



Shokugeki no Soma Anime as a Form of Japanese Soft Power in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Anime is a Japanese popular culture that has gone global. The Shokugeki no Soma anime is one of the anime that has many fans in various countries, one of which is in Indonesia. Although this anime has never been broadcast on Indonesian television stations, Ani-One Asia, a business branch of Medialink Group engaged in content distribution and brand licensing, has broadcast the Shokugeki no Soma anime with Indonesian subtitles on the YouTube platform for free. This study aims to explain the Shokugeki no Soma anime as a form of Japanese soft power in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative method with interpretive analysis. The object of study is the Shokugeki no Soma anime which displays scenes containing Japanese cultural elements. Data collection was carried out through interviews and literature studies. In analyzing, the researcher used the theory of soft power and cultural diplomacy. From the results of the study, the researcher found that the Shokugeki no Soma anime is a product of Japanese popular culture that is used as a source of soft power. The Washoku and Onsen cultures featured in the Shokugeki no Soma anime are Japan's efforts to attract the interest of its viewers so that they want to know more about Japan. Apart from contributing as a soft power instrument that introduces Japanese culture, the Shokugeki no Soma anime also contributes as a tool for Japanese cultural diplomacy in the tourism sector because it can influence viewers to go to Japan because they want to experience Washoku and Onsen culture directly.

Kata Kunci

Anime,
Budaya
Populer,
Diplomasi
Budaya,
Jepang, Soft
Power.

ABSTRAK

Anime merupakan budaya populer Jepang yang telah mendunia. Anime Shokugeki no Soma adalah salah satu anime yang memiliki banyak penggemar di berbagai negara, salah satunya di Indonesia. Meski anime ini belum pernah tayang di stasiun televisi Indonesia, tapi Ani-One Asia, cabang bisnis dari Medialink Group yang bergerak di bidang distribusi konten dan lisensi merek telah menayangkan anime Shokugeki no Soma dengan takarir Bahasa Indonesia di platform YouTube secara gratis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tentang anime Shokugeki no Soma sebagai bentuk soft power Jepang di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan analisis interpretatif. Objek yang diteliti adalah anime Shokugeki no Soma yang menampilkan adegan-adegan berisi elemen budaya Jepang. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dan studi pustaka. Dalam menganalisis, peneliti menggunakan teori soft power dan diplomasi budaya. Dari hasil penelitian, peneliti menemukan bahwa anime Shokugeki no Soma merupakan produk budaya populer Jepang yang dimanfaatkan sebagai sumber soft power. Budaya Washoku dan Onsen yang ditampilkan dalam anime Shokugeki no Soma merupakan upaya Jepang untuk menarik minat para penontonnya agar mereka ingin tahu lebih dalam tentang Jepang. Selain berkontribusi sebagai instrumen soft power yang memperkenalkan budaya Jepang, anime Shokugeki no Soma juga berkontribusi sebagai alat diplomasi budaya Jepang dalam sektor pariwisata karena dapat mempengaruhi para penontonnya untuk pergi ke Jepang sebab mereka ingin merasakan secara langsung budaya Washoku dan Onsen.

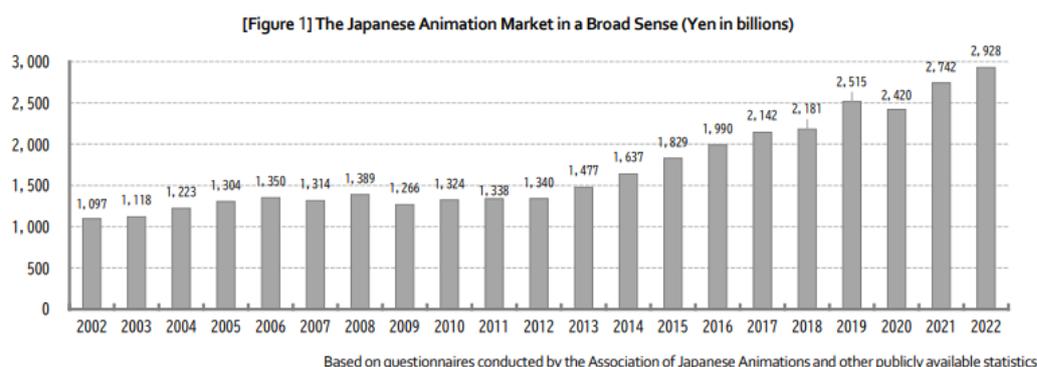
INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, popular culture has become an instrument of soft power for countries in cultural diplomacy. One country known for this is Japan. Japan utilizes its popular culture, such as *manga*, anime, games, *J-pop*, *dorama*, and so on, to expand its influence and spread its culture internationally. In addition to being useful in spreading influence, Japanese popular culture can also promote the economy and tourism.

