

Topic-Japan's Animation Industry as a Soft Power Tool Since Post-War

Oishe Ghosh

Student, Masters in International Studies, Christ University, Bangalore.

Abstract

The study presented here considers anime as playing a part in Japan's cultural diplomacy and soft power. It analyses the effect of the "Cool Japan" initiative and the qualities of anime as an effective promotional tool and its capability of spreading Japanese cultural values. Qualitative analysis is used to explore how anime impacts Japan's world image.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of context

The animation industry in Japan, with special emphasis on anime, has come out to be a post-World War II cultural phenomenon that has transcended into a cultural diplomacy and soft power tool. But Osamu Tezuka and other creators of animation drove anime to be an expression of Japan's modern, energetic and culturally rich values, dreams and social changes creating a global image of Japan as technologically progressive, and as a distinctive culture (Chung). During this time, anime has been promoted as a cultural export, and the government has taken initiatives, including the "Cool Japan" strategy, in promoting Japanese creative industries through government policy of economic growth.

Japan is aiming to strengthen its international presence with anime investment, as it would be able to build favourable cultural connections and encourage tourism. Not to put it too bluntly, anime has been something of a trade that has helped rival traditional exports for Japan and has been a symbol of its cultural identity and a vehicle to spread global understanding. Especially when considering challenges, such as digitalization and workforce issues, the strategic use of anime as soft power indicated that Japan's global deployment of anime is indeed a successful combination of cultural promotion and economic diplomacy.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

Aim

The research seeks to examine how the booming animation industry of Japan is used as a weapon of cultural diplomacy and the promotion of soft power on a global level.

Objectives

- To understand how the characters of anime became a product of cultural evolution in Japan since World War 2 and how anime helped shape a picture of Japan.
- To assess the impact of the Japanese government initiatives, such as 'Cool Japan,' on promoting anime as a soft power tool.
- To investigate the qualities of anime that enable it to be an effective means through which to promote Japan's soft power to international audiences.
- To the analysis of how the themes and their narrative form a part of anime that makes it a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and moral reflection.

1.3 Research question

- What is the representation of Japanese culture in anime today changed from the post-war?
- How is anime being used by the Japanese government as soft power?
- What do people of different demographics around the world do and how do they respond to and interpret anime as a representation of Japanese culture?
- How do the popular anime's narratives represent or conflict with Japan's national identity and values?

