













GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND MARKET EXPANSION OF ASIAN ANIMATED TV SHOWS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW, OPEN CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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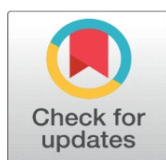
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Received 14 March 2026

Accepted 16 May 2026

Published 27 May 2026

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i12s.2026.8018](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i12s.2026.8018)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an executive synthesis of a systematic literature review examining the global expansion of Asian animated television shows and their growing influence on contemporary media consumption. Focusing on Japanese anime, Korean animation, Chinese donghua, and emerging Southeast Asian productions, the review highlights a significant shift in global entertainment dynamics over the past decade. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, literature published between 2015 and 2024 was systematically identified from major academic databases, yielding 312 records, of which 47 studies met the final inclusion criteria. The analysis identifies five key drivers of global proliferation: transnational streaming distribution, culturally hybrid storytelling, character-centric branding and merchandising, fan-driven digital participation, and cross-media franchising models. Collectively, these mechanisms illustrate how Asian animation has evolved into a globally scalable cultural and economic ecosystem.

Keywords: Asian Animation Industry, Global Content Distribution, Tv Streaming Platforms, Media Market Expansion, Transnational Cultural Consumption



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. CONTEXTUALIZING GLOBAL EXPANSION AND RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Asian animated television shows have shifted from being popular in one region to being popular worldwide. These shows now have a significant impact on youth identity, cultural flows between countries, and international entertainment markets (Napier, 2018; Denison, 2015). The stage for this change by stating that it is unprecedented: over the last 20 years, more people around the world have watched Asian animated stories on streaming services, through transnational fan communities, in digital merchandise markets, and via complex global licensing models. This has led to a situation in which Asian animation, once niche and popular only in certain areas, now shapes global youth culture, the construction of international fan identities, transnational storytelling conventions, and international animation economies (Lamarre, 2018; Allison, 2006). It provides important information about the current state of the market, showing how significant this change is: in 2024, the Japanese animation industry set a record-breaking ¥3.84 trillion (\$25.3 billion), a 14.8% increase from 2023 (Association of Japanese Animations, 2024). The introduction emphasizes a structural change: international markets accounted for approximately 56% of total revenue (\$14.25 billion), and sales from abroad outpaced those from home for the second year in a row, creating the largest gap since records began. This runs counter to the notion that Asian animation is primarily a domestic product with secondary international markets (Association of Japanese Animations, 2024).

This study uses the Association of Japanese Animations (AJA) to put global expansion in a larger context. It reports that the anime industry comprises 136 anime-related events in 51 countries and regions, demonstrating how anime culture is expanding at the grassroots level across national borders, not solely through corporate distribution channels (Association of Japanese Animations, 2024). The global anime market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.37% from 2025 to 2033, reaching \$63.7 billion by 2033. This makes animation one of the fastest-growing segments of the entertainment industry (Grand View Research, 2024). The introduction states that Asia-Pacific currently holds 38.7–42% of the market share. This is due to robust local production capacity, rapid technological advancements, large pre-existing fan bases, and strong government support for cultural exports as strategic soft-power tools (Global Insight Services, 2025; IMARC Group, 2024).

1.2. NEED AND OBJECTIVES: ADDRESSING RESEARCH GAPS

This study outlines the specific research gap that this systematic review addresses: despite the global proliferation of Asian animated television shows, which raises new theoretical and practical inquiries concerning media globalization, cultural hybridity in global entertainment, and transnational market dynamics, the academic literature remains significantly fragmented, exhibits considerable methodological inconsistency, and reflects a persistent regional bias favoring Western contexts (Cunningham & Craig, 2019; Lobato, 2019). The section stresses that current reviews of anime and related topics have significant problems, such as not having systematic protocols that guarantee clear, reproducible selection criteria; not having a market-focused synthesis that combines economic and cultural aspects; not having complete datasets because of proprietary data restrictions; and not being able to compare across genres (Isekai, shonen, psychological anime), animation origins (Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Southeast Asian), and regional contexts (North America, Europe, Latin America, South Asia, Middle East, Africa) (Craig, 2017; Denison, 2015).