Anime is one of Japan's popular cultural exports that serves as an instrument of soft power in cultural diplomacy. The history of anime dates back to 1917, when the first anime productions began to emerge in the form of moving black-and-white images without sound. Then in the 1920s, anime began to develop into moving images with sound and music. Even though anime had undergone development, at that time, it could only be enjoyed by certain groups of people. Finally, thanks to globalization followed by advances in science and technology, anime can now be enjoyed by all groups of people.) (Anwar, Suwecawangsa, & Resen, 2023).

Over the past few decades, anime has become an international attraction. This can be seen from data on trends in the anime industry market, which has continued to grow from 2002 to 2022. According to a report from the Association of Japanese Animation, in 2002, the anime industry market was worth 1.097 billion yen and continued to rise to 2.928 billion yen in 2022, despite experiencing a decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Masuda, et al., 2023).

Figure 1. Anime Industry Market Trend Data from 2002 to 2022



Source: (Masuda, et al., 2023, p. 2)

Anime has a different visualization from other animations. That is why anime has its own appeal for its audience. Unlike other animation industries, the Japanese animation industry has developed diverse and unique graphics, storylines, and themes from year to year. It must be acknowledged that anime as Japan's soft power is an interesting topic to study. Therefore, researchers are interested in studying anime as Japan's soft power. In order to strengthen the theoretical and empirical foundations of this research, the researchers first reviewed a number of previous studies relevant to the topics of soft power and Japanese cultural diplomacy through anime media. Reviewing previous studies is important to map the position of this research and identify research gaps to be addressed.

Research conducted by Wisanggeni (2019) entitled *Japan's Soft Power in the Anime Samurai Champloo as a Form of Cultural Diplomacy* examines how the anime *Samurai Champloo* is used as an instrument of Japanese cultural diplomacy. This study uses the concepts of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and anime cultural politics. The results show that Japan utilizes anime as a medium to build its image as an open and inclusive country to international audiences, thereby strengthening the appeal of Japanese culture at the global level (Wisanggeni, 2019, pp. 64-72). Furthermore, a study by

Yuliani, Mulyadi, and Adji (2021) entitled *Japanese Soft Power in Indonesia on Anime Entitled Ufo Baby: Study of Popular Culture* ocuses on the representation of Japanese culture in the anime *Ufo Baby* and its influence on Indonesian society. By applying John Storey's popular culture theory and Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, the study finds that the elements of Japanese culture portrayed in the anime are able to stimulate Indonesian public interest in participating in Japanese cultural festivals, thereby demonstrating the effectiveness of anime as a medium of Japanese soft power in Indonesia (Yuliani, Mulyadi, & Adji, 2021).

Research by Ardiansyah (2023) entitled *Japanese Cultural Soft Power in the Boruto Anime Film (Himawari and Kawaki Academy Arc) in Indonesia in 2022* examines the role of *Boruto* anime in introducing Japanese culture, particularly cuisine and fashion, to the Indonesian people. This study uses the concept of soft power and constructivist International Relations theory. The results show that the *Boruto* anime serves as a means of Japanese soft power that can foster Indonesian people's interest and curiosity about Japanese culture in greater depth. (Ardiansyah, 2023). Finally, research conducted by Nessa, Wiranata, and Suwecawangsa (2024) entitled *Japanese Cultural Diplomacy Through Makoto Shinkai's Animations as an Instrument of Soft Power* discusses the representation of the anime *Kimi no Nawa* and *Tenki no Ko* in the context of Japanese cultural diplomacy. This study uses the concepts of soft power, cultural politics, and cultural diplomacy. The findings show that both anime represent Japanese cultural values as well as global culture in the dynamics of urban and rural life, and have a positive impact on Japan's cultural diplomacy efforts in the international arena. (Nessa, Wiranata, & Suwecawangsa, 2024).

Based on a review of previous studies, no research has been found that specifically discusses the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* as an object of study in the context of Japanese soft power and cultural diplomacy. Previous studies tend to focus on anime in the adventure, fantasy, and drama genres, while cultural representation through culinary themes has not been widely studied. In addition, although *Shokugeki no Soma* has never been aired on Indonesian television stations and is relatively unknown to the general public, this anime is quite popular among Indonesian anime fans through digital distribution by Ani-One Asia on the YouTube platform with Indonesian subtitles. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing *Shokugeki no Soma* as an instrument of Japanese soft power in introducing Japanese culinary culture and cultural values to Indonesian audiences through digital media.