1.4 Rationale

1.5 Research Structure

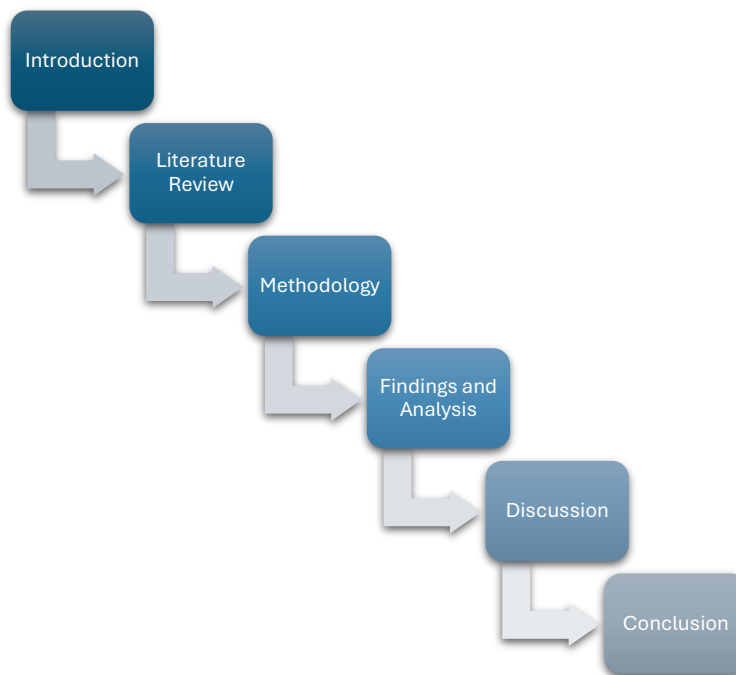


Figure 1: Structure of this research
(Source: Self-developed)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review highlights the role of anime in Japan's cultural diplomacy, discusses its development, government initiatives to foster soft power, and animates that enable the global involvement and cultural exchange.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This research selects the *Cultural Imperialism Theory* to understand how Japan employs anime to spread its cultural identity and its consequent impact on world perception (Zoi). This theory of cultural exchange as both a construction of Japanese values and a means to facilitate the understanding and dialogue of an increasingly connected world suggests that anime is a medium both of Japan projecting its values and for understanding and dialogue among people in a too connected world.

2.2.1 Theme 1 Cultural Evolution and Identity Formation Through Anime

According to Ahmad (80), for the past half a century, anime has come to represent a vitally important part of Japan's identity as a culture, a means of entertainment and a method of cultural expression. It speaks to

Japan's progression as a global power making a comeback and injecting confidence through the creators like Osamu Tezuka helping themselves and the audiences both from within the country and outside to connect to styles they enjoy. Anime's complex ways of integrating prey narratives and themes have provided a cultural diplomacy channel to promote Japan to the outside world in shaping its perception, thus maintaining its homogenous national identity.

Romancing-Japan claims that anime reveals Japanese values, dreams, and social changes. It provides storytelling through friendship, social justice tradition and modernity. 'One Piece' is an example of collective ideals as some shows, and 'Grave of the Fireflies' as some struggle in society. Together, the combination of entertainment and culture insider presents is what enabled anime to speak deeply to both domestic and foreign audiences in the most profound senses shaping and condensing how Japan projects itself to the world, and how the world sees Japan.

Ahmad (80) points out how anime is important to Japan's cultural diplomacy and influence around the globe, specifically pointing to the creators, like Tezuka, and the soft power they have. Romancing-Japan highlights how anime reflects Japanese social values and the transformations it. On the global impact, Ahmad does tremendously well while slipping social critiques, and Romancing-Japan provides cultural insight but very little in the global perspective. Cultural Imperialism is a theory that justifies two views by viewers, although it shows how anime spreads Japan's identity to the globe and at the same time, its domesticity.

2.2.2 Theme 2 Government Initiatives and Soft Power: The Role of 'Cool Japan'

Cakrabuana goes further to state that anime is rather a strategic tool used by Japan to strengthen its image around the globe by selling its cultural exports. This program aims to change people's perception of Japan as an energetic and modern country, dissociating it from its history. Through this initiative, it effectively conducts the most exciting showcases of anime's exclusive storytelling and artistic styles to attract international audiences to promote harmony build a positive cultural connection with Japan and reinforce Japan's soft power on a global scale.

According to YokoGad, the 'Cool Japan' program backed by the government has significantly impacted the economic outlook in Japan by helping the country achieve its cultural exports, predominantly anime. It represents a strategic policy framework through which Japan will build its global image and promote economic growth through cultural diplomacy. By investing in creative industries, the government strengthens international ties, and in the meantime positions Japan as a cultural powerhouse on the world stage.

Cakrabuana also talks about the 'Cool Japan' initiative that provides Japan's global image better through anime, promoting cultural exports and creative stories. YokoGad agrees that the initiative has a significant economic impact and benefits the cultural diplomacy of Japan. Both agree that the initiative has significance however Cakrabuana focuses on image repositioning whilst YokoGad is an economic growth person. Cultural Imperialism Theory affirms their views through the illustration of how Japan exports cultural such as anime to spread soft power and transform international perceptions.

2.2.3 Theme 3 Qualities of Anime as a Soft Power Tool

According to Srinath, anime's profile of universal popularity, peculiar artistic style, as well as its narrative complexity make it an ideal soft power to use. Anime takes themes which are quite relatable and animations that are also quite stylish and uses them to transcend cultural barriers and reach out to global audiences, making them understand Japanese values more. Due to its power, this cultural export can not

only help to improve Japan's global image but also support international dialogue to achieve the goal of cultural diplomacy.

