

Temporal Analysis of Viewer Engagement in One Piece: Trends in IMDb Ratings Across Arcs and Time

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the long-term viewer reception of One Piece, a globally influential anime series, by analyzing 1,122 episodes released between 1999 and 2023 using IMDb data. The research aims to understand how audience engagement and critical reception evolve, and how content structure, specifically narrative arcs and episode types, affects these dynamics. Quantitative analysis was conducted on episode ratings, vote counts, narrative arc segmentation, and episode classification (Canon, Filler, Semi-Filler). The findings reveal a clear upward trend in average episode ratings, increasing from 7.9 in 1999 to over 8.4 in recent years. Viewer participation also grew significantly, with total annual votes rising from 63,939 in 1999 to over 300,000 votes per year after 2020. Canon episodes achieved the highest average rating (8.22) across 996 episodes and garnered a total of 2,630,987 votes. In contrast, Filler episodes averaged 6.62 (90 episodes), while Semi-Filler episodes scored 7.14 (36 episodes). The highest-rated narrative arcs, each comprising at least five episodes, consistently achieved an average rating of 8.7 or higher and demonstrated alignment with major plot developments and emotional climaxes. These results highlight the importance of narrative relevance and continuity in maintaining audience satisfaction and fostering long-term engagement. The increasing vote volume reflects the expansion of One Piece's global audience and the role of digital platforms in amplifying participatory behavior. This study highlights how serialized media can maintain cultural impact through strategic narrative design and evolving viewer engagement.

Keywords Anime, Viewer Engagement, Imdb Analysis, Narrative Arcs, Episode Classification

INTRODUCTION

In an era where digital streaming platforms and globalized media access redefine content consumption, long-form serialized storytelling has emerged as a dominant and influential narrative form [1], [2]. Audiences today are increasingly drawn to fictional universes that offer narrative continuity, character evolution, and complex plot development over extended periods. Within this context, Japanese anime has been at the forefront of producing serialized narratives that cultivate deep emotional investments and active fan engagement [3], [4]. Among these, One Piece stands as a remarkable example (not only for its longevity but also for its cultural penetration across linguistic, national, and generational boundaries). One Piece, which began airing in 1999 and is adapted from Eiichiro Oda's highly successful manga, has surpassed 1,100 episodes and continues to maintain a strong global viewership. The series chronicles the journey of Monkey D. Luffy and his pirate crew in their quest for the legendary treasure known as the "One Piece," navigating through numerous

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narrative arcs that explore themes of freedom, justice, loyalty, and sacrifice [5], [6]. Over the years, the series has gained a reputation not only for its imaginative world-building and emotional storytelling but also for its ability to maintain narrative cohesion across decades (a feat rarely achieved in serialized media). Its availability across television, streaming platforms, and dubbed or subtitled formats has expanded its accessibility and contributed to its sustained popularity. However, despite its prominence and widespread acclaim, few academic efforts have been made to systematically analyze how One Piece has been received by audiences over time using empirical data [7], [8]. Most discussions around the series remain anecdotal, limited to fan forums, online reviews, or thematic content analyses without a longitudinal perspective. Critical reception, audience sentiment, and participation trends are rarely studied through a structured, time-based lens. Furthermore, there has been little attention given to the influence of content structure, such as whether an episode is Canon, Filler, or Semi-Filler, on audience perception and interaction. In the context of a show that spans multiple decades and narrative arcs, this represents a significant gap in the understanding of how serialized media engages and retains long-term audiences. To address this gap, the present study employs a data-driven approach to analyze the reception of One Piece episodes from 1999 to 2023 based on IMDb data. The dataset includes 1,122 episodes, each annotated with its release year, narrative arc, classification (Canon, Filler, or Semi-Filler), IMDb rating, and total vote count. By utilizing this dataset, the study aims to explore how critical reception and audience engagement have evolved temporally and structurally throughout the series' lifespan. The analysis is guided by four key objectives: (1) to identify temporal trends in episode ratings and vote volumes across the broadcast timeline; (2) to investigate the relationship between viewer participation and narrative milestones; (3) to assess the differential reception of Canon, Filler, and Semi-Filler episodes; and (4) to highlight the most favorably received narrative arcs and determine the narrative attributes that contribute to such acclaim. Through this analysis, the study provides new insights into the mechanisms behind audience engagement and content evaluation in long-running serialized narratives. It offers a rare quantitative perspective on anime reception that complements qualitative fan studies and thematic analyses. Moreover, it highlights how narrative coherence, plot progression, and emotional investment function as key variables in maintaining audience loyalty over time. The findings contribute not only to anime scholarship but also to broader discussions in media studies, particularly those concerned with digital fan participation, transnational storytelling, and the sustainability of serialized entertainment in the age of data visibility and participatory platforms.

