

# Impact Of Sports Anime On Real Sporting Behaviour: An Indian Perspective

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## Abstract:

Anime is commonly referred to as Japanese animation or animation produced in Japan. There are various genres through which anime caters to its audience, and one of them is sports. Hence, there are multiple motivations for audiences to seek out this genre. The purpose of this research paper was to study these motivations in the Indian anime community to watch sport-related anime shows and to observe how well the anime shows adopt the actual sporting behaviours from the audience's point of view. A Google survey form containing a self-constructed questionnaire was circulated amongst the online community in which 150 participants were shortlisted through a purposive sampling technique where their responses were recorded to understand the Indian perspective on sports anime. About 67% of the participants responded that they feel sports anime has educated them about the respective sports and has adopted actual sporting behaviour in their shows. It was observed that the anime as a medium has been able to educate the technicalities of the sport to its audience successfully, and it has proved to be a valuable addition to the watchers' life. Also, the impact of Japanese culture on the sports genre of anime is visible. It's evident that sports anime has showcased to its audience real-life scenarios of sports. The Indian audience appreciates the platform well, and there can be an increase in demand for more sport-related anime shows.

**Keywords:** Sports anime, Influence, Behavior, Motivations, Impact

## Introduction

There are many mediums and sources from where humankind seeks to suffice its thrust for entertainment. Whether these mediums are acceptable to certain social norms depends on the various playing factors that are only particular to those ecosystems. One such category often labelled as an offbeat medium by many countries but is an entertainment universe of its own is "anime" <sup>(1)</sup>.

Anime is commonly referred to as Japanese animation or animation produced in Japan. However, the Japanese themselves have a different definition of this, as they consider every animation work as anime, irrespective of the work's province <sup>(2)</sup>. It is generally regarded as separate from its western counterpart due to the various unique art styles and themes pondering upon violence, sadness, and all whole genres appealing to different fan groups. Furthermore, the mature take on multiple genres and to-the-face presentation has always separated anime from being labelled as 'cartoon' <sup>(3)</sup>. The proven physical and mental growth in Japanese youth via anime as the influencing backdrop shows why the anime industry garnered over US\$24.18 billion in 2019 <sup>(4)</sup>.

But does this mean that anime is only exclusive to Japan? A look into anime history will clearly show that it always had a global reach <sup>(5)</sup>. Anime, a Japanese brand, was always at the forefront of diplomacy disguised as pop culture <sup>(6)</sup> and continuously endorsed Japan's culture thoughtfully. To identify people of different cultures, there were various cultural politics associated with Japanese animation and its internationalization. There are numerous counts showcasing efforts made to export this Japanese product for global consumption, sport being one of the genres right from the telecast of *Speed Racer* (1967).

The success of this platform, of course, goes to the numerous fans spread worldwide. The fans outside Japan refer to themselves as *otakus*, giving them an identity of their own as unique as the platform they follow. Even though the real meaning of the word 'otaku' is an insult in Japan (literal meaning 'one with no social life'), the western audience proudly calls themselves as so <sup>(7)</sup>. There have been literature works that have studied these fan behaviours, as it provides a brilliant side to how humans fulfil their social acceptance needs. Furthermore, it offers excellent fieldwork for psychologists to decipher the different underlying motives of fans, which make them watch and follow these anime shows and mangas. Some results indicate similarities and differences between males and females needs of acceptance and how the fandom caters to them <sup>(8)</sup>.

This research paper saw an exciting aspect of fan behaviours and how stereotypes in anime are. The research paper considered the different demographics with which the other fans, like furry fans and fantasy sports fans, contribute to the medium <sup>(9)</sup>. The entertainment platforms over the years have shaped the belief and behaviour of the audiences. This point, too, has provided the base for curious researchers to base their studies. There have been clear cases of individuals getting influenced not only to watch shows but also to collect the associated materials like books, merchandise, etc. and have actively sought such <sup>(10)</sup>. Interestingly many of these individuals were reluctant readers in the beginning. This is only one of the many ways anime has influenced behavioural change. In a broader sense, anime has also been shown to incorporate the team identification phenomena and enduring friendship <sup>(11)</sup>. Artwork showcasing, continuous engagement costuming, and many other activities are some of the few outcomes resulting from this medium. But do these influences have any connection to sport? Sport is a phenomenon invented by humans that always had a compelling narrative fitting in any medium <sup>(12)</sup>. There are very many common grounds shared by anime and sports in their respective individual forms. Sports viewership and sports fan motivation have no competition when it comes to entertainment. Sharing their interests and experiencing acceptance in positive regard are also virtues of anime <sup>(13)</sup>. Not just this, the psychology of sports fans has also been a point of attraction for many researchers out there <sup>(14)</sup>. The general notion raised by these researches is that skills can be cultivated with fandom and specifically in regards to sports <sup>(15)</sup>. All these key factors make sport an automatic category of anime <sup>(16)</sup>.

