A study on the influence of Anime among Anime Fans in Aizawl

Maria Lalmuankimi

Abstract

This paper is a study on the influence of anime genre of animation, as regards to the attitudes and behaviour of the fans of this genre in Aizawl. The study hypothesises that; the characters in anime serve as a model for anime fans, and they tend to imitate their favourite character and that Anime is the main agent to disseminate Japanese popular culture in Aizwal. The Social Learning Theory which postulates that anime fans imitate the attitudes and behaviour of their favourite anime characters through observation and learning.

The present study employed Focus group method to collect qualitative data. Data collected will be transcribed and selected extract analysed. Participants in the focus groups comprised of the members of two leading anime fans club in Aizawl; Anime Freaks Hard Core (AFHC) and Anizos between the ages of 15-25 years old. The study was conducted into six groups which consisted of twelve participants each.

Keywords: Anime, Japanese popular culture.

*****

A study on the influence of Anime among Anime Fans in Aizawl

Introduction

Right from its inception television played an integral part in the lives of the people. Television enters India during the 1950s and never left India. The former television viewing where only the rich people afford to watch television was over. Today, television entered millions of Indian household. We could say that television holds a special place in most households. Television is the main disseminator of popular culture with its characteristics of providing information, entertainment and education in audio visual form. The impact of the lifestyle, fashion and acceptance of foreign culture and norms are closely correlated with television. Television reflects culture and it transmit those cultural values all over the world.

1. Maria Lalmuankimi, PhD Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Mizoram University
There are various studies in regards to this context in other parts of the world but studies in this field in India are very sparse. The present study will try to find out the impact of Japanese culture embedded in anime which is disseminated via television.

**Review of literature**

Japanese popular culture is one of the many popular culture distributed by television. Various researches reveal that *Anime* is the sole distributor of Japanese popular culture. The word anime is pronounced as ‘’ah-knee-may and is an abbreviation of the word animation. All the animation produced by Japan is termed as ‘anime’. For many years anime was available only within Japan. The *anime* produced by Japan has distinctive and unique characteristics in terms of artwork, storytelling, the themes, and the concepts. It has become a global phenomenon during the last forty years and it was translated into different languages. *Anime* has succeeded in attracting viewers all over the world due to it’s distinguish characteristics. Influence of *anime* could be rather strong and this was proved true by the studies made by Normaliza Abd Rahim et al with the topic ‘The influence of online anime towards children’. They conducted the study on 10 nine years old children from a class of one school in Putrajaya, Malaysia. The outcome of the result is that the subjects were strongly influenced by the characters, settings and storylines of online anime. Nujhat Nuari Islam & Tuhin Biswas conducted a research on Influence of *Doraemon* on Bangladeshi Children; A CDA perspective. To find out the effect of *Doraemon* on children, the researchers went to 2 Bangla medium, 2 English medium schools. The children of class I and II were interviewed. They concluded that the children considered Doraemon as a hero, thereby using Hindi more and more in their daily life. This reveals that the participants were motivated to learn Hindi because of *Doraemon*. The present study also aim to find out similar impact that anime serials have among anime fans in Aizawl.

A notable outcome of the influence of Japanese popular culture is the consumption of Japanese cultural products. There are several theories about the popularity of Japanese cultural products in Asia brought forward by scholars of media and cultural studies. These theories are based on the viewpoint of globalisation but empirical studies on the issues are tended to be avoided. Noboru Toyoshima attempts to outline the consumption of Japanese cultural products in Thailand. The result of 677 questionnaire turned in by secondary school students in Thailand reveals that the students consume a great deal of Japanese cultural products. Seiko Yasumoto Conduct a research on ‘Popular culture: Island of Fandom in East
Asia’. This study was set out to investigate and evaluate pan-Asian exports of Japanese TV drama in a variety of formats within the field of popular culture. The exportation of Japanese media has been successful in creating fan culture among the youth in other region outside Japan. A few years ago Japan was popularly known as an aggressive nation but the components of the present Japanese media wipe out that negative image. The study argues that the regional distribution of Japanese media popular culture has contributed to the regional harmony through the world of fandom in East Asia. To test his hypotheses the researcher conducts a study using audience research by collecting questionnaires and focus group interviews. The aim of this study was to find out the extent of media influence of Japanese television drama in Taiwan, Japan and Korea, representations of Japan and its cultural proximity. Participants for the research were selected from among Taiwanese, Japanese and Korean students studying in Australia. The study further argues that political changes in South Korea has created a step change in regional media flows towards the Korean wave and its antecedent Hallyu, further reinforcing the process of regional fandom. The study found out that the common interest in the contents of Japanese television drama has created the feeling of oneness which allows them to live in harmony with one another in spite of historical antipathy. The present research was also set out to find out the extent to which Japanese animation television serials influence the fans of anime.