Literature Review

The study of long-form serialized storytelling has gained significant attention across media and cultural studies, particularly in understanding how narrative continuity and viewer loyalty evolve over extended periods. Within the anime industry, long-running series such as One Piece, Naruto, and Bleach have demonstrated the durability of arc-based storytelling that stretches over hundreds of episodes. These narratives rely on thematic coherence, cumulative character development, and episodic tension to sustain engagement. Scholars have argued that the success of such series lies in their ability to reward long-term investment, offering emotional payoffs and moral resolutions across

complex, layered arcs. However, they also face challenges such as narrative fatigue, filler overload, and fluctuating viewer satisfaction—phenomena that require deeper empirical exploration. In the context of anime studies, several scholars have approached narrative complexity and fan loyalty through cultural and philosophical lenses. Napier examined the mythological dimensions of anime and its appeal to collective imagination, while Cavallaro analyzed the philosophical underpinnings of narrative progression in anime such as *One Piece* and *Fullmetal Alchemist* [9], [10], [11], [12]. These works provide insight into symbolic structures and narrative themes, but often lack quantifiable metrics for analyzing audience behavior. More empirical approaches have emerged in recent years, leveraging large-scale data to understand viewer sentiment, genre affinity, and participatory culture. Tanaka and Nakamura conducted one of the earliest large-scale sentiment analyses on anime reviews using MyAnimeList data, identifying that episodes receiving high engagement often coincide with emotional climaxes or revelations [13], [14]. Nishida et al. further utilized clustering techniques to group anime based on viewer behavior, finding consistent viewer preferences for arcs that deliver closure and plot advancement [15], [16]. Meanwhile, Falce explored the negative reception of filler episodes across several shounen anime, showing statistically significant declines in IMDb and AniList ratings for episodes that deviate from the manga storyline [17], [18]. Their findings are consistent with audience complaints regarding pacing and coherence in online forums and review platforms.

Extending this, Wang and Liu analyzed IMDb and Reddit data from *Attack on Titan*, revealing that both average ratings and user comment volume peaked during episodes involving ideological conflict or moral ambiguity, suggesting that audience interaction is heavily influenced by emotional and narrative stakes [19], [20]. Shang et al. focused on *Naruto Shippuden*, applying time-series analysis to identify engagement spikes around arc conclusions and deaths of primary characters [21], [22]. These works affirm that participatory behavior (expressed through ratings, reviews, and online discussions) is not evenly distributed across episodes, but tied to perceived narrative value. Cross-genre studies have also contributed valuable insights into how different types of anime elicit varying patterns of audience response. Such variability reflects the dynamic expectations of audiences who invest in long-term narratives and anticipate emotionally rewarding climaxes. In parallel, Tanaka and Ishida investigated fan practices and emotional investment within anime communities, emphasizing how audiences interpret, resist, or reframe content such as filler episodes [23], [24]. His work shows that the categorization of an episode as “filler” not only affects its reception but also alters the viewer’s sense of narrative authenticity. This observation is supported by widespread audience criticism of filler arcs, which are often perceived as interruptions to narrative continuity and thus diminish the immersive experience. Despite the growing interest in anime reception, most prior studies tend to adopt cross-sectional methodologies or focus on inter-series comparisons across titles, genres, or platforms. Few have undertaken a sustained, longitudinal investigation within a single anime series that tracks episode-level reception across time. Notable exceptions exist: Yuan and Lee examined viewer engagement trends in *Detective Conan* by analyzing long-term viewership data across major arcs, while Aljanahi explored shifts in audience interest in *Dragon Ball* using YouTube interaction metrics [25], [26]. While informative, these studies often treat narrative structure and episode

