
THE INFLUENCE OF ANIME AND MANGA CULTURE ON JAPANESE DINING EXPERIENCES ON YOUTH IN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

There has been an increase in anime viewership during the past five years, due to which there has been a rise in demand for anime inspired Japanese food and snacks along with merchandise and games. The two restaurants under study for this research are anime and manga themed selling authentic Japanese food in Mumbai. The purpose of this study is to understand if there is any influence of anime and manga culture on dining experiences on youth living in Mumbai. Also to understand the role of social media in promoting Japanese food to anime viewers. The findings of the study via Case study that includes Observation of the restaurant and Interview of the restaurant managers, and Focus group that consisted of people who are anime watchers or manga readers who have consumed Japanese cuisine. With the focus group and case study, we concluded that majority people think that there is an influence on dining experience and agreed it is the ambience that plays an important role. Also, majority believe social media, helps promote it a lot with many influencers because of the growing trend.

Keywords - Anime and Manga Culture, Japanese Dining Experiences, Pop Culture, Social Media's Influence, Youth In Mumbai.

INTRODUCTION

Manga and anime—Japanese comic books and animated films characterized by a distinct aesthetic style—are deeply embedded in Japanese popular culture and enjoy widespread global popularity. Among the diverse genres within manga and anime, food- and cooking-themed narratives have developed a significant international following. Series such as *Oishinbo*, which has been in circulation since 1983, demonstrate the sustained appeal of culinary storytelling.

However, culinary manga and anime extend beyond the mere visual representation of aesthetically pleasing dishes. These narratives offer insight into the philosophy of Japanese cuisine, the cultural significance of ingredients, and the craftsmanship associated with being a Japanese chef. Through depictions of spices, regional delicacies, and culinary traditions—many of which are recognized under UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage framework—such works reflect deeper socio-cultural values embedded in food practices.

Food and cooking occupy a central place in Japanese cultural identity. The growing global fascination with Japanese cuisine has paralleled broader shifts in consumption patterns, lifestyle aspirations, and dining practices. Imports of sophisticated meals and beverages have increased, and dining culture has evolved to include greater attention to etiquette, taste, and aesthetic presentation. Even smaller communities have experienced greater accessibility to gourmet cuisine, indicating the normalization of refined food culture in everyday life (Moorthy, 2018).

While these developments highlight the cultural and economic dimensions of Japanese cuisine, scholarly discussions suggest that gourmet manga also engage with broader themes such as gender, professionalism, and identity formation. This study therefore examines how culinary manga not only represent food but also construct social meanings around gender, competition, and cultural exchange.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of “gourmet manga” in the 1970s, particularly within the shōnen manga tradition, marked a significant shift in the representation of food and cooking. According to Miyajima (2020), gourmet manga redefined culinary practice as a professional and masculine domain. This contrasts with the traditional association of domestic cooking with women and femininity in Japanese society and popular media.

Shōnen manga tropes—such as battle, rivalry, and victory—contributed to the construction of hegemonic masculinity within culinary narratives. Cooking competitions became symbolic arenas where skill, authority, and masculine development were performed and validated. At the same time, certain popular gourmet manga blended food and sensuality by portraying exaggerated emotional responses to eating. Carefully prepared food was often framed as a catalyst for vitality, heteronormative desire, and personal growth.

However, more contemporary gourmet manga have gradually moved beyond strictly competitive frameworks. Non-competitive, pleasure-oriented depictions of cooking and eating have gained prominence, alongside more diverse representations of gender and sexuality. This shift reflects broader societal changes in Japan and suggests that culinary narratives are evolving in response to changing cultural values (Miyajima, 2020).

The rising popularity of Japanese food over the world, especially since the 1970s, has been remarkable, and more recently the cases of authentic fine-dining restaurants around the world. In the context of authenticity, in dealing with Japanese foods, we are dealing with an agent-based authenticity, in which the agents (including their activities and materials) are individuals rather than local or place-based authenticities.

With the familiar flavors of his Japanese dishes and spread of network, it has contributed to the diffusion and recognition of Japanese food around the world, a trend which can be described as a specific case of the globalization of Japanese culinary culture. (Imai, n.d.)