According to Apeejay, anime movies transcend cultural boundaries because they contain universal themes that deeply connect to the audiences of the whole world. Rich storytelling and rich characters make them connect emotionally to the view from all walks of life so they feel that they are part of something. Besides, this cultural export not only conveys Japanese values but also encourages the exchange of cultures and fosters the global cultural dialogue through anime, as a powerful medium to bridge between two cultures. Srinath explains how the soft power of anime is a means to promote a global understanding of Japanese values the artistic style and the complexity of anime. Apeejay too seems to agree that anime embodies universal themes that use emotions and strike an emotional chord among cultures. For example, while Srinath considers cultural diplomacy and the view of Japan as a whole, Apeejay concentrates on the mutual experiences and cultural dialogue facilitated by anime. The views of Cultural Imperialism Theory are supported by an illustration of how Japan uses anime to spread its values around the globe and help the understanding of others.

2.2.4 Theme 4 Anime as a Vehicle for Cultural Diplomacy and Moral Reflection

Anime, according to Handoyo (1028) promotes cultural diplomacy since it enables anime to explore cultural intake of issues faced by society and decaying moral dilemmas that empathize and facilitate culture and diplomacy. Anime poses themes like resilience and community and makes them a global issue to hesitate and reconsider, like the leader in ethical discourse, Japan. Ruminations on shared human experiences through this narrative complexity not only entertain people, but they help to cultivate meaningful conversation, and dry up the water cooler of Japan’s soft power.

According to Septiara, anime functions as a means of delivering Japan’s historical narration and its cultural values. Anime usually portrays historical events and social change to deepen an understanding of Japanese culture by international viewers. By using story strategically, Japan strengthens its global image by showing that it respects peace and cooperation while helping to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue.

According to Handoyo (1028), Japan is a leader in ethical discourse because anime serves to explore societal issues and empathy. The last point of this dissertation is discussed by Septiara, namely, how anime plays a role in the dissemination of historical narratives and cultural values, expanding Japan's global image. The authors agree on the way anime is a tool for cultural diplomacy, but they differ in the way that Handoyo puts her through moral engagement while Septiara does it through historical context. Their views are backed up by Cultural Imperialism Theory which explains that anime is used by Japan as a projection of their values aimed at changing perception globally as well as for enhancing greater understanding.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

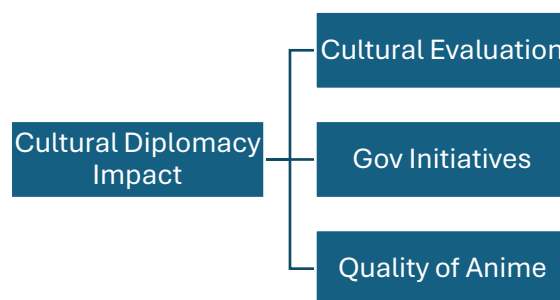


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of this research
(Source: self-developed)

In this research, the conceptual framework is provided to examine how anime is a powerful cultural diplomacy tool as a dependent variable of Cultural Diplomacy Impact. Three independent variables shape this impact. Cultural Evolution then looks at how anime conveys Japanese cultural identity by showing values, social change, historical narratives and connections between Japan and the rest of the world. Government Initiatives like ‘Cool Japan’, dealing with the strategic role of government-backed policies in promoting anime as a cultural export for boosting Japan’s soft power abroad are second. The last is that Qualities in Anime like their universality, their specific artistic style, and their narrative complexity are outside of cultural borders so that they help lay the basis for emotional connections and cross-cultural understanding. Together these variables provide insights on how ideological production through British anime has been used for cultural diplomacy to form Japan’s global image.

2.4 Literature Gap

According to the existing literature, there is a gap in how anime generally impacts cultural identity formation varying in different global contexts, predominantly in non-Western regions. In addressing the impact of anime on Japanese culture, and its international renown, however, there is nevertheless a current deficit in comprehensive analysis of its role, in contributing to cultural perceptions and identities, in areas traditionally less perceptible such as the Middle East, and Africa.