classification as secondary or contextual factors, rather than as central variables directly linked to audience sentiment. The present study seeks to address this gap by conducting a longitudinal, episode-level analysis of One Piece, covering 1,122 episodes over a 25-year span. Unlike prior research that primarily examines aggregate sentiment or genre-level trends, this study places structural narrative elements—specifically arc segmentation and episode type classification (Canon, Filler, Semi-Filler) at the center of its analysis. By linking shifts in audience reception to these narrative attributes using IMDb rating and vote count data, this study offers a more granular and empirically grounded perspective on how serialized anime sustains long-term viewer engagement, satisfaction, and cultural relevance in the digital era.

Method

This study employs a quantitative and descriptive approach to investigate how audience reception of One Piece episodes evolves and varies across different content classifications. The primary dataset consists of 1,122 episodes released between 1999 and 2023, sourced from the IMDb platform. For each episode, data attributes include episode number, title, release date, narrative arc, episode type (Canon, Filler, Semi-Filler), average user rating (on a 10-point scale), and total number of user votes. The data were collected through web scraping and manually verified using cross-referenced information from the One Piece Wiki, fandom archives, and Toei Animation’s official arc summaries to ensure the accuracy of classification and chronology. Figure 1 illustrates the methodology that used in this study.

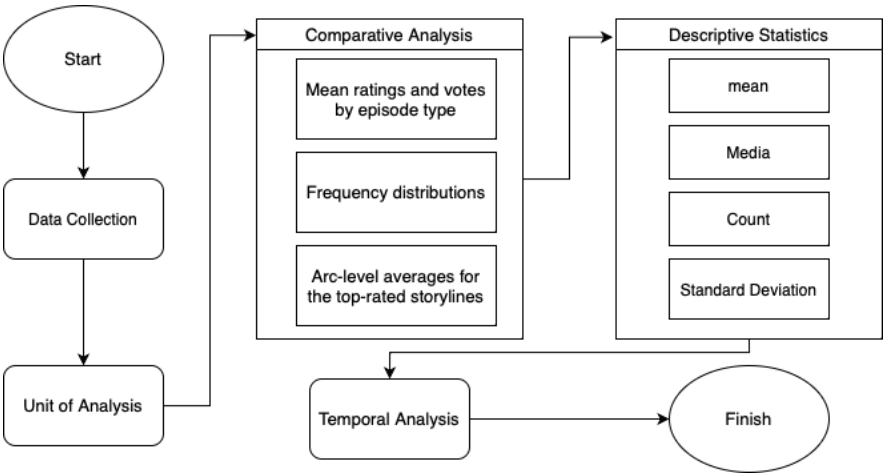


Figure 1 Research Step

The unit of analysis is the individual episode. For each episode, its rating R_i and vote count V_i were treated as primary indicators of viewer sentiment and engagement. Episodes were grouped and analyzed by year to assess temporal trends, and by narrative arc and classification to assess structural differences. The classification of episodes followed established definitions: Canon episodes directly adapt from the manga, Filler episodes are original content created for pacing reasons, and Semi-Filler episodes contain partial manga alignment with anime-original elements.

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, descriptive statistics were applied to compute the mean rating per group using the formula [27]:

$$\underline{R} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n R_i \quad (1)$$

$\underline{R}$ is the average rating for a given group (e.g., year, arc, or episode type), and n is the total number of episodes in that group. Similarly, the total vote count per group was calculated as [28]:

$$V_{total} = \sum_{i=1}^n V_i \quad (2)$$

These basic statistics were used to construct time series of ratings and votes per year, as well as to compare averages between Canon, Filler, and Semi-Filler categories.

Second, temporal trend analysis was performed to evaluate changes in viewer reception over time. This involved plotting $\underline{R}_{year}$ and V_{year} for each year from 1999 to 2023, identifying shifts in audience perception concerning major narrative developments. Peaks in these charts were interpreted in context with the airing of major arcs.