Figure 2. *Shokugeki no Soma* anime on the Ani-One Asia YouTube channel



Source: (Yonetani, 2015)

Shokugeki no Soma is an anime series with a unique story. This anime tells the story of Yukihira Soma's journey to surpass his father's cooking skills and become the head chef at his family's restaurant. To achieve his goal, Soma accepts his father's offer to attend an elite culinary school, Totsuki Academy, where only 10% of students graduate, to prove that he is worthy of becoming the head chef at his family's restaurant. (Fandom, 2022).

This anime contains several scenes that represent Japanese culture and introduce it to viewers. Based on this, the researcher decided to conduct a study entitled Anime Shokugeki no Soma as a Form of Japanese Soft Power in Indonesia.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Soft Power

Soft power is a concept introduced by Joseph Nye, a professor of political science at Harvard University and an American expert on international security, in the early 1990s. Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence other countries without coercion, such as through culture, political values, and foreign policy. Essentially, soft power is the idea that a country's appeal and legitimacy can shape the behavior of other actors in the international system. Unlike hard power, which uses military force (coercion), soft power is exercised through persuasion and attraction. (Nye, 2004).

Nye argues that a country's soft power resources can increase its influence and credibility on the international stage. Here are three examples of soft power resources:

1. Culture

Nye argues that a country's soft power resources can increase its influence and credibility on the international stage. Here are three examples of soft power resources. The culture referred to here is not always high culture, which can only be enjoyed by certain groups. Popular culture that can be enjoyed by all segments of society can also be a form of soft power. Culture is considered the most effective and efficient source of soft power because it can be accepted and enjoyed by all segments of society. Joseph Nye himself has discussed traditional culture (high culture) and popular Japanese culture as sources of soft power for their countries.

2. Political Values

If the political values embraced by a country are consistent with the actions taken by that country, then that country will gain legitimacy from other countries. This, in turn, can help the country determine what kind of foreign policy to pursue.

3. Foreign Policy

Foreign policy greatly influences soft power because the policies established by a country can demonstrate the values embraced by that country. In other words, if a country has policies that are considered good by the international community, then the international community will consider that country to be a good country. Conversely, if the country's policies are considered arrogant, then those policies will damage the country's image and weaken its soft power. (Nye, 2004).

In this study, popular culture is included in the first soft power resource, namely culture. Culture is viewed as values and practices that create various meanings for society, eventually forming a complex system that includes customs, morals, arts, and so on. Popular culture is one form of this culture. Popular culture is universal in nature and has unique characteristics that easily attract the attention of many people. In this case, anime is one example of popular culture (Nye, 2004, pp. 60-63). In this study, the concept of soft power is used as an analytical tool to explain how the representation of Japanese culture in the anime Shokugeki no Soma is able to create appeal and influence the perceptions and behavior of Indonesian audiences without coercion. Anime is analyzed as a source of soft power that showcases washoku culture, onsen, and Japanese aesthetic values, then traced how

these representations build attraction through visuals, narratives, and the emotional experiences of viewers. Furthermore, audience responses such as interest in cooking Japanese food, desire to visit Japan, and interest in Japanese culture are understood as forms of soft power outcomes, where changes in attitudes and preferences occur voluntarily. Thus, soft power functions as a framework that connects cultural representations in anime and their relationship with audiences in Indonesia.

Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is a concept that plays an important role in shaping global interactions and mutual understanding between countries. The goal of cultural diplomacy is to create understanding and appreciation for different cultures in order to foster trust and cooperation between countries. This is because culture is considered a value and practice that creates meaning for society.

By engaging with culture, a country can increase its soft power and strengthen diplomatic relations with other countries. The ability to get what the country wants through appeal shows that culture is very important for a country (Nye, 2004, p. 18).

Cultural diplomacy has become important in international relations because it offers a unique and effective way to build bridges between countries, promote peace and mutual understanding, and overcome global challenges. According to Gienow-Hecht and Donfried (in Carbone, 2017), cultural diplomacy has four main components. The following is a description of these main components:

1. Agent

An agent refers to an entity or individual responsible for conducting cultural exchange activities on behalf of a country or organization. This can include government officials, cultural institutions, artists, academics, and non-governmental organizations. Agents play an important role in representing the cultural values and interests of a country or organization in an international context.

2. Agenda

The agenda refers to the specific goals and objectives that a country or organization wishes to achieve through cultural exchange. These goals vary and may include national identity, increasing soft power, improving mutual understanding between countries, building relationships with other countries, and so on. This agenda guides cultural diplomacy activities and can influence a country's cultural diplomacy strategy.

3. Vehicles

Vehicles refer to the means or channels through which cultural diplomacy activities are carried out. These can include cultural events, exhibitions, performances, media campaigns, and so on. The selection of these vehicles is very important in reaching the target audience of cultural diplomacy.