Aims and Objectives of the study

The study aims to find out that television played an important part in popularising Japanese popular culture in Aizawl. The researcher felt the need to conduct a research which will try to find out;

- To find out the relationship between viewing Japanese animation channel.
- To find out to what extent anime (Japanese animation) had an influence on anime fans.

Research Questions

RQ 1. What are the characters in anime serve as a model for anime fans. And the youth who were fans of anime tend to imitate their favourite character?

RQ 2. Whether Anime is the main agent to disseminate Japanese popular culture?

RQ 3. Does viewing anime serials lead to the consumption of Japanese cultural products among anime fans?
Methodology

The study utilizes focus group techniques to obtain answers to the proposed research questions. Focus group, or group interviewing, is chosen for this study because focus group is a research strategy for understanding people’s attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, data were collected from focus group discussion with open ended questions. The recorded discussion transcribed and selected extract were analysed. Samples were selected using purposive sampling from two most notable Anime fans club; Anizos and Anime Freak Hard Core (AFHC). To obtain answers to the proposed research questions focus group discussions were conducted into six groups. Each group consisted of 12 participants each.

Results and discussions

The result of the focus group discussion reveals certain areas where the participants were influenced by anime. The following points are some of the areas;

Influence of Anime character

Each of the samples were asked their favourite Anime and to mention their favourite Anime character. All the samples answer it promptly. They do not have to think twice before answering the question. They were all so enthusiastic and they become livelier when they talk about their favourite character. This shows that they were sure of their answer. There were sparkles in their eyes as they relate their favourite character. This shows that they have a deep passion for Anime. They could describe all the features of their favourite character and give details why that character is their favourite. All the participants had been watching Anime since childhood between the ages of 4 – 9. They become addicted to it ever since. Watching Anime has become a part of their daily life schedule. According to their conversation their favourite Anime character has a deep influence in their life. They even named and called each other according to their favourite character and used that name as their Facebook profile name.

The samples were proud of their favourite character and wished that they could be like them in every way. They had this opinion that their favourite character had a positive influence on them. The samples also mention that their favourite character change their whole perspective of life. They could relate it to their personal life and mould their character. They felt that it taught them how to be a loyal friend. The reasons for their liking toward Anime character were that they display determination and strong willed. There was a time when they
were weak and stubborn at times when life showered all kinds of difficulties on them. They never give up and achieve their goals in the end. All these qualities of their favourite character had a deep influence on them and it makes them more determined to go forward until they reach their goals no matter how difficult the road may be. One of the sample said that after watching Full metal Alchemist, he changed his attitude and behaviour towards his younger brother. Full metal Alchemist depicts the strong relationship between two brothers. From the moment he watched it he realise that the way he treated his younger brother was wrong and realise that he should show more love.

The female participants mention that they look for boyfriends with qualities similar to that of their favourite character. The male respondents also said that they search for girls who possessed the same qualities as that of their favourite female Anime character. This clearly shows that their favourite Anime character had a major influence on them. When they are with their peers they love discussing about their favourite character and the Anime they have watched recently.

**Influence on fashion, hairstyle and makeup**

When it comes to fashion the female participants became very enthusiastic. The male participants have less to say in terms of fashion. Apart from copying anime hairstyle they do not copy other things at all. But among the girls the case was different. One of the female respondents said that as they grew up watching anime they copy the fashion. What once a fantasy for them became reality because of the internet. During their childhood days they could not copy anime fashion but now they could easily buy accessories, make up like fake eyelashes, contact lenses from certain online shopping websites like Amazon.com, Ebay etc. They could order accessories even if they could not find in the local market. For them it’s like living out their fantasy. They found it fun to experiment different kinds of makeup and clothes that seem to have the most resemblance with anime fashion. Anime fashion are characterised by long locks, detailed outfits and coloured hair, detailed Japanese nail art, colouring hair, sporting fun flower headband, streaks of colour in the hair and patterned tights. It’s like a strong gust of anime fashion swept across female anime fans. They said that the fashion that they mostly copy was Harajuku fashion which was anime inspired fashion. They said that anime completely change their dress pattern, hair, makeup and accessories. They would regularly visit Japanese fashion website on the internet like Tokyo fashion.com.

