

Negotiating Global Media in Conservative Contexts: Yaoi and Yuri Consumption Among Malaysian University Students

ROKIAH PAEE*

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

ROSLINA MAMAT

Universiti Putra Malaysia

ROSWATI ABDUL RASHID

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu

ABSTRACT

This study explores the consumption of Yaoi (boys' love) and Yuri (girls' love) media among Malaysian university students, focusing on three objectives: identifying demographic characteristics and consumption patterns, exploring motivations for engagement, and examining reasons for discontinuation alongside socio-cultural perceptions. Based on a survey of 111 students from five Malaysian universities, the findings reveal the significant appeal of Yaoi and Yuri genres through their emotional depth, compelling storytelling, and alternative relationship narratives. Female respondents dominated the sample (84%), with a strong preference for non-explicit narratives such as Shonen-ai and Shoujo-ai, reflecting the conservative cultural context of Malaysia. Respondents highlighted motivations such as emotional engagement (54.2%), intricate storylines (52.8%), and aesthetic appeal (26.1%), while some emphasised representation (17.6%) and entertainment or escapism (9.2%). However, discontinuation was often driven by religious and moral values (61.2%) and dissatisfaction with repetitive storylines (28.6%). The findings reveal a nuanced engagement with these genres, reflecting both their appeal as platforms for identity exploration and the challenges posed by deeply ingrained cultural and religious norms. While Yaoi and Yuri media foster empathy and cultural dialogue, their broader acceptance remains constrained by societal values. The study underscores the need for culturally sensitive storytelling that aligns with local traditions and universal themes to promote inclusivity without undermining societal norms. These findings contribute to understanding the dynamics of globalised media consumption in conservative societies, offering insights into the interplay between global narratives and local cultural frameworks.

Keywords: *Yaoi and Yuri media, Malaysian youth, media consumption patterns, LGBT representation, cultural negotiation.*

INTRODUCTION

Japanese anime and manga have emerged as significant global cultural phenomena, captivating audiences worldwide with their compelling narratives, complex characters, and artistic aesthetics. These mediums have transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, with anime generating ¥1.2 trillion in overseas revenue in 2022 (Statista, n.d.a, accessed January 4, 2025) and manga achieving ¥613 billion in domestic sales in 2020, growing to ¥693.7 billion in 2023 (Statista, n.d.b, accessed January 4, 2025). The synergistic relationship between anime and manga, where successful manga often inspire anime adaptations and spin-offs, underscores their dual cultural and economic importance (Muliyati et al., 2024).

*Corresponding author: prokiah@unimas.my

E-ISSN: 2289-1528

<https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2025-4101-29>

Received: 6 January 2025 | Accepted: 18 February 2025 | Published: 30 March 2025

Among the myriad genres within anime and manga, Yaoi (boys' love) and Yuri (girls' love) are notable for their focus on same-sex relationships. Originating in the 1970s with Japan's Year 24 Group, these genres primarily cater to female audiences, offering narratives on love, intimacy, and identity that deviate from traditional heteronormative portrayals (Li & Pang, 2024; Madill, 2021). While these genres have achieved global recognition, they remain contentious in conservative societies due to their thematic focus.

In Malaysia, where cultural norms are deeply rooted in Islamic values, the consumption of Yaoi and Yuri media often raises moral and ethical concerns (Abdul Majid et al., 2024; Mohd Noor, 2023). The portrayal of same-sex relationships in these genres conflicts with societal expectations, creating tensions between globalised media influences and local cultural frameworks. Nevertheless, digital platforms have broadened access to Japanese popular culture, enabling Malaysian youth—particularly Gen Z—to engage with Yaoi and Yuri media. This interaction offers opportunities for identity exploration and cultural reflection, while also presenting challenges in reconciling these narratives with prevailing cultural and religious values (Astari et al., 2024).

Although anime and manga have been extensively studied in Malaysia, with research focusing on their popularity among youth and their role in language learning and cultural exchange (Normalis et al., 2022; Rokiah et al., 2020), studies specifically addressing Yaoi and Yuri are scarce. This study addresses this gap by examining Malaysian university students' engagement with these genres through three objectives: (1) identifying the demographic profiles and consumption patterns of audiences, (2) exploring the motivations driving their engagement, and (3) examining the factors influencing discontinuation and their socio-cultural perceptions of Yaoi and Yuri media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Yaoi and Yuri

Yaoi (boys' love) and Yuri (girls' love) emerged in the 1970s as transformative subgenres within Japanese manga, introduced by the "Year 24 Group," a collective of female manga artists. These genres disrupted traditional shōjo manga by incorporating narratives of same-sex relationships (Madill, 2021). Yaoi centres on male-male romantic dynamics, while Yuri focuses on female-female relationships, appealing to audiences seeking alternative portrayals of intimacy and identity (Amal et al., 2021; Rahmawati & Nurhidayah, 2023). Initially conceptualised as Shōnen-ai (boy love) and Shōjo-ai (girl love), the genres evolved over time to explore more emotionally intense and explicit themes, catering to diverse audience preferences. Their rise reflects a broader shift within Japanese pop culture, where challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms became a defining characteristic (Mustafani et al., 2023). The emotional depth and relational complexity of these genres, as noted by Zsila et al. (2018), make them particularly resonant with audiences navigating personal and societal challenges.

