

**The comparison between Japanese anime, manga
and mascots and their American equivalents**

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Introduction

Cartoons, comics and funny looking mascots play a big role in both Japanese and American cultures; because of these creations, many people had an awesome childhood. Japanese anime, manga and mascots are really different from American cartoons, comics and football mascots in some aspects but also share various common elements like science fiction, fantasy, advertisement and money. The following is an analysis of anime, manga, Japanese popular mascots, and a comparison between these and the American equivalent versions of them like Disney cartoons, Marvel comics and American football mascots.

The reasons how I came across these topics are several, lets start by saying that I grew up watching Dragon Ball and Pokemon in Spanish back in México and I fell in love with these T.V series. Since my analysis will be a crucial element on this research, I figured out if I had some background knowledge on the subject, reaching the fulfillment of this research would be better accomplished. I know the plot good enough to write a paper, but I would like to do more research on these two anime series and learn more about their history, genre, relation to Japanese pop culture, etc. As for manga and Japanese mascots, my knowledge is limited as well as for American comics and football mascots so I would like to learn something new on my research.

Many interesting questions will be analyzed; for example: what do Japanese anime and American Disney/Nickelodeon cartoons have in common? How are they different? What is the age aimed by dragon ball producers as well as by Pokemon (teens, children, adults, etc.)? How are the themes/plots in Dragon Ball and “Hey Arnold” similar/different? Why are manga and comics different? To what extent are Japanese

mascots and football mascots similar in propaganda/advertising terms? Is there a type of “American kawaii” culture and we don’t even know it? I plan to answer these questions by deeply analyzing the plot of each story and comparing them in many aspects such as genre, theme, age aimed to, sexual content, message, advertising/propaganda, tourism, monetary profit, etc.

Anime: Dragon ball Z and “Hey Arnold”

Dragon Ball /Z

Dragon ball belongs to anime from the eighties; it was created in 1984 by Akira Toriyama and produced by Toei animation studios. It was first aired in Japan, later on dubbed to many languages and watched in places like United States, Australia, India, Europe, and Latin America including México. This anime was initially inspired by the Chinese novel called “Journey to the West” but also from his own manga called “Dragon Boy”. Toei Animation made two anime series: Dragon Ball & Dragon Ball Z that were broadcasted in Japan from 1986-1996. This cartoon was a success in the U.S making a profit of three billion in sales from 1986 to 2000.

The plot of this anime is quite simple; is about powerful super human beings called Saiyans that came to earth from another planet with intentions to destroy human kind but things change once involved with humans. As a baby, Goku (a Saiyan) is sent to earth to conquer it and then is raised by Mr. Roshi. Goku’s brother had sent him to earth as a baby because humans were weak and didn’t require an adult to destroy the planet. Goku grows up among humans unaware of his origin until his brother Raditz comes back to earth to conquer it. Like every story, some friends become enemies and enemies

become friends as Goku struggles to keep human kind safe from conquerors. Goku's power keeps increasing as he trains harder and defeats powerful enemies; he is killed several times but then revived by the magic dragon spheres.

Hey Arnold

Hey Arnold is a television show created by Craig Bartlett for Nickelodeon. Bartlett started creating the first episode in 1993 but its original actual production started in 1994 when it was transformed from clay animation to cel animation. Hey Arnold was aired until 1996 in the United States, and then it was dubbed to Spanish and other languages as well.

The plot of this cartoon is a bit broader in comparison to dragon ball Z. Every episode has a different story or plot every time; for example, the second episode is not a continuation of the first episode. Each individual episode has its own little plot, like a new obstacle for Arnold to overcome. The show "hey Arnold" is about a fourth grader named Arnold who lives with his grandparents, Phil and Gertrude. This animated series take place in a fictitious place named Hillwood, in each episode Arnold helps one of his classmates to overcome a personal problem. These problems include things such as bullies, homework, parents, or anything going on in their personal lives. An important character of the show is Helga; she pretends to dislike Arnold, bullies him and treats him bad all the time to hide the fact that she is in love with him. Arnold's best friend is Gerald, together they overcome many obstacles in life.