4. Target Audience

Target audience refers to specific individuals, groups, or communities that a country or organization wishes to reach and influence through cultural diplomacy activities. Understanding the characteristics, interests, and preferences of the target audience is important in designing initiatives that are relevant and impactful for a country's cultural diplomacy (Carbone, 2017).

The four components of cultural diplomacy work together to shape and define the practice of cultural diplomacy in international relations. By considering these four components, a country and/or organization can effectively utilize cultural diplomacy to promote cultural values, increase its influence in the international arena, and build good relations with other countries.

In this study, the researcher focuses on one of the components of cultural diplomacy, namely, vehicles. As a form of Japanese popular culture, anime has become a good “vehicle” for Japanese cultural diplomacy. The popularity of anime in the international arena has enabled Japan to showcase

its unique cultural identity, values, and creativity to the international community. By using anime, Japan can interact with the international community, promote its culture, and strengthen its soft power on the international stage.

One of the things that makes anime a vehicle for Japanese cultural diplomacy is its ability to overcome language barriers. Anime can be subtitled or dubbed into various languages, allowing viewers from all countries to enjoy it. This accessibility further increases the spread of Japanese culture and values to the international community. In addition, anime also serves as a medium that visually displays Japanese culture, traditions, aesthetics, and social norms. By presenting Japanese culture and values in visual form, anime can also be a tool to show a positive image of Japan to the international community.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used by the researcher in this study is a qualitative approach with interpretive analysis. Qualitative research is used to examine, understand, and describe problems to answer the research questions in this study. According to Bakry (2017), the use of interpretive analysis focuses on revealing meaning-making practices and showing how the configurations of the observed results are. This research method was chosen so that the researcher could understand and interpret the scenes depicted in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*. (Bakry, 2017).

In this study, researchers collected data from two sources, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data is data obtained directly. In this study, the primary data source was scenes shown in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* that contained cultural elements in the images and dialogue. The data collected can be used as a reference to conclude the meaning or message contained in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*. In addition, the researcher also used interviews as a primary data source to describe the influence of Japanese soft power in Indonesia. Interviews were conducted with a group of young people aged 20-26 who were members of the MUSUME anime group, which had 21 members. Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling. This was done because the interviews were only conducted with three members who liked the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* and were personally influenced by Japanese culture after watching it.

The interview technique used by the researcher was a semi-structured interview technique. This interview technique is a technique that adheres to interview script guidelines but is flexible. The sources in this study included Shafira (26 years old), Reza (25 years old), and Dymas (24 years old). All interviews were conducted via private WhatsApp chat for 7-10 minutes. Secondary data is data obtained from literature studies such as books, journal articles, official documents/reports, and so on. In this study, the researcher used various types of secondary data sources relevant to the study to supplement the information obtained from primary data sources. The collected data will be used as input for the conclusions at the end of the study. Therefore, the role and validity of the data must be considered as carefully as possible. Consequently, the researcher needs to follow the steps in obtaining the correct data.

First, the researcher collects data obtained after observing the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* and organizes the data obtained from the observation. Second, after the data is organized, the researcher reduces the data by removing data that is considered irrelevant to the research. Third, the researcher categorizes the data that is considered important into sections that are relevant to the research topic to facilitate the research. Fourth, the researcher connects the data with the concepts used to interpret the data in order to answer the research questions.

In this study, research instruments are needed to assist the researcher during the data collection period in order to obtain valid data. These research instruments consist of primary and supporting instruments. The researcher acts as the primary instrument, where the researcher acts as the planner,

implementer, data collector, data analyst, and data interpreter. In doing so, the researcher is assisted by supporting instruments such as books, journals, interview guidelines, internet access, and electronic equipment such as cell phones and laptops.

In qualitative research, data validity tests consist of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests. In practice, qualitative research must be based on accuracy from the perspective of the researcher, participants, and readers in general so that the research results are seen as authentic, credible, and reliable. In this study, data validation was carried out through data triangulation by cross-checking primary and secondary data. Primary data in the form of interviews with informants and observations of scenes in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* were compared and tested for consistency with secondary data obtained from books, journal articles, and scientific reports discussing soft power, cultural diplomacy, and Japanese popular culture. This triangulation aims to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is not based on a single data source but is supported by various perspectives and theoretical references, so that the research findings have a higher level of credibility and validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Japan's Soft Power Through Popular Culture (Anime)

Japan is one of the developed countries renowned for its rich culture, whether it be traditional or popular. Anime is one of Japan's most popular cultural exports, with many fans around the world. Even the Japanese government itself supports and develops the activities and creativity of its people through anime. Almost everyone in the world knows about anime and considers it to be a symbol of Japanese culture itself. The Japanese government's seriousness in making anime a soft power can be seen from the appointment of a character from a famous anime, Doraemon, as the Japanese Animation Ambassador (Yuliani, Mulyadi, & Adji, 2021, pp. 330-331).