2.5 Summary

The literature draws attention to how anime has contributed to Japan’s cultural identity and its image in the global market through cultural diplomacy. Themes include its evolution as a cultural expression, the impact of government initiatives such as ‘Cool Japan’, improvements in its accessibility, its universal appeal for developing cross-cultural understanding, differing views between representatives of the elderly/infant’s communities and its relation to the lives of children and youth.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research philosophy

The philosophy for this research is interpretivism; this means it focuses on understanding the subjective meaning and experience of the individual (Pervin, 419). This method suits well in analysing the cultural flavour of anime and the projection of its impact on Japan’s identity as one enables for a more comprehensible semblance of anime and its reception by disparate audiences. By bringing out the social and cultural facets of Japanese culture across the globe, Interpretivism helps to strengthen the research in the sense that it offers perspectives on how these complex social and cultural dynamics shape the way Japanese culture is perceived.

3.2 Research Approach

An inductive approach is used for building theories based on the observed patterns and themes in the data (Wiltshire, 159). This approach is adequate for this research because it allows one to probe for additional ways into understanding the use of anime in cultural diplomacy. An inductive method of anime focuses on some instances and examples and strengthens the research on anime more comprehensively, gaining a deep understanding of the effects anime has on global perceptions of Japan.

3.3 Research design

The research relies on a mono-method design in which the researcher's reliance on and utilization of qualitative data is the exclusive methodology used (Hossain). This design is suitable given its ability to have a wide analysis of the cultural diplomacy and anime topics without the complexity of blending in several methods. This is where the strength of a mono method acknowledges its ability to bring us richer

and more detailed insight into the way participants both think and feel about an experience, which will make the overall findings of the research richer.

3.4 Data collection

Existing literature, articles and reports on anime and its cultural significance are collected through secondary data collection (Yusof, 6). The reason for that is efficiency related to accessing a plethora of data without the need to collect primary data. Because secondary data have the strength to provide a broad context and established findings, which can be analysed to get meaningful conclusions about how anime influences on Japan's cultural diplomacy.

3.5 Data analysis

Interpretation of collected information relies on qualitative data analysis techniques to identify themes, patterns and narratives within the literature (Salmon, 80). This analytical approach is suited to this research as it enables a complex phenomenon with a subtle cultural penetration to be understood. The strength of qualitative analysis lies in the fact that it can manifest deeper meanings and insights that are otherwise obscured by quantitative methods to strengthen the study's findings.

3.6 Research Ethics

This research is an ethical consideration, and everything is cited, and all biases are acknowledged. The research adheres to ethical guidelines and ensures integrity and credibility through ethical guidelines by respecting contributors/original authors.

3.7 Research Limitations

Limitations are identified in this study, particularly secondarily relying on data, which may not be inclusive of all parties' views or recent events in the anime industry. Consequently, subjective interpretation of qualitative data may lead to misinterpretation of the overall findings as well as interpretive biases.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The results and analysis of the research demonstrate the multiple aspects of what animation accomplishes in moulding the image and the strength of using animation to promote cultural diplomacy. Ahmed (80) observes that anime is now a large cultural artefact, and Japan's emblem, which has turned into a tool of entertainment and cultural expression. This is representative of the resurgence of Japan as a global power in the era of creators like Osamu Tezuka in speaking to an audience's relatable narratives and themes. Anime effectively combines such complicated social issues and moral problems into its top, offering a method of cultural diplomacy to form an international understanding of Japan, even so, that Japan's own national identity.

Romancing Japan emphasizes that anime, carried out as storytelling, predominantly tells Japanese values, dreams, and social change that can connect with domestic and foreign audiences. "One Piece" shows the series with collective ideas and "Grave of the Fireflies" deals with societal issues and shows how anime is a medium to communicate how Japan is brought to the world.