DBZ and Hey Arnold

Dragon ball and “hey Arnold” are different in many ways. Hey Arnold’s actual genre is comedy-drama (dramedy), and “slice of life” while Dragon Ball’s genre is action, adventure, comedy, martial arts and science fantasy. While dragon Ball is more of a sci-fantasy anime, Hey Arnold is a bit more realistic. This does not mean it is one hundred percent real; is just based on the life of an average teenage boy; unlike Dragon Ball z is about powerful beings called Saiyans and other out of this world creatures that try to destroy the planet. Dragon ball z has way more action based on unrealistic super fights between powerful beings, meantime hey Arnold has some kind of action in the obstacles they have to overcome. The action in Hey Arnold relies on a realistic type of action that we have in our everyday lives. The age frame that Dragon ball Z is aimed to is broad, it could be from seven years old to twenty five years old, while hey Arnold is aimed to a shorter age frame around twelve to fifteen years old. I think Dragon Ball Z is aimed at such a wide age range because of the violence, sexual content, and language used in the cartoon. That is why a lot of adults liked that cartoon back in the eighties and still like it now days. The kids that liked DBZ back in the eighties are adults now and still like it, DBZ has become a classic and has impacted many generations. Hey Arnold is a “cleaner” cartoon aimed for young teenagers without bad words or sexual content; in this case teen agers like it but once they grow up they think its childish and stop liking it. In my opinion just because DBZ is rated “T” or “M” does not mean it’s aimed for mature audiences only, of course they put a label “T” for Teens or “M” for mature but producers know that kids are going to watch it anyways. Legally they have to put that age

restriction or label but producers know kids are not going to follow the rules so they aim at a younger to older age range.

Global impact of DBZ

DBZ became like a classic icon for Americans, Mexicans (Latinos in general), Russians, Brazilians (Portuguese), New Zealand's, French, Canadians, and many other nationalities. Because it was dubbed to many languages, it was a big impact on the lives of many people all over the world. It was dubbed to Spanish by dubbing director Gloria Rocha; she really did a good job dubbing all the episodes of DBZ. Mario Castañeda dubbed Goku's voice and because of that he became famous in México and Latin America. Dubbing the whole series to Spanish did not only made fans in México but in all Latin America and other Spanish speaking countries such as, Argentina, Perú, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, and countries in Central America. It also impacted the clothing market; many brands started making sweatshirts, hoodies and shirts of DBZ characters. Funny ones were made for bodybuilders, like hoodies that said "training to beat Goku, or at least Krillin". Fit people, body builders and active people were really influenced by DBZ; it motivates them to be in shape.

Manga/comics: Fullmetal Alchemist & Spider-man

Full metal Alchemist

Full metal alchemist is a manga created by Hiromu Arakawa and published on July 12, 2001. This particular manga is styled after the European Industrial Revolution when people started discovering new inventions. Fullmetal Alchemist was published in the U.S by the American manga company called Viz Media, in Australasia by "Madman

Entertainment” and by Chuang Yi in South Korea. Up to this date, Fullmetal Alchemist manga has sold around sixty four million copies internationally. It was the top selling comic” during 2005 when the English version of it was released.