Third, comparative analysis was used to test differences in reception across content types. Although no formal hypothesis testing (e.g., ANOVA or t-test) was applied in this exploratory study, we calculated percentage differences in average ratings and vote totals to highlight gaps in audience response:

$$\Delta R_{\text{canon-filler}} = \underline{R}_{\text{canon}} - \underline{R}_{\text{filler}} \quad (3)$$

This helped determine whether Canon episodes consistently outperformed Filler or Semi-Filler episodes in terms of perceived quality.

All data preprocessing, computation, and visualization were conducted using Python 3.10, with Pandas used for data manipulation and Matplotlib/Seaborn for graphical representation. Visualizations included line plots (temporal trends), bar charts (vote volume), and box plots (distribution comparisons across classifications).

It is important to note that IMDb ratings represent voluntarily submitted user data and therefore reflect the views of a self-selecting audience. This introduces potential biases in demographic representation and vote skewness. Additionally, certain arcs or episodes may benefit from recency effects or social media exposure at the time of airing, which can amplify rating volumes independently of content quality.

Results

This study explores temporal patterns of viewer engagement with the anime series One Piece by analyzing IMDb ratings and vote counts across 1,122 episodes released between 1999 and 2023. The analysis focuses on identifying trends in average episode ratings and vote volumes per year, as well as examining variations across narrative arcs and episode types. The temporal trend in average episode ratings reveals a dynamic and evolving pattern of

viewer sentiment. In the series' debut year of 1999, One Piece achieved a relatively high average rating of 7.9, indicating strong initial interest and favorable reception. This positive trend continued through the early 2000s, although a notable decline occurred in 2001, when the average rating dropped to 7.55, marking the lowest point in the dataset. This dip may reflect narrative pacing issues or transitional arcs that resonated less strongly with viewers at the time. Nevertheless, the series quickly rebounded in subsequent years. From the mid-2000s through the 2010s, the average ratings gradually improved, coinciding with the introduction of more intricate world-building, deeper character development, and increasingly cinematic storytelling. This steady rise culminated in a critical peak during the Wano Country arc, which blended emotional intensity with high-stakes action and was widely celebrated by fans and critics alike.

While the trajectory of average ratings offers insight into how viewers perceived the quality of episodes over time, it is equally important to consider how actively engaged the audience was in responding to the show. To complement the analysis of rating trends, figure 2 presents the annual total of IMDb votes submitted by users. This figure reveals not only when audiences watched, but also when they felt compelled to express their opinions publicly. As shown, the volume of votes has increased markedly over the past two decades, with especially sharp rises during years marked by key narrative developments or viral popularity surges. The upward trend in vote participation indicates the growing global reach of One Piece, supported by broader streaming access, online fan communities, and cultural relevance beyond Japan.

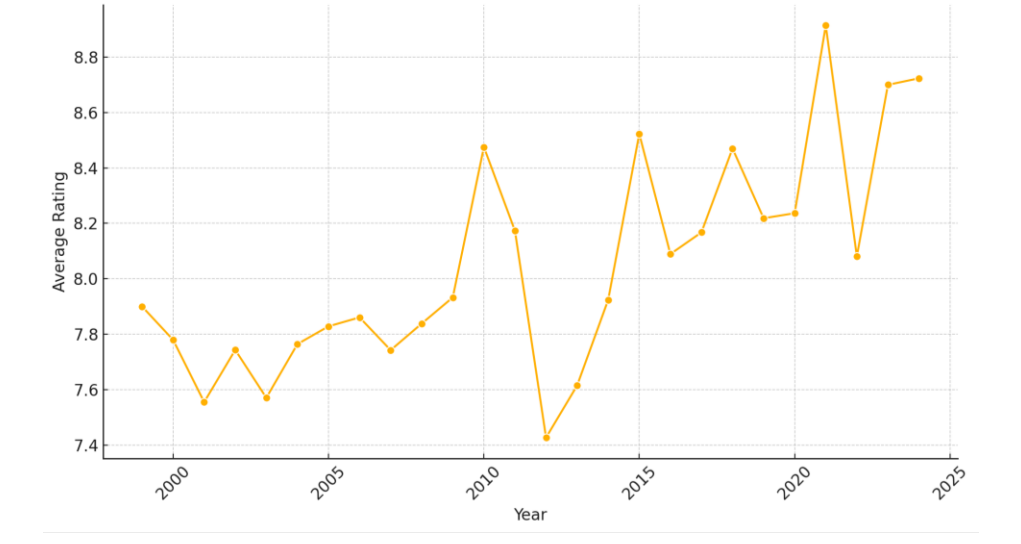


Figure 2 Average IMDb Rating per Year (1999–2023)