Global Reach and Accessibility

The globalisation of anime and manga has significantly expanded the reach of Yaoi and Yuri, driven by the growth of the anime streaming business (Statista, n.d.a). Platforms like Crunchyroll, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ have transformed global access, spurring competition in the Japanese streaming market and enabling animation production companies to cater increasingly to international audiences. For instance, Sony's acquisition of

Crunchyroll for \$1.2 billion in 2021 highlights the growing importance of streaming in the anime industry and its role in global cultural dissemination. As Nozawa (2023) highlights, Boys' Love and related genres leverage transmedia storytelling to captivate global audiences, fostering cross-cultural dialogue through universal themes of love and identity.

Fan-driven spaces such as AO3 (Archive of Our Own) and social media platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram further foster global fan interactions, enabling discussions, art sharing, and cosplay that bridge cultural divides (Mulyati et al., 2024). In Malaysia, these platforms provide critical spaces for youth to explore their interests while navigating societal constraints (Abdul Majid et al., 2024; Mokhtar et al., 2019; Salleh et al., 2024). As Bykov and Gao (2024) note, such digital spaces act as cultural bridges, facilitating engagement with global narratives while allowing local audiences to interpret them through their socio-cultural lenses. Streaming services and online communities have also facilitated innovative fan engagement, including derivative works and fandom events, showcasing the global cultural impact of Yaoi and Yuri.

Socio-Cultural and Identity Impacts

The socio-cultural implications of Yaoi and Yuri consumption are particularly pronounced in conservative societies like Malaysia. These genres challenge traditional portrayals by normalising same-sex relationships, fostering empathy and inclusivity among audiences (Madill, 2021; Zsila et al., 2018). Studies have shown that exposure to LGBT-themed media can reduce prejudice and broaden societal perspectives on gender and sexuality (Hoskin, 2018; Li & Pang, 2024; Sookpornawan et al., 2024). Pham (2024) illustrates how media representations of alternative identities in Southeast Asia provide audiences with tools for self-expression and cultural negotiation.

In Malaysia, where Islamic values heavily influence cultural norms, the depiction of LGBT themes in media often provokes moral and ethical debates (Abdul Majid et al., 2024). Fans of Yaoi and Yuri may experience internal conflicts as they reconcile their enjoyment of these genres with cultural and religious beliefs. However, the imaginative and fictional nature of these stories allows some fans to engage with these themes without necessarily aligning with them ideologically. This mirrors findings by Mopashari (2019), where Indonesian fans viewed their engagement with Yaoi as a temporary escape rather than a reflection of personal ideology. Similarly, Rubinstein et al. (2025) argue that imaginative narratives provide a space for emotional regulation and exploration of identity, allowing audiences to process complex emotions in a safe and engaging environment.

The intersection of gender identity and fan communities is also significant. Female fans identifying as fujoshi ("rotten women") and male fans as fudanshi ("rotten men") use these labels as markers of engagement with Yaoi and Yuri. Kristanto and Alie (2018) observed that these identities often serve as resistance to societal norms, providing fans with a sense of belonging within a global subculture. In Indonesia, fujoshi and fudanshi communities create safe spaces for fans to connect and explore themes of gender and identity. However, these identities can attract stigma in conservative contexts, where engagement with Yaoi and Yuri is sometimes perceived as socially deviant (Mopashari, 2019; Rahmawati & Nurhidayah, 2023). Mustafani et al. (2023) further identified that male Indonesian fans of Yaoi often face societal judgment, leading to feelings of isolation and internalised conflict.

Relevance to Gen Z in Malaysia

While studies on Yaoi and Yuri consumption are relatively abundant in Indonesia, research in Malaysia remains limited. As such, it is premature to categorise Malaysian audiences as key consumers of these genres. However, Gen Z, characterised by their digital nativity, represents a significant demographic for media engagement. This cohort has grown up during the proliferation of anime and manga culture in Malaysia, which has positioned them uniquely to interact with Japanese media.

Gen Z's deep integration with digital media and social networking platforms makes them potential consumers of Yaoi and Yuri. Globally, they are recognised for their digital fluency and openness to diverse cultural narratives (Astari et al., 2024; Salleh et al., 2024). In Malaysia, their enthusiasm for Japanese pop culture has been identified as a key driver for learning the Japanese language (Rokiah et al., 2020; Rohayati et al., 2022). Yaoi and Yuri genres may provide avenues for this demographic to explore themes of identity and self-expression, navigating complex questions of gender and societal expectations while engaging critically with cultural norms (Mustafani et al., 2023).

Despite resistance to LGBT narratives in Malaysia, Gen Z's active involvement in online fandoms highlights the transformative potential of digital media to reshape cultural attitudes. Their engagement with Yaoi and Yuri reflects not only a consumption pattern but also an interaction with broader cultural and social discourses. These evolving patterns emphasise the role of globalised media in influencing the cultural sensibilities of Malaysian youth while underscoring the need to understand the socio-cultural implications of such engagement.

Research Gap

While extensive research exists on anime and manga globally, studies addressing Yaoi and Yuri consumption in Malaysia remain scarce. Previous research largely focuses on anime and manga's role in language learning and cultural exchange (Normalis et al., 2022; Roslina et al., 2018). This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the socio-cultural complexities surrounding Yaoi and Yuri consumption in Malaysia's conservative context, exploring how global media narratives intersect with local cultural norms (Pham, 2024; Umar Hakim & Md. Azlanshah, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection to explore the demographics, consumption patterns, and socio-cultural implications of Yaoi and Yuri engagement among Malaysian university students. Mixed methods are particularly well-suited for examining complex cultural phenomena, as they combine statistical analysis with an in-depth exploration of individual perspectives (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This approach aligns with the need to contextualise media consumption and its socio-cultural ramifications (Mulyati et al., 2024).

