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Is Anime Still in Favour among University Students?

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Abstract

Anime is widely known and has a numerous army of admirers all over the world. It originated in Japan almost 70 years ago, but, as time went by, this style of animation has won the audience, become recognised worldwide and still has not lost its appeal. The authors of the article aim to discover whether it continues to be popular today among the students of one particular Russian university and indicate the reasons for that. The methodology used in the paper involves literature analysis and synthesis, generalization, comparative analysis, statistical analysis, and a survey. The sample of the study consisted of 170 undergraduate students aged 17 to 20 from the Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov (Arkhangelsk, Russia). The received results demonstrated that most students got acquainted with this genre while being at school but hitherto favour it. Anime, being an incentive for many young people, inspires them to study the history, traditions and culture of Japan and compare it with other countries, thus, being a part of the global anime community. The survey also revealed the main reasons of anime popularity such as a fascinating plot, variety of genres, bright images of the characters and identified the filmmaker with the highest number of votes.

Keywords: anime, survey, popularity, Eastern culture, university students, influence on the audience, perception, media text.

1. Introduction

Anime is not a new phenomenon as it was created in the 1960s but Western communities got acquainted with it in the 1990s (Ferreira et al., 2023). There is an opinion (Wahab, 2012) that it appeared even earlier, in the XIXth century, owing to technical and artistic knowledge exchange among Japanese, American, and European cultures. The first anime is considered to be *Imokawa Kukuzo genkaban no maki* that was produced in 1917 and combined fairytale elements of Japanese and Western cultures. During the Second World War anime alleged political agenda, the Pearl Harbour attack being one of the references (Wahab, 2012).

Many can argue about the phenomenon of anime but no one can refute the fact that anime can conquer both fans and professionals. A number of awards is a convincing argument, as Hayao Miyazaki's movies won the Best Animated Feature category twice: *Spirited Away* in 2003 and *The Boy and the Bird* in 2024. Moreover, Shinkai Makoto's anime *Your Name* has been screened in more than 100 countries (Hiroaki Mori, 2018). A surprising fact is that in 2020 the international anime consumption market reached 10.89 billion US dollars while in Japan the sum was US\$10.41 billion and that fact highlighted the shift of the industry from a domestic niche market to a global mass market (Ferreira et al., 2023).

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Among specific peculiarities of the anime movies researchers list “emotionality, expressivity and brightness, sensuality, imagery, denial of reality, symbolism, aggressiveness, blurriness and lack of specificity of the characters' speech, an exciting and fascinating story, aesthetics (increased attention to the beauty of the national nature), a specific manner of drawing characters and heroes (unnaturally large eyes of the characters, their exaggerated detailing; nose and mouth are depicted with wavy lines), individuality (anime culture is characterized by the opposition of the mass to culture with its desire to unify the personality)” (Kostetskaya, Vasilchenko, 2022: 361). Although anime embraces various genres ranging from daily life, romance, fantasy, magic, super power, mystery, action, supernatural, thrillers, and science-fiction series, prevailing anime characters have large eyes, a pointed chin, accentuated physical features, and a handsome and beautiful face design as the anime character type is ‘bishōjo’ that means a beautiful young girl in Japanese (Andari, Litaay, 2022; Leo-Liu, Wu-Ouyang, 2022; Wahab, 2012).

The aim of the current study is to determine the role anime movies play in the life of university students. To achieve the aim, a few objectives should be accomplished. Firstly, we consider the phenomenon of the anime with its underlying factors. Secondly, it is necessary to scrutinize classifications categorizing anime movies in order to understand potential influence of the anime on the audience. Finally, the survey of university students is to be carried out to grasp their attitude towards the phenomenon of anime.

2. Material and methods

The methodology of the study was based on analysis and synthesis of literature, generalization, classification, induction and deduction. First, we studied the literature on the problem and various classifications of anime. Then we considered students' understanding and attitude to this genre by administering an anonymous survey consisting of 12 open-ended questions. The questions were elaborated with respect to cultural mythology analysis, character analysis, and stereotypes analysis (Fedorov, 2007; Fedorov, 2014). The sampling frame for the study comprised 170 bachelor students aged 17-20 from Northern (Arctic) federal university named after M.V. Lomonosov (Arkhangelsk, Russia). The results of the survey were processed by the method of statistical analysis and presented in the digital form.

3. Discussion

When talking about anime, researchers refer to several concepts underlying the significance and popularity of anime. The first concept is cultural diplomacy. In our everyday life we think about international affairs when we encounter the concept of diplomacy. It is perceived as an instrument that countries apply to gain their interests in negotiations with their counterparts. “At the same time, global corporations face unprecedented opportunities to profit from the control of information, the inflection of cultural and political choices, and the circulation of ideas” (Bazalgette, 2009: 2). But along with traditional diplomacy another one should be mentioned, that is cultural diplomacy.