Figure 3: This is the largest “one-piece” store from Japan
(Source: Japanshopping.org)

The program “Cool Japan”, and the role of government initiatives, are also important. Cakrabuana emphasizes anime as a strategic weapon in Japan’s efforts to image its culture through the promotion of its cultural exports. But YokoGad adds that these initiatives not only promote international ties and Japan’s soft power but also give economic reason to such actions. Both authors see the significance of these initiatives, however, they disagree in focusing, which is image repositioning by Cakrabuana and economic growth by YokoGad.

Handoyo and Septiara conclude by stating how anime can act as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and display an ethical consideration. According to Handoyo, anime delves into social issues and ethical difficulties and Japan comes across as a leader in ethical discourse. Septiara focuses on the portrayal of historical narratives to provide an international understanding of Japanese culture. Together these findings show how anime not only portrays but influences our cultural identity throughout the world, this goes hand in hand with Cultural Imperialism Theory which explains why Japan tries to push its values to the boundaries of state.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Representation of Japanese Culture in Anime Today Compared to Post-War

The first research question, then, is answered through the historical development of anime as a cultural artefact. However, Ahmad (80) asserts that anime has now established itself as a key figure emblem of Japan as its identity has evolved from post-war narratives to more sophisticated portrayals of shifting and complex social values. It was an important transformational role in which creators such as Osamu Tezuka provided much-needed confidence to Japan’s global image and connectivity to the imagined audiences and themes through relatable narratives.

Miyori no Mori’s anime demonstrates how it is important to focus on moral education and the conservation of the environment in the anime. It is also a narrative vehicle that vehicle for instilling values in terms of ecological responsibility and of the community (Wachyu Nur Fauzy). Romancing Japan further shows that anime is used to express Japanese values, dreams, and social change through storytelling, friendship and social justice. For instance, shows like “One Piece” also show collective ideals; “Grave of the Fireflies” also shows the struggles of being in society, an example of how anime has gone from wartime media to a worldwide cultural expression.

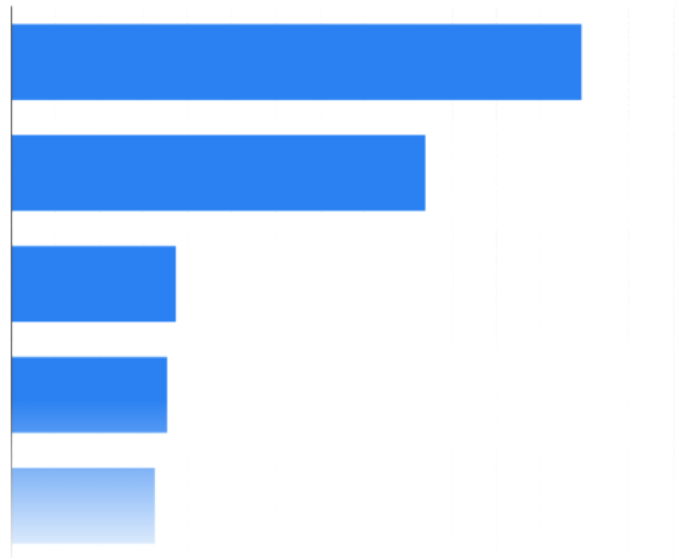


Figure 4: As of August 2023, the proportion of One Piece content users in Japan
(Source: Statista)

The anime "One Piece," which contributed to Japan's economic growth in 2023, was seen by 64.7% of respondents (Statista). These findings prove that anime has changed with time by accommodating Japan’s evolution of identity while keeping its cultural essence.

Anime as Soft Power: Government Initiatives

The second research question is investigated through an analysis of the 'Cool Japan' program. Cakrabuana notes that Japan’s use of anime to boost its cultural exports and reconstruct a global image of Japan by exhibiting its own storytelling and artistic styles. The objective of this initiative is to put Japan forward as an energetic country, related to the future, rather than the past. YokoGad also says that aside from being used to bolster international ties such initiatives also help drive economic progress by enhancing growth in creative industries. In January 2024, The Japanese government declared a ¥6 billion fund that will support young creators who advertise Japanese culture on the roads. The purpose of this initiative is to offer continuous help on a creative journey from planning to international display to encourage talent in the manga and contemporary art industries (Yomiuri). Combined, these findings show how government-backed programs do the same with anime to promote Japan’s soft power abroad while also enhancing economic growth. This strategy is aligned with Cultural Imperialism Theory because Japan is using cultural exports such as anime to spread its values globally and change perceptions.

