

Global Media, Local Markets: How Anime and Manga Influence Consumer Behavior in Chennai's Emerging Youth Segment

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ABSTRACT: Japanese anime and manga are available through digital streaming services and, as a result, have created new cross-cultural consumption patterns for youth worldwide. This research study examines how these consumption patterns affect the consumer behavior of young people in Chennai, India, specifically regarding brand attitude, purchase intention, lifestyle adoption, and cultural identity negotiation. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used to gather primary data through a structured questionnaire (to measure the dependent variables), administered via a purposive/snowball sampling strategy to 412 respondents aged 15-30 years living in Chennai. The respondents were recruited via academic institutions, anime conventions, and online digital platforms. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach, supplemented by multiple regression analysis to investigate the proposed relationships. The study found a significant and positive impact of anime and manga on brand preference ($\beta=0.523$, $p<0.001$), merchandise purchase intention ($\beta=0.618$, $p<0.001$), and lifestyle orientation ($\beta=0.471$, $p<0.001$) in Chennai youth. Cultural proximity, parasocial relationships with fictional characters, and fandom community engagement were identified as key mediating factors. The effects of anime and manga consumption were moderated by gender and income. The findings provide theoretical contributions to Uses and Gratifications Theory and Cultural Proximity Theory in the context of anime consumption within an emerging South Asian urban market. Practical implications for global media brands, local retailers, and digital marketers are outlined to help capitalize on the expanding anime economy in Indian metropolitan markets.

Keywords: *anime consumption; manga; consumer behavior; youth market; structural equation modelling; fandom; purchase intention*

1. INTRODUCTION

The worldwide spread of media content has reshaped the cultural consumption landscape in Asia and around the world. Japanese anime and manga, originally a subculture that was often viewed as niche by the West, have now become part of the mainstream in many countries due to a variety of factors, including the rise of digital on-demand services (e.g., Crunchyroll, Netflix, and Amazon Prime Video) and the development of online communities through social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) (Napier, 2024; Jenkins et al., 2023). India is one of the fastest-growing markets for anime consumption, with a population of over 1.4 billion people, a median age of about 29 years, and a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.7 percent from 2020 through 2025 (Statista, 2025; FICCI-EY, 2025). Chennai, Tamil Nadu, is an important site for studying the cultural and economic impact of anime because it has a large population of young people who engage with transnational popular culture while negotiating their regional linguistic identity and traditional values. In contrast to the more metropolitan areas of Delhi and Mumbai in northern India, Chennai has a much stronger regional focus in its cultural consumption patterns. This makes anime's penetration into this conservative area a culturally significant event in need of further investigation.

Anime and Manga are not just forms of entertainment. Instead, consumers also use anime and manga as vehicles for conveying messages about brand recognition, lifestyle goals, and identity formation. According to Condry (2023) and Alvarez-Ossorio and Nogueira-García (2025), through the narratives created in anime, many contexts within anime showcase various products that the character uses (i.e., style of clothing, brand) as well as the lifestyle that should be

aspired to; this is called "embedded" advertising/marketing and cultural transmission (Lee & Tran, 2024). Proprietary research conducted by Allied Market Research (2025) shows that the global anime merchandise market is expected to exceed USD 31.2 billion in 2024, and growth in India is being driven at an unprecedented pace.

While anime holds cultural and commercial significance in India, there is limited empirical research on the topic. Most literature focuses on either the Western market (Broida & Park, 2023), East Asian reception studies (Hu & Zhang, 2024), or broader/genre forms of Indian media consumption (Mehta & Kohli, 2025). Additionally, there is a lack of research about how Chennai, a Tier-1 city in South India with unique sociolinguistic and cultural attributes, perceives and influences anime and manga. This study aims to address this gap using quantitative methods to explore this topic more rigorously.

The research aims to achieve four specific objectives: (a) to create a profile of Chennai adolescents' anime and manga consumption; (b) to examine the extent to which anime/manga consumption influences males' thoughts about how likely they will be to buy certain products, and how they view their lifestyles; (c) to determine if there are other factors (i.e., cultural distance, parasocial relations, and community support) between consumption of anime/manga and thoughts about purchases or lifestyle orientations; and (d) to investigate how demographics may impact the relationships between these factors.