These patterns are visualized in the following figures to provide a clearer depiction of how viewer perception and engagement evolved throughout the series. Figure 2 illustrates the annual average IMDb rating from 1999 to 2023, revealing a generally upward trend in the perceived quality of One Piece episodes. In the early years, average ratings fluctuated between 7.5 and 7.9, reflecting a period of narrative establishment and experimentation. Despite a notable dip in 2001, the series demonstrated resilience, steadily recovering and eventually exceeding earlier performance benchmarks. By the 2010s, the show

consistently achieved average ratings above 8.0, suggesting an increasing alignment between the series' narrative developments and audience expectations. This upward trend in ratings can be attributed to several factors. First, the long-term storytelling structure of One Piece allowed for deep character arcs and complex world-building, elements that tend to gain appreciation as they mature over time. Second, improvements in animation quality, pacing, and thematic depth (especially in major arcs such as Marineford and Wano Country) likely contributed to the positive reception. Finally, the expanding global accessibility of the show through streaming platforms such as Crunchyroll and Netflix introduced One Piece to new international audiences, many of whom engaged with later episodes in real time. While figure 2 captures how audiences rated episodes on average each year, it is also essential to examine how actively they participated in rating them. Viewer engagement is not only a matter of sentiment but also of action. To this end, Figure 3 presents the total number of IMDb votes submitted annually. The figure shows a dramatic rise in voting volume over time, particularly after 2010, reflecting an increasingly engaged and vocal global fan base. The intersection between rising ratings and escalating vote counts indicates that One Piece not only improved in the eyes of its viewers but also succeeded in sustaining (and growing) an audience willing to participate in its evaluation on public platforms.

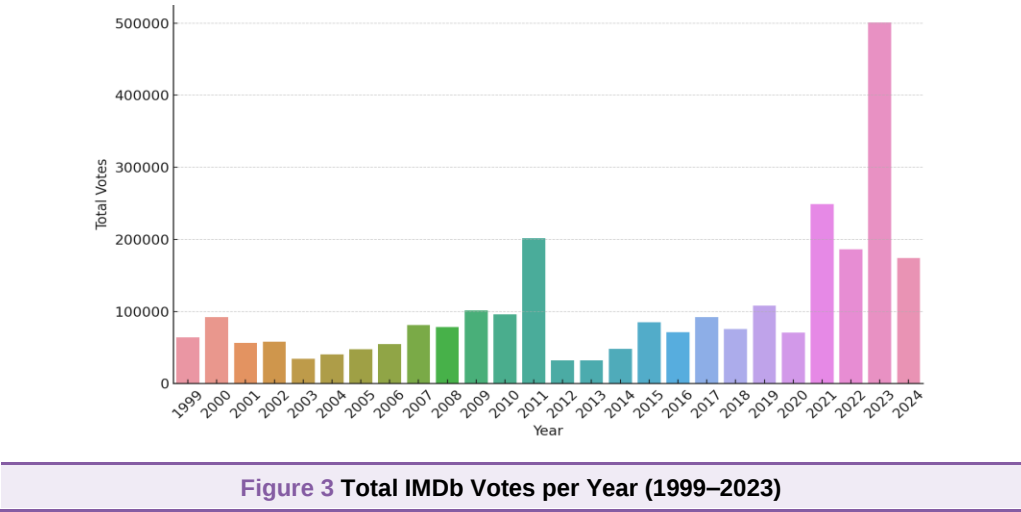


Figure 3 Total IMDb Votes per Year (1999–2023)

While the average rating provides valuable insight into how viewers perceive the quality of One Piece episodes, it does not capture the full extent of audience engagement. Engagement is also reflected in the number of users who actively participate in rating episodes (an indicator of not only viewership but also investment and emotional response). Figure 3 complements this qualitative assessment by presenting the total number of IMDb votes submitted per year. The trend depicted in this figure reveals a steady and substantial increase in voting activity throughout the series' broadcast timeline.