Global Audience Engagement with Anime

Findings on anime’s universal appeal and emotional resonance are addressed in answering the third research question. According to Srinath, anime’s strange art style and its deep narrative go way beyond

stuff being associated with a granted cultural limit, and the viewers all cross over worldwide connection emotionally to its themes. Apeejay agrees that good storytelling with diverse characters makes people who have different cultures feel part of something bigger and helps them find meaning in each other. Romancing Japan contends that anime transmits values that are appreciated by domestic as well as overseas audiences according to their respective cultures. The use of Indian folklore in Fate/Grand Order and other series shows that anime can creatively reinterpret traditional ones to give them new meanings which connect both Japanese and international viewers (Samanta et al. 1). This is interesting because it paints a strong picture as to how demographic factors matter in the way that audiences consume anime as representative of Japanese culture, as well as how generational differences in audience appreciation of anime are being interpreted by them as representative of Japanese culture.

Popular Anime Narratives: Representation or Conflict with National Identity

The fourth research question is investigated through talks about social issues and ethical dilemmas portrayed in anime. An anime also explores themes of resilience, community and addressing ethical problems, contributing to making Japan the moral leader in the world, says Handoyo. Towards the goal of increasing the international understanding of Japanese culture, Septiara chooses historical narratives displayed in anime that emphasize peace and cooperation. This together shows that anime can both reinforce and challenge the perception of national identity by tackling very complex societal issues while promoting the human experience. That duality ticks with the Cultural Imperialism Theory that maintains that even if cultural exports like anime spread national values globally, it is also meant to gain global awareness.

Justification for Findings

The justification of the alignment between the findings and the research questions rests on the depth of analysis provided by research existing on the role of anime in cultural diplomacy. Romancing Japan and Ahmad (80) effectively show how anime can advertise Japan’s changing identity after the war through stories, and Anime Art, the novel, communicates values through anime. Cakrabuana and Yoko Gad gesture that the strategic use of 'Cool Japan' government initiatives is strong evidence that the anime not only uses soft power culturally but also economically.



Figure 5: A Japanese Megastore content with Pokémon
(Source: Sahni)

The “Cool Japan” framework has helped anime carry lots of weight as a substantial economic driver. In 2020, about \$24 billion was the global anime market (Sahni). Also, speaking about audience engagement,

Srinath and Apeejay's discussions on how anime unites people across cultures evoke the universality of such a medium. Handoyo and Septiara's analysis regarding moral reflection and historical narratives is finally compelling that why the anime addresses the complex themes touching globally.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The "Cool Japan" program of economic growth with Japan's cultural diplomacy enlists the use of anime as a potent tool in its effort to grow the percentage of Japan's economic base. In addition to showing Japan's values, dreams and social changes, this initiative affects the global image of Japan substantially. Japan's soft power is increased through promotion of unique narrative style, artistic style, and universal messages with anime. Anime reflects people's youth as it merges the old values with new issues, sharing a common human experience. The cultural exports are growing; tourism is growing; there are related industries being stimulated. In our changing world all of that, always cultural exchange is going on and anime plays a major part by shaping Japan's national image while also driving economic progress there. That anime should have become a cultural and economic force with the success of either strategic government support or creative industries as the means to promote a nation's identity and prosperity on the global stage is indeed a testimony to its effectiveness.

Recommendations

- Using anime's potential, the Japanese government should emphasize supporting creators and address the matters of digitalization and piracy.
- More funds would be given to emerging talent, and stronger international partnerships would enhance competitiveness.
- Anime can be used to spread culture and cultural diplomacy, which indeed would help us to develop further global connections.
- Expanding anime's reach will be in capacity concerning dealing with cultural identity, especially in areas that are not well covered.

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