The remainder of the paper includes the following sections: section two discusses the literature review regarding the theoretical and empirical perspectives; section three contains the development of the hypotheses and conceptual framework; section four provides details of the methodology; section five presents the results; section six describes implications; and section seven concludes with limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Anime and Manga as Global Cultural Products

Anime and manga are examples of *mukokuseki* products, or "no culture," created as cultural artifacts that can appeal to a global audience while retaining a distinctly Japanese aesthetic. This situation of simultaneous cultural specificity (Japanese) and universal appeal (to a global audience) contributes to anime's worldwide dissemination. However, many contemporary researchers now question this definition of "no culture", and argue that it is the "cultural smell" (culturally specific elements) of anime that draws cross-cultural audiences who are looking for "cultural otherness" (Napier, 2024; Hernandez-Perez, 2023). In South and Southeast Asia, anime's attraction is enhanced by its spatial, narrative and visual similarities to traditional forms of art found locally (Lent & Xu, 2023; Banerjee & Das, 2025).

The significant transition from physical distribution formats (e.g., DVDs and Blu-Rays) to digital streaming platforms (e.g., Netflix, Crunchyroll) has had a profound effect on the economics of distributing anime and manga, as well as on the demographics of those who consume them. For example, Crunchyroll reported that in 2021, shortly after being acquired by Sony, it had 13 million paid subscribers worldwide, with India as the second-largest market outside Japan (Crunchyroll Annual Report, 2024). Additionally, Netflix's substantial investment in original anime productions (including localized/translated dubs in Tamil) has increased access to anime and manga for Indian audiences who speak a variety of languages (Rao & Krishnan, 2025). The dynamics of these platforms will affect how consumers are exposed to anime; therefore, the relationship between socio-culturally defined consumer habits and subsequent behaviors is largely dependent on these platforms.

2.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory in Media Consumption

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), developed by Katz et al. (1974) and later extended by Ruggiero (2000), theorizes that media audiences are active, making choices about how they consume media based on the satisfaction of certain psychological and social needs. UGT considers how viewers utilize media for satisfaction; for example, contemporary analyses of UGT (i.e., Whiting & Williams, 2013; Vaterlaus et al., 2024) have identified several key elements of satisfaction from viewing streaming content/digital media, including entertainment, information searching, social interaction, escapism, and identity exploration. An example of how UGT may apply to understanding youth's

consumption of anime is through the following areas: escapism, emotional release, aesthetic enjoyment, sense of community, and curiosity about culture (Lai & To, 2023).

Recent empirical studies have also begun to use UGT as a framework for exploring downstream effects of consumer behavior. Chung et al. (2024) demonstrated that gratification from anime consumption predicted the intention to purchase merchandise, with $\beta = 0.54$ ($p < 0.01$), among a Korean sample. Alvarez-Ossorio and Nogueira-García (2025) extended this work to Spanish anime viewers, finding that identity-exploration gratifications mediated the relationship between consumption intensity and brand engagement. This study will expand on these findings by using UGT as a foundational theoretical perspective in the Chennai region and examining how gratification-driven consumption may shape specific behavioral outcomes.

2.3 Cultural Proximity Theory and Cross-Cultural Media Reception

In his 1991 Cultural Proximity Theory, Straubhaar proposed that audiences prefer media that come from their own cultural contexts — specifically, in terms of language, values, humor, and the use of culturally specific historical references. The original goal of Cultural Proximity Theory was to explain the tendency for regional media to dominate within geographic areas; however, with the inclusion of transnational cultural phenomena such as the Korean Wave and Japanese anime in subsequent studies, the theory has taken on more complex implications. There is a growing trend among scholars toward using the term 'asymmetric proximity' to describe how audiences can develop a sense of closeness to content that differs from their cultural context. According to scholars (Ramaswamy & Srinivasan, 2024; Hu & Zhang, 2024), this can occur through repeated exposure to foreign content, which can create parasocial relationships and a sense of belonging to a community associated with that content.

In the Indian context, Lee and Tran (2024) showed that cultural proximity significantly moderates the relationship between anime exposure and Indian audiences' cultural identification with Japanese culture. The authors found evidence of this in the similarities Indian audiences perceived between how families are portrayed and how each nation has defined honor in relation to its narrative traditions; as a result, these perceptions increased Indian audiences' attachment to Japanese culture through anime.

Furthermore, Banerjee and Das (2025) found that Tamil-language dubbed versions of anime increased South Indian audiences' perception of cultural proximity to Japanese culture, which, in turn, had positive effects on anime viewing frequency and merchandise purchasing behaviors among those audiences. Overall, the above examples suggest that the mechanism of cultural proximity in Chennai is likely to be distinct from that across pan-Indian audiences as a whole.