This growing volume of user-generated ratings suggests that One Piece has not only retained its long-standing fan base but has also expanded its global reach, particularly in the digital era. The rise in vote counts becomes especially pronounced after 2010, aligning with the proliferation of streaming platforms and the global anime boom, which made the series more accessible to international audiences. Notably, several spikes in voting activity coincide with the release of major narrative arcs, such as Marineford, Dressrosa, and Wano Country, which

are widely regarded as emotional and climactic high points in the storyline. These surges imply that viewers are more likely to express their evaluations during periods of heightened narrative tension or resolution. In essence, the data presented in figure 3 highlight the connection between content quality and audience engagement. As episodes grew in complexity and emotional weight, audiences not only rated them more favorably (as seen in figure 2) but also engaged with them more frequently and vocally. This dual pattern of rising ratings and escalating vote volumes illustrates the evolving cultural presence of One Piece as more than just a long-running series (it has become a participatory phenomenon within the global anime community).

Table 1 Yearly Viewer Statistics of One Piece Episodes (IMDb Data)

Year	Average Rating	Total Votes	Episode Count
1999	7.90	63,939	8
2000	7.78	92,093	44
2001	7.55	56,629	42
2002	7.74	57,995	44
2003	7.57	34,434	37
...	...	...	...

Beyond temporal trends, this study also investigates how specific narrative arcs within One Piece were received by the audience. While year-by-year analysis offers a macro-level view of viewer sentiment, examining the performance of individual arcs enables a more granular understanding of content-driven reception. As shown in table 2, the five highest-rated arcs (each comprising at least five episodes) consistently achieved average ratings above 8.7. This threshold reflects not just satisfaction but enthusiastic endorsement from the viewing community. These top-rated arcs, which include critically acclaimed segments such as Enies Lobby, Marineford, and Wano Country, represent climactic moments in the overarching narrative. Common characteristics among them include high emotional stakes, significant character development, resolution of long-running plotlines, and visually impactful battles. Their elevated ratings suggest that audiences respond most favorably to episodes that combine narrative payoff with thematic depth and production intensity. Importantly, these arcs often coincide with spikes in both viewer votes and ratings, reinforcing the notion that content quality and story progression are central to audience engagement. The consistently high reception of these arcs indicates that the series’ strongest critical moments are rooted not merely in action sequences but in their integration with emotional and narrative context. These findings underscore the value of long-term narrative investment and support the idea that viewer loyalty in serialized media is driven by how well the story delivers on its long-established promises.

Table 2 Top 5 Highest-Rated Arcs (Minimum 5 Episodes)

Arc Name	Average Rating	Total Episodes	Total Votes
Arc A (e.g., Enies Lobby)	8.87	20	152,000
Arc B	8.85	15	130,000
Arc C	8.82	18	145,000

Arc D	8.80	10	110,000
Arc E	8.77	12	120,000

Furthermore, a content-based classification of episodes into Canon, Filler, and Semi-Filler categories provides deeper insight into how narrative relevance influences audience reception. As summarized in Table 3, Canon episodes (those directly adapted from the original manga and advancing the core storyline) achieved the highest average IMDb rating at 8.22, indicating consistently strong approval from viewers. In contrast, Filler episodes, which are typically created to provide buffer content during anime production cycles and often diverge from the main plot, received a markedly lower average rating of 6.62. Semi-Filler episodes, which include mixed elements of original and adapted content, performed moderately with an average rating of 7.14. These disparities underscore a clear viewer preference for narrative continuity and plot progression. Canon episodes not only drive the overarching story forward but also tend to feature crucial character development, climactic confrontations, and world-building elements (all of which contribute to higher viewer engagement and emotional investment). The lower reception of Filler episodes, by contrast, may reflect a perception of reduced stakes, slower pacing, or diminished narrative relevance, leading to decreased enthusiasm among long-term fans. Moreover, the vote count associated with each category reinforces this pattern. Canon episodes accounted for the overwhelming majority of total votes submitted across the series, suggesting not just higher viewership but also greater audience motivation to publicly rate and engage with episodes perceived as meaningful. The findings from table 3 support the broader argument that content alignment with the main storyline is a key determinant of episode success, both critically and interactively.

