

# The Representation of Omotenashi Culture in the Manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro

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## Abstract

This research aims to identify the forms of *Omotenashi* that appear in the Abe Yaro's manga *Shinya Shokudou* based on the *Omotenashi* theory. The approach used in this research is the *hospitality* approach, with a qualitative descriptive method. The theory refers to the concept of *Omotenashi* according to Nobuhiro Ikeda and the service principles of Mitsukoshi. The data source is taken from volume one of the manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro. The analysis results show twenty data points that are categorized into seven forms of *Omotenashi* representation: service based on feelings, giving surprises, warmth and willingness to listen, flexibility in serving, empathy in attitude, building long-term relationships, and respecting customers' habits. Each form reflects service practices that are carried out with sincerity and care, and also illustrates the close social relationship between the Master and the customers. The conclusion of this research indicates that the manga can function as a medium for learning about Japanese culture, especially the value of *Omotenashi*, through meaningful and contextual narrative visualization as depicted in *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro.

**Keywords:** *Omotenashi, manga, popular media, hospitality, cultural representation*

## 要旨

この本研究は、マンガに表れるおもてなしの形を特定し、その意味をおもてなし理論に基づいて解釈することを目的としている。研究で使われるアプローチはホスピタリティアプローチであり、研究方法は記述的な質的研究方法を使っている。理論は池田信博のおもてなし概念と三越のサービス原則に基づいている。データの資料は『深夜食堂』第1巻から取られている。マンガの分析結果には、おもてなしの7つの表現形に分けられる20のデータが見られる。それは「気持ちに基づいたサービス」「サプライズを与える」「温かさや傾聴の姿勢」「柔軟な対応」「共感的な態度」「長期的な関係構築」「顧客の習慣を尊重する」という形で表れている。それぞれの形は、誠実さと注意深さを持つサービスの実践を反映しており、マスターと顧客の強い社会的つながりを表している。この研究の結論は、『深夜食堂』というマンガが、日本文化、特におもてなしの価値を学ぶための教材として機能できることを示している。マンガの中で文脈的で意味のあるナラティブなビジュアルを通して表現されている。

キーワード：おもてなし、マンガ、大衆メディア、ホスピタリティ、文化表現

## 1. Introduction

Jerald (in Sumarto, 2019) stated that culture is not only seen from daily life behavior, but also comes from the way of thinking and values that are rooted within an individual. Japan has many unique cultural aspects, and one of them is *Omotenashi*. According to the fifth edition of the *Shin Meikai Kokugo Jiten* (1997), *Omotenashi* comes from the verb *motenasu* (もてな

す), which means an action of providing service with full attention and care. The term *Omotenashi* was first widely introduced during a speech by Christel Takigawa in 2013. Takigawa was appointed as a delegate sent to the 125th International Olympic Committee (IOC) Session in Buenos Aires in September 2013. In her speech, Takigawa explained the concept of *Omotenashi* as a form of Japanese hospitality that is done sincerely and selflessly. The speech gained significant attention from both Japanese and international media, and it was seen as playing an important role in Tokyo's success in winning the bid to host the 2020 Olympic Games. Since then, the term *Omotenashi* has become a key word to describe Japanese-style hospitality and sincere service to the world.

As public understanding of service quality continues to grow, awareness of the importance of providing high-quality service has also increased. This has led the Japanese government to establish official standards as a reference for service quality. In late January 2017, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) in Japan launched the *Omotenashi Standard Certification* to encourage service providers to stay motivated in improving their service quality based on the principles of *Omotenashi*. There are four types of certificate logos that represent different levels of service quality, each based on the *Omotenashi* standard.



Figure 1. Omotenashi Standard Certification

The Omotenashi Standard Certification includes four levels, each represented by a specific color and name. These levels reflect the quality of service based on the spirit of *Omotenashi*:

1. Purple (紫認証 – Murasaki Ninsyo)
  - a. Highest level: Emotional and meaningful service that touches the customer’s heart.
  - b. Service is not only functional, but also impressive and emotionally engaging.
2. Blue (紺認証 – Kon Ninsyo)
  - a. Intermediate level: Noticeable service improvements that customers can feel.
  - b. Often achieved through innovation and continuous improvement (*kaizen*).
3. Golden Yellow (金認証 – Kin Ninsyo)
  - a. Basic level: Meets the minimum standards of quality service.
  - b. Suitable for small or medium businesses starting their commitment to *Omotenashi*.
4. Red (紅認証 – Beni Ninsyo)
  - a. Pre-qualification: Registered in the system but not fully evaluated yet.
  - b. Shows the intention to begin improving service quality.

These certification levels help guide and motivate service providers in Japan to grow their hospitality standards, and share the spirit of *Omotenashi* with the world.