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit university students enrolled in Japanese language courses at five Malaysian universities. This target group was chosen due to their familiarity with Japanese pop culture, including anime and manga (Rokiah, 2020; Roslina, 2022). From an initial dataset of 280 responses, data cleaning—removing duplicates and

entries with excessive missing data—reduced the sample to 265. Of these, the study focused on 111 participants who self-reported consuming or having consumed Yaoi and Yuri content. This subset ensured that findings directly addressed the research objectives of understanding the socio-cultural impacts of Yaoi and Yuri media consumption.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through an online survey comprising a mix of multiple-choice, open-ended, and closed-ended questions. This comprehensive format allowed for the capture of both specific details and broader perspectives, as recommended in educational research (Cohen et al., 2018). The survey covered six primary areas:

1. Demographics: Age, gender, religion, and university affiliation were captured to understand media consumption patterns (Mohd Azul et al., 2024).
2. Consumption Patterns: Duration, frequency, and types of Yaoi/Yuri consumption (e.g., anime, manga, fanfiction). A multiple-choice format simplified responses and facilitated statistical analysis (Madill, 2021; Umar Hakim & Md Azalanshah, 2024).
3. Awareness and Identification: Familiarity with terms such as *fujoshi* (female fans of male–male romance) and *fudanshi* (male fans of male–male romance), alongside self-identification. This component highlighted identity formation within fan cultures (Kristanto & Alie, 2018).
4. Motivations: Open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their reasons for engaging with Yaoi/Yuri and their perspectives on socio-cultural impacts.
5. Discontinuation Factors: Open-ended items probed why participants ceased consuming Yaoi/Yuri content, providing insights into cultural and personal factors influencing disengagement (Ting et al., 2021).
6. Perspectives: Participants shared their views on the socio-cultural implications of Yaoi and Yuri, particularly in the context of Malaysia’s conservative society.

The inclusion of multiple-choice questions ensured structured data collection for ease of analysis, while open-ended responses provided depth and richness, facilitating a nuanced understanding of participants’ perspectives.

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

The survey was conducted online and disseminated via social media platforms frequently used by university students, such as Instagram, and WhatsApp. This approach ensured broad accessibility and convenience while maintaining participant anonymity. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and objectives through an introductory message accompanying the survey link. Consent was implied by their voluntary completion of the survey, and participants were assured they could withdraw at any time. The survey refrained from collecting sensitive personal information, and all data were securely stored to protect respondent confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel to calculate frequencies and means, providing a statistical summary of demographic trends and consumption behaviours (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2019) six-phase framework to identify, review, and define recurring patterns

and nuanced perspectives on cultural engagement with Yaoi and Yuri. Thematic analysis, a widely used method for exploring patterns in qualitative data, has broad applications in diverse research contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019; 2024).

Limitations

This study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce response bias (Creswell, 2022). Additionally, focusing on Japanese language learners may limit the generalisability of the findings to other populations. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable insights into the intersection of media consumption and socio-cultural dynamics within a conservative setting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings based on the study's three research objectives: consumption patterns, motivations for consumption, and discontinuation factors. Each objective is discussed with relevant data and excerpts, supported by insights from prior research.

Consumption Patterns and Demographics

This section presents findings and discussion on the demographic characteristics of respondents and their consumption patterns of Yaoi and Yuri media, addressing Objective 1.

a. Demographics of Yaoi and Yuri Consumers

The study surveyed 111 university students from five Malaysian universities. The majority of respondents (83.8%) were aged 18–24 years, reflecting the typical demographic for anime and manga audiences globally. This aligns with findings by Kristanto and Alie (2018), who highlight the significant appeal of these genres to younger audiences due to their emotional complexity and relatability.

Female participants comprised 84% of the sample, consistent with global trends where women dominate Yaoi and Yuri audiences. This trend is attributed to the genres' focus on emotional depth, romantic narratives, and character development, which often resonate more with female audiences. One respondent shared, "Yaoi stories offer a unique perspective on relationships, and the emotional storytelling feels deeply engaging."

Although male respondents accounted for only 16% of the sample, their inclusion highlights the expanding appeal of Yaoi and Yuri beyond traditional gender boundaries. This shift mirrors observations by Mopashari (2019), who noted a growing male engagement with BL and GL genres in neighbouring countries like Indonesia. Male respondents emphasized the uniqueness of the storytelling, with one participant stating, "I enjoy the unique storytelling in Yaoi; it's different from mainstream genres."

Religious affiliations among respondents included Muslims (55%), Buddhists (34%), Christians (10%), and Hindus (1%), reflecting Malaysia's cultural diversity. Religious and cultural values significantly influenced respondents' engagement with Yaoi/Yuri media, with some expressing ambivalence. A Muslim participant remarked, "As a Muslim, I find some themes challenging, but I appreciate the emotional depth of the stories." These findings echo Mokhtar et al. (2019), who emphasize the pivotal role of religion in shaping media consumption in conservative societies. Such tensions illustrate how Yaoi/Yuri media serve as a site of cultural negotiation, where globalized narratives intersect with local cultural values.

b. Engagement Patterns

Among the respondents, 54% actively consumed Yaoi/Yuri media, while 46% had discontinued. Active consumers identified predominantly as Fujoshi (45%) or Fudanshi (13%), reflecting the fandom labels associated with these genres. However, 37% of active consumers refrained from adopting such labels, demonstrating the fluidity of fandom identities. For those who had discontinued, societal pressures and personal values were common factors. One participant explained, "I used to identify as Fujoshi, but now I avoid such labels due to societal judgment."