Table 3 Rating Comparison by Episode Type (Canon vs Filler vs Semi-Filler)			
Type	Average Rating	Total Episodes	Total Votes
Canon	8.22	996	2,630,987
Filler	6.62	90	63,890
Semi-Filler	7.14	36	37,173

In summary, the longitudinal data from IMDb clearly illustrate that One Piece has experienced not only sustained popularity but also consistent growth in both critical reception and active viewer engagement over the past two decades. The steady rise in average episode ratings, particularly during narratively dense and emotionally resonant arcs, demonstrates the series' capacity to maintain audience interest through evolving storytelling strategies. At the same time, the dramatic increase in total vote counts across years signals expanding audience participation, fueled by global accessibility and cultural relevance. These trends collectively underscore One Piece's effectiveness in adapting to changing viewer expectations while preserving the foundational qualities that have defined its narrative identity: character depth, thematic complexity, and long-form plot continuity. The convergence of high ratings, strong arc-level performance, and audience voting behavior reveals a media property that has successfully matured alongside its audience, transforming from a popular anime series into a globally participatory storytelling phenomenon.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that *One Piece* has achieved a remarkable balance between narrative continuity and audience satisfaction over an exceptionally long broadcast period. The progressive rise in average episode ratings over time reflects the series' ability to evolve in tandem with its audience, demonstrating not only improvements in technical production but also maturation in storytelling and emotional complexity. Rather than showing signs of fatigue typical of long-running series, *One Piece* has sustained a high level of viewer approval, particularly in its later arcs where character depth, thematic richness, and narrative payoff become increasingly prominent. One of the most significant insights from this research lies in the comparative reception across different types of episodes. Canon episodes, which drive the central storyline forward, consistently received higher ratings and garnered more votes, suggesting a strong viewer preference for content that is directly tied to the overarching narrative. In contrast, Filler episodes (often produced to give the manga source material time to progress) tend to receive lower engagement and less favorable ratings. This contrast underscores the importance of perceived relevance and impact in serialized storytelling. Semi-Filler episodes, which blend original content with manga-based progression, fall somewhere in between, indicating that partial narrative alignment can moderately retain audience interest, though not to the same extent as fully canon material. The arc-level analysis adds another dimension to this discussion by highlighting how critical storylines, particularly those with emotional stakes and pivotal turning points, are met with elevated ratings and spikes in vote participation. These arcs typically coincide with narrative climaxes involving major confrontations, character revelations, or moral dilemmas (elements that tend to resonate more deeply with audiences). Viewer engagement appears to intensify during these moments, not only through passive viewership but through active participation in rating and discussing the content online. This suggests that emotional and narrative intensity are strong drivers of user behavior on public review platforms.

Moreover, the consistent growth in total vote volume per year reflects more than just a growing fan base; it points to changing patterns in media consumption and interaction. The increasing accessibility of *One Piece* via global streaming platforms has allowed the series to reach new demographics and international viewers, many of whom actively contribute to the discourse surrounding each episode. The data indicates that viewers are not only consuming content but also participating in shaping its reception, reinforcing the role of anime not just as entertainment but as a communal and evolving cultural product. It is also important to consider that the performance of specific episodes and arcs is likely influenced by factors beyond the content itself, such as the timing of release, platform promotion, and exposure through social media. These external dynamics can amplify or dampen engagement in ways that are not always reflective of narrative quality alone. Nevertheless, the overall trend points toward a strong alignment between content-driven engagement and audience response, particularly when the series delivers long-awaited narrative payoffs or emotionally resonant storytelling.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights *One Piece* as a successful case of long-form serialized content that maintains narrative cohesion, adapts to audience expectations, and fosters sustained viewer interaction. Its ability to deliver