Japan is considered to be a powerful example of a country spreading its national culture throughout the world using soft skills or soft power. It refers to the strategy of persuading others to align with one's interests through cultural appeal and ideology rather than through military force. Anime operates within the realm of ‘soft power’ by using cultural artefacts such as anime to influence its audience ideologically (Wahab, 2012). We bear in mind that “media content is a text that provides insights into contemporary cultures. Media presentations reflect the attitudes, values, behaviours, preoccupations, patterns of thought, and myths that define a culture” (Silverblatt et al., 2013: 220). Anime is not the only one Japanese soft skill as most people have heard at least about one of Japanese national features: kimono, geisha, tea ceremony, Sakura blossom, samurai, karate, ju-jitsu, sumo, sushi, etc. Anime is of interest to people of different age, most anime fans are at the age of teenager to early adulthood (Andari, Litaay, 2022; Lipayeva, 2017; Shishkina et al., 2020). All the current generations have heard about at least one character: Doraemon, Hello Kitty, Ampan Man, Pokemon, Astro Boy, Sailor Moon, One Piece, and others (Kartikasari, 2018). But not so many people realize the fact that anime being a component of another culture can influence them in several spheres. Anime gaining its recognition led to the appearance of multiple fandoms and pop cultures worldwide manifesting in numerous activities, events, and communities such as cosplay, character figurine collection, fan made comics, fanfiction, artwork, mashup videos and amateur manga (Leo-Liu, Wu-Ouyang, 2022; Olkova, 2018; Reysen et al., 2020). Moreover,

researchers identified a new subculture 'otaku' that means 'people staying at home' in Japanese and that represents such features as affection for Japanese culture, preference for indoor activities, and shyness (Al-Sada et al., 2021; Leo-Liu, Wu-Ouyang, 2022).

At the same time researchers distinguish cultural politics behind anime that falls into three types: a) internationalization de-politicized (in order to gain the world market anime should blur distinct Japanese context as it will allow a wider imaginary space of identification for representatives of different cultures), b) occidentalization-internationalization (in contrast to the first type, it strives to implicitly portray Japan's superiority over the Western countries), and c) self-orientalized internationalization (the underlying idea is to show Japan's superiority among Asian countries and to present itself as a Western country of Asia) (Wahab, 2012).

The manifestation of these cultural politics becomes evident when we pay attention to characters, attire, setting, and lifestyle. For example, anime characters do not always share the same physical features of Japanese people. Rather often we can see them with blond hair, big blue or green eyes. Producers try to endow their characters with universal or westernized characteristics as it will help conquer the world market. Another underlying factor here is the cultural ambivalence as many Japanese people consider their culture to be between the West and the East. As for the attire, mostly, it tends to be a modern-type of clothing such as T-shirts and short pants, though some authentic elements are also present, let us name a head band, long tied hair, sandals, etc. Meanwhile, the setting resembles a typical residential area in Japan with such peculiarities as brick walls separating houses in the neighbourhood, entrance area where heroes are to take off their shoes before entering, sliding doors, corridors connecting rooms, convenience shops nearby, etc. Finally, the content of numerous anime displays a typical Japanese family that lives in the urban area (usually a nuclear family with one or two children where father works hard to provide the family and mother is a housewife engaged in cooking, cleaning and other household chores).

In family daily routine we encounter typical meals at lower tables, sleeping on futon instead of beds, particular style of sitting, bowing to older people, etc. These examples illustrate an attempt to fuse two cultures (Japanese and Western) in order to prove to be progressive and modern (Wahab, 2012). This fusion highlights the idea that Japan has enough technological and scientific capacity to compete with other countries, at the same time the country retains its uniqueness and prone to combine traditionality with contemporaneity (Wahab, 2012).

In many cases anime serves as the starting point for anime viewers to get interested in Japan and Japanese culture, particularly, popular culture such as manga, cuisine, fashion, pop and rock music, the Japanese language learning, tourism (Fernández-Bedoya et al., 2022). For instance, some food-themed anime or episodes touching upon Japanese cuisine culture induce anime viewers to taste Japanese food and then purchase Japanese cuisine products to cook them at home (Basaran, Sunnetcioglu, 2021). Anime has become so popular that the idea of the anime pilgrimage turned out to be feasible. Watching anime, its fans are often motivated to visit places featured in the anime. They actively interact both amidst their community and with people living in the areas portrayed in the anime. The notion of pilgrimage is reasonable in this context as it presupposes a trip to the sacred places, procurance of relics or souvenirs, and return to own place inspired by impressions and representations (Hiroaki Mori, 2018). This is the case of soft power that is considered to be the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence (Hiroaki Mori, 2018). According to Nye (cited in Hiroaki Mori, 2018) soft power relies on three components: culture, a country's political values, and its foreign policies, when culture is widely represented worldwide as stated above. We should keep in mind that any culture incorporates two aspects equally valid: high value culture with pieces of art, literature, etc., and popular culture (Yuliani et al., 2021). Even if anime viewers do neither share nor support Japan's political values and policies, they do feel attraction to Japanese cultural phenomena. Researchers persistently emphasize Japan's ability to lure other countries without an element of coercion that is perceived as soft power (Yuliani et al., 2021). Moreover, the concept of Japanization has come into being (Basaran, Sunnetcioglu, 2021).