As the main theoretical foundation in this study, the concept of *Omotenashi* refers to the understanding described by Ikeda (2013), who explains that *Omotenashi* is a form of hospitality that comes from the heart (*kokoro*) and is performed with sincere and selfless intention. Ikeda emphasizes that the essence of *Omotenashi* lies in the awareness to actively care for the comfort and happiness of others, even without an explicit request from those being served. In this context, service is not simply a professional duty, but a form of care that arises from warm and equal human relationships. This concept includes values such as empathy, attention to detail, spontaneity in giving small surprises, and flexibility in service.

According to Nobuhiro Ikeda (2013), there are six main types of *Omotenashi* (Japanese-style hospitality) that form the foundation of service values in Japanese culture:

#### 1. Selfless and Sincere Service

Ikeda (2013) emphasizes that *Omotenashi* is done not for profit, but out of genuine care and the desire to make others feel comfortable. He defines *Omotenashi* as: “freedom from the pursuit of economic rationalization by eliminating waste, irregularity, and unreasonability.” This idea is reinforced by Miyai and Nishio (2016), who define *Omotenashi consumption* as:

「相手を喜ばせ、満足してもらうために相手の立場に立ち、相手の目的・状況・ニーズに合わせて心配りし、それに基づいて行う直接的または間接的な行動を『おもてなし消費』と定義した。」

*Aite o yorokobase, manzoku shitemorau tame ni aite no tachiba ni tachi, aite no mokuteki, jōkyō, nīzu ni awasete kokorokubari shi, sore ni motozuite okonau chokusetsuteki matawa kansetsuteki na kōdō o 'Omotenashi shōhi' to teigi shita.*

(*Omotenashi consumption* means any direct or indirect act done from the guest's perspective, to satisfy them, based on attention to their purpose, situation, and needs.)

#### 2. Reading the Atmosphere (*Sassuru*)

The ability to understand someone's feelings without them saying anything—called *sassuru*—is essential. In Japanese service culture, good hosts read emotions through gestures and facial expressions. Ikeda (2013) highlights this, and Oshima (2012) adds:

「『おもてなし』という言葉は精神性に注目したものであり」

“‘*Omotenashi*’ to iu kotoba wa seishinsei ni chūmoku shita mono de ari”

(“The word ‘*Omotenashi*’ focuses on spirituality and emotional sensitivity.”)

#### 3. Service Improvisation (*Form*)

According to Ikeda (2013), *form* in *Omotenashi* is not rigid—it is a flexible guideline that allows personalized service depending on the guest's condition. This aligns with Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (2002), who said:

「サービスにおける即時的な対応は、顧客満足に寄与する重要な要素である。」

*Sābisu ni okeru sokujiteki na taiō wa, kokyaku manzoku ni kiyō suru jūyō na yōso de aru.*

(“Immediate and responsive service plays a key role in customer satisfaction.”)

#### 4. Aesthetic and Emotional Sensitivity

*Omotenashi* also includes attention to beauty and emotion. Ikeda (2013) stresses the importance of personal touch and emotional experience. Vanhamme and Snelders (2001) support this, stating:

「驚きを伴うサービス体験は、顧客満足度を高め、記憶に残る体験を生み出す。」

*Odoroki o tomonau sābisu taiken wa, kokyaku manzokudo o takame, kioku ni nokoru taiken o umidasu.*

(Surprising service experiences increase satisfaction and create lasting memories.)

### 5. Learning and *Kaizen*

Continuous improvement (*Kaizen*) is a key principle in *Omotenashi*. Ikeda (2013) explains that even with full preparation, every guest situation is unique—so learning and adapting are necessary. Finsterwalder and Tuzovic (2010) also mention that learning helps maintain service quality.

「おもてなしは常に改善の余地があるため、学び続けることが必要である。」

*Omotenashi wa tsuneni kaizen no yochi ga aru tame, manabi tsuzukeru koto ga hitsuyō de aru.*

(*Omotenashi* always has room for improvement, so constant learning is essential.)

### 6. Long-Term Relationships

The final aspect focuses on building long-term emotional connections. Ikeda (2013) sees *Omotenashi* as more than a one-time gesture—it builds trust over time. Nicholls (2010) and Harris et al. (1997) emphasize that even customer-to-customer interaction can improve loyalty.

「長期的な関係性の中で信頼と共感が築かれることが、真のおもてなしにつながる。」

*Chōkitekiteki na kankeisei no naka de shinrai to kyōkan ga kizukareru koto ga, shin no Omotenashi ni tsunagaru.*

(True *Omotenashi* comes from building trust and empathy over the long term.)