2.4 Parasocial Relationships and Consumer Behavior

In recent years, parasocial relationships (PSRs), or emotional and psychological attachments formed by fans with television or film characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956), have gained importance as an influence on consumer behavior in digital media (e.g., Dabbier et al., 2023). The prevalence of PSRs among anime characters drives much of the merchandising associated with said characters, including purchases of cosplay materials and/or licensed products (Broida & Park, 2023). Results from empirical research indicate a positive relationship between PSR intensity and willingness to pay premiums for character-related products (Kim & Ko, 2024).

As demonstrated in a longitudinal study by Mejia-Rodriguez et al. (2025), which sampled respondents from multiple countries, including India, there is evidence that parasocial relationships formed through the consumption of anime predict consumer loyalty ($\beta = .61$, $p < 0.001$) to brands associated with that anime (even when controlling for frequency of anime consumption). This predictive relationship demonstrates a "halo transfer" process whereby emotional/affective attachment to an admired character extends to an associated brand/product. The theoretical basis of this process informs the current study's proposed relationship between parasocial engagement and brand attitude.

2.5 Fandom Communities and Collective Consumer Identity

Anime fandom is an intricate social environment comprising events such as conventions (anime cons), online forums, fan fiction communities, and social media groups. In his seminal study of participatory culture, Jenkins (1992)

demonstrated that members of a fandom create cultural meaning rather than passively receive it. Contemporary research extending Jenkins' framework to digital fandom shows that participating in a community enhances individual consumption, intensifies brand engagement, and enables the creation of collective consumer identities that influence purchase behavior (Zubernis & Larsen, 2022; Krishnan & Mehta, 2024).

The anime fandom in Chennai has grown significantly, in part due to the Chennai Comic Con* and other anime-related conventions (ChennaiNarutoCon, AniMadras) that draw thousands of attendees (The Hindu, 2023). In addition, multiple online Tamil-language anime fandoms on Discord, YouTube and Telegram support daily engagement among fans. In these fandom environments, fans act as facilitators of consumption — by offering product recommendations to one another, collaboratively purchasing merchandise, co-organizing cosplay events, and legitimizing anime-themed consumer identities within their local peer groups (Rajan & Pillai, 2023).

2.6 Research Gap and Study Positioning

The previous literature provides a solid empirical and theoretical basis for examining anime's effects on consumer behavior; however, many gaps remain. To begin with, the number of empirical studies focusing on consumers living in Indian metropolitan cities is low, and no studies are available on Tier 1 South Indian cities. Secondly, the majority of published studies do not integrate multiple theoretical frameworks (UGT, Cultural Proximity, PSR) into a single model and test it with SEM. Lastly, there has been limited research on the mechanisms (mediating and moderating) by which anime consumption affects consumer behavior in traditional yet rapidly modernizing societies.

The current study addresses all three of these gaps by providing original empirical data from Chennai, one of India's largest cities, that reveal unique characteristics of consumer behavior and can inform the relationship between globalization and the localization of media consumption.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Conceptual Framework

The study combines the Use and Gratification Theory, the Cultural Proximity Theory, and the Parasocial Relationship Theory to create a combined conceptual framework that illustrates how the frequency of anime and manga consumption, determined by the accessibility of media and content based on the individual's level of gratification, can affect three different types of consumer behavior (brand attitude, purchase intentions for merchandise, and lifestyle orientation). Three variables have been included in the design as mediators for those relationships: cultural proximity, the strength of parasocial relationships, and engagement within fandom communities. The direct and mediated paths have been identified to have gender and income effects.

3.2 Hypotheses

Through synthesizing theory and analyzing research, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: There is a positive relationship between intensity of anime/manga consumption and attitude toward a brand (in Chennai).

H2: There is a positive relationship between anime/manga consumption intensity and purchase intention for merchandise.

H3: There is a positive relationship between anime/manga consumption intensity and change in one's lifestyle orientation.

H4: Cultural proximity mediates the relationship between anime/manga consumption and brand attitude.

H5: Parasocial relationship intensity mediates the relationship between anime/manga consumption and merchandise purchase intention.

H6: Engagement with a fandom community mediates the relationship between anime/manga consumption and lifestyle orientation.

H7: Gender moderates the relationship between anime/manga consumption and merchandise purchase intention.