**Impact of anime serials on their taste in music**
Japanese pop and rock music are also popular among them. One of the participants said that anime has also influence their taste and preference in music. Anime serials are accompanied by opening, ending and background music with lyrics specially composed for anime serials. From their comments it is clear that they were deeply influenced by anime music, ‘’I love the lyrics because it adds essence to the story’’. The others expand the conversation by mentioning their favourite band “Punk Rock band One Ok Rock are my favourite, I could listen to them endlessly”, “for me no band could replace my favourite pop band May M”, “Nothing can compare to my favourite band Scandat”, “You should listen to the gazette, they were superb”, “Baby metal were also great”, “I just love vocaloid”.

**Anime fans prefer to play video games related to anime serials**

‘‘Besides influencing on character, fashion, music and others video games is one thing that anime influenced us’’ said one of the male respondents. They all said that besides watching television they also love playing video games. When video games related to anime in terms of storylines or appearance became available for them, they chose only that type of video games. There are games that are made in accordance with anime storylines and there are anime inspired games which are usually very good. Dating sims, Visual novels, MMO (Multimedia online), Pokemon, Guilly Gear, Naruto and card games were their favourite ones. They love playing those games that are based on the storylines of anime serials. One reason why they love playing anime related video games is because of the art work. They love the fact that they are like anime characters. They used to organise completion as a part of Anime fans activities. The participants also mention that they love to play online games and that they love playing video games together and competing with each other.

**Watching Anime serials give the desire to own Anime products**

The result of the focus group reveals that watching anime serials develop the desire to own anime products among anime fans. When one of the participant mention that he still have Pokémon card which he collected as a child. The others joined the conversation like ‘’I remember collecting them. I think I was about 10 years old during that time when Pokémon cards come with Uncle Chips. I never eat the chips but I always make my mother bought it for me”, “If I’m not mistaken those cards also come as a free gift with Kissan also”, “and bay blade comes as free gift with Sun feasts”, “Yeah, bay blade toys and dual cards. I used to be crazy with them”. Their conversation shows that they have the desire to own anime products. One of the respondents said that they could easily order some anime related
products on online shopping websites like Amazon and eBay. When it comes to buying anime products such as key chains, figurines etc. the boys are more willing to spend their pocket money in comparison with the girl participants. One of the participants said that Mesaya Kaneko from Japan attends the 3rd cosplay con held in Aizawl and he brought with him key chains and figurines of anime character for sale. This clearly shows that anime serials have a huge impact on anime fans and it created in them the desire to own anime products.

**Influence of anime serials’ storylines and settings**

Next to the impact of anime character, the participants were influence by the storylines and settings of anime serials. All of the respondents watch more than a hundred anime serials. Among them *Blood +*, *Black cat*, *Inuyasha*, *One piece*, *Full Metal Alchemist*, *Card Captor Sakura*, *Get backers*, *Journey to the west*, *Mura Rise of the Yokai Clan*, *Slice of Life* are their all time favourite. Among the girls Black Cat is their common favourite anime serial. When one of them said, ’’ My favourite anime is *Black Cat* because it depicts the real minds of human. In life there was a time when our hatred and greed drives us to a point where we are completely insane, that was our dark side. But even in our darkest there is always some light, some goodness. ‘Black Cat’ shows that when there is a dark side, there is always a lighter side of every human being if we dig deep within ourselves and search our inner souls’’. Another one said that ‘Black Cat’ taught her the true value of friendship and to remain loyal to her friends. When she feels alone and stranded, there are people who would never leave even if she try and push them away. It taught her to be optimistic every aspect of life. Then another participants share her experience when she watch Slice of life. She said that she became emotional and her eyes filled with tears. All the other members of the group claim that they all had the same kind of experience. One participant said that, ‘I too cried when Ace died in One Piece. The writer shouldn’t have let Ace die just like that’. Each of them gave comments about storylines of anime like, ‘*Full Metal Alchemist* has the greatest plot in anime history’.