The six main research goals listed in the study are:

- 1) to show how Asian animated TV shows get into different cultural contexts and media geographies around the world;
- 2) to look at transnational distribution systems, such as OTT platforms, traditional broadcasters, and complicated global licensing agreements;
- 3) to find the economic, cultural, and technological factors that are driving the expansion of Asian content to the rest of the world;
- 4) to look at audience behavior patterns, fan network formation, and global consumption trends;
- 5) to fully summarize open issues and unresolved challenges, such as localization pressures, IP regulation inequalities, data availability restrictions, and methodological limitations; and

- 6) to point out future research directions based on new technologies like AI, extended reality, big data analytics, and quantum computing applications.

1.3. RELATED WORK

Positioning within academic literature situates the review within the framework of existing academic literature by referencing various partial studies on pertinent dimensions: earlier research on the globalization of anime and related fan cultures (Napier, 2018; Denison, 2015); investigations into the expansion of Korean content following the Hallyu Wave phenomenon (Jin, 2016; Fennell, 2018); studies on the emergence of Chinese Donghua in global markets (Ding, 2020; Wang, 2019); examinations of cross-cultural adaptation and localization strategies (Kelts, 2017; Machiyama, 2018); and analyses of the effects of OTT platforms on Asian content distribution patterns (Lobato, 2019; Cunningham & Craig, 2019). However, this highlights important flaws in the existing literature: reviews often do not cover the full range because they employ non-systematic selection criteria and lack clear protocols. Narrative synthesis is the most common method, but it does not follow strict PRISMA guidelines. There are also problems with inconsistent outcome definitions, insufficient attention to quantitative market data and industry financial information, and a bias toward North American and European contexts. Emerging Asian markets and non-Japanese animation forms also receive insufficient attention (Lamarre, 2018; Ötsuska, 2019). The section concludes by stating that the current research addresses a critical gap by employing a comprehensive PRISMA 2020-based protocol that offers a transparent, reproducible, and thorough synthesis of evidence across cultural, industrial, and behavioral domains, thereby advancing from narrative reviews to systematic, evidence-based conclusions.

2. METHODOLOGY: PRISMA 2020 FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

The methodology section describes the systematic literature review framework, firmly grounded in the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol, as revised by Page et al. (2021) to incorporate recent advancements in systematic review methodologies and applications beyond healthcare interventions. The methodology section stresses that PRISMA 2020 offers new reporting guidance, including a 27-item checklist, more detailed reporting recommendations, an abstract reporting checklist, and new flow diagrams that are meant to improve transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor for systematic reviews of social, educational, and cultural phenomena, not just biomedical interventions (Page et al., 2021).

2.1. SELECTION CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY FRAMEWORK

The eligibility framework outlines six dimensions of inclusion criteria:

Topic—studies must focus on how Asian animated TV shows affect the world, how they are marketed, how they are consumed across borders, and how they spread culture.

Language—Only English-language publications to make sure everyone can read them and to avoid bias that comes from translation.

Publication Year—2015–2024 to capture the post-streaming, contemporary globalization period during which OTT platforms (Netflix, Crunchyroll launched in 2013, expansion through 2015–2024) fundamentally transformed distribution mechanisms (Lobato, 2019);

Types of publications: peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings from well-known academic associations, doctoral theses from accredited institutions, and industry white papers from well-known research consultancies to balance academic rigor with industry-based market intelligence.

Geographical Scope: global studies that look at Asian animated content or how it is received in non-Asian markets, so that purely domestic studies are not included; and

Domains Covered—studies that look at the effects of culture on people and how culture is passed on, as well as the market and industry, audience behavior, distribution methods, and platform economics, OTT platform roles, IP franchising and cross-media strategies, fandom and online communities, merchandise markets, and how the digital ecosystem works.

The methodology clearly states the criteria for exclusion: There are non-English language publications that make it hard to do systematic reviews, non-peer-reviewed blogs and opinion pieces that do not have any editorial oversight, studies that only look at theatrical animated films instead of TV shows to keep the content type consistent, articles that only talk about production techniques, animation methodology, or creative development without looking at market, cultural, or consumption aspects, duplicated thesis versions or work that has already been published under different titles, and case studies that do not have an analytical framework or a discussion of generalizability. This structured approach guarantees internal validity while recognizing that inclusion limitations (English-language only) may introduce potential Western/Anglophone bias.