H8: Household income moderates the relationship between anime/manga consumption and merchandise purchase intention.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design and Context

A quantitative cross-sectional survey research strategy has been adopted for this study, as is usual in the area of consumer behaviors and for research employing SEM (Hair et al., 2019). This study will be situated in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India — a city with a population of approximately 8.9 million — home to an extremely high number of educational institutions, IT parks, and cultural facilities which help to make up a demographically diverse and very digitally active population of young people aged 15–30 who have consumed anime or manga in the previous 12 months.

4.2 Sampling Strategy and Data Collection

In accordance with the principles of two prior studies, Broida and Park (2023) and Chung et al. (2024), we employed identical methods for recruiting niche youth consumer groups using a combined purposive and snowball sampling approach. There were three methods of data collection: a survey of academic institutions (Madras University, Anna University, Loyola College, SRM University, VIT Chennai), attendees of anime conventions (AniMadras 2025, Chennai Comic Con Jan 2026), and Tamil-language anime social media communities. The data were collected using structured surveys with explicitly stated content, administered via Google Forms for online respondents and paper copies for attendees between October 2025 and January 2026.

A total of 487 surveys were distributed to potential respondents. A total of 51 partially answered surveys and 24 outlier responses, as determined by Mahalanobis distance analysis, were excluded from the analysis, thereby yielding an overall usable sample of 412, which is within the target sample size range of 345–450, and exceeds the minimum of 200 recommended for structural equation modeling (Kline, 2023). This research received ethical approval from the University of Madras Institutional Research Ethics Committee (Ref: IREC/2025/MKT/017).

4.3 Measurement Instrument

A 5 section questionnaire was developed: Section A was sociodemographic and included age, gender, educational level, total household income, and the district of residence located in Chennai; Section B consisted of measuring the intensity of anime/manga consumption using six items modified from Chung et al. (2024) and Lai & To (2023), including frequency of viewing, diversity of platforms used to view, breadth of genres viewed, frequency of reading manga, participation in online communities, and participation/content creation within a community; Section C measured mediating variables including cultural proximity (5 items; Straubhaar, 1991, modified by Lee & Tran, 2024), intensity of parasocial relationships (6 items; Dibble, 2023), and fandom engagement (5 items; Jenkins, 1992, modified by Krishnan & Mehta, 2025); Section D contained measures of the outcome variables of brand attitude (5 items; modified from Mitchell & Olson, 1981, updated from Kim & Ko, 2024), merchandise purchase intention (5 items; modified from Broida & Park, 2023), and lifestyle orientation (6 items; modified from Alvarez-Ossorio & Nogueira-García, 2025). Responses to all Likert scale items ranged from a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree); and Section E was an open-ended qualitative response regarding the number one anime title that the participant had watched and its associated cultural elements.

Content validity was assessed by expert review of three marketing professors and two cultural studies scholars, and a pilot survey (n=38) confirmed comprehension and reliability of the scales with Cronbach's Alpha (α) scores for all constructs ranging from 0.821 to 0.894.

4.4 Analytical Approach

The data analysis was completed in four different parts using IBM SPSS V29.0 and AMOS V26.0. First, we examined the descriptive statistics for each variable and their frequency distributions for Profiles of Respondents. Secondly, we

conducted a reliability analysis of all variables (using Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega) and checked for validity using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The third part of the data analysis was to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the measurement model fit, as well as convergent and discriminant validity, according to Hair et al. (2019). Finally, in the fourth part of the data analysis, we tested a structural model to determine whether or not the hypothesized paths were supported. The bootstrapping technique (with 5,000 iterations; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was used in the mediation analysis, while moderation was tested for the interaction terms by adding interaction terms and using the PROCESS Macro (Model 1 and Model 3). Harman's single-factor test and a common latent factor analysis were used to assess for common method bias.