The Japanese government's efforts are motivated by its goal (mission) to grow its economy, establish good connections/relationships with other countries, and encourage Japan to become a more open country. In addition to these three missions, Japan also wants to promote its public image. From this, it can be seen that Japan is exerting (subtle) influence on the international community.

The broadcast of anime with various language subtitles is one of Japan's efforts to achieve these goals. The anime *Shokugeki no Soma*, licensed by Medialink Group and broadcast on the YouTube channel Ani-One Asia with subtitles in four languages, is an example of this effort. The licensing of this anime encourages international cooperation between companies, which in turn encourages foreigners to understand Japanese culture itself. Ultimately, the international broadcast of anime further promotes the spread of Japanese popular culture (anime) itself, which improves Japan's public image, as evidenced by the growing number of international audiences who enjoy Japanese popular culture (anime). From this, it can be stated that anime, as a form of Japanese soft power, has gone global.

Analysis of Japan's Soft Power in the Anime *Shokugeki no Soma*

In several episodes, the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* shows that it is a form of Japanese soft power used to attract international attention. This can be seen from Japan's efforts in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* to attract viewers' interest in Japan by including and showcasing several aspects of Japanese culture. This has become a unique attraction for viewers of this anime, and ultimately makes them want to learn more about things related to Japan. (Chan & Wong, 2017).

In episode 2, one of Japan's traditional dishes (washoku) is featured: *Furikake Gohan*. *Furikake Gohan* is a Japanese dish consisting of warm rice topped with *furikake*, a savory Japanese seasoning made from dried fish flakes, sesame seeds, and seaweed. This dish is featured in the scene where Soma takes the entrance exam for the Totsuki Academy. In the exam, Soma is challenged to make a

dish using eggs. Ultimately, Soma creates an innovative dish based on furikake gohan, called Bakeru Furikake Gohan.

Figure 3. Soma serves Erina some Bakeru Furikake Gohan.



Source: (Yonetani, 2015)

In Indonesia itself, Furikake Gohan has become one of the favourite dishes at several Japanese restaurants. Many Indonesians love the unique and distinctive taste of Furikake Gohan. In addition, Furikake Gohan is also believed to be a dish with good nutritional content. Not only as a dish, there are also many Japanese-style restaurants or stalls that provide furikake as a topping on their main menu. This is because almost any dish becomes more delicious when sprinkled with furikake. Now, furikake has become a global staple among umami lovers thanks to its versatility and practicality in contemporary cuisine. (Staff, 2024).

In episode 5, one of Japan's traditional dishes (washoku) is featured: Ochazuke. Ochazuke (お茶漬) is a traditional Japanese dish that literally means “soaked in tea.” This dish is featured in the scene where Soma is surprised by Isshiki's mackerel dish, prompting Soma to make Sawara Onigiri Chazuke in response to Isshiki's “challenge.” Today, ochazuke has become a practical (like instant ramen) and healthy dish. In fact, instant ochazuke packets are now available for purchase at convenience stores in various countries. (Tulali & White, 2024).

In Indonesia itself, Ochazuke dishes have gained popularity over the past few years. Although not as popular as other Japanese dishes such as sushi or ramen, it is undeniable that it has become one of the favorite menus at several Japanese restaurants in Indonesia, such as Sushi Tei, Sakana, Gohan-ku, and Ochazuke House. This is because Ochazuke has an appealing taste with its combination of rice, green tea, and meat/fish. In addition to its appealing taste, social media such as TikTok and Instagram have also contributed to the popularity of Ochazuke, as many social media users share photos and videos of Ochazuke.

The presentation of Bakeru Furikake Gohan and Sawara Onigiri Chazuke dishes has piqued the interest of several people who want to try both dishes. This is evidenced by the statement of a source named Shafira (26 years old), who felt an influence after watching the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*, where she became interested in cooking Japanese cuisine and enjoys making Bakeru Furikake Gohan and Sawara Onigiri Chazuke.