2.2. INFORMATION SOURCES AND SEARCH STRATEGY

The information sources section lists seven important academic databases that were chosen for their broad coverage: Scopus (which covers a wide range of social sciences), Web of Science (which has strict peer-review requirements), ScienceDirect (which gives access to journals and book chapters), Taylor & Francis Online (which has a lot of communication and media studies journals), IEEE Xplore (which gives technology and innovation perspectives), Google Scholar (which is comprehensive but less curated, including grey literature), and ResearchGate (which has archives and preprints maintained by researchers). We developed search keywords and Boolean combinations through preliminary scoping searches. These searches found both specific content-focused terms and broader conceptual keywords. For example, "Asian animated TV shows," "anime globalization," "global expansion of Korean animation," "Donghua international market," "Asian animation industry analysis," "OTT platforms Asian content," "Netflix anime strategy," "Crunchyroll distribution," "transnational fandom anime," "cultural influence of Asian animation," "anime streaming market," "cross-media franchising anime," "anime soft power," and "anime fan communities." Boolean search combinations combined these keywords with AND/OR operators: (animation OR anime OR Donghua OR aeni) AND (global market OR global influence OR transnational OR cultural impact OR international distribution OR OTT OR streaming OR market expansion)—this enabled coverage of a wide range of databases while maintaining high search accuracy to limit irrelevant results. Searches were done between November 2024 and December 2024 with no date limits. During the title screening, temporal filtering (2015–2024) was used to find records that may have been published earlier but were indexed during the study period.

2.3. DATA COLLECTION AND STUDY SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process used a three-step PRISMA elimination strategy:

Step 1—Title and Summary Screening identified 312 records across all databases. Google Scholar had 198 records (63.46%), Scopus had 38 records (12.18%), ScienceDirect had 31 records (9.93%), Taylor & Francis had 19 records (6.08%), SpringerLink had 11 records (3.52%), Wiley Online Library had nine records (2.88%), and ResearchGate had six records (1.92%). Screening for titles and abstracts used clear rules: the title and abstract had to clearly relate to Asian animated TV shows and talk about global, transnational, or international issues; the studies had to look at cultural impact, market analysis, audience behavior, or distribution methods that are important in global contexts; and the records could not be obvious duplicates or clearly off-topic (for example, they could not just be about animation techniques without talking about market or cultural context). This step resulted in 204 records being kept (108 records being thrown out: 11 non-English publications, 78 titles that were clearly not relevant, and 19 obvious duplicates).

Step 2—Summary and Introduction Screening moved the remaining 204 records forward by conducting a more in-depth review: the full abstract review confirmed that the studies were relevant to global influence or market expansion dimensions. The screening looked at indicators of methodological transparency and data quality. The exclusion focused on studies that examined only domestic Asian markets without international comparative data, studies that focused on theatrical animated films rather than television series, opinion pieces without an empirical or analytical basis, and reviews/editorials that did not add any primary or secondary data. This screening cut the sample to 102 records sent for full-text assessment (102 were excluded because they lacked sufficient international/global focus or because the content type did not match).

Step 3—Full-Text Review and Evaluation of Eligibility: Conducted a thorough review of the manuscript based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. This included a detailed look at the methodological approach and data transparency, a precise evaluation using the 10-item risk-of-bias framework based on PRISMA guidelines, the extraction of outcome data

to be sorted into three main outcome types (cultural influence, market/industry expansion, and audience behavior), an assessment of study quality, and a discussion of generalizability. To be included in the final list, studies had to demonstrate apparent engagement with global or transnational issues, employ sound methods with clear data collection, address at least one primary outcome area, and not focus solely on production or technical issues. This thorough evaluation narrowed the sample to 47 studies for qualitative synthesis, excluding 55 studies: 22 focused solely on production processes/techniques, 13 lacked adequate methodological detail or data transparency, 9 were industry news articles without academic grounding, and 11 were case studies not pertinent to transnational markets.