4.5 Respondent Profile

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (N = 412)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	218	52.9
	Female	179	43.4
	Non-binary / Prefer not to say	15	3.6
Age Group	15–18 years	87	21.1
	19–22 years	156	37.9
	23–26 years	112	27.2
	27–30 years	57	13.8
Educational Status	School (Classes 10–12)	78	18.9
	Undergraduate	183	44.4
	Postgraduate	108	26.2
	Working Professional	43	10.4
Monthly Household Income	Below ₹25,000	94	22.8
	₹25,001–₹50,000	138	33.5
	₹50,001–₹1,00,000	121	29.4
	Above ₹1,00,000	59	14.3
Primary Residence (Chennai)	Central Chennai	134	32.5
	South Chennai	112	27.2
	North Chennai	89	21.6
	West Chennai / Suburbs	77	18.7
Primary Platform Consumption	Crunchyroll	189	45.9

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Netflix	134	32.5
	YouTube / Unofficial sources	67	16.3
	Physical manga/books	22	5.3

5. RESULTS

5.1 Descriptive Statistics and Consumption Patterns

According to the data collected, respondents watched an average of 14.7 hours of Anime each week ($SD = 6.3$), with almost three-quarters (71.8%) reporting daily Anime viewing. Among all Anime genres, action or shonen anime was ranked the most popular (68.4% of respondents), followed by romance or shojo (54.6%), psychological thriller (41.3%), and Isekai (38.9%). Regarding Manga consumption, 61.4% of respondents reported reading at least one Manga regularly, with the top five titles being Demon Slayer, One Piece, Attack on Titan, Jujutsu Kaisen, and Chainsaw Man. Table 2 provides the summary of descriptive statistics by constructs.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR CONSTRUCT VARIABLES (N = 412)

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Consumption Intensity (CI)	6	3.91	0.74	0.879	0.891	0.582
Cultural Proximity (CP)	5	3.67	0.81	0.854	0.867	0.567
Parasocial Relationship (PSR)	6	3.83	0.79	0.871	0.883	0.573
Fandom Community Engagement (FCE)	5	3.58	0.86	0.842	0.856	0.545
Brand Attitude (BA)	5	3.72	0.77	0.863	0.876	0.584
Purchase Intention (PI)	5	3.64	0.82	0.858	0.871	0.578
Lifestyle Orientation (LO)	6	3.49	0.89	0.867	0.879	0.563

**Note: CR = Composite Reliable; AVE = Average Variability Extracted*. All AVE scores are above the 0.50 minimum value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), which satisfies the requirements for convergent validity. CR is higher than Cronbach's Alpha, indicating adequate internal consistency across all constructs. Discriminant validity was also confirmed, since the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than the correlation between that construct and any of the other constructs.*

5.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Measurement Model Fit

The measurement model yielded acceptable fit metrics. Model fit metrics appear in Table 3. All standardized factor loadings were at least 0.65; most exceeded 0.70, indicating indicator reliability. Harman's single factor explained 24.3% of total variance (at a threshold of <50%). Maximum item variance from the common latent factor method was low (0.086), indicating that the study's findings are not significantly threatened by common method bias.

TABLE 3: MEASUREMENT MODEL AND STRUCTURAL MODEL FIT INDICES

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Measurement Model	Structural Model	Model Fit Assessment
χ^2/df (CMIN/DF)	< 3.00	2.34	2.47	Acceptable
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.963	0.951	Excellent
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	> 0.90	0.957	0.944	Excellent
IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.964	0.952	Excellent
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.046	0.051	Excellent
SRMR	< 0.08	0.052	0.057	Acceptable
GFI	> 0.85	0.911	0.903	Acceptable
AGFI	> 0.80	0.887	0.871	Acceptable

5.3 Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 presents the standardized path coefficients for all hypothesized direct relationships in the structural model. Results are discussed below.

Table 4: Structural Model — Direct Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Supported?
H1	CI → Brand Attitude	0.523	0.048	10.90	< 0.001	✓ Yes
H2	CI → Purchase Intention	0.618	0.052	11.88	< 0.001	✓ Yes
H3	CI → Lifestyle Orientation	0.471	0.057	8.26	< 0.001	✓ Yes
—	CI → Cultural Proximity	0.589	0.045	13.09	< 0.001	—
—	CI → Parasocial Relationship	0.647	0.043	15.05	< 0.001	—
—	CI → Fandom Community Engagement	0.534	0.051	10.47	< 0.001	—
—	CP → Brand Attitude	0.412	0.054	7.63	< 0.001	—
—	PSR → Purchase Intention	0.503	0.049	10.27	< 0.001	—
—	FCE → Lifestyle Orientation	0.488	0.053	9.21	< 0.001	—

Legend: Percentages reflect Consumption Intensity (CI); Cultural Proximity (CP); Parasocial Relationship (PSR); and Fandom Community Engagement (FCE) - the β (as Standardized Regression Coefficient) represents the effect size, $\ast SE$ (as Standard Error) measures the precision of the estimate, and t -values > 1.96 denote statistical significance at a level .05, while t -values > 2.58 denote a level .01.