These findings highlight the significant influence of societal perceptions on engagement with fandom culture. Bykov and Gao (2024) argue that globalized media often requires audiences to navigate societal judgment and cultural norms, a dynamic clearly reflected in respondents' hesitation to identify openly with Yaoi/Yuri fandoms. The negotiation of fan identities underscores the broader tension between individual preferences and societal expectations in media consumption.

c. Content and Medium Preferences

Respondents exhibited a preference for non-explicit narratives, with Shonen-ai (41%) and Shoujo-ai (27%) being more popular than Yaoi (23%) and Yuri (9%). This inclination toward emotionally resonant storytelling rather than explicit content reflects the conservative cultural context of Malaysia. As one respondent shared, "I prefer Shonen-ai because it's more about love and emotions, not explicit content." These preferences align with Nozawa's (2023) observations that non-explicit BL narratives resonate with diverse audiences due to their focus on relationships and emotional depth over explicit depictions.

Anime emerged as the most consumed medium (72%), followed by manga (58%), highlighting the appeal of episodic storytelling and visual formats. The popularity of anime underscores its engaging and accessible nature, offering audiences a dynamic way to experience these narratives. These findings support Mulyati et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of aesthetics and episodic storytelling in enhancing audience engagement with Japanese media.

Respondents also favoured subgenres such as fantasy (29.9%), romance (19.4%), and slice-of-life (14.9%), showcasing the appeal of emotional and fantastical elements. These preferences further underline the significance of visual media and compelling storytelling in driving global interest in Yaoi/Yuri genres.

d. Discovery Channels

Social media (40%) and peer networks (55%) were the primary channels through which respondents discovered Yaoi/Yuri media. This highlights the central role of digital platforms and interpersonal networks in shaping media preferences. Bykov and Gao (2024) describe digital platforms as cultural intermediaries that facilitate access to globalized narratives while navigating local cultural constraints. Similarly, respondents indicated that these platforms allowed them to explore their interests discreetly while connecting with like-minded communities.

For instance, respondents highlighted the role of social media platforms such as Twitter and TikTok in exposing them to Yaoi/Yuri content through fan art, recommendations, and discussions. Friends also played a significant role, with one respondent sharing, "I discovered Yaoi through a friend who recommended an anime. It was my first exposure, and

a. Emotional Engagement (54.2%, 77 mentions)

Emotional engagement emerged as the most significant motivator, with respondents frequently describing the emotional depth of relationships and character development in Yaoi/Yuri works. These narratives often evoke strong feelings of love, joy, heartbreak, and healing, allowing audiences to connect with characters on a personal level. Respondents also valued the comforting and emotional release they experienced through the genre's storytelling.

Yoru to Asa no Uta - I love the relationship dynamics and also have you seen Yoru's lovesick face?

Strawberry Panic - Good drama between the main girls in the anime, also involves affectionate romance. I also fell in love with one of the girls because of her character throughout the anime.

Given - The main characters found comfort in each other through music, I find it endearing because initially the straight guy wasn't aware that he developed a feeling towards his friend.

These findings align with Kristanto and Alie (2018), who argue that Yaoi and Yuri challenge conventional storytelling while fostering deep emotional connections. Similarly, Zsila et al. (2018) highlight emotional resonance as a key factor attracting audiences to Yaoi media. Nozawa (2023) further emphasizes that the emotional focus of Boys' Love (BL) and related genres provides a space to explore complex relational themes, making these narratives particularly compelling to diverse audiences.

b. Storylines (52.8%, 75 mentions)

Storylines were the second most frequently mentioned theme, emphasising the critical role of engaging narratives in attracting audiences. Respondents often highlighted the complexity and uniqueness of plots, including elements such as character struggles, relationship dynamics, and dramatic arcs. These narratives frequently explore sensitive topics such as mental health, societal conflicts, and personal growth, resonating deeply with viewers who seek stories that go beyond surface-level entertainment.

Adam no Rokko - this manga shows the hardship and conflict experienced by a person with dissociative identity disorder trying to take care of himself and his loved one.

Caste Heaven - unique plot.

Given - I like this anime because the music is so good, and the story is very interesting.

These preferences highlight the appeal of storytelling that transcends surface-level entertainment, resonating deeply with audiences navigating similar struggles. Bykov and Gao (2024) emphasise that such narratives serve as cultural bridges, connecting audiences to

universal themes while navigating local cultural contexts. Similarly, Zsila et al. (2018) underscore the role of intricate storytelling in fostering engagement with Yaoi media.

c. Aesthetic Appeal (26.1%, 37 mentions)

The artistic quality of Yaoi/Yuri anime and manga was an important factor in audience preferences. Respondents valued the unique and detailed art styles that define these genres, including well-crafted characters and visually powerful emotional scenes. The combination of visual storytelling and narrative made the experience more engaging and emotionally impactful for viewers.