Youth are the most used to the advancements in communication technology. Pop culture, to put it simply, is one of the phenomena that is currently gaining popularity among young people at a rapid rate. Japan is the source of pop culture that is currently gaining popularity around the globe, including cosplay, manga, and anime. These media can be used to spread awareness of Japan and Japanese culture. This investigates the impact of Japanese popular culture on Indonesia and its use as public diplomacy. Kartikasari, W. (2018)

In addition to domestic reception, Japanese cuisine and its media representations have significantly influenced international audiences. In India, for instance, authentic Japanese cuisine was initially met with skepticism. Sushi, often associated with raw fish and exclusivity, was largely confined to high-end five-star establishments and remained inaccessible to a broader population. However, with the adaptation of ingredients—particularly the introduction of vegetarian variations—and the growing popularity of contemporary Japanese dining, perceptions have shifted considerably.

Today, dishes such as ramen and teppanyaki, accompanied by beverages like sake, are increasingly integrated into urban lifestyle culture. Restaurants such as Tsubaki, Taki-Taki, and Wakai in Mumbai reflect this growing acceptance and localization of Japanese cuisine within the Indian context (Mayer, 2022).

Rationale

Although existing scholarship has examined gourmet manga in relation to gender construction, professional identity, and the global rise of anime and manga in India, limited attention has been given to how these culinary narratives shape cross-cultural perceptions of Japanese cuisine among Indian audiences. In particular, the role of anime-themed restaurants in Mumbai as spaces where media influence intersects with culinary consumption among urban youth remains significantly underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by investigating how representations of Japanese food in anime and manga contribute to the localization and acceptance of Japanese cuisine in India, with specific focus on anime-themed restaurants in Mumbai and their influence on youth engagement with Japanese cultural identity.

Relevance

Anime and manga have a significant following among youth globally, including in Mumbai. Understanding how these cultural phenomena shape the dining preferences and consumption patterns of young people in the city is important for businesses in the food and beverage industry, as well as for cultural analysts interested in the intersection of media, entertainment, and consumer behaviour.

Studying the influence of anime and manga on dining experiences can shed light on the innovative ways in which cultural themes are incorporated into commercial ventures. Anime and manga-themed restaurants and cafes provide spaces for fans to come together, share their interests, and immerse themselves in a shared cultural experience. Understanding the social dynamics of these themed dining venues can offer insights into how communities form and interact in urban settings.

Purpose and significance

Cultural Impact: Anime is not just a form of entertainment; it serves as a window into Japanese culture. Exploring how anime influences the dining experience can shed light on how cultural elements portrayed in anime are perceived by the youth in Mumbai. *Globalization of Cuisine:* Japanese cuisine has gained popularity worldwide, including in Mumbai. Understanding how anime affects the perception and consumption of Japanese food among the youth can provide insights into the globalization of cuisine. *Consumer Behavior:* Researching the influence of anime on the dining experience can help understand consumer behavior among the youth demographic. It can reveal patterns in preferences, motivations, and decision-making processes regarding food choices influenced by cultural representations in anime and manga on Indian youth. *Marketing*

Opportunities: Findings from such research can be valuable for marketers and businesses in the food and entertainment industries. Understanding how anime influences dining preferences can inform marketing strategies targeted at youth consumers interested in Japanese culture.

OBJECTIVES

To study the influence of Anime and Manga culture on Japanese dining experience on Indian youth in Mumbai.

1. To understand integration of anime and manga culture into food preferences of Indian youth.
2. To study the marketing and business strategies of anime and manga-based restaurants.
3. To understand the role of social media in promoting Japanese food to anime viewers.

HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses 1

1. Alternative (H1) - Anime and manga culture has led to a significant influence on dining experience and food choices on Indian youth in Mumbai.
2. Null (Ho) - Anime and manga culture has not led to a significant influence on dining experience and food choices on Indian youth in Mumbai.

Hypotheses 2

1. Alternative (H1) - social media plays an important role in promoting Japanese food to anime viewers.
2. Null (Ho) – Social media does not play an important role in promoting Japanese food to anime viewers.

Limitations

1. The research being restricted to Japanese oriented anime food only, where other cuisines can also be explored.
2. The study is limited to anime and manga
3. Research is confined only to youth between the age 18 to 38 years
4. This study is restricted to Mumbai only.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research is a type of analysis that outlines the features of the population or issues under study. This primary method will be used in descriptive research, which includes observations, surveys, and case studies. We will use variables in descriptive research to explain the facts.