Supporting H1: Consumption intensity is a strong predictor of how favorable people will feel toward brands associated with Japanese content or created by companies in Japan ($\beta = 0.523$, $t = 10.90$, $p < 0.001$). That is, as young adults in Chennai consume more and more anime and manga (which are closely associated with Japanese culture), they develop increasingly favorable feelings toward these brands. This finding supports the work of Mejia-Rodriguez et al. (2025) and Kim and Ko (2024).

Supporting H2: The direct relationship between consumption intensity and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.618$, $t = 11.88$, $p < 0.001$) was shown to have the highest path coefficient. This supports the findings of Broida and Park (2023) and Chung et al. (2024), which found that heavy anime consumers are more likely than light consumers to purchase merchandise associated with the anime they consume.

Supporting H3: Consumption intensity significantly predicts a change in one's orientation towards lifestyle ($\beta = 0.471$, $t = 8.26$, $p < 0.001$). This means that anime consumption will lead to changes in a person's aesthetics, daily routine, food choices (Japanese food), and clothing choices (as they move to wear clothing associated with the anime they consume) among young adults in Chennai.

5.4 Mediation Analysis Results

TABLE 5: MEDIATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

Hypothesis	Mediated Path	Indirect Effect (β)	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	Supported?
H4	CI $\rightarrow$ CP $\rightarrow$ Brand Attitude	0.243	0.181	0.312	✓ Yes
H5	CI $\rightarrow$ PSR $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.326	0.259	0.401	✓ Yes
H6	CI $\rightarrow$ FCE $\rightarrow$ Lifestyle Orientation	0.261	0.192	0.334	✓ Yes

Important: In terms of mediation, all three of the supporting hypotheses are confirmed by confidence intervals that exclude zero. All of the support has partial mediation, as the remaining direct effect after accounting for the indirect effect remains significant, indicating that while cultural proximity, parasocial relationships, and fandom engagement all amplify the relationship between consumption and behavior, these three factors do not fully account for that effect.

5.5 Moderation Analysis Results

TABLE 6: MODERATION ANALYSIS — GENDER AND INCOME EFFECTS ON PURCHASE INTENTION

Moderator	Interaction Term	β	t -value	p -value	Hypothesis
Gender	CI $\times$ Gender	0.187	3.84	< 0.001	H7: ✓ Supported
Income	CI $\times$ Income	0.214	4.21	< 0.001	H8: ✓ Supported

H7 is confirmed: There is a significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship between the intensity of consumption (or usage) and the intention to purchase ($\beta = 0.187$, $t = 3.84$, $p < 0.001$). Post hoc analysis of simple

slopes shows that male respondents have a steeper positive slope ($\beta = 0.693$, $p < 0.001$) than female respondents ($\beta = 0.539$, $p < 0.001$), indicating both sexes have positive link(s) between consumption and purchase; however, an increased strength of the link is apparent amongst male youth. This result aligns with Broida and Park (2023). However, gender differences appear to be diminishing compared with previous studies, consistent with the increasing number of female fans in Indian anime communities (Krishnan & Mehta, 2025).

H8 is supported: There is a significant moderating influence of household income on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.214$, $t = 4.21$, $p < 0.001$). Respondents with higher incomes translate their higher consumption intensity into greater purchase intention due to their financial ability to purchase higher-priced merchandise, attend conventions, and subscribe to paid streaming services. This moderating effect aligns with Chung et al. (2024) and has significant implications for market segmentation.

5.6 Additional Exploratory Findings

The open-ended responses were analyzed (N=298 usable responses). Three main themes emerged from the data (1) Cultural Translation - Many respondents made connections between anime storylines and the Mahabharata and Ramayana and this made them feel more connected to their own culture; (2) Social Currency - Consuming anime was often considered a means of gaining social status/identity or social capital with peers in school and/or college settings; and (3) Aspirational Japanophilia - Exposure to Japanese cultural codes, including aesthetic elements such as simplicity, attention to detail, or discipline, was noted as influencing aspirational living styles (e.g., enrolling as a student in the Japanese language proficiency test, being interested in Japanese food, or preferring Japanese products).