“After watching the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*, there was a significant change in my interests, especially in cooking. I became interested in cooking, especially Japanese cuisine, and even tried to

make the dishes featured in the anime. I was really curious about how Soma's dishes tasted. Finally, I made those dishes myself, especially Bakeru Furikake Gohan and Sawara Onigiri Chazuke.” (Shafira, 2025)

In addition to these two Japanese dishes, the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* also features several other dishes. One of them is the donburi dish that appears in episodes 6 and 7. Episode 6 of *Shokugeki no Soma* tells the story of Soma finally discovering that Totsuki Academy has a research institute similar to an extracurricular club in a regular school. Finally, Soma goes to the Don Research Institute, where he meets the head of the Don Research Institute, Konishi Kanichi. It is in this scene that the audience is explained what don is. Donburi (丼), commonly abbreviated to ‘don’, is a Japanese ‘rice bowl dish’ consisting of fish, meat, vegetables or other ingredients that are boiled together and then served over rice.

Then in episode 7, Soma creates an original Japanese dish, Chaliapin Steak, based on the concept of donburi. Chaliapin Steak is an original dish created in 1936. This dish was specially made for Russian opera singer Fyodor Chaliapin when he visited Japan. At that time, Chaliapin was suffering from toothache and said, “I want to eat tender steak.” Finally, this dish was created at his request.

It can be said that donburi is a Japanese dish that is quite well known around the world, but perhaps only a few people know about Chaliapin Steak. In this scene, the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* introduced Chaliapin Steak to its audience, making them eager to try the dish. This was supported by a statement from one of the sources, who said that when in Japan, they immediately ordered the Chaliapin Steak Don menu.

“I found a restaurant that serves Chaliapin Steak Don. Although it is unknown whether the recipe is the same as the one shown in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*, the existence of this menu allows me to taste a dish that I had previously only seen in anime” (Reza, 2025).

Along with sushi and ramen, donburi is a Japanese dish that is very popular in Indonesia. There are several reasons why donburi has become so popular in Indonesia. First, because Donburi is easy to make by serving a side dish on top of a bowl of rice, that alone makes it a Donburi dish. Second, the cooking process is quick after the rice is cooked and served in a bowl, as it does not take long to cook the side dish because it only needs to be fried, sautéed, or grilled briefly and then served on top of the bowl of rice. Third, it is inexpensive because it uses easily obtainable ingredients, making Donburi a dish that is affordable for all walks of life. These three factors have made Donburi popular in Indonesia, and now dishes based on the Donburi concept are beginning to appear in non-Japanese restaurants as rice bowl dishes. (Budhi, 2023).

Then, in episode 9, one of the traditional Japanese dishes (*washoku*) called *Iwana no Okakiage* is featured. Basically, this dish is *kakiage*, a type of tempura (fried food) made with mixed vegetables, usually consisting of onions, carrots, burdock, shrimp, or squid, which are then fried. This dish is featured in the scene where Soma and Megumi receive their first challenge at the Totsuki Training Camp. At the training camp, the students are asked to make Japanese dishes. Soma gets the idea to make *kakiage* from the char he caught, then uses Hinako's *kaki no tane* (sickle-shaped soy-flavored rice crackers) as a coating for the batter to make this dish.

Kakiage is a Japanese dish that is not well known around the world, but it remains one of the most delicious Japanese dishes, whether enjoyed as a main dish or as a snack. The crispy texture of *kakiage* offers a unique taste of *washoku*. This dish may not be well-known in Indonesia. This is because *kakiage* in Indonesia is not served as a main dish, but as a side dish when enjoying ramen or donburi. Even so, this dish often amazes people with its beauty, to the point that it is referred to as a hidden gem by many people (machiko, 2024). This statement is supported by a statement from one of the sources, named Dymas (24 years old), who said that the image of the dish *Iwana no Okakiage* in the

anime *Shokugeki no Soma* looked so aesthetic that it influenced him to pursue a career as a food photographer.

“The visual presentation of food in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*, particularly the dish *Iwana no Okakiage*, fosters an aesthetic appreciation for cuisine. This experience encourages the habit of documenting visually appealing food, which then develops into an interest and professional practice in food photography.”(Dymas, 2025).

In addition to these dishes, the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* still features several other dishes. In episode 16, one of Japan's world-famous traditional dishes (*washoku*) is featured, namely ramen. Ramen is a popular Japanese dish made from wheat noodles served in a meat or fish-based broth and seasoned with soy sauce or miso. This dish is featured in a scene where Soma and Joichiro are challenged to make a light but energizing breakfast dish that will refresh the judges, Fumio, Megumi, and Isshiki. In the challenge, Joichiro creates a ramen dish he names *Joichiro Tokusei Noko Ramen*. Ramen is not only enjoyed by the Japanese; people around the world love ramen, leading to many variations and interpretations of ramen on the international stage(Gavigan, n.d.).

Ramen is a traditional Japanese dish that has become a cultural phenomenon worldwide. Almost everyone is familiar with ramen, as it is one of the most well-known Japanese cuisines. This is also supported by a statement from an interviewee named Shafira (26 years old).