We will be using observation technique for better understanding the audience coming to the restaurant. The youth being our main study of focus, will help us understand the ethnography of the audience along with their main intent at the restaurant. Along with the audience, the restaurant itself will be under observation which involves analyzing the design set and décor.

Sampling

A purposive sampling has been used for this research so the focus can be narrowed down to a specific audience group of 30 people. People who live in Mumbai and watch anime between the age of 18 to 38 years. During the data collection, qualitative study will be conducted via- case study which involves observation of the restaurant and two interviews of restaurant owners and for audience perspective, a focus group study will be conducted.

The two restaurants used for the research are – **Ramen Tales** and **You Mee** located in Mumbai. They are my area of study because they are anime and manga themed restaurants offering Japanese cuisine, which attracts niche audience.

Research Instruments and Method

Qualitative research method provided a versatile and adaptable methodology that helped me to investigate the meanings, contexts, and points of view this topic. Qualitative research produced rich, detailed data that inform, complement quantitative findings, and provide a deeper understanding of social, cultural, and individual dynamics by emphasising participant voices and utilising techniques like focus groups, interviews, and observations.

A formal thematic analysis was employed to systematically interpret the qualitative data collected from observations, interviews, and focus group discussions.

After data collection, the responses were transcribed and carefully reviewed to identify recurring patterns and themes.

The coding process was conducted manually, where significant statements and repeated ideas were highlighted and grouped into thematic categories for structured interpretation.

To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, peer review was applied, where identified themes and interpretations were cross-checked to minimise researcher bias.

DATA COLLECTION

Observation

Observation allows me to witness firsthand how youth interact with anime and manga culture in dining settings. I can observe their behaviors, preferences, and reactions to different aspects of the dining experience. Observation enables me to capture non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures, providing additional depth to your understanding of participants' experiences.

Interview

Through interviews, restaurant owners can share personal narratives, anecdotes, and experiences related to diner's interactions with anime and manga culture in dining settings, providing rich qualitative data. Interviews offer the opportunity to clarify responses, probe further into specific topics, and get deeper into owner's thoughts and feelings, enhancing the richness and depth of the data collected.

Case Study

Case studies are considered to be “naturalistic” because subjects are studied and **observed** in their natural context. By focusing on the restaurants surroundings and working in its natural setting, this case study will improve understanding of the broader features and processes at work.

Case study involves also involves **interviews**. The owners or the managers of restaurants with anime or manga oriented Japanese food are suitable for answering questions related to marketing and business of their restaurant.

Focus Group

People who visit the restaurants for Japanese oriented meals in anime/and manga themed restaurants will be the subjects for focus group discussion. They will be able to help us understand cultural integration of anime and manga culture into food preferences among them (Indian youth in Mumbai).

This will help me come close and examine the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. To get more in-depth information on the audience's perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences, and beliefs on Japanese food from anime themed restaurants, focus group method will be used. The questions will be asked in-person with a group of 3 to 5 people at a time.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

To understand Integration of anime and manga culture into food preferences of Indian youth, these methods of data collection tools are employed - The first tool being Case study that involves observation and Interview of both the restaurants that are under study – YouMee and Ramen Tails. The Interview is taken of the restaurant managers or person in charge, to talk about business and marketing point of view. The other tool is Focus group where 30 people who are anime fans or manga readers, who have tried Japanese cuisine were under study to explore their experience.

Case study

A. Ramen Tails

Just as entering the premises of the restaurant, we are greeted by Naruto Anime/Manga themed wallpaper with yellow lighting were the backdrop for the Ramen Tails restaurant. Just as I sat down, I had a few observations. The menu was not themed, just black coloured with photo of a ramen bowl and food items mentioned. The utensils provided were Japanese styled Chopsticks with soya sauce on the side. Surprisingly, no music was being played at the restaurant. Just then the staff approached me and I requested for the manager. That's when I was introduced to Mr. Alimiya Patel, the head in charge. He has been working at the restaurant for the past three months and the restaurant started in March, 2023. He readily agreed to the interview and I dived into the interview questions.

When I asked him why was anime- theme chosen for the restaurant, he answered that he wanted to bring Japanese food to the customers to enjoy authentic experience. For marketing they mostly rely on word-of-mouth since the experience is unique. They also use social media, mainly Instagram where posts go every week to promote their restaurant. After these I asked if he believes if it's a long business to which he admitted that it's merely pop culture and will fade away in the next five years or so.