Even though not many parallels and scholarly works are found related to sports anime, it indeed has created a buzz. It has maintained its status for influencing and motivating many personalities. Sports anime also has proved to be an inspiration for many international athletes. Star footballers like Messi and Fernando Torres have credited the show *Captain Tsubasa* (1983) as an early motivator to take up the sport <sup>(17, 18)</sup>. The influence of sports anime in France is also well documented <sup>(19)</sup>. The need to study such impacts in various other settings just gets highlighted after such examples come forward.

When we talk about anime from an Indian point of view, it seems that it is not a good fit from an outsider's viewpoint, but it is far from being accurate or a distant reality. A recent example is the anime movie *Weathering with you* (2019), the first anime release in theatres for an Indian audience <sup>(20)</sup>, garnering over ₹6.6 million in its limited release. This was only possible due to the love for the anime from the community in India. This development does not take away the anime engagement happening in India from the past many years. Along with many genres in anime, sports too have been welcomed in India with open arms. The global platform of anime has been well accepted in India, and its relationship with sports benefits both mediums.

Many studies have tried to dissect various elements of anime in terms of its media effects <sup>(21)</sup>. How can it be given amiss when it provides so many scholarly and artistic perspectives? <sup>(22)</sup> The ever-expanding community of 'nerds' literally consumes this entertainment source daily <sup>(23)</sup>. It has proved to be a goldmine of content sought by millions of audiences with different motivations from various socio-economic backgrounds. Many such factors have unfortunately not been researched and are needed to be looked into.

There are hardly any studies that directly have connections with the sports genre in anime and its influence on sport participation. The limited available studies have focused on anime influence as a whole concept rather than diving into specific genres <sup>(24)</sup>. This research paper has pondered into this space by providing a study of the sports genre in anime regarding the Indian anime community. What influences it brings out and the medium's ability to adopt real-life experiences into its shows have formed the base of the study. Even though the sport is the primary genre that the research paper is focused on, additional measures like asking questions about which anime show they follow were included by the authors to carry out the study to provide an overview of other genres for future researchers.

The study's objective was to determine the motivation of the Indian anime community to watch sport-related anime shows and to find out if the anime shows can adopt actual sporting behaviours and sports technicalities. The research recorded and analyzed the motivations, influences, impacts, etc., involved in sports anime watching from an Indian standpoint.

## Methodology

**Selection of the Subject:**

The study gathered information from 150 participants, of which 97 participants were familiar with the sports anime and hence were chosen as the sample group. The subjects were selected from various dedicated anime community pages spread across social media websites (mainly Facebook and Instagram). The study adopted the purposive sampling technique as a limited number of people have expertise on the chosen topic.

**Data Collection:**

Various pop culture websites were used as a reference point to formulate the show’s list to check whether the individual is aware of the sports genre of anime or not. The data collection part for the sample group was conducted via google survey forms. The participants were provided with google forms containing the questions for the study. The questions were restricted to sports anime and sports participation. The google form was circulated amongst contact networks who engage in viewing of sports anime as well as was sent across various social media pages where the respective communities regularly engage in different discussions on topics related to sports anime.

**Statistical Techniques:**

For the study, the authors used the Chi-square goodness of fit test to analyze individual questions and compare the different themes. The study also checked the reasons for motivation to watch sport-related anime and how well the anime as a platform can adopt actual sporting behaviour in general. The questionnaire was self-constructed and was accordingly pilot tested to check for its validity. SPSS Version 24 and Microsoft Excel 2019 are the two critical tools with which analysis was done. The level of significance  $P < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

**Results**

From the 150 participants who were well aware of the sports genre of anime, ranging from the age group between 14 to 30 ( $22.58 \pm 2.954$ ) years of age.