What worries researchers is the idea that many users perceive media figures and computing agents as human-like social interlocutors and according to media psychologists such users are liable to 'parasocial interaction' or 'parasocial relationship' (Leo-Liu, Wu-Ouyang, 2022) that is an alternative to real relationships.

What are the reasons that make anime so attractive for fans? Researchers (Reysen et al., 2020) emphasize at least four reasons that inspire and keep fans engaged. Firstly, the content of

anime itself. Although anime has different genres, it is prosocial in its essence as most of anime promote the ideas of helping others, empathy, social justice, cooperation, environmental sustainability, and so on. One of the world-famous anime directors Hayao Miyazaki often addresses the topic of ecology and environmental sustainability in his movies. Such anime movies as *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Spirited Away*, and *Princess Mononoke* can be mentioned in this regard. Many anime movies emphasize the moral message about the significance of protecting and preserving the environment from negative impacts (Mulyadi, 2022) such as temperature rise, erratic seasonal changes, climate change, etc. Secondly, skills and proficiency of artists, animators, and directors can persuade in sincerity and reality of the anime. Thirdly, voice actors engaged in anime become public faces and celebrities as their voices are inseparable with their characters. Ultimately, other fans help enhance global citizenship identification when an amateur becomes a person of the world (Gálik et al., 2024; Reysen et al., 2020).

Another point of view suggests that the popularity of anime culture can be explained by the following factors. Firstly, Japanese animators constantly create unique and unparalleled movies, interesting and exciting stories. Secondly, anime producers impart their own thoughts, feelings, emotions, experiences in their works. Thirdly, “most anime movies have a psychological, moral and ideological impact on the viewer. They teach the audience to confess their mistakes, forgive their enemies and not to be afraid to fall in love with someone they disliked and even hated not so long ago. Fourthly, anime proves that nothing in life is given for nothing, and in order to achieve your goal, you need to work hard and develop yourself. Fifthly, anime movies convey the idea that our life and destiny have a deep meaning, and each person has their own purpose in life, and a series of interconnected events have their own specific place and time. Finally, anime teaches the viewer the principles of life. They say that life is unfair but if you stop justifying your failures and bad luck with inequality or unfair treatment to you, and confidently follow the dream, you will definitely achieve it” (Kostetskaya, Vasilchenko, 2022: 363).

While analysing anime, researchers choose different criteria underlying their classification. The first classification (Golmohammadi et al., 2021) is based on the level of audience’s activity and consumption and it proffers three groups: 1) anime watchers (they watch a couple of anime series each year during their leisure time; anime may or may not be their primary form of entertainment, but they enjoy watching particularly popular and thought-provoking anime series; they may or may not collect anime merchandise and engage in fan-related activities), 2) Otaku (typically, these are introverted and socially awkward individuals with a deep passion for anime; they enjoy collecting anime merchandise, dedicating a substantial amount of their leisure time to watching and engaging in discussions about anime through online platforms; additionally, they may partake in cosplay, create fan fiction, and even produce subtitles for anime content during their free time), and 3) Nit (they are dedicated and somewhat obsessed anime enthusiasts; they prioritize watching anime, playing games, and staying updated on the latest anime news over their career and social interactions; Nit fans are known for their social isolation, as their intense passion for anime often takes precedence over other aspects of their lives; they have a consistent anime-watching routine and are less inclined to engage with others, opting to immerse themselves in anime and gaming instead).

