchyroll for the whole world (global level), including Japan, bringing it back to the local level (see Figure 2).

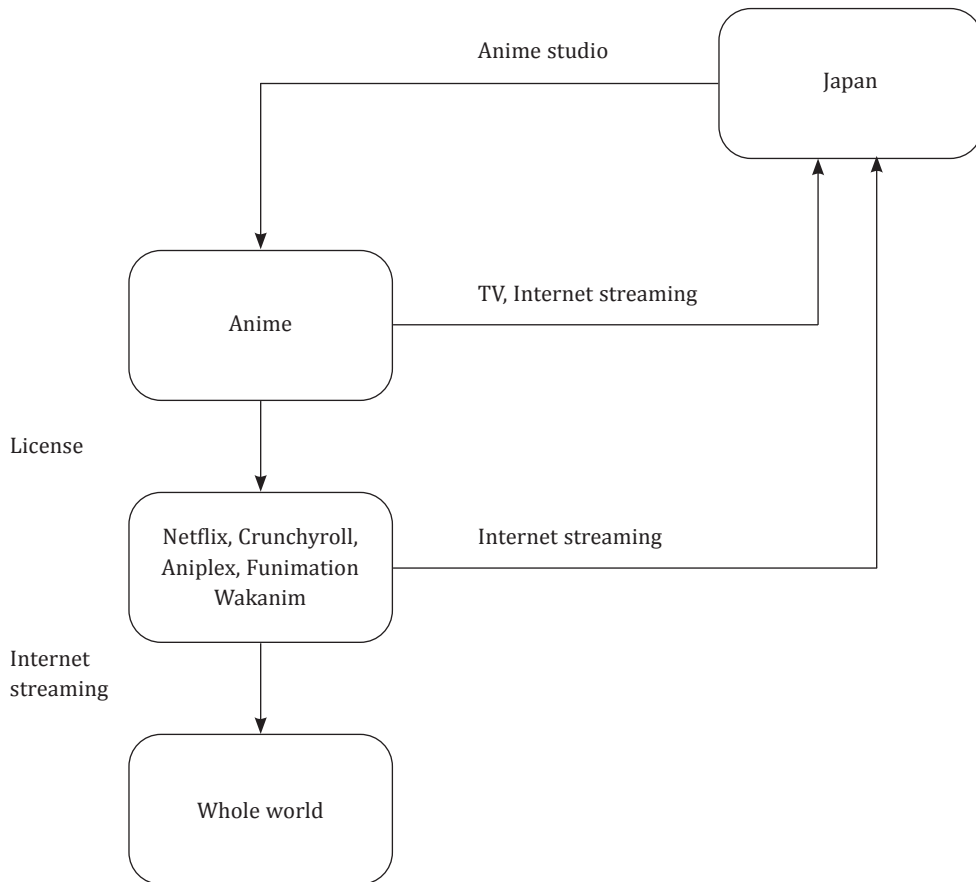


Figure 2: The scheme of anime spreading in trend national–global

At the end of the second season of anime *Sword Art Online: Alicization – War of Underworld* in 2020, the memories of the main characters according to the plot are uploaded to the server in a digital format; the IP address 52.68.96.58 is shown. If a user enters it into one's own browser, one is redirected to the anime webpage, which says "Our memories are right here". The authors connect fictional space of the imaginary world with the reality enabling the viewer to interact with it. If a viewer watched the anime on TV, one is redirected to online updating cross-media practices. For the details of cross-media practices, see the Japan's cross-media systems: features of functioning in the local market (Paschenko, 2017).