In addition to Ikeda’s theory, this study also refers to the service principles practiced by the legendary Japanese department store, Mitsukoshi. The Mitsukoshi service philosophy highlights personal and emotional service aimed at creating memorable experiences for customers. The service is not only based on formal procedures, but also considers the emotional condition of customers deeply. Some of the core values in Mitsukoshi’s service include warmth (*ataitakai kokoro*), respect for customer habits, and the offering of small, joyful surprises (*sorpresa*). These principles are applied by Mitsukoshi staff to provide thoughtful, delicate, and personalized service—making it a respected service culture in Japan and recognized internationally.

The customer service philosophy at Mitsukoshi Department Store is built on eight core principles that guide all service activities in the store (Aishima, 2018, p. 169). These principles go beyond operational procedures; they reflect deeply rooted Japanese cultural values such as attentiveness, empathy, and respect toward customers.

The first principle emphasizes that customers always come first. New employees are trained to prioritize customer comfort in every situation. For example, allowing a customer to try on clothes without pressure to buy is seen as part of creating a pleasant shopping experience.

Second, employees are encouraged to avoid saying “no” to customers. If an item is not in stock, staff will look for it in other store branches or even suggest alternative stores. This shows that customer satisfaction is more important than protecting sales for one store.

The third principle focuses on teamwork. Staff from different departments collaborate to help customers. For instance, when a customer is looking for a special handbag, employees may coordinate with others in different sections to provide better options.

Fourth, professionalism is highly valued. Employees are not only expected to know the products well, but also to understand the cultural or social contexts behind how items are used. This includes giving advice on etiquette for gift-giving or explaining how to take care of certain products, always treating all customers equally.

The fifth value is emotional sensitivity. Employees are trained to understand the feelings and reasons behind customers’ choices. For example, one staff member compassionately helped a customer select a sugar box that was actually intended to hold a

child’s ashes—a gesture that made the service highly meaningful.

Sixth, flexibility is a key part of service. Staff are encouraged to think creatively and respond to unique situations. One story tells of an employee who helped a businessman buy a cake box before opening hours to meet his urgent needs.

Seventh, every employee is expected to help, no matter their role. Whether or not someone works in sales, they are required to assist any customer who needs help.

Finally, the eighth principle highlights the importance of smiling. A genuine smile is seen as essential in creating a welcoming environment, and many customers remember it as one of the most touching parts of their shopping experience at Mitsukoshi.

These eight service values demonstrate how the concept of *Omotenashi* is put into practice at Mitsukoshi. The human-centered approach they follow transforms retail into a warm, thoughtful, and memorable experience for customers (Aishima, 2018, p. 169).

By combining Ikeda’s theory of *Omotenashi* and the Mitsukoshi service principles, this study aims to analyze how the values of Japanese-style hospitality are represented in the manga *Shinya Shokudou*. Unlike previous research that tends to focus on *Omotenashi* in tourism or hospitality industries (such as the study by Wijayanti & Saifudin, 2021), this research explores how these values are applied in a narrative visual context, especially in the field of popular culture. Several previous studies have discussed the meaning of *Omotenashi* from different perspectives. For example, Kuboyama (2020) states that *Omotenashi* is not only relevant as a cultural concept but has also become a standard practice in the Japanese service industry. A study conducted in a traditional Japanese inn (*ryokan*) found that *Omotenashi* is shown not only through basic service, but also through empathetic attitudes displayed by the staff to their guests (Wijayanti & Saifudin, 2021). Another study conducted in a hotel in Japan analyzed the use of *keigo* (polite language), which is considered a real application of *Omotenashi* in hotel service communication (Kuraesin, 2021). However, few studies have examined how these values are represented in manga as a medium. This creates a gap in the study of Japanese popular culture, particularly in understanding how visual media contributes to shaping public perceptions of service culture.

However, although many studies have explored the concept of *Omotenashi* in real-life contexts, there is still a lack of research discussing how this value is represented in popular media, such as manga. In fact, manga—being one of Japan’s most globally consumed forms of popular culture—has strong narrative and visual power to effectively deliver cultural messages. Manga is not only a medium of entertainment but also a reflection of Japan’s social and cultural values. One manga that is relevant to be analyzed through the perspective of *Omotenashi* is *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro. This manga tells the story of a late-night diner owned by a man called “Master,” who serves customers from diverse social backgrounds with empathy and understanding.

Master, the main character, is not only a restaurant owner, but also a good listener, a problem solver, and a figure who brings people together through food and care. The interactions between Master and his customers in each chapter show various forms of service that reflect the values of *Omotenashi*, such as warmth, patience, empathy, and flexibility. Based on early observations, *Shinya Shokudou* does not merely depict a seller-buyer relationship, but rather an emotional connection, where food becomes a medium to show care and appreciation toward others. The service given by Master often goes beyond the customers’ expectations and is delivered sincerely, representing the ideal form of *Omotenashi*.