The next classification is built on target audiences’ demographics. Researchers determined five target audiences that are keen on anime. These groups were set according to the demographic features but they are not final or cast-in groups (Ferreira et al., 2023). The first group is *Kodomomuke*. The anime from this group is for children under 12. Such anime usually narrates stories about family, friends, and animals that appear to be cute. In most cases this anime has some comic touch. The second group is *Shoujo*, and it is aimed at female teenagers. The age range varies between seven to 20 years old depending on the genre of the anime, for instance, everyday life stories, sports, relationships between boys and girls. The third group, *Shounen*, is designed for male teens and embraces such genres as action, adventures about sports, fighting. This anime may contain obscene humour and gauze of sexuality, and rather often they depict ways of becoming a stronger man. The fourth group is *Josei*. The anime from this group is targeted at young adult and adult females. They tend to be more existential, emotional covering heteronormative experiences. Characters of the anime of this group search for romantic love, men as well as women. The fifth group, *Seinen*, is created for young adults and male adults, portrays more dramatic plots, uncovering challenges of life, dealing with violence, psychological disturbances, and sometimes unveiling nudity (Ferreira et al., 2023). Also, one more group can be identified, narrating harem

stories and presenting a fusion of two target audiences' anime, *Shoujo* and *Seinen*, depicts a young man with attractive girls around him that is involved in romantic situations.

One more classification relies on genre variation criteria. Within this classification 12 groups were identified (Ferreira et al., 2023). The first one is *Isekai* embracing magic and fantasy anime. Characters usually possess anthropomorphic features and are represented by dragons, elves, magicians, kings, and others. In this group can be listed such anime as *KonoSuba*, *Overlord*, *Black Clover*, etc. The second group incorporates psychological anime with a plot full of mystery and horror, psychological terror, dramas, tragedies, suspense, some fantastic and supernatural creatures. *Death Note*, *Berserk*, *Sword Art Online* are examples of the anime of this group. The third group comprises dramatic romances, crime stories, and adult comedies all based on novels and games. Mostly they portray organized crime with a few or no elements of fantasy. For instance, these are *Violet Evergarden*, *91 Days*, *Romeo x Juliet*, and so on. The anime of the fourth group narrates time travel dramas and novels, bishounen reverse harem stories where 'bishounen' stands for a male character with traditionally feminine physical beauty traits and 'reverse harem' describes the setting where men surround a female protagonist. Also, this group comprises anime movies about vampires or comedies about otaku (those who have a strong affection for Japanese culture, prefer indoor activities, and can be characterised as rather socially awkward). *Tokyo Revengers*, *Vampire Knight*, *Himouto! Umaru-chan* are anime movies, to name a few, belonging to this group. The fifth group anime describes common, conventional everyday life charged with habitual work or studies, routine, household chores, reposeful and calming environment, the things that are understandable and habitual for people. Most anime movies of this group are comedies with a small number of dramas. This group is illustrated by such anime as *Yuru Camp*, *Citrus*, and *Spy x Family*.

Anime movies from group 6 narrate about magical contests produced with the help of spells and other supernatural forces. Even though the characters use numerous superabilities, the action habitually takes place in the real world. For instance, *Sailor Moon* (anime that appeared first in many countries), *Ao no Exorcist*, *Soul Eater*, and *Sakura Cardcaptor*. In anime of the seventh group the main hero is usually involved in a team and has to work in partnership with other contestants to win some sport or military contest. *Full Metal Panic!*, *Re:Creators*, and *Captain Tsubasa* can be mentioned in this group. The next group anime touches upon erotic content and uncovers nudity though most movies are of comedy genre and portray schools and school life. As example, we can cite *Monster Musume*, *No Game No Life*, and *Ishuzoku Reviewers*. Group 9 includes dramatic science fiction anime. It means sophisticated, philosophical, and questioning science fiction adventures when science fuses with fantasy to create new worlds with elements of drama. The anime of this group is *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Made in Abyss*, and *Psycho-Pass*. The tenth group refers to historical and scientific themes. Mostly, they are based on real events and facts, may belong a variety of genres (action, adventure, comedy, drama, etc.), and aim at teaching the audience as they cover different topics, for instance, history of Japan or European history. The anime of this group is *Vinland Saga*, *Kingdom*, and *Last Exile*. Group 11 is called 'Shounen and seinen fighting anime' that designates fight among male teens, young adults, and male adults. Generally, characters possess super powers, not only imaginary but real. Usually, a protagonist or a character becomes stronger in order to combat with more powerful enemies. This group is also full of fighting but in comparison with teamwork anime heroes here fight individually. *One Punch Man*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *Naruto* should be quoted in this group. The final group includes cute girl anime of romances. The focus of such anime is a character or romantic story development, usually it does not possess any erotic aspect. Frequently, characters undergo some challenges on the path of their development. The examples of this group are *Girls and Panzers*, *Love Live! Sunshine!!*, and *Horimiya* (Ferreira et al., 2023).

