



Beyond the Screen: Gender and Emotional Motivations in Anime Viewing

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Abstract

A popular type of Japanese animated storytelling around the world, anime goes beyond simple pleasure to examine difficult subjects like culture, identity, and social challenges. Research on it is fascinating due to its wide range of genres and artistic forms, which provide insights into its

psychological storylines, cultural impact, and global audience participation. The current study focuses on the reasons for the higher interest in anime by males than females. Mixed methodology was employed, and data was collected using the survey tool administered to a sample of 60 respondents within the age bracket of between 18 and 23 years. Of these, the most salient reasons for male interest include escapism, social involvement, and identification with characters who are exemplars of traditional masculine virtues like hardness and toughness. It has been observed that males tend to be attracted towards genres such as action, adventure, and sci-fi movies that revolve around excitement and identification with dominant personalities. It investigates themes and character presentation with cultures embedded into them and how it creates influence over viewer choice and view. Results will supplement how anime is gendered that influences media consumption behaviors, hence a call towards making psychological and social insights applicable in the audience research. The results indicate that total engagement is significantly driven by escapism, information and personal identification, with escapism showing the strongest correlation. Additionally, positive emotions, social interactions and entertainment also play crucial roles in fostering multidimensional engagement. As for gender differences females were more inclined towards informative content. However, no gender differences were found in other studied variables. As for the genre, Horror themed anime was a top choice. In the main, this study throws considerable light on the complex dynamics of gender, media representation, and consumer relations that occur within the folds of new, developing animet.

Keywords: *Anime, male interest, gender differences, motivations, entertainment, horror genre, comedy, thriller*

Introduction

Anime, being Japanese animation, gained popularity worldwide, with millions of viewers. However, with time, some trends in viewing culture have been established, most especially a deep difference concerning gender interest. More males than females generally engage with anime, a phenomenon observed in various countries. The paper aims to identify drivers for this trend, incorporating content themes, cultural representation, and media preferences.

Anime has had a distinct penchant within popular culture for combining the best of artwork, storytelling, and occasionally, very detailed character sketches. Males specifically appeal to anime because it is mainly a show of action plots, male-centric storylines, and adventures; anime is also highly known for its animated styles like sci-fi and adventure genres. Good action-oriented anime series throughout history - such as *“Naruto”*, *“Dragon Ball Z”*, and *“Attack on Titan”* have attracted massive fan bases among males. Why is that? The best way to understand this phenomenon better is by taking into consideration the psychological and social factors that foster male interest in anime. In this context, variables related to motivations for entertainment, social interaction, or personal identification with characters, particularly those traditionally understood as masculine-such as strength, independence, or more-action-will be considered.

Furthermore, gender in anime can determine who watches the film and for what reason. Male protagonists are portrayed as strong, decisive, and emotionally resilient. Such qualities could explain why young men watching that anime identify themselves with such characters. Female characters are sometimes portrayed in a passive or secondary role. Such a portrayal may explain why women cannot identify as well as they might with another type of film.

The research also focused on various anime genres, such as action, comedy, horror, romance, sports, slice of life, sci-fi and thriller. Anime genre such as *Jujutsu Kaisen* (comedy);

One Piece (comedy); *Black Butler* (horror); *Kaguya-sama: Love is war* (romance); *Haikyū/Free* (sports); *Komi can't communicate* (slice of life); *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (sci-fi) and *Beastars/Death Note* (thriller) are few of the anime series.

The current study will critically examine whether cultural expectations and gender roles determine the target audience for anime regarding male viewership responses to the anime. The research will further question whether narratives present in anime reflect prevalent norms of culture on masculinity and femininity and, hence, perpetuate a traditional gender structure. This will be accomplished through qualitative analysis surveys.

Review of Literature

Anime Interest Level

Anime is one such special Japanese style of animation film and its styles about brightness, fantastic themes, and complicated storylines with action, adventure, romance, and science fiction mixed into each other. A style of animation originating in Japan that is characterized by stark colorful graphics depicting vibrant characters in action-filled plots often with fantastic or futuristic theme.

According to Mamat et al. (2022), a study of 104 university students in Malaysia revealed that anime is the most popular aspect of Japanese culture, followed by manga, songs, and voice actors. Fantasy, humor, romance, and mystery were the most favored genres. Additionally, most participants became aware of VTubers through anime, friends, and social media, highlighting the rising influence of VTubers in promoting Japanese culture.

According to binti Hassan et al. (2016), a study on 247 Malaysian university students found that the university students generally had positive attitudes toward anime aired on television. The

research highlighted the influence of anime's character design, storyline, and context on students' perceptions, reflecting anime's growing integration into their daily lives.