“My favorite dish is *Joichiro Tokusei Noko Ramen*. This is likely because ramen is noodle-based, making its taste quite familiar to my personal palate.” (Shafira, 2025).

In Indonesia itself, ramen has a special place in the hearts of Indonesians. This is because ramen is a dish that can be localized by its creators. While retaining the essence and main ingredients from Japan, ramen restaurants in Indonesia add a local touch to create ramen variants for Indonesians. This proves that ramen can combine the taste of Japanese cuisine with distinctive local flavors.

Episodes 17 and 18 are the final episodes featuring Japanese cuisine. In episode 17, Soma visits his family's restaurant on his father's advice, where he learns that *Sumire Shopping District*, where his family's restaurant is located, is in trouble due to the popularity of a *karaage* shop called *Mozuya*. In order to revive the shopping district, Soma decides to create a *karaage* recipe that rivals *Mozuya*'s.

Then, in episode 18, Soma creates an innovative *karaage* dish that he names *Sumire Jirushi Karaage Roru*. Typically, *karaage* is made from boneless chicken pieces that are marinated in soy sauce, ginger, garlic, and sake to create a unique flavor. The cooking technique for *karaage* involves double-frying to make the final dish lighter and less oily. Overall, *karaage* is more than just a dish; it has become a culture in itself (Lau, 2023).

As a dish rich in history and tradition, *karaage* has become one of the world's favorite Japanese dishes. This has led to *karaage* being frequently innovated, whether in terms of flavor variations or packaging methods. This is supported by a statement from a source named Reza (25 years old) who tasted a unique *karaage* dish while he was in Japan.

“I also ate unique *karaage* there. I think it's different from the *karaage* in the anime *Soma*, but I consider it similar because the *karaage* is unique. Maybe the restaurant owner was inspired by the anime *Soma* and ended up innovating the *karaage* menu.” (Reza, 2025)

In Indonesia, *Karaage* is widely available in Japanese restaurants, and is now even available as frozen food that can be purchased at mini markets and online stores. All *Washoku* (Japanese cuisine) featured in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* has gained popularity in Indonesia. This shows that *Washoku* introduced through anime has successfully become a popular culture in Indonesia.

In addition to Washoku, the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* also features other aspects of Japanese soft power, one of which is Onsen. In episode 10, a hot spring used by the Japanese people called Onsen is featured. Onsen is shown in the scene where Soma decides to go to Onsen to take a bath. Soaking in hot springs (Onsen) has long been a part of Japanese culture. The popularity of Onsen has become a unique attraction for the public, and now there are many hotels in various countries inspired by Japanese culture that also provide Onsen facilities (Yuliani, Mulyadi, & Adji, 2021, pp. 334-335).

The appeal of Onsen was felt by a source named Dymas (24 years old). He expressed his interest in Onsen, which made him want to go to Japan just to soak in Onsen.

“I developed a desire to visit Japan, specifically to experience bathing in an onsen. This interest arose after watching a scene in episode 10, when the characters attended a training camp and stayed at Totsuki Resort, which featured onsen facilities. The scene sparked my imagination to stay at a high-end resort in Japan and enjoy the experience of bathing in an onsen.” (Dymas, 2025)

In Indonesia itself, the existence of Onsen is still limited. Even so, several places such as hotels in Indonesia have developed the concept of Onsen with a local touch. The appearance of Washoku and Onsen culture shown in the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* has indirectly introduced and promoted Japan to its audience. Based on the statements of the sources, we can see that the anime *Shokugeki no Soma* has influenced its audience to go to Japan to experience the culture of Washoku and Onsen. Based on the description of the anime *Shokugeki no Soma*, it can be analyzed that the relationship between cultural representation, attractiveness, and changes in audience attitudes and behavior is formed through a mechanism of soft power that is indirect and persuasive. The representation of Japanese culture in this anime is realized through the visualization of washoku (such as *Bakeru Furikake Gohan*, *Ochazuke*, *Donburi*, *Kakiage*, *Ramen*, and *Karaage*), cultural practices (such as onsen), and values inherent in Japanese culture, such as innovation, hard work, and respect for tradition. These representations are presented narratively and aesthetically so that they are easily accepted by international audiences without coming across as patronizing.

These cultural representations further shape the attractiveness that is a key element of Japanese soft power. This attractiveness emerges through several aspects, namely the aesthetic visuals of the food, the emotional storyline, and the strong characterization. The detailed and appetizing depiction of food not only presents cultural information but also a visual experience that triggers the emotional interest of the audience. This explains why Japanese dishes in *Shokugeki no Soma* can attract the attention of Indonesian audiences even though some of them were previously not widely known.