This study is important because it expands the understanding of *Omotenashi* from a cultural representation perspective in popular media. Research that examines *Omotenashi* in visual narrative forms like manga, especially one that explores deep interpersonal stories such

as *Shinya Shokudou* is still very limited. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of Japanese culture and hospitality studies. This study adopts the hospitality approach developed by Kuboyama (2020) and the theory of *Omotenashi* by Ikeda (2013) as its theoretical foundation.

The main goal of this research is to identify and describe the forms of *Omotenashi* represented in the interactions within the manga, as well as how these values are interpreted through visual elements and character dialogues. Through this study, it is expected to gain new insights into how the concept of *Omotenashi* can be transformed into visual narratives and become a part of cultural communication in the context of popular media. The results of this research are not only relevant to academic studies in Japanese culture and visual literature, but can also serve as a reference for service practitioners who wish to understand the humanistic and empathetic nature of Japanese-style hospitality more deeply.

## 2. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a hospitality approach. This method was chosen to describe and analyze the representation of *Omotenashi* service forms in the manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro. The hospitality approach is considered suitable because *Omotenashi* is not only seen as a cultural expression of Japan, but also as a service strategy that plays an important role in Japan’s tourism and service industries (Kuboyama, 2020).

This approach allows the researcher to explore the meaning of sincere and selfless service as illustrated in visual media such as manga, and to connect it with the principles of *Omotenashi* as defined by Nobuhiro Ikeda and the traditional Mitsukoshi service principles. The main object of this study is volume one of *Shinya Shokudou*, as it introduces the main character, the setting, and initial interactions that reflect *Omotenashi* values. Data were collected in the form of narrative texts and visual elements (images) that depict acts of service, care, and relationships between the restaurant owner (Master) and the customers.

The analysis was carried out in three stages. First, identifying scenes and dialogues related to *Omotenashi* based on theoretical indicators. Second, interpreting the data to understand the meaning of these service actions. Third, classifying the findings into seven categories of *Omotenashi*: emotion-based service, surprise giving, warmth and willingness to listen, service flexibility, empathy, long-term relationship building, and respect for customer habits. This study did not use statistical instruments but relied on qualitative interpretations of textual and visual data. Conclusions were drawn inductively based on the patterns found in the analyzed data.

## 3. Result

Based on the analysis of the first volume of the manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro, this study found seven types of *Omotenashi* (Japanese hospitality) represented through interactions between the main character, the restaurant owner (Master), and his customers. Each type of *Omotenashi* appears in different scenes and shows how the Master provides sincere and thoughtful service, both through dialogue and visual storytelling. The most frequently appearing forms are “Warmth and Willingness to Listen” and “Flexibility in Serving,” each found five times. This shows that the Master is consistently shown as a character who creates a warm atmosphere and is open to different customer needs, adapting to both emotional and unspoken requests.

The form of “Feeling-Based Service” appears four times, showing how the Master understands customer needs intuitively without waiting for them to ask. The types “Building

Long-Term Relationships” and “Respecting Customer Habits” appear two times each. These forms show a caring relationship with regular customers and attention to their personal preferences. Two other forms are “Giving Surprises” and “Empathy in Attitude”, which appear one time each. Even though they are less frequent, these forms still have strong emotional meaning. They show how the Master expresses kindness and understanding, either by giving small happy surprises or by showing deep empathy for a customer’s problem. The table below shows the number of data found in each *Omotenashi* category:

Table 1. Number of Data Based on Types of *Omotenashi* in *Shinya Shokudou*

No.	Type of <i>Omotenashi</i>	Number of Data
1.	Feeling-Based Service	4
2.	Giving Surprises	1
3.	Warmth and Willingness to Listen	5
4.	Flexibility in Serving	5
5.	Empathy in Attitude	1
6.	Building Long-Term Relationships	2
7.	Respecting Customer Habits	2

These findings show that *Shinya Shokudou* presents *Omotenashi* not only as a way of giving service, but also as emotional and human connection. This supports the concept of *Omotenashi* explained by Ikeda (2013) and the traditional service principles of Mitsukoshi department store, both of which highlight sincere, personalized, and empathetic hospitality.

### 1. Emotion-Based Service

The first form of *Omotenashi* found in the manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro is emotion-based service. This happens when the Master serves others without being asked or expecting anything in return, simply because he feels that someone is in need. This kind of service comes from a sincere emotional response and a desire to help. This can be seen in the following scenes:

Data 1



Figure 2. Vol. 1 Ch. 1, the Master offers an extra dish for free to a regular customer.

マスター：小寿々さん、ウィンナー炒めようか？



将平:オレ、絶対別れないって言ったよ、ってね・・・

(Shohei : Ore, zettai wakarenai tte itta yo, tte ne...)