The plot of this manga is quite interesting; is about two brothers, Eric and Alphonse who are in search of the philosopher’s stone to help them recover their bodies from an accident. They live in a place called Rosembool with their mother Trisha who died from a terminal illness. Their father, Van Hohenheim who is an alchemist, left them alone for unknown reasons. They have been learning alchemy on their own from one of their father’s books. They try to use this alchemy to bring their mother back to life, the process is called human transmutation. This is a forbidden taboo in which creation of a human being is attempted. The boys try this transmutation but they fail leaving the oldest boy with out an arm and a leg and the youngest one’s spirit in a metal armor. Roy mustang visits the Elric brothers and tries to convince Edward to join the State military of Amestris and in exchange, he will be provided with materials to recover his own and his brother’s bodies back. Right after the accident, Winry Rockbell and her grandmother replace Edward’s leg and arm with a prosthetic limb. When Edward becomes a state alchemist, he can use resources only available to state alchemist. As they keep searching this famous philosopher’s stone, they make a lot of friends and enemies as well; these include Scar and homunculi. The brother find out that the “homunculi” were the ones who created and secretly control the State Military. The “father” gained immortality through the philosopher’s stone and wants to use Amestris as a gigantic transmutation to transform the entire country. The brothers find out his evil plan and try to stop him. They

create a war between the Northern Briggs army and the Amestris's capital central city. After all these troubles, Edward defeats "father" and his brother recuperates his arm but costs him his soul. To repay him, Edward returns Alphonse to his original body but loses his ability to use alchemy. They return back to Rosembool but they have to go different ways to repay all the allies and people that help them in their dangerous journey.

Spider man

This comic was created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko and was published by Marvel Comics. Marvel has created many comic book series about spider-man, but the first one is "The amazing spider-man". Spiderman is one of the most successful superheroes becoming Marvels most commercial character and almost being a cultural icon. After the manga creation it was transferred into animated cartoons and came on many television shows. The idea of spider man came around 1962 after the success of the other comic called "fantastic four". There was a high demand for comics from teenagers so Stan Lee had to get creative.

The plot of the story is quite exciting; is about a teen age man named Peter Parker who lives with his uncle Ben and his aunt May. This orphan is in high school and is quite lonely and is frequently bullied by Jocks. He has a secret crush for his neighbor, a beautiful red head named Mary Jane Watson. One day he goes to a high school excursion to a laboratory and is bitten by a radio-active spider who had escaped. His whole life is changed after this event, he acquires many super powers like clear vision, ability to climb walls, throw spider web, super human strength and a spider sense. He learns how to use his powers and has fun impressing Mary Jane but all this fun does not last too long. A

millionaire called Norman Osborn, who is his best friend's dad, creates a villain named Green Goblin that will trouble Peter Parker for a long time. Now Peter Parker has to have a double life as a teen ager and as a super hero, so he becomes spider-man to fight crime. The green goblin is trying to kill spider man but fails and he dies instead.

Fullmetal Alchemist & Spider-man

These two mangas/comics are quite different in style and story; I could say that they try to give a scientific credible explanation for how the super powers were caused but it's combined with a world of fantasy. It could be said that the language used and the explanation given in full metal alchemist is more credible because they actually make alchemy seem to be a real thing. The way they portray alchemy and how the process is described make it a bit more credible than the spider-man version, as it is just being bitten by a radioactive spider. The explanation given in spider-man try to make it seem that it could be scientifically possible to have super powers just for being bitten by a radioactive spider, but we all know that is impossible. Kids might be able to believe it but adults know specifically that is impossible; maybe the explanation is too simple to be believed. The age aimed by the creators of full metal alchemist would be for an older generation than the one aimed by spider-man creators. It could be that full metal alchemist was designed for teen agers and young adults as for spider man was made for little kids young teens. Probably because the story plot and the fact that Full metal alchemist use more complex vocabulary to define things make it rated for an older audience. While spider man on the other hand, is more about a fantasy world mixed with real life problems of an unaccepted adolescent man. Not focusing on making the cause of the super powers seem

realistic, spider man producers aim this comic to a certain group of teen agers. Teen agers could identify themselves with Peter Parker's self-obsessions with rejection, inadequacy, and loneliness. This is the more modern side of Peter Parker, the one that is portrayed in the new movies, but it still carries some of the personality of the old manga character.