To examine whether the participants were interested in the sports aspects or not, their motivation to watch the shows, their watching habits, and the impact of the sports anime shows on them, we used the chi-square goodness of fit to analyse these data. Table 1 below, provides the result of the chi-square goodness-of-fit test conducted on the questionnaire. When the participants were asked whether they were interested in the respective sport shown in the show, 51.6 % agreed, 29.9% chose the neutral option and 18.5% of them disagreed and the difference between the interests of participants was highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). A hefty 67% of the participants agreed that sports anime motivated them to pursue some kind of physical activity, 25.8% remained neutral and 7.2% claimed that they disagree with this notion and the difference between their choices was highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, when the participants were asked whether they felt that if sports Anime had been a valuable addition to

their life, 57% agreed that it has been a value addition while a mere 6.2% disagreed and 37.2% maintained neutrality and the difference between their choices was highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1.** Chi-Square Goodness of fit statistics with the effect size

Sr. No	Item	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Effect Size (Phi)
1	Your interest in sport made you watch sport-related Anime.	19.903	3	0.000178	0.463

2	In general, Sports Anime has renewed/motivated you to pursue sports/physical activity.	15.26 7	2	0.00048 4	0.41 2
3	Sports Anime has been a valuable addition to your life and has shaped your personality in some ways.	7.538	2	0.02307	0.28 8
4	Rate the impact of Japanese culture on Sports Anime	22.54 6	3	0.00005	0.48 2
5	How well do you think, Anime adapts to real sporting behaviour?	27.56 8	3	0.00000 4	0.53 9
6	How well do you think real skills (e.g., pitching in baseball) are shown in anime?	14	3	0.00290 5	0.38 2
7	What is your motivation to watch Sports Anime?	48.60 8	3	0.00	0.70 8
8	On average, how many hours do you invest in watching Sports Anime in a week?	47.53 6	3	0.00	0.7
9	What would you rather prefer?	8.167	1	0.00426 7	0.29 2

Around 67% of participants rated more than 4 (out of 5) for the impact of Japanese culture on sports anime depicting the evident general notion that the product has a heavy dose of the Japanese culture imbibed in it, while only 7 % rated the impact as below 2 and the difference between the ratings was highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). When asked to rate how well does Anime adapt to real sporting behaviour, 67% of respondents rated it more than 4 (out of 5) while 9.3% rated it below 2 and the difference between the ratings was highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). A similar pattern was seen when the participants were asked to rate (out of 5) if the real skills in sports are showcased in anime, 67.8% rating it more than 4 while 11.3% rated it below 2 and the difference between the ratings was highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

53.6 % of the participants gave entertainment value of anime as their motivation to watch Sports Anime, 21.6 % said it was because of their interest in Japanese culture, 19.6 % due to interest in those particular sport and 5 % as a form of escapism and the difference between the motivations was highly significant ( $P < 0.5$ ). Further, only 5.2% of the participants spent more than 7 hours as the average hours in watching Sports Anime in a week, 10.3% spent 3-7 hours, 45.4% spent 1-3 hours and 39.2% spent less than 1 hour and the difference between the hourly spent per week was highly significant ( $P < 0.5$ ). However, 63.9% of the participants said that they will pursue physical activity when given the choice between the same and watching anime, while 35.1 % chose the other option i.e., watching anime and only 1% chose both and the difference between the choices was highly significant ( $P < 0.5$ ).

A phi effect size has been calculated for each of the significance values ( $< 0.05$ ). The results showed that large effect size is seen for all cases except for the third and ninth questions, where the effect size was medium.

## Discussion

This paper aimed to trace the influences of sports anime on Indian anime watchers, the motivations behind this behaviour, and whether sports anime has educated its audience on the actual technicalities involved in the respective shows.

Initially, the researchers checked whether the sport is the reason for the anime watchers to watch the sports anime or at least has sports as one of the elements of these shows. From the inception of society, the importance of sports has always been discussed extensively. Its ability to influence communities, whether good or bad, stands the lens of many historical studies <sup>(25)</sup>. Media has been a critical factor that has been influenced by sport. In their work, Emma Poulton and Martin Roderick <sup>(12)</sup> have shown how sport is depicted in films. Their study highlighted how sports makes for a compelling narrative in any medium, whether fictional or non-fictional. Poulton and Roderick's work tried to provide an educational tool to analyse films in general with additional examples of *Bollywood* and martial arts films. This study strengthens the point of how sports is not just a genre but a recognised category in the fictional discipline of media. Similarly, media platforms like anime have been influenced by sports and have adapted this as one of the many genres under its garb.