Shohei : I told her there was No. way we'd split and so...

将平:コレッ!

(Shohei : Kore!)

Shohei : This happened!

将平:さっき買ったんだ。安物だけどさ。

(Shohei : Sakki kattanda. Yasumono dakedo sa)

Shohei : We bought it just now, though it's just a cheap little thing.

将平:ぬか漬けにビールは・・・いや日本酒。固めの酒だな。

(Shohei : Nukazuke ni biiru wa... iya nihonshu. Katame no sake da na)

Shohei : Nukazuke and beer... No.. make that sake, a toast to affirm our relationship.

マスター:何も無いけど・・・これ、ぬか床。これからは旦那のために漬けてやんな

(Masutaa : Nani mo nai kedo... kore, nukadoko. Kore kara wa danna no tame ni tsukete yanna)

Master : It's not that much but here... some Nukadoko, with this, you can make pickles on behalf of your husband.

リョマ:ありがとう・・・

(Ryoma : Arigatou...)

Ryoma : Thank you...

This manga panel shows another regular customer at Master's small night diner—a professional female wrestler named Ryouma Fujisaki. One night, she helps a teenage boy named Shouhei who was beaten up by a stranger. Ryouma then brings Shouhei to the diner, where they bond over her habit of eating cucumbers with sake. From that moment, a close relationship grows between them, eventually turning romantic.

Later, Shouhei proposes to Ryouma. At first, she considers ending the relationship, worried it might interfere with Shouhei's dream of debuting as a singer. However, that does not happen. Instead, both of them come to the diner and share the story of their relationship with Master. He listens quietly and then gives them a small gift: a package of *nukadoko* (fermented rice bran used to make pickles), as a way to celebrate this important moment in their lives. Ryouma is touched by the unexpected gesture and even sheds tears of happiness.

Master's action is not just a sign of politeness, but a heartfelt tribute to a significant life transition. He wasn't asked to give a gift, nor was it part of his duty. He did it because he noticed his customers' emotional state and responded with empathy and awareness. This small surprise in the form of *nukazuke* is a simple yet powerful expression of true *Omotenashi*. It shows that the best service doesn't always come from formal systems or rules—it comes from one human understanding another. Through this one thoughtful moment, *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro powerfully portrays *Omotenashi* as a deep emotional and social experience, embodied in a quiet, sincere surprise rather than grand gestures.

### 3. Warmth and Willingness to Listen

Another form of *Omotenashi* found in the manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro is the attitude of warmth and the readiness to listen. This is not only shown through the food served

but also through Master’s sincere demeanor toward his customers. He always positions himself as someone who is fully present and ready to listen to any story his customers bring into the diner.

Based on the data collected under this third category, it is evident that Master is a calm and composed figure. He only speaks when necessary, but he consistently pays close attention to his customers. His presence is not loud or attention-seeking, but rather comforting. This kind of quiet attentiveness reflects a deep level of care and respect, making the diner a safe and welcoming space for emotional expression. This form of *Omotenashi* emphasizes that true hospitality is not just about offering physical service but also about emotional support through genuine listening and presence.

Data 3



Figure 4. Vol. 1 Ch. 2 – A customer arrives in tears, and Master gently asks about their condition

エリカ：最初はここの帰りにお酒飲んでね...

(Erika : Saisho wa koko no kaeri ni osake nonde ne...)

Erika : It began one night while returning from here, after drinking too much.

エリカ：ジンさん、一緒にいたいの！

(Erika : Jin-san, issho ni itai no!)

Erika : Jin-san, will you keep me company.

マスター：で、どうしたんだい？

(Masutaa : De, dōshitan dai?)

Master : So, what happened?

エリカ：あ〜ん...おかわりちょうだい！

(Erika : Aan... okawari chōdai!)

Erika : Aah... another one please!

In this manga panel, a woman named Erika arrives at the diner visibly upset. Without hesitation, she begins to share her story, illustrating how the cozy atmosphere of the diner makes customers feel safe to open up about their personal lives. Master, noticing her sorrow, gently asks what happened. Erika then explains her painful situation: her partner, who she recently discovered is already married, has chosen to stay with his wife instead of continuing the relationship with her. During this emotional moment, Master does not interrupt or offer

immediate advice—he simply listens in silence, allowing Erika to express her sadness freely. Master’s quiet presence and willingness to listen without judgment reflect a non-verbal form of *Omotenashi*. His role here is not to fix the problem, but to provide an emotionally safe space where Erika can process her pain. This approach shows that sometimes people don't seek solutions—they just need someone who will genuinely listen and acknowledge their feelings. Master demonstrates a deep emotional sensitivity, recognizing what the customer needs without being told directly.