Ten Count - The art style is amazing.

Junjou Romantica - The art is stunning and complements the emotions of the characters.

Caste Heaven - Beautiful drawing style, the story is heartwarming.

These findings align with Mulyati et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of aesthetics in enhancing audience engagement with Japanese media. The integration of visual storytelling and compelling narratives enriches the viewing experience, supporting Nozawa's (2023) assertion that BL and related genres effectively use transmedia storytelling to captivate global audiences.

d. Representation (17.6%, 25 mentions)

Representation of LGBT themes and relationships was a critical motivator for many respondents. These works provide inclusive narratives that normalize and celebrate diverse identities and orientations, fostering acceptance and understanding. Respondents appreciated the positive portrayal of same-sex relationships and the authenticity of LGBT experiences, often absent in mainstream media.

Yuri on Ice - Showing that no matter what your preference is you can be a great athlete.

Sekaiichi Hatsukoi - Because they make it look normal to be part of LGBT and it is sweet.

Doukyusei - It presented a point that there is always more to a person other than their sexual orientation.

Madill (2021) highlights the transformative potential of such media in broadening perspectives on gender and sexuality while humanising marginalised identities. Similarly, Nozawa (2023) emphasises the role of BL and GL media in fostering empathy and expanding understanding of diverse identities. Bykov and Gao (2024) underscore how global narratives facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, creating spaces for alternative representations of gender and identity. These findings align with Rubinstein et al. (2025), who stress that imaginative narratives provide a platform to explore identity and inclusivity.

e. Entertainment and Escapism (9.2%, 13 mentions)

For some respondents, Yaoi/Yuri anime and manga provided a necessary escape from daily routines and stress. The light-hearted and entertaining aspects of these works allowed viewers to relax and recharge. Respondents enjoyed the genre's creativity and humour, as well as the fantastical settings and engaging plots that offered a temporary reprieve from reality.

Miss Kobayashi's Dragon Maid - Slice of life shown in a real-life scenario with a pitch of fantasy.

Yuri on Ice - I watched it for relaxation and the skating was so engaging.

Dakaretai Otoko - A fun yet intense love story with a touch of entertainment industry drama.

These motivations align with Rubinstein et al. (2025), who highlight how playful and imaginative storytelling serves as an effective strategy for adaptive emotion regulation. By creating immersive worlds, Yaoi/Yuri media allow audiences to manage stress and enhance emotional well-being, further underscoring their multifaceted appeal.

Figure 3 provides a bar chart visualisation of the frequency of mentions for each theme. The chart underscores the prominence of Emotional Engagement and Storylines in motivating respondents, highlighting the centrality of narrative quality and character depth in attracting audiences.

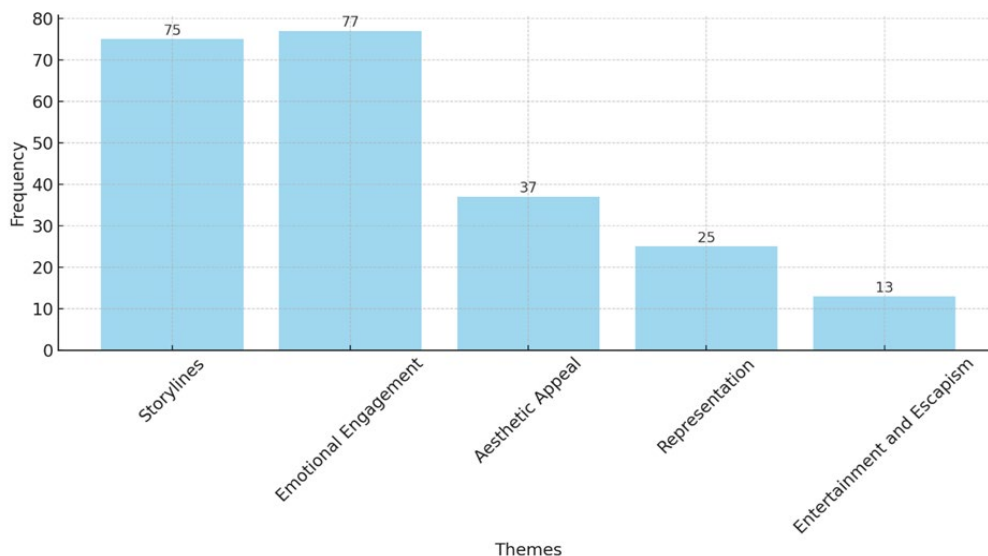


Figure 3: Frequency of mentions for each theme in motivations for consuming Yaoi and Yuri

Overlapping Motivations in Consuming Yaoi and Yuri

While distinct themes were identified, many responses revealed overlapping motivations, demonstrating the multifaceted appeal of Yaoi and Yuri media. For example, emotional engagement was frequently tied to compelling storylines, while aesthetic appeal often enhanced emotional connections. These overlaps highlight the holistic experience these genres provide, where multiple factors resonate simultaneously with audiences.

Given - The main characters found comfort in each other through music. I find it endearing because initially the straight guy wasn't aware that he developed a feeling towards his friend (combination of Emotional Engagement and Storylines).

Strawberry Panic - Good drama between the main girls in the anime, also involves affectionate romance. I also fell in love with one of the girls because of her character throughout the anime (combination of Emotional Engagement and Representation).

Junjou Romantica - The art is stunning and complements the emotions of the characters (combination of Aesthetic Appeal and Emotional Engagement).