In light of sports as a genre in anime, researchers have also shown a growing interest in different genres of anime. Hyreim Cho et al. <sup>(16)</sup>, in their work on different anime genres, have defined what exactly genres are and the additional filters associated with them to ease out the categorisation of themes. Their work highlights the importance of why sports as a genre should be given more consideration, just by the sheer number of sports covered in this medium. The result we obtained in this research paper just strengthened the notion that sports can influence individuals. This interest in the sport motivated most of them to watch anime that had sport as its theme. In addition to this, the research also identified the reverse influencing, i.e., whether sports anime could motivate individuals to pursue a physical activity or any sport. The answer for this was affirmative as well. This just attested to the power of anime as a medium, to go beyond the TV screens and affect the lives of its audience. Bautista <sup>(26)</sup> (one of the very few researchers who have directly emphasised and showed the relation between anime and sport) in his paper has worked on anime *Ruroni Kenshin (1996)*, which had Kendo as the background theme, where he analysed the Filipinos' motivation to join the Kendo Clubs, who were the regular watcher of the mentioned show. It also references how sports like football and baseball saw popularity rise due to the anime shows associated with them <sup>(17)</sup>. Pedersen et al. <sup>(23)</sup>, too, in their research, have identified the different influences on decision making to interact with a specific pop culture factor and how the so-called 'nerds' embrace pop culture, fashion, politics, and various other social aspects with anime as the reference point.

Looking into the more specific reasons why the audience watches sports anime, the participants gave reasons like escapism, generic interest in those respective sports, and even pure interest in Japanese culture. Of course, every individual has different reasons to pursue watching anime. Still, the core reason to seek out it purely based on its entertainment value is where the real success of anime as a medium lies. And the results of this study, too, came out as such. The majority of the respondents gave the entertainment value of anime to watch sports anime <sup>(27)</sup>. With the sheer ability to provide entertainment to its audience of all ages and gender, anime indeed has delivered on this front time and time again through its various genres. The sports genre has also attested to this fact through this study. Cho et al. <sup>(28)</sup>, in their second work of the same year, discussed along similar lines. Their work tried to put forth a recommendation system, in which the study tried to shed some light on the expanding community of anime watchers and what they need and want by analysing various online forum queries. Adopting a content analysis method, their study proposed creating a robust taxonomy that includes plot, narrative, mood, and characters to push to ever-growing reach. Future researchers can indeed consider this and accommodate this for sports anime specifically.

But what makes the sports anime platform work in a country like India, which is far away from Japan and has varying culture and sensibilities, which is not even recognised as a sporting nation? Various reasons make anime a global hit. Its popularity in India only adds to the above fact about its success, evident by the steady demand by its enthusiastic audience <sup>(20)</sup>. India, as a market, has always appreciated foreign entertainment products. The success of Disney films and regular appearances of anime shows on various Indian channels highlights that. The reason for this can also be given to the lack of India's own animation industry setup <sup>(29)</sup>. The general notion in the Indian audience is that animation is only meant for a specific age group (children) may or may not have affected the growth of this industry in India. Hence the wide-ranging themes and effectively executed shows are regularly sought after in India and have boosted the creations of multiple fandoms of anime shows. The thirst for content-rich story-telling is what has driven this craze amongst Indian audiences. Catarina Navio et al. <sup>(30)</sup> are the ones who have the latest work on the audience motivation to watch

anime, relating to how individuals' psyche works and form their desire to move away from their respective local realities because of watching anime. This work also proposed the need for research in different countries and their varying context with anime. Their work mainly focused on the non-Japanese audience hailing from Portugal and has shown parallels with the anime watching pattern, which can be drawn to the needs of Indian audiences.

The genre of sports anime also has seen an increase in huge fan following in India. The survey made it clear that the Indian audience is following the trend and is aware of the top-rated and internationally popular sports anime. The audience is aware of shows like Haikyuu, Captain Tsubasa, Kuruko no basket, etc., following them religiously. Specifically, Haikyuu anime (based on the sport volleyball) is highly rated by multiple websites<sup>(31)</sup>. The multiple fandoms for this particular show present in India highlight the show's popularity and how well the participants appreciate it. It can be safely assumed that this is also applicable to the whole Indian anime community. Laffage-Cosnier S and Inaba R<sup>(19)</sup> have proposed their paper on similar lines. Their work assessed the impact of sports animated movies from Japan broadcasted in France around the 1980s and 1990s. The parallels between the Indian audience and the french populace of that era are nearly identical in terms of awareness of the content related to sports, especially in how the sports anime content was sought out by the french.