Another participant commented that, ‘Most people particularly the elders of the society say that animes contain too much action and bloody scenes but if we look at today’s youth, not much are interested in plain boring romantic stories, even in Hollywood film have action and romance in them. It goes the same for animes. Certain types of animes are made for certain ages and according to the recommendation they put up, it is up to the viewer to decide whether which kind he should watch as not all animes are bloody or evil alike’.
Then another participant said, “When I watch grime and violent types, I don’t usually copy them and become aggressive. It is up to the mentality of the viewer. And if he is violent avoiding aggressive violence shows is a must. Story lines are the most important fact when it comes to watching. When a new anime is released, I usually read the story line first and if it interests me, I watch it. When I am in the middle of watching animes, I get so caught up in them and tend to not hear anyone’s voice as I get so concentrated in watching them”. One of the male respondents said that Pokémon was the first anime that he watched and it was his favourite anime till today. He and his four friends were addicted to watching Pokémon. They would watch it together rather than watching it all by themselves. He prefers watching it with his friends because after it was over they would discuss about each and every details. They would mimic the cries of different species of Pokémon. They would sketch the character of Pokémon while they are watching. Discussing about Pokémon and sketching the character of Pokémon is his favourite past time till today.

One of the participants said that during the time he watch Pokémon he was so engrossed in it that he would not respond when he was spoken to. He said, ‘On a sleepless night I would build a fantasy world of my own Pokémon. I even daydream about them when I was in the class. I think I was kind of obsessed with it. But I did not neglect my studies completely. I still manage to pass in first division. So, my parents did not mind my addiction of watching Pokémon’. One of the male respondents added that his favourite animes were Full Metal Alchemist, YahariOre no Seishun, The disappearance, Shingeki no kyojin (Attack on Titan), and Anohana. His favourite male character is Edward Elric from FullMetal Alchemist and his favourite female character is SuzumiyaHaruhi from The disappearance.

The conversation was then proceed to another topic when one of the participants said that she love the settings in animes and that it makes her want to go to Japan and see all their wonderful places shown in Anime. Their beautiful sceneries, houses and paths, and coffee latte shops are one of the reasons she wanted to go to Japan. His dream was to go to ‘Akihabara’ the centre of Anime.

Anime serials inspire anime fans to organise Cosplay convention in Aizawl

They said that Anime’s have the same impact on a person just like any other movies. One of the members mentioned Cosplay and that was like walking down memory lane for them. They started sharing their own experience in regards to cosplay, ‘’I was one of the members who started cosplay convention in Mizoram. ‘’We are the ones who started cosplay
convention in Mizoram. Akasuna and I were childhood friends and we used to talk about it a lot. As we became older we became aware of the fan culture in other parts of the world. Together we created a group Anime Fans Hard Core on Facebook and we invited others. Slowly members were increasing. By the end of that 2012 we decided to organise Cosplay convention. We were only 15 girls with no money. We were really worried about how we will conduct the event. One of my friends said if it was not for C.F LalhrualitsuangaCosplay wouldn’t be a success. He’s very creative”.

They said that on 28th December 2012 the first Annual Anime Cosplay Con was held in Aizawl, Mizoram and organised by Projectzeromizoram and was followed by a costume parade. The con was a huge success. There were more than a hundred talented participants. The second Annual Anime Cosplay Con was held on 27th-28th December, 2013. From the increase in the number of participants in the second annual Cosplay Con, we can see the rising influence Anime has on the youths, particularly in Aizawl and other states in North East India as there were more than 200 participants where six of the participants were from outside Mizoram, three from Arunachal Pradesh, one from Australia, one from Nagaland and one from Meghalaya.

The 2nd prize winner of the Annual Anime Cosplay Con Mizoram 2012 Zothansanga won the first prize in the 4th Annual Comic Con India held in New Delhi. The first prize winner of the second Annual Anime Cosplay Con Mizoram Lalmalsawma had the opportunity to participate in the New York Comic Con 2014. Apart from the competition organised by Projectzeromizoram, there was a couple of Pokemon drawing competition organised by Laisuih and Pokemon world Mizoram. Amongst all the competitions in regards to anime the Annual Anime Cosplay Con Mizoram organised by Projectzeromizoram is the most notable one so far.

Cosplay con held in Mizoram by Projectzeromizoramis a great leap to the extension of the Japanese culture and Mizo culture. Cosplayers that participated in the event have shown great crafting skills through their weapons and effects they brought with them. The aim of Projectzeromizoram is to enhance the youths of today to evaluate themselves in the field of arts, i.e. crafting, sculpting, painting, drawing etc. and to enhance their creativity and most cosplayers feel that by making their own weaponries, they are challenging themselves to be better.

One of the participants adds,”JohnHinkung of the Seven Dairies put in the picture about the Annual Anime Cosplay Con Mizoram to the Japan Foundation. In response to John
Hingkung’s suggestion the Japan foundation sent two representatives Machiko Yamamura and Atu to Mizoram in 2013’.