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

Third, the significant mediation of parasocial relationships in the consumption–purchase intention pathway (H5: indirect effect $\beta = 0.326$, 95% CI [0.259, 0.401]) corroborates and extends PSR theory by confirming the 'halo transfer' mechanism — affective bonds with fictional characters extend to commercial purchase decisions — in a South Indian context. This finding contributes to the emerging scholarship on digital parasocial relationships and their commercial implications (Dibble et al., 2023; Mejia-Rodriguez et al., 2025).

Thirdly, there is strong evidence that parasocial relationships mediate consumption – purchase intention (H5: indirect effect $\beta = .326$, 95% CI [.259, .401]), thus reinforcing and expanding P-S-R theory through the 'halo transfer' effect, showing that there is an affective connection with a fictional character which will influence viewer purchase decisions for products/services associated with that character, based on South Indian culture. This result adds to currently emerging research on digital parasocial relationships and related commercial effects (Dibble et al., 2023; Mejia-Rodriguez et al., 2025).

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings for international anime content distribution companies (Crunchyroll, Netflix) indicate that the positive impact of consumption frequency on brand attitude and purchase intention will make India a strategically valuable market. In addition, Netflix's provision of Tamil-language dubbing and localized subtitles positively influenced perceived cultural proximity and increased commercial returns. Therefore, platforms should also invest in community-building items, such as fan forums, character voting, and programs for local creators, to enhance fan engagement, as this will be an important mediator for lifestyle orientation shifts.

For brand managers and retailers, the findings also indicate that anime-related marketing co-branding strategies (e.g., licensing anime character intellectual property for product endorsement/packaging) targeted at high-usage male youth aged 19 to 26 in Chennai are likely to be successful. There is evidence that product income moderation (H8) will require multiple product strategies, offering both high-end merchandise (limited edition, art books, large figurines) to higher-income customers and more accessible merchandise (e.g., key holders, stationery, clothing) to price-sensitive customers.

Local entrepreneurs and retailers in Chennai can benefit from connecting with fandom communities to adapt their lifestyles through different forms of consumption, including: Food service (Japanese-style restaurants/cafes); Dress-up (costumes for cosplay); Education (language classes); and Shopping (culturally themed retail stores).

All of these areas present exciting opportunities for business owners to create and offer products and services in response to rapidly changing interests and hobbies among fans, based on the findings of this research.

6.3 Limitations

Several limitations of this study exist. The first limitation concerns the nature of the design – it is a cross-sectional study, and as such, we cannot draw causal conclusions; however, if we had used a longitudinal study, we would have been able to observe how consumption intensity changes over time and influences behavior. Another limitation was that, although we employed a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to access the target population, this approach does not allow us to generalize our results to the total population. A probability sample through a representative household survey in Chennai would have helped to increase the external validity of this research. Additionally, the measures used to assess consumption intensity and purchase intention were based on self-report data. There is evidence that self-report may be susceptible to social desirability bias. However, a common method bias assessment indicates this is not considered a serious threat to the study's validity. Finally, our study was limited to one metropolitan area. A similar study conducted across multiple metropolitan cities in India (such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Kochi) would illustrate the extent of inter-city variation in anime's impact on consumers.

7. CONCLUSION

The first significant quantitative, detailed exploration of the impact of anime or manga on the shopping behavior of young people in Chennai (India) has been completed. We used structural equation modeling (SEM) with a sample of 412 participants to demonstrate that anime and manga consumption intensity is a significant and positive predictor of brand attitudes, purchase intent, and lifestyle orientation among youth in Chennai. Cultural proximity, intensity of parasocial relationship, and fan community engagement (fandom) were identified as significant partial mediators. At the same time, gender and income were both important moderating variables in the relationships between consumption and intent to purchase.

These results have very important theoretical implications because they integrate and enhance three conceptual frameworks of theory using a new empirical context, with practical implications for platform operators, brand managers, local retailers, and policymakers who must navigate the challenges posed by the complex interplay between global media and local consumer markets worldwide. With the continued (and rapid) growth of the anime market in India, Chennai's youth represent a commercially important and culturally vibrant sub-market in the global anime economy.

To better understand how anime influences consumer behavior across life stages, future studies should adopt a longitudinal approach. They may also be able to use qualitative research techniques to provide insight into how consumers determine the meaning of anime consumption. Researchers could take their studies outside Japan to conduct comparative analyses across cities and nations. In addition, researchers should investigate how financial behaviors are influenced by anime, as illustrated by the rapid growth of anime-associated NFT markets and consumer spending in video games, both of which will provide insight into the emerging anime economy.

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