Figure1 and 2. Images of Ramen Tails

B. YouMee

The day I went to go for the interview, the manager wasn't available and the staff asked me to come the next day at 12o'clock, so I did as I was told, but the manager came to the restaurant at 1:20pm. The wait gave me ample time to admire the ambience. It was complete anime and manga themed with manga posters and banners. Japanese words were inscribed on the wall with flower plots and decorations. Anime like Food Wars and Tokyo Revengers dominated the posters where the characters were cooking and enjoying their meals. The menu had elements of manga and photographs of food to allow the people to know the food would look before they ordered. Chopsticks were kept along with soya sauce, vinegar and chili oil. The music was on by were not Anime themed or Japanese, but was English rock music. After Mr. Pradeep (the manager) arrived, I wasted no time and started with the introductory questions. The restaurant started in January 2023, and he has been working for the past four months. When I asked him why was anime- theme chosen for the restaurant, he said that the main reason was to attract teenagers who are into this type of culture. When asked about the marketing strategies he stated plenty of tools used to attract their customers. Ramen festivals, discounts via 'spin the wheel' activities, newspaper flyers, you name them all they have implemented. Instagram page for all YouMee is manged by a separate team. When asked about his thoughts on how long does the themed based restaurant will work, he said it is a trend right now and will continue it another trend takes over.

Key Highlights -

- For both the restaurants, the ambience was the key focus. By having anime/manga themed wallpaper – Naruto theme in Ramen Tails and mix anime like Tokyo Revengers, Food Wars, The Way of the Househusband, etc.
- Menu cards could be made more appealing and theme oriented.
- Utensils were made close to resemble Japanese cutlery with chopsticks and providing condiments like soya souse and chili souse.
- There are a lot of anime opening and ending songs that are popular which could have been used in the restaurants.



Figure 3 and 4. Images of YouMee

Focus group

Table 3. Group 1, 2 and 3

Theme	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
INFLUENCE	YES, they share a fandom that includes common elements in the atmosphere	They think it affects much but only up to a limited extend	It doesn't really.
DRAWN DUE TO AMBIENCE	Yes, once a while to try at such themed restaurants would be fun	Yes, they like to check out anime themed establishments once	Yes, it does because of the visual appeal and surroundings
PASSING TREND	Not a passing trend	The way anime is growing it could continue till another trend takes over.	Maybe, because setting of a different culture may not suit Indian palates
ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	When the restaurants are promoted, they get attention	Social media helps promote it a lot with many influencers too making reels	informing about a new restaurant to tempts them due to the algorithm

Table 4. Focus Group 4, 5 and 6.

Theme	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
INFLUENCE	It elevates experience to try out new place with friends	Sure, they have tried foods featured in anime or manga, like ramen, sushi, or Japanese sweets, because of their visual appeal.	Personally, no influence on them as most of the food shown on the shows and manga contain beef or pork which they do not consume.
DRAWN DUE TO AMBIENCE	Yes of course, not just anime for that matter but also Japanese Cuisine	Anime and manga elements because it adds an extra layer of enjoyment to the meal.	Yes, sometimes they get drawn to these types of dining experiences. An event in Dubai named "Japan con" which had few anime themed restaurants
PASSING TREND	influence on dining experience is a passing trend	Anime and manga have a strong and dedicated fan base that keeps growing but eventually, they will fade away.	They think it will grow as the time progresses as a lot of people are starting to watch anime.
ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	Social media platforms are the only legit way of connecting anime enthusiasts	Yes, it helps create a community around these interests and also helps promote the Japanese dining food industry in the country.	Social media could potentially play a big role

Question 1. How do you think the integration of anime and manga culture into dining experiences affects the overall atmosphere or enjoyment of the meal for you and your peers?