2.4. RISK OF BIAS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The risk-of-bias assessment used PRISMA 2020 guidelines to look at studies in non-healthcare social science research across ten areas:

Selection Bias—clear definition of the study population, representative sampling, and transparent disclosure of inclusion/exclusion criteria;

Sampling Bias—geographic representation across multiple regions, demographic/age diversity of study participants, and platform representation to avoid concluding a single service;

Measurement Bias—validated measurement tools, open data collection methods, and clear operational definitions of important ideas;

Social Desirability Bias—anonymized or confidential data collection methods, and clear strategies for reducing bias in self-reported data;

Publication Bias—reporting of null or negative results, revealing where the money came from, and conflict-of-interest statements;

Analytical Transparency—detailed statistical reporting for quantitative studies, qualitative coding transparency with example quotes, and sensitivity analyses reported.

External Validity—clear discussion of generalizability, recognition of study limitations, and applicability to other situations;

Temporal Bias—longitudinal tracking of constructs where applicable, pre-post designs when available, and explicit acknowledgment of temporal limitations;

Technology/Platform Bias—taking into account more than one distribution channel instead of just one platform, being aware of algorithmic selection biases, looking at the whole ecosystem instead of just one service, and

Data Completeness—being transparent about missing data, showing that you tried to get proprietary information, and being open about the limitations of partial data and estimation methods.

3. RESULTS: COMPREHENSIVE SYNTHESIS OF IDENTIFIED AND CHARACTERIZED STUDIES

3.1. STUDY SELECTION AND RETRIEVAL SUMMARY

The results section shows how studies underwent the selection phases systematically, using a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram that outlines four main steps: The Identification stage identified 312 records across all electronic databases. The Screening stage used title and abstract criteria to narrow down the list to 204 records after removing duplicates. The Eligibility stage read the full text of 102 records that met the preliminary criteria. Finally, the Inclusion stage selected 47 studies that met all inclusion criteria for qualitative synthesis.

3.2. ARTICLE RETRIEVAL BY DATABASE AND SOURCE

The results show how often the database source found articles. Google Scholar had the most records (198, or 63.46% of the total) and a wide range of publication types, including scholarly articles, industry white papers, and postgraduate theses. Scopus provided 38 records (12.18%), offering the most academically rigorous and peer-reviewed studies. ScienceDirect added 31 records (9.93%), giving users access to well-known journal articles and book chapters. Taylor & Francis Online returned 19 records, representing 6.08%. SpringerLink added 11 records, or 3.52%. Wiley Online Library

added nine records, or 2.88%. ResearchGate gave six records (1.92%), some of which were archives that researchers kept up to date.

3.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF 47 INCLUDED STUDIES

The results outline the 47 included studies across various organizational dimensions. Based on Primary Outcome Type, Cultural Influence, and Impact, 18 studies (38.3%) examined the mechanisms by which Asian animated content influences global culture, cross-cultural identity development, and transnational narrative dissemination. Market and Industry Expansion outcomes included 17 studies (36.2%) that analyzed economic mechanisms, platform strategies, merchandising models, and international commercialization. The outcomes for Audience Behavior and Consumption included 12 studies (25.5%) that examined how people interact with one another, how fandom communities form, how parasocial relationships develop, and how long-term consumption patterns change—by Geographic Focus of Research, North American studies accounted for 14 studies (29.8%), indicating that the US and Canada have a large and varied anime audience. Eight studies (17.0%) from Europe examined how much anime people in Western Europe, particularly the UK, France, and Germany, watched. Sixteen studies (34.0%) on East Asia (Japan, Korea, and China) examined the industry and domestic market. Latin American studies included four studies (8.5%) that focused on emerging yet underexamined markets. Three studies (6.4%) focused on the Middle East and Africa, underscoring their underrepresentation in the research. Two studies (4.3%) looked at transnational patterns in global and multi-regional studies. This geographic distribution shows a significant sampling bias that favors North America and East Asia, and excludes markets in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