Content Type/ Genre Influence

A particular type or style of literature, art, film or music that one can recognize because of its special characteristics. Like children (子供, kodomo), girls' (少女, shōjo), boys' (少年, shōnen), young men (青年, Seinen), young women (女性, josei) and a diverse range of genres targeting an adult audience.

According to Cho et al. (2018), a study analyzed 1,597 anime-related terms from English-language databases and websites. The study identified nine key facets and 153 focus terms that described different anime genres. The findings highlighted challenges in discovering and recommending anime due to inadequate indexing. The study emphasized the need for better organization in systems like library catalogs and online databases to improve user experience and access to anime-related information.

According to Reysen et al. (2017), a study found that anime fans who preferred action and hentai genres were more likely to endorse paranormal beliefs. The study controlled for factors like age, sex, and religiosity, showing that these genre preferences uniquely predicted stronger paranormal beliefs compared to other anime genres.

Emotional Response & Motivation for Entertainment

A state characterized by physiological, behavioral, and subjective elements, often understood as either functional responses to environmental challenges or constructs formed by the brain to interpret sensory data. Emotions in non-human animals, differentiating conscious and unconscious components of emotion, and addressing variability in emotional experiences across contexts and individuals.

Motivation is defined as the process by which goal-directed activities are initiated and sustained. It involves both the initiation of action toward achieving a goal and the continued effort to complete it. Motivation is influenced by various factors, such as the expectation of success, perceived value of the activity, self-efficacy, and the interaction between an individual and their environment.

Motivation is "the process whereby goal-directed activities are initiated and sustained" (Cook and Artino, 2016). It involves both starting an action and continuing it to achieve a goal.

According to Chaudhary and Chaudhary (2024), a study involving 25 participants explored the influence of anime on consumption behavior and self-identity. The findings revealed that anime provides significant entertainment and emotional connection, with many associating it with personal growth and unique storytelling. Participants noted that anime influenced their purchase decisions, especially in fashion-related products, highlighting its impact on consumer choices and brand engagement.

According to Tan and Chung (2023) a study on 190 viewers of the online anime *Kaguya-sama: Love Is War* found that positive refocusing was the most used emotion regulation strategy, associated with higher satisfaction with life. In contrast, maladaptive strategies like catastrophizing were linked to problematic anime use, characterized by an inability to control viewing habits. Feelings of arousal also contributed to problematic use, while pleasure was found to lower such tendencies. This highlights the role of emotion regulation in shaping viewers' experiences and behaviors with online anime.

According to Ceylan-Dadakoğlu et al. (2022), a study was conducted to explore secondary school students' opinions on root values in manga and anime. The findings revealed that all participants had some familiarity with manga or anime, recognizing that root values are frequently

emphasized within these mediums. The study concluded that manga and anime could serve as alternative tools in values education.

Engagement with Media

Engagement with media refers to how audiences interact with media content, which can be passive or active. Measures the public shares, likes and comments for an online business' social media efforts.

According to Abd Razak and Ibnu (2022), a study on six new media students in Malaysia revealed that manga and anime play a significant role in fostering creative development. Using qualitative methods, the research found that these mediums help students generate ideas, enhance judgment, and serve as reliable references. Additionally, manga and anime were shown to inspire a strong passion for animation and creative thinking among students.

According to the Schules (2023), new media technologies play a crucial role in anime fan translations, where culturally competent and tech-savvy individuals collaborate to ensure accurate dissemination of content. These groups navigate linguistic and cultural challenges, using the medium to foster creative engagement and novel interactions while addressing both opportunities and limitations in the translation process.

Psychological Factors

Internal mental processes or conditions that affect a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors refers to psychological factors.

According to Liu, Liu, and Wen (2022), a study on 300 participants found that subcultural identities related to anime, idol, and hip-hop were associated with higher levels of anxiety, depression, aggression, and suicidal tendencies. These adverse outcomes were mediated by

perceived reputation and social support, while identities linked to fashion and sports showed no significant psychological effects.

According to Jiang, Ma, and Yue (2022), domestic animation plays a vital role in stress relief and cognitive development among adolescents. Themes focusing on personal experiences, self-reflection, and trauma recovery were found to foster emotional healing, self-actualization, and resilience while integrating cultural and creative elements.

Cultures and Social influences

The impact that a society's ideas, customs, art, and traditions have on people and situations. The process by which people change their beliefs, opinions, or behaviors because of social interactions with others.

According to Ono et al. (2020), anime pilgrimage has emerged as a significant social phenomenon in Japan, where anime fans travel to locations depicted in anime scenes. The study found that this behavior is driven by a desire for social interaction and engagement with local communities. These experiences enhance destination loyalty and reflect a shift in otaku behavior, traditionally associated with isolation.

According to Cazacu (2015), anime culture significantly influences consumer behavior by overcoming cultural barriers and shaping market preferences. The study highlighted the strategic promotion of anime and manga products in Romania, with events like Nijikon playing a key role in fostering this pop culture phenomenon.