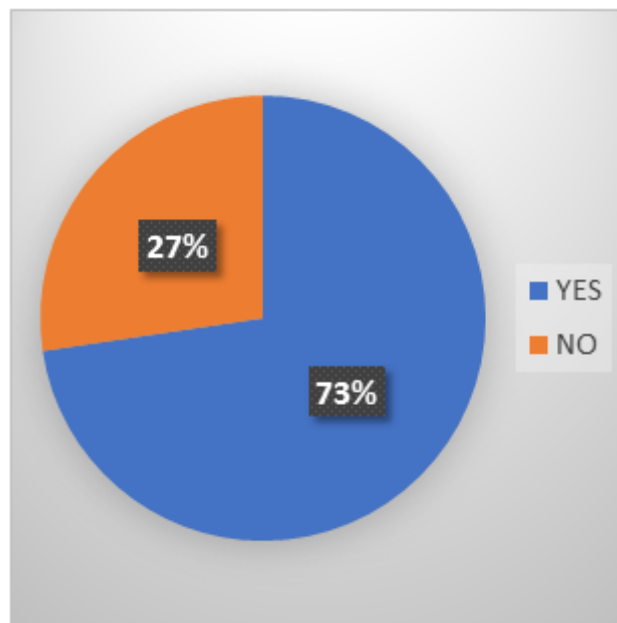


Figure 5. Majority people think that there is an influence on dining experience

Question 2. Do you find yourself drawn to dining establishments that incorporate elements of anime and manga culture into their ambiance, menu offerings, or decor? Why or why not?

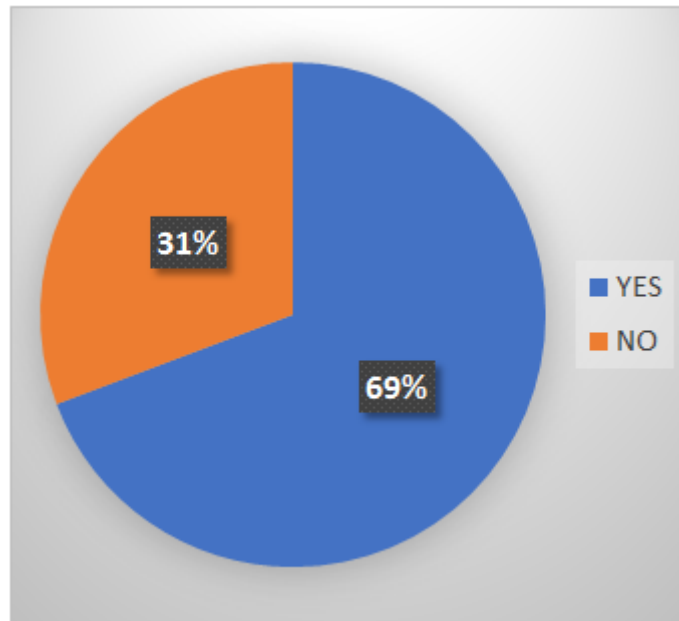


Figure 6. Majority people have agreed it is the ambience that plays an important role.

Question 3. Do you think the influence of anime and manga culture on dining experiences is a passing trend, or do you believe it will continue to grow in significance among Indian youth? Why?

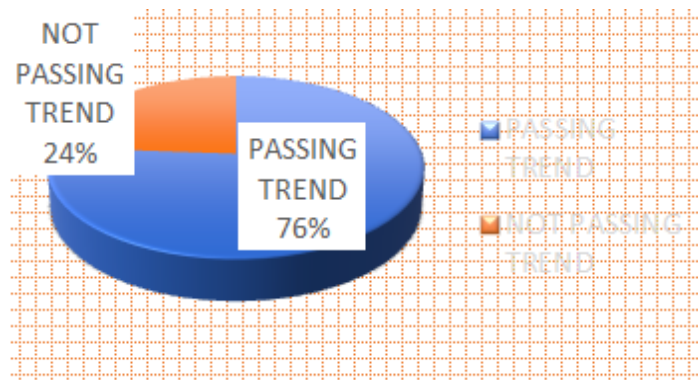


Figure 7. Majority people believe it is a passing trend

Question 4. In your opinion, what role do social media platforms play in bridging the gap between anime/manga enthusiasts and Japanese food culture in Mumbai?