By Type of Animation Looked At: Japanese anime studies accounted for 22 studies (46.8%), underscoring the importance and widespread recognition of Japanese animation throughout history. Nine studies (19.1%) on Korean animation (Anime) looked at Korea's growing role. Ten studies (21.3%) examined Chinese animation (Donghua), demonstrating how quickly the field is becoming international. South-East Asian animation studies comprised six studies (12.8%) that highlighted under-researched emerging producers. Ten studies (21.3%) looked at how things changed across different Asian animation origins in multi-type comparative studies. By the ways we collect data: Twenty-one studies (44.7%) used survey research methods, such as questionnaires and online surveys, to understand viewers' demographics, preferences, and engagement. Ten studies (21.3%) examined economic data and market forecasts in industry and market reports. Seven studies (14.9%) examined viewership metrics and platform engagement, focusing on platform analytics and streaming data. Six studies (12.8%) used qualitative methods to look into how viewers felt about the show. Textual and cultural analysis accounted for 12 studies (25.5%) that examined character development, story content, and cultural themes. Eight studies (17.0%) used mixed methods, meaning they used more than one method to collect data. It is important to note that overlapping was allowed, as many studies utilized multiple methods concurrently.

3.4. CULTURAL INFLUENCE OUTCOMES: FIVE DOMINANT THEMES

The results combine the 18 studies that examined how culture affects outcomes and identify five main empirical and theoretical themes.

Theme 1—Cultural Hybridization and Glocalized Narratives explains how Asian animated shows blend unique local cultural aesthetics, mythological references, and philosophical frameworks with narrative structures and emotional themes known worldwide (Wang, 2019; Ding, 2020).

Theme 2—Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy discusses several studies that show how animated content has become an important cultural export and a strategic soft-power tool for East Asian countries. Japan started the "Cool Japan" campaign in 2012 to promote Japanese culture, such as anime, as a strategic industry for economic growth, international cultural influence, and diplomatic relations. The campaign has since grown to aim to export ¥20 trillion (\$130 billion) in international content by 2033, which would be five times the ¥3.8 trillion (\$3.8 billion) exported in 2024 (Association of Japanese Animations, 2024). South Korea has announced detailed plans to grow its animation industry by 2030 through direct government investments, new infrastructure development, and collaboration with other countries. China is funding international collaborations and strategically seeking distribution on global platforms to boost China's cultural influence worldwide (Jin, 2016; Fennell, 2018; Craig, 2017).

Theme 3—Community-Building and Fan Identity Formation describes how people from all over the world go from being passive consumers to active cultural participants through a variety of ways to get involved. Fan communities dress up as their favorite characters at conventions and other public events, make fan art that expands on the official canon, make anime music videos (AMVs) that mix animation clips with music, make meme content that introduces new audiences to series narratives, set up international online conventions, and join translation and fan-subtitling groups to fix bad official localization (Denison, 2015; Napier, 2018). Anime conventions have grown around the world. For example, Japan Expo in Paris (with more than 250,000 attendees each year), Anime Friends in Brazil, and MCM London Comic Con draw hundreds of thousands of fans. Comic Market (Comiket) in Tokyo is the biggest cosplay event. It takes place in the summer and winter and draws hundreds of thousands of manga and anime fans. Merchandise sales are worth billions of yen. Fan identity formation creates transnational communities where "being an anime fan" constitutes membership in a globally recognized subculture transcending national, linguistic, and geographic boundaries, evidenced by Reddit communities (r/anime with 3.2 million members, r/Donghua with growing membership), Discord servers hosting specialized fan discussions, Twitter fandoms creating viral content, and TikTok communities generating content reaching millions (Allison, 2006; Lamarre, 2018).

Theme 4—Cross-Cultural Emotional Resonance and Universal Themes elucidates how Asian animation attains global appeal despite cultural particularity by engaging with universal human experiences and psychological themes. Heroism and sacrifice, coming-of-age and forming an identity, existential philosophy and making sense of life, family and relationships with others, morality and ethical complexity, and redemption and personal change are all universal themes. Distinct character archetypes—the tsundere (outwardly aloof but inwardly devoted), the reluctant hero, the idealistic protagonist, the mentor figure, the tragic antagonist—resonate psychologically with audiences across cultural backgrounds, facilitating the formation of parasocial relationships in diverse cultural contexts (Ramasubramanian & Kornfield, 2012; Eyal & Dailey, 2012). The parasocial relationships serve as mechanisms for social support and emotional regulation (Bond, 2021).