As it has already been mentioned, anime has gain popularity across the globe, mainly as a kind of entertainment. But some researchers claim that anime can be successfully used to teach theoretical concepts in a variety of subjects (Taja-on, Vacalares, 2021). The reason for this statement is the fact that many students get more involved when there is a story to tell or be engaged in. It allows students to develop their creativity, analytical and critical thinking, get new knowledge, and master new skills. The same scientists carried out research aspiring to evaluate critical thinking skills of students who watched anime and those who do not. The results demonstrate that students who watch anime have a higher ability to analyse and make accurate decisions when they encounter some problems. The researchers explain this finding by diverse

scenarios and plot points present in anime, which engage viewers in the story and encourage them to speculate about potential outcomes and consequences. Moreover, the visual aspect of the anime helps interpret intricate themes and topics watchers face in their studies. One more interesting fact should be stated – the amount of time spent for watching anime does not affect the development of their critical skills where it will be 5 or 11 hours on watching per week (Taja-on, Vacalares, 2021).

Among factors of the anime motivating the audience, researchers list: 1) nobility and friendship that nurture the inner force of a teenager, 2) devotion to the motherland as the highest value of a person, 3) leadership qualities, 4) individualism, understanding the world through your own self, 5) humanism, compassion, dreaminess, ambition, motivation that strengthen any society, 6) ways and determination to overcome difficulties, 7) the heroism of the spirit, bravery and courage, 8) aspiration to help others, 9) nobility of characters (Musin, 2022).

Researchers confirm the influence of anime movies on teenagers, namely, in Russia (Dedov, Kulakova, 2020). They highlight that anime movies have impact on Russian adolescents' behaviour. Japanese anime is characterised by intensive emotional expression and rapidly changing images. Meanwhile, Russian cartoons depict national cultural uniqueness, realistic characters, vivid plots, polysemic and multi-purpose content. The fusion of both encourages teenagers to reflect more consciously, make decisions more responsibly, act in accordance with anime characters retaining Russian mentality and peculiarities of contemporary life virtualization. It results in specific subculture when adolescents combine high emotionality of the anime and pragmatism of current digital society. Thus, their behaviour becomes more spontaneous, they react immediately, their judgements become more superficial and literal (Dedov, Kulakova, 2020).

In spite of a huge number of anime fans, the amount of its opponents is increasing. They criticize anime for excessive violence, sensuality, and inadequate behaviour of those who are keen of watching and collecting anime movies that may lead to the escape from reality, aggressiveness, addiction, etc. Individual anime genres have received critical assessment due to the abundance of scenes containing aggression (fights, wrestling, violence, use of profanity), pornography (with demonstration of various forms of sexual deviations) (Ol'kova, 2018). Researchers claim that the reason for such ambiguous attitude towards Japanese anime is non-compliance with age limits and neglect of national and cultural limitations (Shishkinaetal, 2020). Findings show that 70–90 % of anime viewers perceive it as entertainment, 10 % – 30 % treat the anime seriously, and the most part of them are primary and middle school children. The striking fact is that from 67 % to 95 % of the latter do not orient in anime genres and do not follow age limitations that may result in psychic disturbance, stress, and other detrimental effects. Meanwhile, even the opponents acknowledge that the proper anime enables emotional and creative development, worldview evolution, moral values formation. The underlying factor of this ambiguity is the anime versatility, the abundance of anime genres, and the necessity to choose the proper one. Most anime movies pursue educational goals and aim at formation of such values as respect towards elderly, friendship, distinct differentiation between good and evil. The use of clear, available, and picturesque anime images expresses universal morals such as assiduousness, persistence in achieving aims and objectives, self-control, love, ability to forgive, modesty, etc. (Kostetskaya, Vasilchenko, 2022).

Generally, there are two reasons why people are so keen on media messages and what they want to find in them in contrast to real life. The first reason is impossibility to get some messages in reality. It is interesting to know how our planet looked like a couple of centuries or millennia before, how people behaved and felt during the American Civil war, to share and understand their feelings, emotions, sounds, etc. The second reason is the cost. Someone can not afford going to France in real life but s/he can afford to spend time and money to watch a travelogue on France, or they can afford lower emotional cost for watching someone else establishing and undergoing relationships with others (Potter, 2018: 303). Throughout the time, anime viewers reevaluate their being and attitude to material and spiritual values, perceive the surrounding world easier, try to improve the reality, delve into self-development, acquire new skills and competences, etc. (Shishkinaetal., 2020; Smirnova, 2022).

Meanwhile, encountering difficulties, some children or teenagers may escape from the problems in their imaginary world, looking for consolation and help. That is why the choice of the anime movie is a responsible and feasible task and viewers should be thoroughly taught to make this choice consciously. Though there is an opinion that current young generation is a digital generation, digital natives, and they are somehow naturally skilled and knowledgeable in their dealings with new technology, this viewpoint is brought into question by established researchers

(Buckingham, 2009: 7). We ardently support the idea that every person since the early age should acquire indispensable life skill that helps him or her grow up “in a world full of mass media, popular culture and digital media”, that involves “learning to analyze news and advertising, examining the social functions of music, distinguishing between propaganda, opinion and information, examining the representation of gender, race and class in entertainment and information media, understanding media economics and ownership, and exploring the ways in which violence and sexuality are depicted in media messages” (Hobbs, Jensen, 2009: 9).