**Impact of food and drinks in anime serials on anime fans**

During their years of watching anime serials they have seen a number of Japanese cuisines, snacks, desserts, and drinks that looked superb. It created in them the wanting to try out such foods and drinks. Restaurants and hotels in Aizawl do not serve Japanese food. So, they just make it on their own. The impact of Japanese food and drinks was the same both in the male and female respondents. One of the female participants said that when she saw Sakura from *Cardcaptor* ate *takoyaki*, she started craving for *takoyaki*. They said that they would like to try out *Sushi* but it was not available. *Ramune Soda* and *Sake* a beverage seen on *FuriKuri* and other anime serials seems so refreshing and they wished that it would be available at the local market. They search for these particular drinks in and around the town but in vain. They said that their love for beautifully decorated stunning cakes and sweets begin because of anime series like *Sailor Moon*. Especially their strawberry shortcake decorated beautifully with strawberries looks so appealing to them. However, there were several food items that they could prepare by themselves. Such food includes *Ramen*, *Nori rolls*, *Taiyaki*, *Okurice*, *Okay rice porridge* and *Tofu*. *Taiyaki* is a kind of like pancakes, *Okayu* is rice porridge and *Omurice* is rice with omelette. When they get together eating Japanese influenced food is a part of it. Among all the food items seen in anime serials ramen is the most common as it was available in the local market and was easy to make. One male participants said that, “When I got addicted to watching *Naruto* I had it like everyday eating it while watching”. The male respondents said that they would like to try fried octopus and squid while the female respondents were not that interest in octopus and squid. They look for recipes that was most similar and that have the most resemblance with food and drinks seen on anime serials. When they have cravings for food and drinks from anime serials would be in their mind and nothing else. One of the participants said that her dream food is *Ichiraku* the kind that was popular in anime. All the other joined the conversation enthusiastically. The female participants said that they carry their lunch to college in *bento* which was the name given to decorated lunch box. They make certain comments about the Japanese food they were familiar with by watching anime; “It’s true that the reason why I eat instant noodles daily is because of the influence of anime, ‘’ I wish *Sushi* is available at our local restaurants”, “I learn to use chopstick with rice bowl”. “Sea food (Onigiri) has a profound impression on me after watching anime”.
Anime serials motivated them to learn Japanese language

One of the participants further said that the influences of animes are rather strong and it can affect their daily lives as they spent around 4 to 5 hours every day watching Anime. Their attitudes at certain situations are easy to copy as they tend to be funny and without realising it, it has become part of their daily habit. From Anime they learned certain of Japanese words. And they became motivated to learn Japanese. They would continuously visit websites like Learn Japanese.com. They also said that they would regularly watch Youtube for learning Japanese as it enables them to see the lips and tongue movement and hear the correct pronunciation of Japanese language. All of them said that they download JA Sensei in their smart phone which is an application of English to Japanese dictionary. All the participants said that while watching several animes they pick up some Japanese words like ‘Arigato’ which means ‘Thank You’, ‘Ohaio’or ‘Ohayo’ which means ‘Hello’ or ‘Good morning’, ‘Konbanwa’ which means ‘Good Morning’, ‘Ishitemaru’ which means I love you and several other words. They love using the words that they learn amongst each other. They said that they regularly visited websites which provide for tutorial in learning Japanese language. They also said that they download JA Sensei in their mobile phone. JA Sensei is an English – Japanese language. Nazumi: I just love vocaloid.

Conclusion

The author concludes that television played an important role in popularising Japanese popular culture among anime fans in Aizawl. The participants of the focus group were all young people with their age ranges from 15-25 years old. And they all claims that they television was the main source of medium the used for watching anime. Without anime it was not possible for Japanese popular culture to enter Aizawl. During their childhood day’s i.e around the early 1990s, they used to watch anime which was aired in channels like AXN, Indosiar and Cartoon Network. But in the present context they watch it on Animax which was anime channel. All the participants spent numerous times watching anime. Recently they started watching anime on the internet and download them to be watched later. But still, they watch anime on television. This shows that television act an important agent in disseminating Japanese popular culture among anime fans in Aizawl. The focus group discussion unleashed many areas where anime has influenced the participants. The study found out that the focus group participants were influenced by anime in regards to character, fashion and style, music,
language, storylines and settings, cosplay, food, video games and consumption of anime and anime inspired products.

**Bibliography**