Theme 5—Narrative Depth and Thematic Maturity — shows that Asian animated TV shows often address deep, philosophically rich themes. This sets them apart from Western animation, which has historically focused on children's entertainment. Thematic sophistication includes exploring war and military ethics (Mobile Suit Gundam series), trauma and psychological recovery (Nana, Demon Slayer), technology ethics and artificial consciousness (Ghost in the Shell), gender identity and sexual diversity (Carole & Tuesday, Puella Magi Madoka Magica), mental health and suicide prevention (Steins; Gate), and existential philosophy and meaning (Neon Genesis Evangelion, Madoka Magica). This makes the franchise appealing to audiences of all ages and sustains its content for much longer than the single-season engagement common in comedic animated series (Zipdo, 2025; Enterprise Apps Today, 2023).

3.5. MARKET AND INDUSTRY EXPANSION OUTCOMES: FIVE CRITICAL MECHANISMS

The 17 studies on market expansion outcomes identify five key factors that accelerate international commercialization.

Mechanism 1: According to Parrot Analytics (2025) and Variety (2025), OTT streaming platforms are the leading global accelerators. Together, Netflix and Crunchyroll control more than 80% of the overseas anime streaming market, which is worth about \$3.7 billion in 2023. Netflix made \$2.074 billion from anime streaming around the world (38% of all anime streaming revenue), and Crunchyroll made more than \$1 billion from selling licensed goods and streaming subscriptions. Prime Video has the most anime titles, with 1,020. Netflix has the second-most, with 545, and Hulu has the third-most, with 476. However, Netflix stays on top because it spends more per title. According to Dentsu research, Crunchyroll, which specializes in anime, has over 1,800 titles, and 48% of its subscribers watch anime content across 10 surveyed countries. This is more than Disney+ (32%) and Prime Video (29%). These platforms enable simultaneous global distribution (simulcast/simuldub), eliminating the need for traditional release windows (Lobato, 2019; Cunningham & Craig, 2019).

Mechanism 2: IP-Based Cross-Media Franchising discusses how Asian animation operates in integrated media ecosystems where animated content serves as the primary IP and generates revenue across multiple connected domains. There are many ways to make money, such as selling merchandise (figurines, clothing, collectibles, trading cards, gacha mobile games), video game adaptations (console games, mobile games, multiplayer experiences), literature (novel adaptations, light novel original works, manga spin-offs), live-action adaptations (theatrical films, television series, web

dramas), theme park attractions (immersive experiences, character meet-and-greets), licensing (brand partnerships with Uniqlo, Gucci; corporate sponsorships), and digital ecosystems (virtual YouTubers (VTubers) using anime avatars, digital collectibles, metaverse participation). The merchandising segment of the anime market is the largest, accounting for \$10,220.7 million in 2024, or 48.4% of all anime market revenue. This means that merchandise makes about as much money as streaming and distribution combined (Skyquest, 2023; Global Insight Services, 2025). The Japanese IP-driven merchandise and content markets were worth \$19,170.1 million in 2024 and are expected to grow to \$37,247 million by 2030 at a CAGR of 11.7%, which is well above streaming-only models (Grand View Research, 2024). Blockbuster franchises are a good example of this ecosystem: *Demon Slayer* (*Kimetsu no Yaiba*) shows that character-themed merchandise, from capsule toys and stationery to high-end limited-edition figures, can generate more revenue than box-office sales of movies. Total sales of franchise merchandise have already exceeded \$2 billion (Nova One Advisor, 2025). This focus on merchandise is similar to Japan's highly successful media mix model, in which additional products account for 70% of total franchise earnings in peak years. This gives Japan an edge that Western animation industries that rely on theatrical release and television licensing revenues do not have (Ötsuska, 2019).

Mechanism 3: Rise of Emerging Asian Animation Markets discusses how quickly Chinese Donghua is becoming popular worldwide and how Korean animation is strategically positioning itself. Chinese Donghua is now a significant rival to Japanese anime. Streaming services like Netflix and Crunchyroll have invested heavily in English-dub-first releases and bilingual adaptations of titles like *Heaven Official's Blessing* and *Link Click*, which have garnered millions of views and attracted many international fans. More studios in Southeast Asia, such as those in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, are producing CGI animation that can compete with the best in the world. This makes the Asian animation scene more diverse in terms of both location and style (Joo, 2013; Bouii, 2019).