Purpose

The purpose is to the relationship between emotions and motivations for entertainment between male and female Anime viewers.

Hypothesis

H1: There will be significant relationship between emotions and motivations for entertainment.

H2: There will be gender differences in emotions and motivations for entertainment among males and female anime viewers.

Method

Sample

A total sample of 60 participants was collected from the University, aged between 18-23 years, from Mohali, to investigate the gender-based differences in anime interest.

Measures

PANAS-GEN Scale: It was developed by Waston, Clark and Tellegen (1988). It is used to measure emotional responses to anime. It consists of 20 items, with 10-10 items measuring positive and negative effects respectively. Respondents were asked to rate the score from 5 (extremely) to 1 (very slightly)

Motivations for Entertainment Scale: It was developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1970). Specifically adapted for anime, grounded in the "Uses and Gratifications Theory" which explores why individuals engage with certain media. It consists of 15 items divided into 5 areas: escapism, social interaction, personal identification, entertainment, and culture exploration. Respondents were asked to rate the score from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree)

Survey: A survey was developed asking respondents questions like who got you to anime, why you continued watching anime, which genres they prefer, why men might be more interested in anime, would you recommend anime to others.

Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaires were asked to fill face to face, each participant was thanked for their cooperation, standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data**Results****Table 1:** *N, Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Positive	Negative	Escapism	Social Interaction	Personal Identification	Entertainment	Information	Total
N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Mean	36.5	13.7	11.3	11.4	10.8	11.8	11.0	57.6
Standard Deviation	7.69	4.72	2.74	3.02	2.63	2.51	3.28	11.2

Table 2: *Correlation between PANAS and Motivations for Entertainment*

	Positive	Negative	Escapism	Social Interaction	Personal Identification	Entertainment	Information	Total
Positive	—							
Negative	0.171	—						
Escapism	0.279*	0.114	—					
Social Interaction	0.161	0.165	0.396**	—				
Personal Identification	0.279*	0.121	0.487***	0.450***	—			
Entertainment	0.186	0.096	0.328*	0.370**	0.397**	—		
Information	0.151	0.088	0.398**	0.330**	0.368**	0.347**	—	

Total of Motivations for Entertainment	0.335**	0.141	0.748***	0.603***	0.674***	0.540***	0.678***	—
<i>Note.</i> * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$								

Table 3: *Group Descriptives*

	Group		N	Mean		Median		SD		SE	
Positive emotions	Female		30	37.3		38.0		8.90		1.652	
	Male		30	35.6		35.0		6.40		1.150	
Negative emotions	Female		30	12.9		12.0		4.64		0.862	
	Male		30	14.5		12.0		4.72		0.849	
Escapism	Female		30	11.0		11.0		2.43		0.451	
	Male		30	11.5		12.0		3.03		0.545	
Social Interaction	Female		30	11.6		12.0		2.95		0.547	
	Male		30	11.3		12.0		3.13		0.563	
Personal Identification	Female		30	10.9		11.0		2.61		0.486	
	Male		30	10.8		11.0		2.68		0.481	
Entertainment	Female		30	11.9		12.0		2.12		0.394	
	Male		30	11.7		12.0		2.85		0.512	
Information	Female		30	11.9		12.0		3.03		0.564	
	Male		30	10.1		11.0		3.30		0.593	
Total Engagement	Female		30	58.2		59.0		10.88		2.021	
	Male		30	56.7		57.0		11.52		2.069	

Table 4: *Independent Sample T- Test*

		Statistic	df	p
Positive	Student's t	0.870 ^a	58.0	0.388
Negative	Student's t	-1.340	58.0	0.186
Escapism	Student's t	-0.676	58.0	0.502
Social Interaction	Student's t	0.376	58.0	0.708
Personal Identification	Student's t	0.128	58.0	0.898
Entertainment	Student's t	0.290	58.0	0.773
Information	Student's t	2.196	58.0	0.032
Total	Student's t	0.517	58.0	0.607

Table 5: *Distribution of genre preferences across total sample*

Genre	Proportion %
Action/Adventure	16%
Comedy	18%
Horror	22%

Romance	14%
Sports	12%
Slice of Life	10%
Sci-Fi Fantasy	8%
Thriller	3%

Discussion of Results

The current research was undertaken to study relationships between emotions and motivation for entertainment among male and female Anime viewers.

The Table 1 showed the summary of mean scores and variability (standard deviations) of the variables. Positive Emotion scored the highest on mean with ($M = 36.5$, $SD = 7.69$), meaning participants showed quite a high level of experiences in positive emotions. Of which, negative emotions were drastically minimal compared to the positive with a mean of (13.7) and standard deviation at (4.72) thereby indicating that participants felt primarily positive rather than negative emotion. The lowest mean was escapism with ($M = 11.3$, $SD = 2.74$). In other words, escapism is the least reported outcome or motivation for engagement.