### 3.3.5 Transcultural anime fandom

Fan labour and works also make their contribution to the globalization of Japanese mass culture. There are few different kinds of activities fans usually do in order to share anime, manga or games they like in their country (e.g. making a fan translations to their language) or to simply express themselves (drawing a fan-made comics about their favorite characters, doing cosplay or drawing a fan art). Hye-Kyung Lee (2011), describing fansubbing and scanlating, states that "Enthusiastic fans obtain – buy, record from TV or download – overseas audiovisual products, translate the original language into their own, provide subtitles and release the subtitled version on the internet for other fans, without asking permission from the relevant copyright holder" (Lee, 2011, p. 1131). From the one hand, fansubbing and scanlating of licensed manga and anime is regarded as a form of media piracy by copyrights holders, but from the other hand, it helps to globalize Japanese media mix in countries where it is not officially accesible. "Accessing and consuming foreign cultural products via 'fan-translation' has become an everyday part of life for many ordinary cultural consumers in different sections of the world from the US to China", thinks Lee (2011, pp. 1131–1132). Fans in Japan and overseas also engage themselves in drawing fan works dedicated to their favorite anime, game or manga. It is called doujinshi, which stands for a self-published piece of work (manga, game, music, etc.) made by a group of fans with the same interests or by a single person. Doujinshi also can be original works. In Japan, lots of doujinshi works are sold at the Comiket, the biggest comic festival which is held twice a year. Fans around the world also draw doujinshi: in the USA, in the Netherlands, in Germany and many other countries (Lamerichs, 2013, pp. 158–165). Fans also create tones of fan art (simply anime-styled fan-made drawings dedicated to a certain character or title), and upload it to imageboards. One of the most popular fan art themed websites is Japanese Pixiv. Fans also engage in cosplay, when they dress

up as their favorite character, take photos and share it within community. This practice became popular among fans from different countries and illustrates the progress of globalization of Japanese pop culture around the globe (Lamerichs, 2013, pp. 167–173). Fan labour such as anime fansubbing or manga scanlating are made mostly on voluntary basis, but fan works such as doujinshi or fan art can also be monetized by their authors. They either sell their works at the comic festivals and online or receive donations via crowdfunding (e. g. using Patreon website).

## 4. Discussion

The research results prove that on a global level in a mediatized society, it is not important which country produces the product of mass culture – no matter whether the product is artificially connected with a certain area (in our case, Japan) by franchise, language, characters, and symbolic elements or media technologies. Culture and language act as mediators passing through them the products of other areas, creating the elements of pop cosmopolitanism discourse on a global level with bright national features. The arguments for this statement can be the data as for the quantity of followers of American streaming service Crunchyroll, where there are more than 1000 anime, only 49 of which are dubbed. The others are in Japanese with subtitles in different languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, German, and Russian. Crunchyroll has more than 3 million paying subscribers and more than 55 million site visitors monthly; the data are retrieved from Similarweb (2021). Of these 42 % are from the USA, then Brazil, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. One of the Crunchyroll's competitors is American streaming service Funimation. It specializes more on anime dubbed in English and Spanish. It is less popular and has approximately 1 million paying subscribers (Nikkei Asia, 2020) and 9.8 million users monthly, 71 % of whom are from the USA, then Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and Brazil (Similarweb, 2021). Crunchyroll is much more popular than Funimation, which proves that millions of people want to take anime in the original language; the availability of audio dubbing is not important and not necessary for them.

Japanese mass culture together with the language appeals to the emotive level of consumerism through the systems of lovely characters, emotional stylistics and a great number of opportunities on services market: from souvenirs with beloved characters to dressing up (cosplay), etc. This approach turns out to be surprisingly effective in various forms of social interaction. In fact, Armour (2011) is sure that the use of anime and manga while learning Japanese makes the process funny and encourages people to study.

Nowadays, a lot of people all over the world play Japanese games, and when playing western games, set the Japanese language for audio instead of their native language. Service Steam gives such opportunity enabling to download the Japanese language into a French game *Life is Strange*. Chinese mobile game publishers Yostar, Inc. make the games in Japanese in order to sell them to the West. At the same time, some of them do not even have a Japanese version: only Chinese and English one, but audio is only in Japanese. And that is not to mention a great number of works imitating the Japanese originals which are created all over the world: Amerimanga, manhwa (Korean and Chinese manga), American cartoons in anime style, European magazines of manga (e.g. in Ukraine MIU manga), etc. Besides, cosplay, fan-art and doujinshi (unofficial manga from the fans based on official anime or manga works or original stories).

Globalization of Japanese mass culture is spread around the world and forms a branched cross-media system that connects not only local media channels but also converges global information space. Mass culture dates back to traditional media and develops the content further spreading it to different platforms. This strengthens the effects of mediatization on local cosmopolites.