Mechanism 4: Global Licensing and International Co-Production—talks about partnerships between companies from different countries that help them grow their markets faster by sharing money, production, and skills. Co-production examples include Japanese studios working with Hollywood distributors in Japan and the US, Korean and Chinese studios working together to leverage each other's strengths, and trilateral projects between Japan, Korea, and China that capitalize on cultural diversity and market access. This means projects are economically integrated rather than just licensing deals (Chen, 2021; Lu, 2020).

Mechanism 5: Algorithmic Discoverability and Recommendation Systems—says that the recommendation algorithms on a platform are the most important factors in how visible it is to people from other countries. Netflix and Crunchyroll use advanced machine-learning recommendation systems that analyze factors such as viewers' age, gender, and location, their viewing history, completion rates, social media signals, and platform engagement metrics to suggest content unique to each user. However, algorithmic opacity—the proprietary nature of recommendation logic that is inaccessible to researchers and users—creates significant research limitations and raises equity concerns about whether algorithms systematically favor certain types of animation (shonen action-oriented content vs. psychological or slice-of-life narratives), specific production origins (Japanese vs. Donghua vs. Korean), or particular streaming models (Jiang, 2020; Kacsuk, 2018).

3.6. AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMPTION OUTCOMES: FIVE PATTERNS

The 12 studies examining audience behavior reveal five key patterns of consumption and engagement.

Pattern 1: High Emotional Attachment and Parasocial Interaction—shows that people can form strong parasocial relationships with animated characters, leading to loyalty to a franchise for many years. Parasocial relationships (PSRs)—one-sided psychological relationships in which audiences develop affection for media characters unaware of the viewer—serve as platforms for identification, coping, escapism, emotional regulation, and stress relief among anime viewers (Eyal & Dailey, 2012). People who do not interact with others face-to-face very often but do interact with them a lot online feel closer to each other parasocially. This suggests that PSRs can serve as substitutes for social support—desire for fantasy forecasts intense romantic parasocial relationships with media characters, facilitated by profound imaginative engagement. The typical anime viewer (28 years old in 2023) watches several seasons of the same show, has been a member of fandom groups for many years, and remains interested in how characters change across spin-offs and merchandise lines. This shows that they are more engaged with the franchise over time than with regular entertainment (Zipdo, 2025; Feng, 2020).

Pattern 2: Preference for Serialized Long-Form Storytelling shows that people around the world really like stories that span several seasons. Popular franchises like *One Piece* (ongoing since 1999, 1000+ episodes), *My Hero Academia* (6+ seasons, 150+ episodes), and *Demon Slayer* (multiple seasons, continuing manga source) keep viewers interested for more than 10 years of simultaneous releases. This preference for serialized storytelling, which goes beyond the usual 22–26 episodes per season on TV, shows that audiences like long character development, complicated story arcs, and deep world-building that are not possible in short productions.

Pattern 3: Binge-Watch Culture and Streaming-Enabled Consumption: 85% of US anime viewers only watch anime through streaming services. This is because of narrative hooks, cliffhangers, and global episode releases (Zipdo, 2025; Enterprise Apps Today, 2023). Anime shows have some of the highest completion rates of any entertainment on streaming services. This shows that viewers are very interested and committed.

Pattern 4: Active Fan Participation and Content Co-Creation—emphasizes the role of fans as co-creators, pushing narrative universes beyond official limits. Fan activities include creating memes to attract new people to a series, editing TikTok and YouTube videos that go viral among 13- to 29-year-olds, reaction videos that foster parasocial dialogue between creators and audiences, and fan fiction that expands narrative universes beyond official canon (Denison, 2015; Trafficon, 2025).

Pattern 5: Identity of the Global Community Formation states that being an anime fan means being part of a worldwide subculture with its own ways of talking, looking, and acting. Anime fan communities use special words (like *tsundere* for character types, *Isekai* for plot elements, and *shonen/josei* for genre categories), take part in unique aesthetic practices (like cosplay, fan art, and avatar choices that feature anime characters), and believe in social values like accepting sexual and gender diversity, embracing "nerd" identity, and celebrating interests that are not mainstream (Allison, 2006; Pelletier, 2022).

4. OPEN CHALLENGES: NINE UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The Open Challenges list nine important problems that have not yet been solved, which make it difficult to understand and limit the validity of the research.