4. Results

To reach the aim of the study and find out whether and why anime is popular among students we conducted an anonymous survey. 170 bachelor students from Northern (Arctic) federal university named after M.V. Lomonosov (Arkhangelsk, Russia) answered the questions connected with this subculture.

In the first question respondents had to write their preferences in film genres. The number of variants was not limited. The majority of those who responded noted from three to five genres. The predominant number of voices was given to comedies. Only three students said that they neither watch nor like any films. Other results are presented in Figure 1. We attempted to find the connection with particular genres and anime addiction but unfortunately did not detect any correlation between them. This apparent lack of correlation can be explained by the multi genre essence of anime.

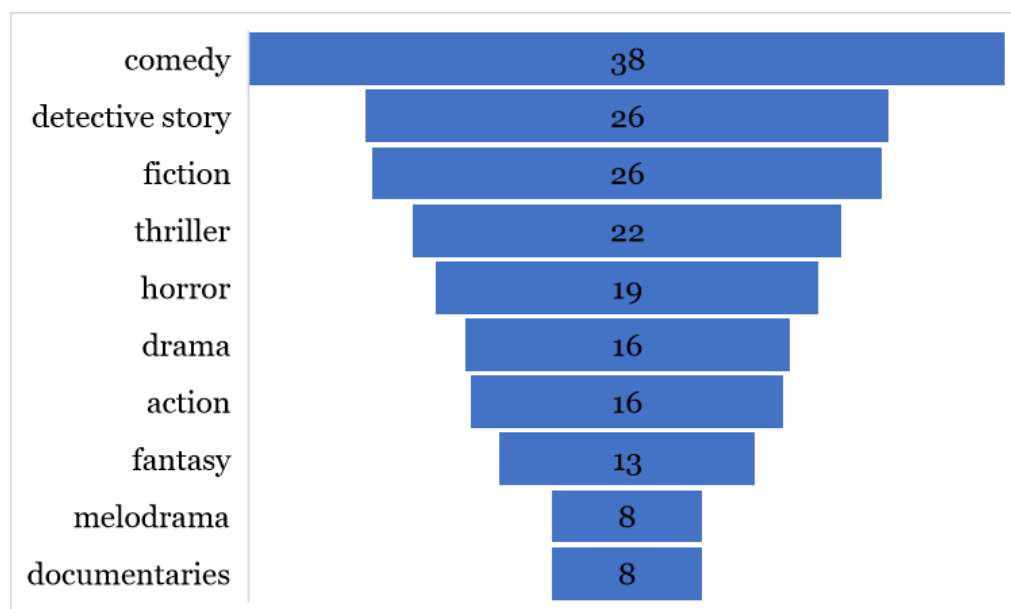


Fig.1. Film genre preferences (%)

The aim of the second question was to find out what the students know about anime. A half of those answered defines it as a special genre of animation or cartoons based on comics, myths or legends and touching upon various problems. 56 % of respondents closely connect it with Japan: *Japanese cartoons, created in Japan, an important part of Japanese culture exported to other countries*, etc. Only 9 % of the students do not know anything about this genre.

82 % of pollees got acquainted with anime while studying in primary or secondary school and only 12 % in adolescence. 40 % of those interviewed learned about it from friends and classmates, 20 % from TV, 11 % from the Internet and 4 % from social nets. 9 % and 36 % of respondents remember neither the age nor the source of their meeting with anime correspondingly.

Talking about frequency of watching anime 30 % of students have never done it, 30 % watch it rarely or from time to time, 6 % have watched it once or twice a life and only 25 % do it often. Interestingly, 9 % of respondents noted that they used to do it often but now they watch anime much less.

The most popular anime among students is *Attack on Titan*, one fifth mentioned it as their favourite. Other films are demonstrated in Figure 2. It is necessary to note that ten percent of respondents did not have any preferences, and 35 % did not give any answer at all.