This attractiveness then serves as a bridge to changing the attitudes and behaviors of the audience. The change in attitude is evident in the increased appreciation and positive perception of Japanese culture, especially washoku and cultural practices such as onsen. Meanwhile, the behavior change is reflected in the concrete actions expressed by the interviewees, such as the emergence of a hobby of cooking Japanese cuisine, the desire to taste the dishes featured in the anime, the decision to order certain menus while in Japan, and the drive to pursue a career in culinary photography. In fact, this interest has further developed into a desire to visit Japan, both for culinary tourism and cultural experiences, which is in line with the *seichi junrei* phenomenon.

Thus, it can be concluded that in the context of *Shokugeki no Soma*, the relationship between cultural representation, appeal, and changes in attitude/behavior is linear and layered: aesthetic and narrative cultural representations form emotional and cognitive appeal, which then gradually encourage changes in the audience's attitudes and behavior. This analysis shows that appeal acts as a mediating variable connecting cultural representation with the impact of Japanese soft power, a conceptual relationship that has not been systematically elaborated in previous studies on anime as an instrument of cultural diplomacy.

Shokugeki no Soma Anime as a Tool of Japanese Cultural Diplomacy

In the previous explanation, it was explained that anime is a form of soft power that originates from Japanese culture. Soft power and culture are important elements in cultural diplomacy. In practice, cultural diplomacy is divided into two versions, namely, those used to support foreign policy interests and those used for tourism interests. From this explanation, it can be seen that anime is an important tool in Japanese cultural diplomacy. Shokugeki no Soma is one anime that has been successful in attracting viewers in terms of its story, aesthetic animation, and the Japanese culture featured in it. (Nessa, Wiranata, & Suwecawangsa, 2024, p. 142)

As a tool of cultural diplomacy, the anime Shokugeki no Soma not only serves as a medium for introducing Japanese culture, but also introduces and promotes actual locations in Japan itself. Ultimately, these locations have become tourist attractions promoted by the Japanese government to attract international tourists. Some of the iconic places in the anime Shokugeki no Soma that actually exist in the real world are Shinagawa Station in Minato, Tokyo, and the Tennozu Isle Station Area.

The popularity of the anime Shokugeki no Soma on the international stage has led to these places being visited by many tourists, especially the Tennozu Isle Station Area. This demonstrates that anime is not merely entertainment but an effective and efficient tool for promoting Japanese culture and tourism. This is supported by statements from sources who expressed their desire to visit Japan after watching the anime Shokugeki no Soma.

“After watching the anime Shokugeki no Soma, I developed a strong desire to visit Japan.” (Reza, 2025)

“I want to go to Japan to bathe in an onsen!!” (Dymas, 2025)

Currently, anime tours have become a new phenomenon emerging from the anime industry. Many anime fans flock to Japan to visit real places that appear in anime scenes. The phenomenon of anime fans visiting locations that inspired and/or served as the backdrop for their favorite anime is called seichi junrei. (Association, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis presented, it can be concluded that the anime Shokugeki no Soma is a Japanese popular culture product that is used as a source of soft power. The depiction of Japanese culture in the anime Shokugeki no Soma is an effort by Japan to introduce Japanese culture to international audiences in order to attract their interest in learning more about Japan.

The Japanese cultures identified as elements of soft power in the anime Shokugeki no Soma include Washoku culture in the form of Furikake Gohan, Ochazuke, Don, Kakiage, Ramen, and Onsen culture. In addition to contributing as an instrument of soft power that introduces Japanese culture, the anime Shokugeki no Soma also contributes as a tool of Japanese cultural diplomacy in the tourism sector.

Washoku and Onsen culture, as well as the locations that inspired and/or served as the backdrop for the anime Shokugeki no Soma, have influenced anime fans in Indonesia. This is demonstrated by the interviewees who have grown to like Japanese culture and want to visit Japan after watching the anime Shokugeki no Soma.

This paper provides implications for the theories and concepts used by showing that soft power does not only work through narrative or heroic popular cultural products, but also through representations of everyday culture such as cuisine and lifestyle practices. Through an analysis of the anime Shokugeki no Soma, this study expands on Joseph Nye's concept of soft power by emphasizing

that cultural appeal can be built through gastronomy (washoku) and visual-aesthetic experiences that encourage voluntary changes in audience attitudes and behavior. Furthermore, this paper reinforces the concept of cultural diplomacy by positioning anime as an effective vehicle for bridging cultural representations and audience responses across countries, thus demonstrating that cultural diplomacy is not always carried out directly by state actors, but also through creative industry products operating in the non-state sphere.

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