These overlaps reflect the layered nature of Yaoi/Yuri media, where multiple factors converge to create a rich and engaging experience. As Bykov and Gao (2024) note, transmedia narratives excel in fostering such multifaceted engagement by adapting to the cultural and emotional needs of diverse audiences.

Reasons for Discontinuing Yaoi/Yuri and Respondents' Opinions on the Genre

This section explores the reasons respondents discontinued consuming Yaoi/Yuri media and their opinions about the genre. Data from 49 participants revealed three primary themes for discontinuation: religious and moral values, disinterest in storylines, and time constraints. Respondents' perspectives on the genre were categorized into positive, negative, and neutral opinions. Figure 4 summarises recurring terms and themes, highlighting key points such as moral values, LGBT, art, and plot.



Figure 4: Reasons for stopping consumption and their opinions

Reasons for Stopping Consumption

a. Religious and Moral Values (61.2%, 30 mentions)

Religious beliefs and moral standards were the most frequently cited reasons for discontinuing Yaoi/Yuri media consumption. Respondents expressed discomfort with the portrayal and normalization of LGBT themes, which they perceived as conflicting with cultural and moral frameworks. Concerns were particularly tied to perceived societal impacts, especially on youth.

My religion, my culture, my background, moral values - it is very different from the moral values that I learned.

My religion - it influences negatively in terms of mind and emotion.

My upbringing, moral value - it damages the youth brain, for instance, in enhancing your memory and the way you look at someone, you will look at them as a sex object.

These responses align with Abdul Majid et al. (2024), who emphasize cultural resistance to LGBT representation in Malaysia due to prevailing religious and moral values. Pham (2024) similarly discuss how globalized media in Southeast Asia often encounters significant resistance despite its growing presence. The findings indicate that Yaoi/Yuri media challenge societal norms by presenting alternative narratives, creating both opportunities for dialogue and sources of discomfort for more conservative audiences. The divergence between global and local values is further exemplified by Nozawa (2023), who notes that while BL and GL media offer platforms for exploring diverse identities, they often face pushback in societies where such representations conflict with traditional values.

b. Disinterest in Storylines (28.6%, 14 mentions)

The second most cited reason was dissatisfaction with the narrative aspects of Yaoi/Yuri media. Respondents described the plots as repetitive, unrelatable, or lacking innovation.

I can't relate with male characters since I'm a woman. However, I do not find interest in women too.

Having other interests in other anime.

Maybe the sad or queerbaiting plot—storylines seem to lack creativity.

These findings highlight the importance of creative storytelling in maintaining audience engagement. Zsila et al. (2018) argue that unique and relatable narratives are crucial for sustaining interest in niche genres like Yaoi/Yuri. Kristanto and Alie (2018) also emphasize the risks of narrative stagnation in alienating long-term audiences. As Pham (2024) observed, the lack of locally resonant storytelling in media can exacerbate disengagement, particularly in conservative societies where such narratives already face cultural resistance.

c. Time Constraints (10.2%, 5 mentions)

Practical limitations, such as academic responsibilities, career demands, and other priorities, also emerged as reasons for discontinuation. Respondents often clarified that their disengagement was not due to objections to the content but rather a matter of competing commitments.

No time. I need to prepare for the final year lol.

Insufficient time to read manga as the daily schedule is becoming busy.

Lack of time. It's not that I don't enjoy it, but I'm just too occupied with my degree.

These findings underscore the role of life stages in shaping media consumption. Rubinstein et al. (2025) highlight that while imaginative narratives can serve as tools for emotional regulation and stress management, external constraints such as time pressures often reduce audience engagement. This suggests that Yaoi/Yuri media, while appealing, may be deprioritized when practical obligations arise.

Opinions About the Genre

Respondents also shared their perspectives on Yaoi/Yuri anime and manga, which were categorized into three themes:

a. Positive Views (40.8%, 20 mentions)

Positive opinions focused on the artistic and cultural value of Yaoi/Yuri media. Respondents acknowledged its creativity and ability to showcase diverse perspectives, often appreciating its educational elements, such as insights into Japanese culture and language.

It is an art and culture of Japan, and it is entertainment material for me.

It's a good way to represent their people and way of life.

It can improve my understanding in Japanese. I also learn new words in Japanese language.

These perspectives align with Nozawa (2023), who notes that BL and GL media serve as tools for cultural exploration and empathy-building. Bykov and Gao (2024) similarly highlight the role of globalized narratives in fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

b. Negative Views (22.4%, 11 mentions)

Negative opinions focused on the moral and societal implications of Yaoi/Yuri media. Respondents expressed discomfort with the explicit or romanticized themes, particularly those involving LGBT representation, which they perceived as inappropriate or potentially harmful.

It is annoying and gives a bad impact, especially to children.

In my opinion, it is not okay to have this genre in manga and anime because it feels like we are supporting LGBT to normalize it in our life.

A bit dirty, I think.

These findings reflect ongoing tensions between global narratives and local cultural values, consistent with Abdul Majid et al. (2024) and Pham (2024). The pushback against Yaoi/Yuri media underscores the cultural challenges faced by these genres in conservative societies.

c. Neutral Views (36.7%, 18 mentions)

Neutral perspectives reflected a balanced outlook, recognising both positive and negative aspects of the genre. These respondents often deemed Yaoi/Yuri media acceptable under specific conditions, such as engaging plotlines or when the content did not influence their personal values.