This panel demonstrates that *Omotenashi* is not limited to food or drink service; it also involves offering emotional support through presence and empathy. The act of simply being there and listening, though it may seem small and leaves a lasting impression. In Erika’s case, being able to share her sorrow helped her feel lighter, showing how human connection and warmth are at the heart of true Japanese hospitality.

#### 4. Flexibility in Service

Flexibility in service is the next form of *Omotenashi* found in this manga, especially within the context of the small diner where the story takes place. Master doesn’t just serve food but he also shows an open attitude toward his customers’ unique requests and is willing to adapt to situations that are not always ideal. This attitude creates a strong emotional connection between Master and his customers, going beyond basic commercial transactions to touch on deeper social and human values. The following analysis explains how this flexibility is shown, such as accepting special food requests from customers or changing ingredients to make them more comfortable.

Data 4

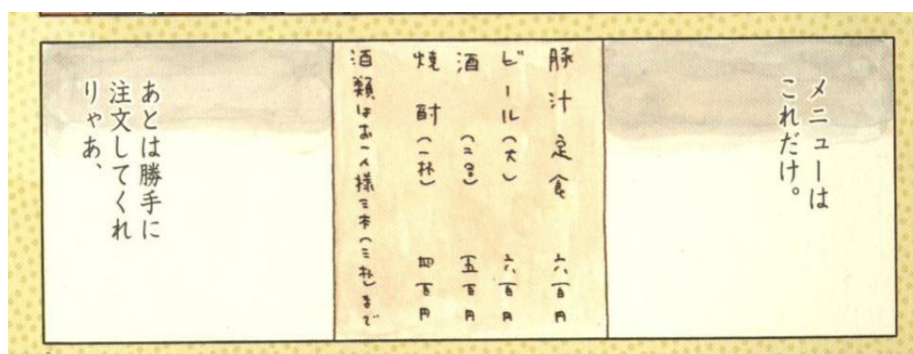


Figure 5.Vol. 1 Ch. 1, menu board showing that customers are free to order dishes outside the listed menu items

メニューはこれだけ。

(Menyū wa kore dake)

These are the only items on the menu

豚汁定食 六(百)円

(Tonjiru teishoku roppyaku en)

Pork Miso Soup 600 yen

ビール(大) 六(百)円

(Bīru (dai) roppyaku en)

Beer (big) 600 yen

酒 ( コップ ) 五百円

(Sake (360 ml) gohyaku en)

Sake (360 ml) 500 yen

焼酎 ( 一杯 ) 四百円

(Shōchū (ippai) yonhyaku en)

Shochu (one cup) 400 yen

酒類はお一様三本 ( 三杯 ) まで

(Shurui wa o-hitoyō san-bon (san-pai) made)

Alcoholic drinks are limited to 3 servings per customer.

あとは勝手に注文してくれりゃあ。

(Ato wa katte ni chūmon shite kure ryaa)

Other dishes are available on request.

In this manga panel, the menu board shows very limited items, listing only "pork soup," "beer," "sake," and "shochu." However, beside it there is a note saying, "For everything else, just ask for what you like." This suggests that even though the written menu is simple, customers are still welcome to order something outside the listed items. Master's flexibility is shown through this casual and unpretentious message. It reflects that his service is not based on strict rules, but rather on the willingness to meet the customer's wishes as much as possible. This approach creates a warm and friendly service atmosphere that may not be found in other dining places.

The freedom to order what the customer wants also shows that Master trusts his customers. They are encouraged to try asking for something different, and he will consider it with an open mind. This shows a strong relational value in the customer interaction, treating them more like friends or regular companions rather than just buyers.

## 5. Emphaty in Attitude

The next form of Omotenashi is empathy in attitude, which is an important part of customer service. This does not only show care, but also helps build an emotional connection between the service provider and the customer. In the context of food service, empathy can be seen through how the staff or owner understands the customer's needs, background, and even their emotional condition. A sincere sense of empathy gives customers a feeling of comfort and helps build loyalty to the place.

Empathetic service goes beyond conversation. It can also appear through facial expressions or presence that shows care without needing to say many words. This kind of response helps make the relationship more than just a business transaction, it becomes more human and meaningful.

Data 5



Figure 6. Vol. 1 Ch. 10 – The Master Observes His Customer’s Expression While Enjoying His Napolitan Dish.

フリオ : .....ウーン

(Furio.....Ūn)

Furio : Hmm.

マスター : .....と言ったっきり、なんとも言えない表情してたよ。

(Masutaa..... to itta kkiri, nantomo ienai hyōjō shiteta yo)

Master.....was that all that he said. Saying nothing else, He made such a face.

マスター : .....それかわからないけど、この頃妙に多いんだ.....

