

**The Sociocultural Impact of Social Media Promotion on the Japanese Market
(The Case of UNIQLO, Zara, H&M, and GAP Official Accounts on Twitter)**

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Social media has transformed the way people interact, share information, and engage with brands in the contemporary communication landscape. Twitter, in particular, has emerged as a popular platform for businesses to promote their goods and services to a large audience of prospective customers. Understanding the sociocultural impact of Twitter promotion is critical for businesses looking to thrive in Japan's dynamic and complex market, where social media use has skyrocketed in recent years. This paper investigates the various ways in which Twitter's social media promotion shapes the Japanese consumer landscape, casting light on the cultural and social factors that influence consumer behavior in this context.

The purpose of this study is to carry out a comparative analysis of social media promotion of Japanese and non-Japanese fast-fashion brands among consumers in Japan. Thus, the research question of the study is "What are the sociocultural features European and American brands are overlooked in their online interactions with Japanese consumers?"

The main approach applied was the sociocultural approach, based on Sorokin's [7], and Parsons' [6] sociocultural research. To bring this approach closer to the topic of the present study, the author additionally applied Consumer Culture Theory [2], an anthropological framework in marketing research [8], Computer Based Communication theory [4], as well as theories concerning the interaction of social media and culture [1]. The author also refers to cross-cultural theories such as the cultural iceberg theory [3], high-context and low-context communication [3], and cultural dimensions [5], among which an emphasis on collectivism in modern Japanese society was made due to its fundamentality as a cultural dimension and connection cohesion with a high-context culture [3].

The author has conducted content and influence analyses based on the data from official accounts UNIQLO, Zara, H&M, and GAP, mainly posts published over six months from August 2022 to January 2023.

As a result of the study, the author has described the origins of the sociocultural characteristics in online communication and consumer behavior and traced the connection between promotion on Twitter and sociocultural peculiarities.

Based on the listed results, the following conclusions were made:

- 1) Firstly, due to the impact of collectivism and the importance of relationship-related communication, the Japanese brand (UNQLO) has a wider social media network resulting in more frequent consumer interactions with their content.

- 2) Secondly, high-context culture contributes to indirect and implicit “soft-selling” messages which led to the establishment of a special marketing campaign conducted by the Japanese brand UNIQLO.
- 3) Moreover, non-Japanese brands tend to reprint (translate their content to Japanese) from their main accounts without creating content tailored for Japanese consumers ignoring their sociocultural peculiarities.
- 4) Finally, direct interaction with Japanese consumers on some issues takes place in most cases in private correspondence outside of Twitter (by mail, phone, LINE), which differs from the behavior of European and American consumers, who prefer to address the brand in replies or by creating a post with a tag. All of the brands reviewed take into account the importance of privateness in a high-context collectivist society and follow this pattern.

Prospects for future research consist of adding other Japanese (e.g. Shimamura) and Korean (e.g. NERDY) and Chinese (e.g. SHEIN) fast fashion brands to the analysis. It is also noteworthy to consider other social networks (e.g. LINE Voom) and messenger mailings (e.g. LINE). Finally, sociocultural explanations can be given through other cultural dimensions (e.g. Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, etc.).

References

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