I think as long as the plot is good, it doesn't matter whether it is a Yaoi or Yuri manga.

We can read it as long as it doesn't change anything in our life.

This is just a category of manga and anime. And they are just reflecting some of the phenomenon of the community nowadays.

These views indicate that while these respondents may not actively engage with the genre, they do not strongly oppose its existence. These perspectives highlight conditional acceptance, where audiences compartmentalise their engagement with globalised media. This nuanced approach mirrors findings by Bykov and Gao (2024), who discuss how conservative audiences navigate global narratives while maintaining their cultural identities.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the consumption of Yaoi and Yuri media among Malaysian university students, focusing on their demographic characteristics, motivations for engagement, and socio-cultural perceptions. The findings reveal the complex interplay between globalised media and local cultural norms, highlighting both the appeal and the limitations of these narratives in a conservative society.

Yaoi and Yuri resonate with audiences through their emotional depth, compelling storytelling, and exploration of alternative relationships. However, their broader acceptance is constrained by deeply rooted cultural and religious values. Many respondents highlighted the tension between their enjoyment of these genres and societal expectations, with discontinuation often driven by moral and religious considerations. These findings underscore the dual role of Yaoi and Yuri media as platforms for identity exploration and cultural negotiation, navigating the intersection of global and local values.

While these genres have the potential to foster empathy and cultural exploration, this study emphasises the importance of alternative approaches for achieving meaningful cultural dialogue in conservative contexts like Malaysia. Culturally sensitive storytelling that incorporates traditional values alongside universal themes may offer a more effective avenue for promoting inclusivity and understanding without challenging societal norms. Leveraging local narratives and transmedia storytelling provides an opportunity for media creators to engage audiences in ways that resonate culturally, while still fostering a broader appreciation for diversity.

The study contributes to the growing discourse on globalised media and its socio-cultural implications, particularly in regions where traditional values heavily influence media consumption. However, the focus on university students limits the generalisability of the results. Future research should include more diverse demographic samples and examine the long-term cultural impact of Yaoi and Yuri media. Additionally, exploring how localised narratives can bridge cultural divides while respecting societal values presents an important area for further investigation.

In conclusion, Yaoi and Yuri media offer unique insights into the dynamics of globalised media consumption in Malaysia. While these genres provide platforms for identity exploration and cultural engagement, achieving sustainable cultural dialogue requires strategies that align with local traditions and values, ensuring broader societal acceptance and inclusivity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge Sumitomo Foundation grants 2020/2021 "Understanding LGBT elements in manga and anime and its relationship with Malaysian Otaku," Grant No. 208402, and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak for supporting this project.

BIODATA

Rokiah Pae is a senior lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Research interests include second and foreign language teaching and learning, and translation and interpreting. Email: prokiah@unimas.my

Roslina Mamat is an Associate Professor at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Her research interest are conversational analysis and Japanese popular culture. Email: linamm@upm.edu.my

Roswati Abdul Rashid is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Language and Communication, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. Her research interests are related to Japanese Language in tourism and the teaching and learning (T&L) of Japanese as a foreign language. Email: roswati@umt.edu.my

REFERENCES

- Abdul Majid, S. F., Ajmain @ Jima'ain, M. T., & Wan Khairuldin, W. M. K. F. (2024). Aplikasi kaedah al-zajr bi al-hajr (pencegahan melalui pemulauan) sebagai pendekatan menangani isu LGBT di Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law*, 12(3), 598–608. <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.vol12no3.520>
- Amal, B. K., Supsiloi, D., Ampira, D., & Natsir, M. (2021). The analysis of fantasy and representation of females on gay and male homoerotic relationships in the yaoi genre. *Asian Social Science and Humanities Research Journal*, 3(2), 55–63.
- Astari, D. W., Nurussa'adah, E., & Apriliana, A. Q. (2024). The urgency of social media “diet” for Generation Z. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 40(3), 74–89. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4003-05>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019) Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11, 589–597.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). A critical review of the reporting of reflexive thematic analysis in Health Promotion International. *Health Promotion International*, 39.
- Bykov, I., & Gao, X. (2024). Western transmedia projects in China: Growing phenomenon with cross-cultural challenges? *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies*, 6(4), 500–521. <https://doi.org/10.46539/gmd.v6i4.501>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hoskin, R. A. (2018). Westernization and the transmogrification of Sailor Moon. *Interalia: A Journal of Queer Studies*, 13(1), 78–89.
- Kristanto, A. B. D., & Alie, A. (2018). Studi fenomenologi tentang laki-laki (Fudanshi) penggemar bacaan dan tontonan fiksi romantis homoerotis Jepang (Yaoi) di Kota Surabaya. *Journal of Urban Sociology*, 1(1), 58–69.
- Li, E. C. Y., & Pang, K. W. (2024). Queer media from the global South: The emerging Girls Love (GL) media industry of Southeast Asia. *Feminist Media Studies*, 24(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2024.2433564>
- Madill, A. (2021). Yaoi, boys' love (BL), and danmei: Female-oriented homoerotica in popular culture. *Cultural Studies Review*, 27(1), 35–50.
- Mohd Azul Mohamad Salleh, M., Che Kasim, A., Mohd Yusof, M. Y., Mohamad Adli Baco, M., & Nor Arzami, M. N. I. (2024). Ketagihan skrin dalam kalangan belia di Lembah Klang. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 40(1), 286–303. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4001-16>
- Mohd Noor, F. (2023, March 18). “LGBT isu akidah, akhlak... kita kena tolak”. *My Metro Online*. <https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2023/03/947151/lgbt-isu-akidah-akhlak-kita-kena-tolak>
- Mokhtar, M. F., Sukeri, W. A., & Latiff, Z. A. (2019). Social media roles in spreading LGBT movements in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Media and Communication*, 3(2), 77–82.