The other variables that contained social interaction were at a midpoint level with the mean score of ($M = 11.4$, $SD = 3.02$); identification personal ($M = 10.8$, $SD = 2.63$); entertainment ($M = 11.8$, $SD = 2.51$); and information ($M = 11.0$, $SD = 3.28$). The general engagement score in total was ($M = 57.6$, $SD = 11.2$). This is an overall measure of engagement by all participants across the domains.

Further, the correlations were taken out of the stated variables.

Positive Emotions: The positive emotions measure strongly and significantly correlated with an overall level of motivations for engagement ($r = 0.335$, $p < .05$) and level of escapism ($r = 0.279$, $p < .05$) to positive emotions. The findings suggest that individuals who experience positive emotions are more likely to engage with content as a form of escape or to fulfil intrinsic motivations.

Social Interactions: The self-identification was significantly positively correlated with personal identification ($r = 0.487$, $p < .01$), entertainment ($r = 0.370$, $p < .05$), and total engagement ($r = 0.603$, $p < .001$). The result suggests that individuals who engage in social interactions often identify personally with the content, they interact with and find it entertaining.

Self-Identification: Personal identification significantly correlated and highly with escapism, ($r = 0.450$, $p < .01$) entertainment, ($r = 0.397$, $p < .05$); and overall engagement, ($r = 0.674$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the centrality of identification with the contents holds at the heart of any engagement pattern of the person concerned. The result implies that individuals who identify with content personally are more likely to use it for escapism and entertainment and exhibit higher overall engagement.

Entertainment and Information: Highly correlated and significant relation with social interaction ($r = 0.370$, $p < .05$), personal identification ($r = 0.397$, $p < .05$) and total engagement ($r = 0.540$, $p < .001$). The results suggests that individuals who find content entertaining and informative are more likely to interact socially, identify personally and exhibit overall engagement.

Total Engagement: The sum total engagement score was most highly and significantly correlated with the variables: escapism with ($r = 0.748$, $p < .001$); social interaction was $r = 0.603$,

$p < .001$; personal identification was at ($r = 0.674$, $p < .001$); entertainment was at ($r = 0.540$, $p < .001$) and information was also at ($r = 0.678$, $p < .001$).

As for the gender differences, females were higher on Information ($t=2.19$). However, no gender differences were found in the other stated variables. This suggests that females may prioritize or value informational content more than their male counterparts. This indicates a potential gender-based preferences in engagement patterns, where females are more drawn to content that provides knowledge or insight.

Table 5 showed the % frequencies of anime genres as viewed by total sample. The highest frequency % was of Horror genre (22%), followed by comedy (18%), action/adventure (16%), romance (14%), sports (12%), slice of life (10%), sci-fi (8%) and thriller (3%).

Horror emerged as the most popular genre, with 22% of respondents indicating it as their top choice. This suggests that a significant portion of viewers are drawn to the thrill and intensity associated with horror-themed anime. Comedy, following closely at 18%, reflects a strong preference for light-hearted and entertaining content, which may cater to viewers seeking relaxation or humour. Action/adventure, at 16%, also stands out as a favoured genre, aligning with the universal appeal of dynamic and fast-paced storytelling.

Romance, accounting for 14% of the sample, indicates a notable interest in emotional and relational narratives, while sports anime (12%) appeals to those who enjoy competitive themes and physical challenges. Slice of life (10%) and sci-fi (8%) genres have comparatively lower percentages, suggesting that while these genres have a dedicated following, they are less popular overall in this sample. Lastly, thriller (3%) represents the least favoured genre, which may reflect a smaller but niche audience for suspense-driven narratives in anime.

The results indicate clear genre preferences, with horror, comedy, and action/adventure emerging as the top three, while genres like thriller and sci-fi attract less widespread attention. These findings offer valuable insights into the diverse tastes of anime viewers and suggest that engagement with specific genres may be influenced by emotional needs, entertainment preferences, or personal interests. Further research could delve into the underlying motivations behind these preferences and examine the factors that contribute to genre selection among anime audiences.

Conclusion

The results indicate that total engagement is significantly driven by escapism, information and personal identification, with escapism showing the strongest correlation. Additionally, positive emotions, social interactions and entertainment also play crucial roles in fostering multidimensional engagement. The results also suggests that females are more engaged in watching informative content. However, no other gender differences were found. The results also revealed that the most popular anime genre was Horror, and least favorite genre was thriller.

Further research could explore emotional differences based on genre or narrative structure to better understand how different types of content influence engagement. Cross cultural comparisons could reveal how cultural contexts impact the relationship between emotions, motivations and anime viewing behaviors.

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