As it's established widely that anime is sought heavily, the paper also tried to look at how much hourly investment the audience invests in this activity. Because the more intensive experiences of anime watching favour higher levels of involvement, anime is not viewed to pass the time. About half of the participants said they invest around 1-3 hrs per week in watching sports anime. As the effects of binge-watching on personal engagement critically depend on the availability of the content, it may or may not have affected the watch time<sup>(32)</sup> of the participants. Gisele et al.<sup>(33)</sup> directly established television viewing and its direct physical activity influence. Even though there was no mention of anime in their work, the study spoke about the prevalence of TV viewing on children and tried to establish a relation between TV viewing and its influence on sport participation. As the sample population for this criteria to generalise was meagre, whether the whole population follows this norm cannot be devised, but diving deep into the watching habits will surely give out interesting findings.

Furthermore, when the participants were asked whether sports anime has been a valuable addition to their life and whether it has shaped their personalities in some ways or not, the majority of the group agreed and confirmed the notion of the positive influence of anime. By treating its audience as mature individuals, anime has proven to increase the intelligent quotient and has helped educate various social aspects<sup>(34)</sup>, which came out as one of the findings through this research.

In addition to this, the participants were asked about the influence of Japanese culture on sports anime, in particular, to know whether it is true for the sports genre. Due to the nature of anime, it's been established that it has a huge Japanese influence on its production, as the platform has originated from Japan. Japan has always put forth that anime is a Japanese product through and through<sup>(35,36)</sup>. So, to look into whether this stands true for the sports genre, the responses were overwhelmingly affirmative. This proves the effort of the anime producers to make anyone identify that this is a Japanese product. Amy Shirong Lu<sup>(37)</sup>, in her paper of 2008, introduces the phenomena of anime, more precisely it's cultural politics from a Japanese point of view. The paper demonstrates how Japan has always wanted to establish anime as an international product, how its exports from its inception from the start of the 20th century, and how the sports genre has always been an important part of it.

Further, the study looked at the sports anime's ability to adapt to real sport behaviour, which was the vital question the paper wanted to throw light on. It's been observed that some of the watchers do relate with the characters showing different human traits in the real-life scenarios depicted in the shows<sup>(38)</sup>. The same can be said for shows with the sport as their theme. The characters present in the sport setting have enacted and are presented in a manner such that it is believable and how real-life personas react in those dynamics. This sample group attested that anime has been successful in portraying real-life sport behaviour.

But when we asked the same group whether anime could convert these natural settings into showing fundamental skills and technicalities of the sport, the result, even though inclined as positive, was a mixed

bag. The technicalities associated with the sport vary and may or may not have been covered every time. This can be blamed on the exaggerative nature of the anime itself. The same can be said for the question as well regarding real-life sporting behaviour. Unfortunately, as the sample size is too small, a conclusive take on this cannot be made even though the portrayal of skills and conduct have been attempted in multiple shows named by the participants.

Respondents were further asked to choose between going out to play and watching sports anime. The results were in favour of going out to play and pursue physical activity. This research paper suggests that the reason for this behaviour can be multiple and can provide interesting findings if done on a deeper scale solely focused on this point.

### **Limitations and future research**

This study provides a glimpse into Indian sports anime viewers' motivation. However, a broader conclusion cannot be made for many findings considering that it is a limited portrayal of this population. Furthermore, the Google survey form was circulated amongst online communities, and social media groups restricted the study to this subsection of the Indian anime population. Thus it is possible that a substantial part of the sports anime viewer's viewpoint was not effectively captured.

Future researchers may look into different regions and study points to find out the impact of the sport on anime viewing habits. Furthermore, interviews from hardcore fans at community gathering events like Comic-Con should be conducted to get a microscopic and a deeper understanding of the subject impacts.

### **Conclusion**

The paper mainly discussed the motivation behind the Indian audience to watch sports anime and whether anime is being successful in showcasing real-life sports behaviour. This study showed that the Indian anime community is aware of the sports genre in anime. Apart from the generic interest in sport, the majority of the respondents that participated in this study gave the reason for watching sports anime as the entertainment value of the anime itself, giving an indication that more audiences will seek this platform which sought out the entertainment value of sports and this can be followed for the animated content of sports as well.

The study also found that sports anime could motivate the participants to pursue a physical activity or take part in the sport. The participants were also asked whether sports anime could add value to their personality in any way, to which the majority gave affirmation. The Japanese culture in the sports genre of anime is also evident through this research. Furthermore, the study also found that the sports genre can successfully adapt the real-life sports behaviour in their shows and, to some extent, has been able to educate the audience about the game's technicalities. However, in general, the exaggerated nature of the anime tends to have hindered the possibility of this medium to effectively throw light on the technicalities involved in the respective sports.

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