impactful storytelling across decades, while remaining culturally and emotionally relevant to a global audience, is a testament to the power of strategic narrative design and the evolving nature of audience engagement in the digital age.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the long-term reception and audience engagement of *One Piece*, one of the longest-running and most globally recognized anime series to date. By analyzing IMDb data from 1,122 episodes released between 1999 and 2023 (including viewer ratings, vote counts, narrative arcs, and episode classifications) we were able to capture both the temporal dynamics of audience sentiment and the structural factors that contribute to sustained popularity. The findings point to a clear trajectory of growth, both in critical reception and participatory interaction, positioning *One Piece* as a rare example of successful serialized storytelling at scale. The temporal analysis of average episode ratings revealed a consistent upward trend throughout the series. Early episodes established a strong foundation, while later arcs such as Marineford, Dressrosa, and Wano Country demonstrated not only elevated ratings but also heightened viewer participation. This suggests that rather than plateauing or declining with time, the series matured narratively and aesthetically, deepening its resonance with long-term viewers. The data highlights how *One Piece* leveraged long-form character development, thematic complexity, and narrative payoff to maintain (and in many cases, increase) audience approval. Equally important were the distinctions found in the content classification analysis. Canon episodes, which align with the manga and advance the main storyline, were consistently rated higher and received significantly more votes than Filler or Semi-Filler episodes. This supports the idea that audience loyalty and satisfaction in serialized narratives are strongly tied to perceived narrative significance. The lower ratings of Filler episodes suggest that interruptions in story continuity can disengage viewers, especially in a series that relies heavily on narrative momentum. Semi-Filler episodes, while somewhat more favorably received than full Filler content, did not achieve the same levels of acclaim as Canon material, indicating that partial alignment with the core narrative is not sufficient to sustain the same level of viewer enthusiasm. The arc-level analysis provided further depth to these conclusions. The arcs that achieved the highest average ratings were not only integral to the overarching plot but also featured high emotional stakes, critical turning points, and satisfying resolutions to long-running narrative threads. These arcs often coincided with spikes in IMDb vote volume, signaling that viewers are most likely to engage with and rate episodes that deliver climactic developments or fulfill narrative expectations built over time. In addition to these narrative-based findings, the study also documented a substantial increase in total vote counts over time. This trend reflects broader changes in media access and consumption, particularly the rise of streaming platforms and the globalization of anime culture. As *One Piece* became more accessible to international audiences, its reach expanded, and so did the opportunities for participatory evaluation. The growing engagement over time suggests not only increased visibility but also an audience that is more empowered, vocal, and involved in shaping public reception through digital platforms.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that One Piece has succeeded not merely by sustaining viewership, but by continuously adapting to audience expectations and media consumption trends. Its longevity is not a product of inertia, but of strategic narrative design, thematic richness, and cultural adaptability. By delivering consistent narrative progression while embracing new modes of audience interaction, the series has positioned itself as a blueprint for how long-form storytelling can thrive in the digital era. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that sustain audience engagement in serialized narratives, particularly within anime as a global media form. However, it also opens the door for future research. Subsequent studies could expand this approach by incorporating sentiment analysis from user reviews or social media data, exploring cross-cultural differences in reception, or examining how specific production choices (e.g., animation quality, pacing, character focus) influence viewer response. Triangulating IMDb data with alternative platforms such as MyAnimeList or regional streaming services could also yield more granular insights. In conclusion, One Piece represents a rare achievement in global media: a narrative that has not only endured but evolved, captivating generations of viewers through sustained storytelling, emotional investment, and active audience participation. Its trajectory reflects the power of narrative commitment, by both creators and audiences, and offers a valuable model for understanding success in serialized digital media.

Declarations

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: P.S., and Q.Y.; Methodology: Q.Y.; Software: P.S.; Validation: P.S.; Formal Analysis: P.S.; Investigation: P.S.; Resources: P.S.; Data Curation: P.S.; Writing Original Draft Preparation: P.S.; Writing Review and Editing: Q.Y.; Visualization: P.S. and Q.Y.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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