- Mopashari, A. (2019). *Sikap dan perilaku wanita penggemar cerita cinta homoseksual di Facebook dan Instagram terhadap stigma masyarakat: Studi kasus di kalangan fujoshi* [Master's thesis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia].
- Muliyati, S., Yusof, M. Z., & Salleh, A. A. (2024). Visual rhetoric in contemporary comics and web design. *International Journal of Media Arts*, 9(2), 56–70.
- Mustafani, S., Ridfah, A., & Istiqamah, S. H. N. (2023). Gambaran psikologis mahasiswa laki-laki penyuka anime genre Yaoi (Fudanshi) di Kota Makassar. *PESHUM: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 3(1), 99–108.
- Normalis Amzah, Intan Safinaz Zainudin, & Aznur Aisyah Abdullah. (2022). Kecenderungan pelajar IPTA terhadap anime. *The development of Japanese language education in Malaysia* (pp. 163-184). Penerbit UMT.
- Nozawa, E. (2023). Boys' Love, transmedia storytelling, and LGBT awareness in contemporary Japan. In S. Salenius. (Eds.), *Gender in Japanese popular culture* (pp 175–207). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12942-1_7
- Pham, B. (2024). On digital media risks, intensive parenting, and glocal tensions: Public discourse and parents' experiences in Vietnam. *International Journal of Communication*, 18, 2558-2576
- Rahmawati, R., & Nurhidayah, S. (2023). Fujoshi viewed from moral reasoning in Otaku. *Paradigma*, 20(1), 85–95.
- Rohayati Paidi, Asmadi Hassan, Tg Iffah Tuan Yazid, Roslina Mamat, Kelana Ahmad, & Ramli Dollah. (2022). Motivasi belajar bahasa Jepun di kalangan pelajar Universiti Awam. In Roswati Abdul Rashid, Normalis Amzah, & Zoraida Mustafa (Eds.), *Perkembangan pendidikan Bahasa Jepun di Malaysia* (pp. 141–161). Penerbit UMT.
- Rokiah Pae, Roslina, Mamat, & Roswati Abdul Rashid. (2020). Japanese animation: Its effect on Malaysian undergraduates' students. In A. H. Omar, S. Needham, & N. Hill (Eds.), *Proceedings of the (Annual) Conference on Asian Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 145-151). The Glocal.
- Roslina Mamat. (2022). Elemen budaya kontemporati Jepun dalam pembelajaran dan pengajaran Bahasa Jepun. In Roswati Abdul Rashid, Normalis Amzah, & Zoraida Mustafa (Eds.), *Perkembangan pendidikan Bahasa Jepun di Malaysia* (pp. 185-206). Penerbit UMT.
- Roslina Mamat, Hazlina Abdul Halim, Nor Shahila Mansor, & Roswati Abdul Rashid. (2018). Penggunaan manga dan anime sebagai media pembelajaran dalam kalangan pelajar Bahasa Jepun diuniversiti awam Malaysia. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 34(3), 298–313.
- Rubinstein, D., Lahad, M., Aharonson-Daniel, L., Mizrahi, D., Weinstock, G., Tandler, N., & Proyer, R. T. (2025). Fantastic reality and playfulness as a means for adaptive emotion regulation. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 10(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-024-00206-w>
- Salleh, M. A. M., Kasim, A. C., Yusof, M. Y. M., Baco, M. A., & Arzami, M. N. I. N. (2024). Screen addiction among youth in Klang Valley. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 40(1), 286–303. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4001-16>
- Sookpornasawan, R., Kiatrungrit, K., Seree, P., Korpaisarn, S., & Arunakul, J. (2024). Association between exposure to gender and sexual diversity in media (GSDM) and Thai adolescents' attitude towards LGBT individuals: A cross-sectional study in Bangkok schools. *BMJ Open*, 14, e089390. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2024-089390>

- Statista. (n.d.a). Anime industry in Japan. Retrieved January 4, 2025, from <https://www.statista.com/topics/7495/anime-industry-in-japan/#topicOverview>
- Statista. (n.d.b). Total comics market size in Japan from 2009 to 2022. Retrieved January 4, 2025, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1219242/japan-total-comics-market-size/>
- Ting, C. H., Ramli, M. Y. H., & Mokhtar, F. (2021). Media portrayal of LGBT issues in Malaysia: A content analysis. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 15(4), 89–105.
- Umar Hakim Mohd Hasri, & Md. Azalanshah Md Syed. (2024). A paradigm shift in the Malaysian animation industry: Inclusive transmedia storytelling and cultural preservation contrary to global trends. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 40(3), 132–151. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4003-08>
- Zsila, Á., Pagliassotti, D., Urbán, R., Orosz, G., Király, O., & Demetrovics, Z. (2018). Loving the love of boys: Motives for consuming boys' love (BL) media and associated socio-demographic and psychological characteristics. *PLoS ONE*, 13(6), e0198895. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198895>