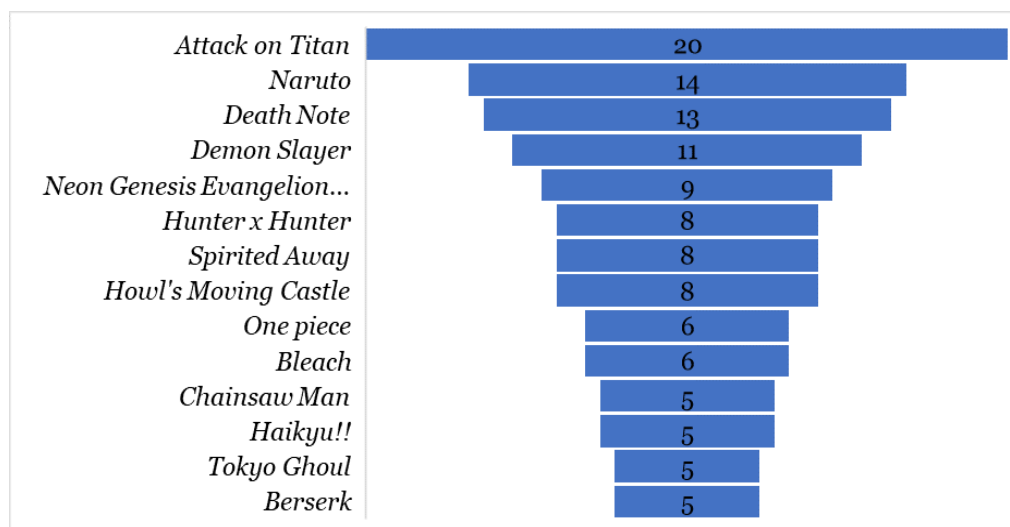


Fig. 2. Favourite anime (%)

The question about beloved protagonists turned out to be rather complicated. Almost half of the students missed it, and 28 % of those answered had no favourites. Six percent mentioned *Naruto* from the anime of the same name, five percent *Levi Ackerman* from *Attack on Titan*, and three percent *Howl* from *Howl's Moving Castle*. All the other characters were mentioned less than three times. The prevalent director is *Hayao Miyazaki* with 50 % of voices. Then comes *Makoto Shinkai* with 11 % and *Hideaki Anno* with 5 % of voices.

Answering about advantages and disadvantages of anime respondents stated more pluses than minuses. Among things attracting to anime students noted plot (40 %), drawing and graphics (34 %), genre diversity (10 %), and characters (8 %). At the same time 13 % of students found no attraction in these films. The most common disadvantage is that it is time-consuming (10 %), develops an addiction (6 %), and demonstrates exaggerated emotions (6 %). Some respondents noted formation of unrealistic standards of beauty, unrealistic characters, too much fan service, vulgarity and cruelty. Strange enough, 71 % of interviewees left this question unanswered, probably they do not see any weaknesses.

When watching anime students have different feelings. 30 % get positive ones such as joy, interest, pacification, burst of motivation, and inspiration. Only four percent have negative emotions, for instance hatred, irritation, and aversion. 20 % of respondents wrote that their feelings vary depending on genres of the film and in this way, they are the same as when consuming any other creative content. Seven percent of those answered experience no feelings at all, five feel sadness, two feel excitement, and two more described their feelings as conflicting or mixed.

According to the survey, anime does not influence the life and outlook of 43 % of respondents. Others noted that it makes them think about life and how it is worth living, about things they have not thought about before, to reexamine priority. These films teach students to stay true to their interests, broaden horizon and allow to look at the world from different angles. Anime also helps mould the character traits and viewpoint, increase self-esteem, cope with a bad mood, sadness, overcome difficulties, be open to new things, think about loved ones, believe in yourself and never give up.

In the next question the interviewees had to share things about the culture of other countries they had learned while watching anime. More than a half got knowledge about Japanese and Eastern cultures. Thus, 26 % mentioned traditional dishes and food, 15 % traditions, customs and habits of eastern people, 6 % school/ university education, 5 % national clothes, 4 % Japanese myths and Gods, 3 % religion, 3 % martial arts, 2 % architecture, etc. Some students noted stereotypes of authors about other countries: *Russians are handsome with platinum hair, often gloomy, but kind, sociable and charismatic; Russians are harsh, Americans are self-confident, the English are mean*. Other students wrote about tolerance to people of different nations, lack of

racism, cult of respect to seniors and to people in general. Among the answers there were also some primitive ones: *Japanese streets are very narrow with a lot of wires; Everyone dyes their hair pink in Japan; Asia has a variety of food; Japan is quite a traditional country; Japan is the birthplace of anime or There are cherry trees in Japan.* Unfortunately, 22 % of respondents did not acquire any new information.