This process is schematically represented in Figure 3, which shows via what media channels local cosmopolite in Japan gets one’s pop culture products and how they are connected with each other in the full-blown cross-media system. Thus, a mass culture recipient gets access to an anime via TV or the Internet, but also can

buy it on BD or DVD disks after TV broadcast is over. A customer can read manga in magazines or tankobon books, and then this manga can get an anime adaptation. Gamers get their games on disks, on the Internet or via mobile device application stores, and their games can be adapted into manga or anime. Music fans get their favorite songs on CD or via the Internet, and after that they can hear them as an anime music theme or even get an anime about their favorite idol band. All of the elements are interconnected in a diverse cross-media system via different media channels and they all can enter a global level afterwards.

Speaking about mediatized space, we should focus on the levels of mass culture product consumption. A full perception of national media discourse happens from inside. Here, there is a division of cosmopolites into local and comprehensive. Certain circles of connoisseurs watch anime only in the original language because in their opinion, any dubbing spoils anime. Others take the translation harmoniously, and somebody needs to visit a country (to which the anime is situated) for full immersion. The level of cosmopolitanism depends on the level of a person’s understanding the context and the realities of the other country that he wants to belong to, in our case – Japan.

A local cosmopolite is aware of the topic but accepts Japan like “they are there – we are here”. To understand some peculiarities of another culture and history, local cosmopolites need special explanation, e.g. translators’ comments in subtitles to anime that explain the

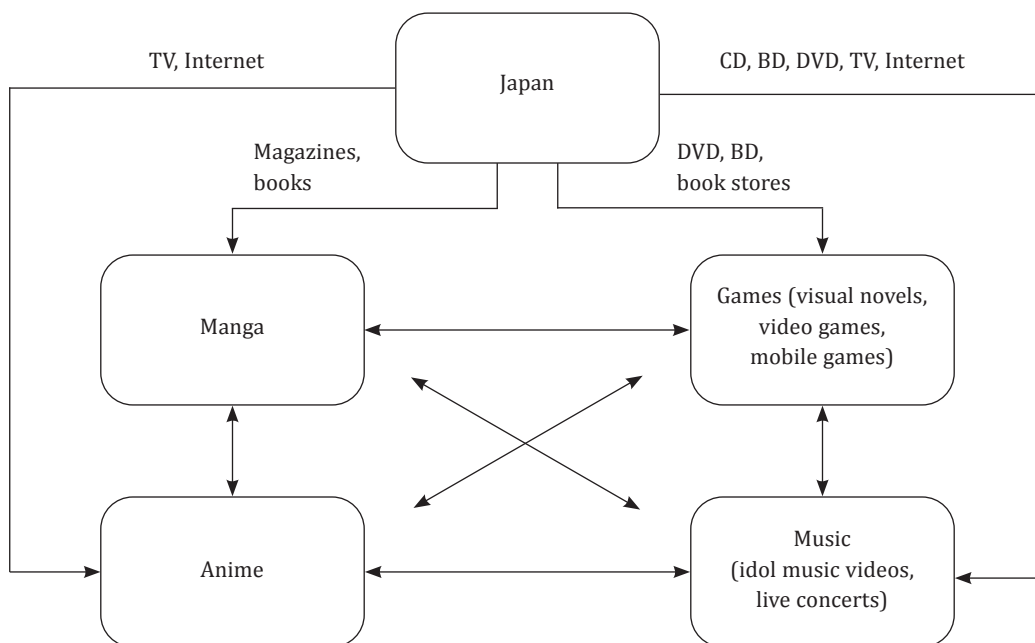


Figure 3: The scheme of mediatization of mass culture products on a global level, oriented on local cosmopolites

context. A comprehensive cosmopolite understands the context without explanations. For example, the foreigners who moved to Japan and have lived there for a long time, or the foreigners who were born in Japan and live there, know two languages perfectly. They do not consider themselves Japanese; however, they know the local culture as well as the locals.

Thus, a question arises: is it possible on the local level of new pop cosmopolitanism in mediatized global space to consider the language as an element of branding and transform it into the rank of technology by adding the function of mediation, according to Fornäs (2014)? The answer to this question is rather disputable and requires a further study.

## 5. Conclusions

New pop cosmopolitanism that is based on Japanese mass culture is spread through a branched system of media channels by which a consumer gets a media content to consume it in the Japanese language: TV, radio, the Internet, press, books, mobile apps, cinemas, computer games, physical disks, and merchandizing. Franchise surrounds consumers all around involving them into a large amount of content, which is one of the main characteristics of cross-media systems. A national product, thanks to mediatization, reaches a global level penetrated by glocalization practices that are implemented through the concept of the new pop cosmopolitanism.

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