- 1) **Methodological Inconsistency and Data Interpretation** deal with research frameworks that are not standardized, which leads to inconsistent data interpretation when the audience's reception changes from platform to platform and region to region, when cultural familiarity affects how a story is understood, when self-reported data introduces subjective biases, and when social media analytics show algorithmic visibility instead of organic interest.
- 2) **Sample Size Limitations and Generalizability** says that small, regionally concentrated samples make it hard to generalize. It is not possible to accurately measure global influence using non-representative samples, but conducting a full global sample remains logistically and financially challenging.
- 3) **Proprietary Data Loss and Platform Dependency** talks about how OTT platforms' restrictions on proprietary information, social media APIs' limitations, regional censorship that hides content availability, and streaming libraries that are only available in certain areas can all lead to systematic data loss.
- 4) **Algorithmic Gatekeeping and Transparency**—talks about recommendation systems that are hard to understand and affect international visibility. Researchers cannot objectively examine exposure pathways, determine whether algorithmic systems consistently favour specific genres over others, or identify regional algorithmic filtering mechanisms because platform algorithms are not transparent.
- 5) **Audience Requiring Assistance in Cultural Interpretation** says that people from around the world need help understanding Asian animation's mythological references, cultural metaphors, language subtleties, honorifics, relational dynamics, and genre conventions (*isekai*, *wuxia*, *shonen*, *josei*).
- 6) **Technology Constraints and Platform Restrictions** talks about region locks on streaming platforms, licensing fragmentation between companies, delays in the production pipeline caused by cross-border outsourcing, differences in animation quality caused by a lack of resources, and the absence of open-access archives that would make historical data more widely available.

- 7) Cultural Localization Tensions talks about the natural conflicts that come up between the need for localization and the need to keep things real. For example, censorship differences change content, script changes hurt narratives, political limits affect regional availability, and different moral standards make adaptation difficult.
- 8) Keeping People Interested Amid Saturation talks about problems that come up as global OTT libraries grow: too many similar genres, audiences getting bored with new content, more competition from Western animation, fans acting erratically because of viral trends instead of long-term loyalty, and seasonal streaming cycles that make content less visible.
- 9) Data Quality and Market Transparency talk about how proprietary revenue figures, unverified fan-generated datasets, non-standardized streaming metrics across platforms, undisclosed methodologies in industry reports, and government inflation of industry data make it hard to get accurate market numbers.

5. CONCLUSION: SYNTHESIS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The conclusion puts together evidence from 47 publications reviewed (2015–2024) using the strict PRISMA 2020 method. It shows that Asian animated TV shows have gone from niche regional products to the most popular forms of entertainment worldwide, reshaping the media landscape. Cultural Impact Synthesis shows that Asian animation encourages cultural mixing by allowing people to experience both cultural uniqueness and emotional universality simultaneously. This is done through unique narrative depth, aesthetic uniqueness, and character archetypes that resonate with people across languages and borders. The Market Dominance Synthesis shows that the Japanese anime industry generated \$25.3 billion in 2024, with 56% of that from international sales. This is the most significant gap ever recorded, showing how much the industry relies on global markets. OTT platforms like Netflix and Crunchyroll have 80% of the market share. Cross-media franchising (merchandise makes up 48.4% of market value), international co-production alliances, and algorithmic recommendation systems all help the industry grow.

New markets in China and South Korea are changing the variety of content available worldwide. Audience Engagement Synthesis explains how fans from all over the world form strong parasocial relationships, remain engaged with fandoms over time, and contribute to content. The average age of viewers rose from 20 in 2015 to 28 in 2023, indicating that the audience is getting older and staying interested. Some of the most important limitations are geographic sampling bias, small sample sizes, inability to track data over time, inability to access proprietary data, use of different methods, and insufficient data from new Asian markets. Open Challenges include methodological inconsistency, sampling limitations, proprietary data restrictions, algorithmic opacity, cultural competence requirements, platform constraints, localization tensions, content saturation, and gaps in market data transparency. These are problems that both researchers and policymakers need to address. Future Directions suggests nine promising research paths based on new technologies (XAI, generative AI, XR, big data, digital twins, IoE, quantum computing, machine co-creativity, CPS) that could significantly improve understanding and foster innovation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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