Japanese mascots & football mascots

Domo

The story of this cute Japanese mascot is quite simple, he first came up in December 22, 1998 on NHK satellite broadcasting's anniversary. The name "domo" was acquired during an episode where the T.V announcer said the word "domo" which means "hello!" or "hello there!" This particular character is kawaii, which is the "cuteness" of Japan. This type of mascots are appreciated more in Japan than in any other countries in the world. How domo gained its international popularity is quite interesting, he became known outside of Japan because of a public service that was going around the internet. Domo is not just a cute mascot, it is a manga published by Tokyopop in the U.S and Canada.

Sourdough Sam

Sourdough Sam is the official mascot for the San Francisco 49ers. He has five nicknames: Sam, Sammy, Samster, Sammiester, and Samarama. His appearance has changed over time, he used to have scruffy brown beard, brown eyes, and a bit hat; but lately he has appeared clean shaven (no beard), with blue eyes, and a hat without any imperfections or defects. In 2011, Sam returned with a full beard for the rest of the season. The 49ers are named after the group of gold prospectors who moved to California

to search for gold during 1849, but many people mistake that fact for a mistaken one. The commonly mistake people make is that they think that they are the 49ers because San Francisco is 7 by 7 miles (49 square miles).

Domo and Sourdough Sam comparison

Both mascots represent a positive side and bring happiness to people. But the domo is cuter because of the “kawaii” culture of Japan. The Sourdough Sam could be cute too but people don’t even realize it. It can be a secret “kawaii” culture in the U.S. Sourdough Sam is known by only football fans, brings a sense of happiness and good vibes every time the 49ers score a touchdown. Football is a serious game and is sometimes taken extremely serious by football fans but I think the mascots brings a sense of comedy to the fans. Just the fact that he dances along with the cheer leaders is kind of “cute”, everybody is human and he is the only funny looking character in the football field. American football fans might have adopted a certain “kawaii” culture through the use of funny looking mascots and don’t even realize it. Most Americans have no idea what kawaii is but are using it in a sense, if they knew about it they would understand it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, anime, manga, Japanese popular mascots are quite different from American similarities such as cartoons, comics and football mascots. Even though they have similar things, I prefer to say they are really different from each other but had a similar purpose; making one’s childhood pretty awesome. I came to the conclusion that not only the creators of anime like Dragon Ball Z that made these cartoons internationally popular and loved by children, teens and adults but also the dubbers that did a terrific job.

If DBZ was not properly dubbed to Spanish and Mario Castañeda would've not put enough dedication and heart to Goku's voice I probably would've not watched DBZ in the first place. Mario Castañeda said in one of his interviews: "I'm not the hero, Goku is". So he knows that he became famous because of Goku, the work of Akira Toriyama. He still says that when he dubbed Goku's voice, he transformed himself into the character (Goku) to feel whatever Goku was feeling. So all the emotion and personal character that Mario Castañeda put into Goku's voice make it such a great dub. Goku's voice now remains in the hearts of millions of Latino children, teens, and even adults. Not only the language that makes us understand the plot but also how the dubbers put emotion, and give life to the characters in whatever language they are dubbing into. DBZ is aimed to a broader audience or viewers, like kids around eight years old all the way to adults in their twenties. The plots are different on DBZ and hey Arnold, DBZ is more fantasy and super human strength type of anime, and hey Arnold is more realistic and focuses more on the life of a typical American teenager. I guess "hey Arnold" falls under the category of "slice of life" and "Dramedy". Also full metal alchemist, the translation was a big factor for it to go viral and popular internationally. Full metal alchemist is aimed at a higher audience of viewers while spider man was made for little kids. Just the language used in both Mangas/comics is crucial thing to the age they are aimed to. Even though they have different plots, they rely on a sci-fi type of genre; it's a world of reality mixed with fantasy that kids and young teen agers love. And Japanese mascots are similar to American football mascots because they are both cute, kawaii and funny. They both bring positive vibes and good energy in every aspect; Americans have adapted a

type of kawaii culture and don't even know it. They use this mascots and kawaii culture in their football games and don't even know it.

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