(Masutaa..... Sore de ka dō da ka wakaranai kedo, kono goro myō ni ōin da.....)

Master : I don’t really understand how or why, but there’s suddenly a lot of them...

お客様 : ナポリタン クダサ〜イ!!

(Okyakusama : Naporitan kudasa~i!!)

Customer : Napolitan, please!!

マスター : イタリア人の客がさ。

(Masutaa : Itaria-jin no kyaku ga sa)

Master : Italian Customers, I mean.

In this manga panel, the scene shows Furio eating Napolitan made by the Master. His expression appears ambiguous and slightly tense, leading the Master to quietly conclude that Furio is not completely satisfied with the dish. Instead of reacting verbally, the Master observes closely and later decides to improve the recipe and serve it again. Through Furio’s facial expression and body language, we can see his emotional discomfort. At this point, the Master demonstrates empathy through silent and non-judgmental observation. He does not ask directly or pressure Furio to enjoy the meal, but instead gives emotional space for the customer to process his feelings. This reflects the Master’s high level of emotional sensitivity and social awareness.

In a following narration, the Master remarks that lately, more customers seem happier when eating the same menu. This shows his ability to observe not just individual emotions, but also patterns in his customers' collective mood. Rather than chasing profit aggressively, he pays attention to their emotional state, offering care and understanding in his service. Later, after improving his Napolitan, a group of foreign customers enters the diner and happily orders using their accent, saying “ナポリタン クダサ〜イ!!” (Napolitan kudasai!). Although this moment is lighthearted and humorous, it also reflects empathy in a broader cultural context. The Master does not judge their pronunciation or origin, but welcomes them with a smile and genuine kindness. This shows that empathy in hospitality is not only about sadness or problems, it also includes openness to cultural differences and joy.

Based on the data analyzed, we can conclude that empathy in behavior is one of the key forms of *Omotenashi* shown by the Master. It is expressed both passively, by allowing emotional space and actively, through observing collective moods and cultural nuances. This level of empathy strengthens the bond between the Master and his customers, turning the diner into a warm, human-centered social space.

## 6. Building Long-Term Relationships

This form of *Omotenashi* illustrates that the relationship between the customer and the Master is not merely transactional but emotional and long-term. The Master offers warm and consistent service that creates a deep sense of attachment. This emotional connection can be recognized through the customers' decisions to keep returning to the diner over time, not just for the food, but for the comfort and familiarity of the experience.

This point is reflected in several scenes from the manga *Shinya Shokudou*, where returning customers show strong emotional bonds with the Master. Through expressions, dialogue, and subtle everyday situations, the manga depicts how trust and loyalty are built over time. These long-term relationships are not created instantly but grow gradually through continuous, heartfelt service. This type of connection highlights one of the essential values of *Omotenashi*: caring for others sincerely, even when there is no immediate reward or obligation.

Data 6



Figure 7.Vol. 1 Ch. 1 – A customer leaves extra change and becomes a regular visitor afterward

竜ちゃん：釣りはいらんないよ。

(Ryuu chan : Tsuru wa iranai yo)

Ryu : Keep the change.

マスター : .....以来 うちの常連さ。

(Masutaa : ...irai uchi no jōrensan)

Master : Sejak itu, dia jadi pelanggan tetap kami.

This manga panel shows a man, familiarly called Ryu-chan, enjoying his meal. The dish was not originally on the menu, but he randomly entered the restaurant and asked the Master to cook some fried sausages. The Master agreed and even offered to shape the sausages like octopuses. Ryu-chan happily accepted, saying it would make the dish taste even better. After finishing the meal, he left extra money and said, “釣りはいらないよ” (Tsuru wa iranai yo / Keep the change), while the Master simply watched calmly without any exaggerated reaction. The closing narration reads, “...以来、うちの常連さ。” (...irai, uchi no jōren sa / since then, he has become a regular customer at the diner).

The customer’s act of leaving extra money calmly and without expecting anything in return shows his trust and comfort toward the diner. The short dialogue shows that building emotional connection does not always require many words. The Master’s narration also indicates that Ryu-chan has kept coming back ever since. This kind of long-term relationship is not built through grand gestures, but from consistency and meaningful first impressions. The customer’s willingness to give extra without asking for change, and the Master’s quiet acknowledgment of a new regular, reflect a strong example of long-term connection. It highlights the concept of *Omotenashi* as a sincere service not focused on profit, but on emotional satisfaction and mutual connection between the server and the guest.

## 7. Respecting Customer Habits

In this form of *Omotenashi*, showing respect for the customer's habits is an important part of service that reflects the Master's sensitivity to the individual characteristics of each customer. Not everyone has the same favorite food, and even their habits can be very different. *Omotenashi* is not only about offering good service, but also about creating comfort by paying attention to the preferences, routines, and backgrounds of each customer. This type of service not only makes customers feel appreciated, but also helps to build trust and long-term emotional connection. The following three examples illustrate how the Master shows respect for the various habits of his customers through responsive behavior, tolerance, and adaptation to their unique requests.