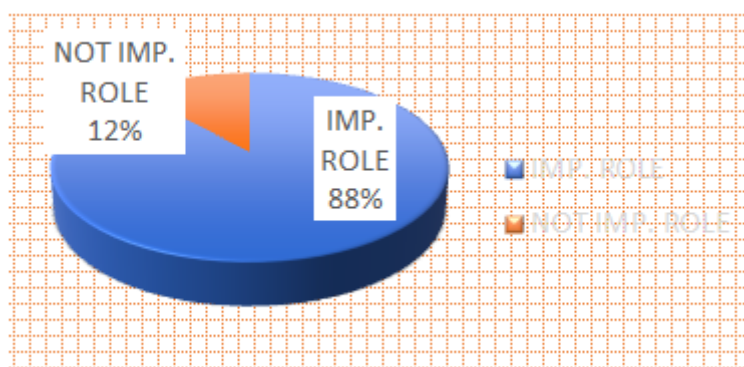


Figure 8. Majority believe social media helps promote it a lot with many influencers too

Key Highlights -

- It is observed that there is an influence on dining experience for which the ambience that plays an important role but it is believe it is a passing trend
- Social media, helps promote it a lot with many influencers too
- Influence - They think it affects much but only up to a limited extend

- Drawn due to ambience - Yes, it does because of the visual appeal and surroundings
- Passing trend - anime and manga have a strong and dedicated fan base that keeps growing but eventually, they will fade away.
- Role of social media - social media could potentially play a big role

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Tools used under Qualitative research

Through case study about the influence of anime and manga on Japanese cuisine in Mumbai among youth by observing the restaurants under study (Ramen Tails and YouMee) first hand, was effective for this research paper. That included observation and interview.

Themes that emerged from the observation are -:

1. For both the restaurants, the ambience was the key focus. By having anime/manga themed wallpaper – Naruto theme in Ramen Tails and mix anime like Tokyo Revengers, Food Wars, The Way of the Househusband, and many more.
2. Menu cards were made appealing when it comes to displaying Japanese cuisine.
3. Utensils were made close to resemble Japanese cutlery with chopsticks and providing condiments like soya souse and chili souse.
4. No Japanese music or anime songs were played in both the restaurants.

Themes that emerged from the interview are -:

Interviews of the restaurant managers about the restaurant about their motive behind themed restaurants, it's marketing strategies and how they bring Japanese cuisine on the table for their customers. The strong hold of Instagram was evident in social media marketing strategy.

1. The restaurants are offering authentic Japanese cuisine, to attract teenagers who are into anime/manga culture.
2. Both restaurants are capitalizing on Japanese cuisine with Ramen being their most sold item.
3. Their marketing is mostly on Instagram when it comes to online marketing.
4. Its pop culture, and will continue it another trend takes over and will fade away in the next five – six years.

Themes that emerged from the Focus Group are -:

1. It is observed that there is an influence on dining experience for which the ambience that plays an important role but it is believe it is a passing trend
2. Social media, helps promote it a lot with many influencers too
3. Influence - They think it affects much but only up to a limited extend
4. Drawn due to ambience - Yes, it does because of the visual appeal and surroundings
5. Passing trend - anime and manga have a strong and dedicated fan base that keeps growing but eventually, they will fade away.
6. Role of social media - social media could potentially play a big role

Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1 H1 - Anime and manga themed restaurants have a significant influence on dining experience on Indian youth in Mumbai is proved because as mentioned above the Qualitative research via interview, focus group and case study proved that there is a significant influence on dining experience due to themed restaurants.

Hypotheses 2 H1 - social media plays an important role in promoting Japanese food to anime viewers was proved because the focus group participants agreed that social media is the medium through which they get maximum information about such restaurants. Along with this the interview with restaurant managers made it clear that they believe that they engage maximum with the audience.

Summary of the study

There has been an increase in anime viewership and manga consumption for the past 5 years due to lockdown people have been consuming any type and all type of content. Due to this there has been a creation of anime

community that demands anime merchandise like clothes, posters and even food viewed by them. After going through the twenty reviews of literature, there was a clear research gap that involved no information about anime or manga themed restaurants specializing in Japanese food in Mumbai. To fill the gap, three-month study was done to understand the influence of anime/manga culture on food preference among youth.

Future Research Scope

There is future scope of study where similar themed restaurants can be taken under study for research. It is established that what drives people to come is the attraction from theme-based restaurants and it can be similarly applied for future scope.

Concluding statement

After this interesting research, I could prove that youth are interested in theme-based restaurants, especially anime/manga themed restaurants to try Japanese cuisine after receiving information via social media. Even if it's a growing popular trend, it is likely to fade and way as other trends take over it.

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