A very important problem was to understand students' ideas about popularity reasons of this media genre. The analysis of the answers revealed that the majority of viewers are probably attracted by plot (27 %): *a dynamic plot; a well-thought-out plot; non-standard plots; plots that are not covered in ordinary films; easy presentation of complex topics; a variety of topics covered from casual to serious; you can recognize yourselves in the characters,* etc. Bright images take the second place (15 %): *appearance of the characters; an unusual and unique drawing; a unique memorable drawing style; an animation style that allows to draw cute characters,* etc. 11 % of respondents consider variety of genres to be the third reason of popularity: *everyone can find something interesting; a variety of genres for every taste; interesting for different age groups,* etc. The next motive mentioned is fashion or hype (10 %): *fan devotion; the popularity of Eastern culture affects the popularity of anime; young people promote it; it is just trendy and something that can set you apart; it is popularized in Asian countries; mass propaganda on the Internet; competent PR; distribution in social networks; teenagers want to join the culture of the countries where their idols live; young people find themselves in the protagonists; constant discussion and hype around it; huge fanbase,* etc. Six percent of pollees expressed difficulty in formulating the reasons: *I do not know, it is strange to me; It remains a mystery to me; I am shocked that it is so popular* and regrettably 16 % did not give any answer. Some students also wrote about not very positive moments that may appeal people to anime: *everyone has become whiners and likes suffering; craving for something bad; the ability to escape from responsibility to another reality.* Moreover, we came across the following characteristic of anime lovers: *those who watch anime are strange and unsociable people having problems with psychological health, they live in their own inner world.*

The last question in the survey presupposed giving beginners recommendation of an anime to get acquainted with this genre. 22 % of respondents suggested to start with *Naruto*, *Attack on Titan* took the second place with 14 %, *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Death Note* shared the third one with 12 %. A noteworthy fact is that 13 % of students did not indicate a particular name but just mentioned *Hayao Miyazaki films*, thus giving this prominent director his due. Other recommendations are shown in [Figure 3](#).

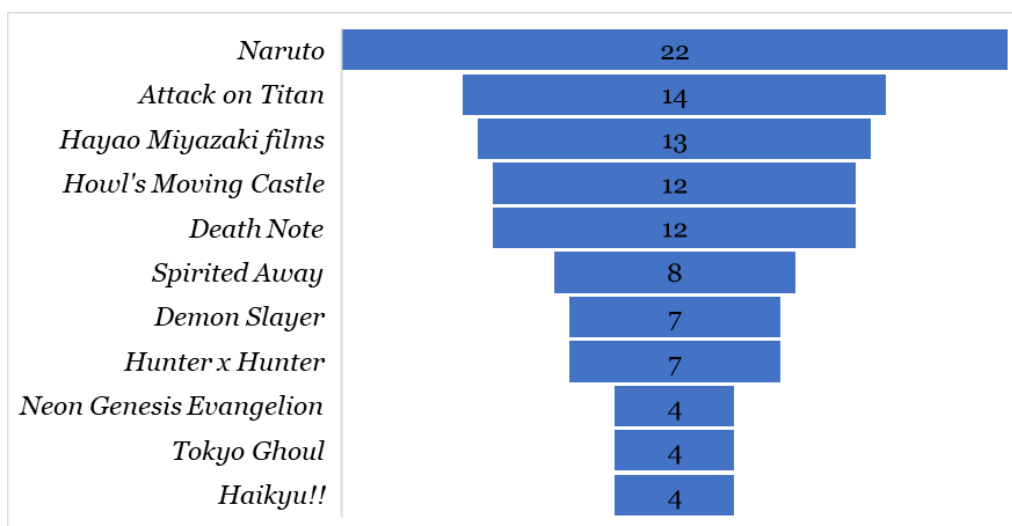


Fig.3. Anime recommended to watch first (%)

5. Conclusion

Taking together, our findings have provided evidence that anime is still popular among university students. In spite of the fact, that students usually lack free time while studying, more than half of them continue watching it often or from time to time. Most of them refer to anime movies as a means of entertainment, though some of respondents note that anime influences their

personality, it makes them think about life and issues they have not thought about before. Students add that anime movies support them in their aspiration to stay true to their interests and to look at the world from different angles.

The most valuable outcome of this activity is acquaintance with not only Eastern but also Western cultures. Young people get knowledge about history, traditions, national customs, rituals, and habits of different nations. Anime watching developing critical thinking allows viewers to reveal stereotypes portrayed in the movies and evaluate them objectively.

The plot, diversity of genres and bright images of characters contribute to popularity of anime. We cannot but mention the emotional impact of this genre on viewers. Although some respondents admit that anime movies may be time-consuming, depict exaggerated emotions, and lead to a kind of addiction, the majority experience positive emotions while watching. The films inspire people to be more open-minded, inquisitive, sensitive, tolerant, and confident.

Thus, in the course of time anime has transformed from simple cartoons and stories into a multi-genre, colourful modern commercial industry that is interesting for different ages. With the variety and accessibility of this modern content, anime does not lose its appeal to students, allowing them to enjoy new movies and broaden their horizon.

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