Data 7



Figure 8. Vol. 1 Ch. 4, a customer arrives and orders an unusual menu item

マスター：ハイ、お待ち。

(Masutaa : Hai, omachi)

Master : Thanks for waiting.

お客様：ケチャップとマヨネーズちょうだい！

(Okyakusama : Kechappu to mayoneezu chōdai!)

Customer : Ketchup and mayonnaise, please!

In this manga panel, a scene is shown where a female detective visits the diner and orders *Aji Furai*, then makes an additional request: “ケチャップとマヨネーズちょうだい！”

(“Ketchup and mayonnaise, please!”). This request reflects her unique personal taste, which differs from the typical habits of other customers. This is proven by the shocked reactions from surrounding customers, illustrated by wide eyes, furrowed brows, and cold sweat, all suggesting that her request goes against the usual dining norms or expectations in that setting.

However, the Master does not overreact, nor does he reject the request. Even though the detective’s preference might seem strange, the scene portrays her as confident and unafraid to express her individuality. The Master’s response to fulfilling the request without hesitation or complaint, he shows a key aspect of *Omotenashi*: respecting and accepting the unique habits and preferences of each customer. This attitude highlights the value of diversity and reinforces the idea that the customer’s comfort is a top priority in the service provided at the diner.

#### 4. Discussion

The discussion in this study focuses on how the concept of *Omotenashi* is represented through the narrative and visual elements in the manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro. In this context, *Omotenashi* is not only shown as a food service practice but also symbolizes social and human values such as empathy, care, and emotional connection between the server and the customer. The seven forms of *Omotenashi* found in this study include feeling-based service, giving surprises, warmth and willingness to listen, flexibility in serving, empathetic attitude, building long-term relationships, and respecting customer habits. These forms reflect that hospitality in Japanese culture is based on sincerity and deep attentiveness, as explained in Ikeda's theory (2013) and the service principles of Mitsukoshi.

The form of feeling-based service shows that the character "Master" is able to understand the emotional needs of customers without needing them to express it directly. This reflects the essence of *Omotenashi*, which focuses on heartfelt sincerity and attention to personal details. In practice, small surprises given to customers during meaningful moments demonstrate how sincere service can strengthen emotional bonds.

The aspect of warmth and willingness to listen is portrayed through the Master's attitude in providing a safe space for customers to express themselves. The diner functions as an emotional shelter where customers feel appreciated and understood. Flexibility in serving, such as accepting orders not listed on the menu, shows openness to individual needs and a non-rigid approach to hospitality, which is one of the essential values of *Omotenashi*.

The Master’s empathetic attitude is also seen through minimal verbal interaction but meaningful gestures, such as eye contact or facial expressions that reflect his understanding of the customers’ psychological conditions. The long-term relationships he builds with his customers are not based on transactions, but on simple and meaningful routines. This shows that *Omotenashi* is not only about one-time service, but about building lasting emotional connections.

In addition, respect for customer habits—such as allowing them to sit in their favorite spot or order the same food repeatedly—demonstrates appreciation for individual uniqueness. This proves that *Omotenashi* does not force customers to follow rigid rules but adapts itself to

ensure their comfort. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that *Shinya Shokudou* is not just a form of entertainment, but an effective narrative medium for delivering Japanese cultural values in a meaningful and contextual way. The visual storytelling in this manga presents *Omotenashi* as a social practice that shapes deep interpersonal relationships. In other words, this manga holds potential as a cross-cultural learning tool, especially in fields such as service and tourism that require humanistic and empathetic approaches.

## 5. Conclusion

The manga *Shinya Shokudou* by Abe Yaro presents the values of *Omotenashi* not only through its storyline but also through the emotional connections between the main character, Master, and his customers. In a simple yet touching narrative, readers can find various forms of Japanese-style hospitality, such as emotional-based service, small surprises, empathy, and building long-term relationships. By using a hospitality approach, this study shows that *Omotenashi* is not only part of Japanese culture but also an effective service strategy, especially in tourism and hospitality. From the analysis, a total of 20 data points were found, representing seven forms of *Omotenashi* in the first volume of this manga.

These findings support the idea that manga can be a powerful medium for sharing cultural values, especially in service fields that require empathy and sincerity. Through its visuals and storytelling, *Shinya Shokudou* communicates meaningful and human-centered messages. However, this research is limited to only one volume and one manga title. Therefore, future studies are recommended to explore more manga or compare across different media to broaden the understanding of how *Omotenashi* is represented in Japanese popular culture.

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