

Characteristics of Japanese Social and Cultural Values from Harajuku Fashion

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Abstract. "Harajuku" is a representative fashion of Japanese street culture, and it has constructed the image of Japanese pop culture. This research analyzes the historical background and cultural causes behind Harajuku fashion and explains the internal and external causes of the formation and development of Harajuku fashion in terms of historical and economic backgrounds. So, the research analyzes the cultural characteristics of Japanese society from the perspective of fashion, and further reveals the logical interactions and intrinsic connections between the cultural representations and value theories. Through relevant research, it is concluded that there is a circular logical relationship between fashion characteristics and the social phenomena as their causes behind them, and it is also proposed that the establishment and dissemination of national characteristic cultural images require the operation of branding mechanisms and the value support of cultural genes. Overall, this study logically constructs and analyzes Harajuku fashion characteristics and cultural concepts, explains the national characteristics and cultural values of Japanese society from the social phenomenon, combines relevant fashion and social theories, and provides insights and reflections on the innovation and construction of the national and local cultural image and brand discourse.

Keywords: Harajuku fashion, Japanese society, cultural values.

1. Introduction

At the end of the last century, the Japanese community embodied the emerging concepts of consumption and individuality in trend culture. Among them, Harajuku fashion became a collection and representative of youth subculture trends, mainly characterized by its open and liberal fashion concepts and diversified and integrated style branches. With the development of the times, Harajuku fashion is a product of the cultural consumption of a specific class of society, reflecting their identity, based on the changes in the economic background and the evolution of consumer consciousness at the time. Further tracing back its cultural origin, it can be found that the concept of fashion styles has a deep connection with the Japanese national character and cultural genes [1]. Therefore, based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that the formation of Harajuku fashion is linked to Japanese social history and culture both internally and externally. Meanwhile, as a manifestation of social phenomenon, there is a two-way interactive logical relationship between the Harajuku fashion and its underlying causes.

In the related research field, most of the existing academic studies have taken historical time as the research structure, and fashion design research and social industrial structure as the main research focus. However, there is still a need for systematic research and in-depth analysis of the social and cultural values reflected in Japanese subculture trends. Therefore, on the basis of existing research, this paper analyzes two major dimensions: social history and consumer consciousness, national identity and cultural genes, thereby revealing the social external causes and internal values behind the formation of Harajuku fashion and further summarize the social characteristics of Harajuku style as a distinguishing feature in Japanese fashion language, drawing a logical conclusion about the interaction between the two, so as to provide theoretical analyses and inspirations for the innovation and development of the national characteristic cultural image.

2. Optional: Definition of Harajuku Style and the Role of "Yankee Style"

"Harajuku style" is a representative and distinctive street trend in the Japanese fashion system, which is mainly presented by the fashion trendsetters with unique personalities in various styles and unique walking on the streets of the Harajuku area in Japan, whose main idea is that "there is no fixed and defined style" [2]. As a result, the Harajuku fashion system is diverse and open, and its inclusive philosophy and free style have made Harajuku fashion a center of fashion development for Japanese subculture trends. At the same time, the Harajuku area also plays an important role in carrying the historical innovation and evolution of Japanese fashion.

"Harajuku fashion" has been summarized into broad and narrow dimensions [3]. In the broad sense, Harajuku, as a regional concept, is one of the core origins and gathering places of Japanese fashion trends. Since the rise of street culture and the independent expansion of fashion consciousness in Japan, Harajuku street fashion culture has become an important part of Japan's fashion history. In a narrow sense, the open ecology and independent consciousness in Harajuku street has created the unique "Harajuku style," which features its flexible styles and diverse fashions.

Therefore, Harajuku fashion not only tells the change and development of Japanese fashion society, but its own concept has also created and become a representative feature of Japanese alternative culture.

At the same time, it can be believed that the formation of Harajuku fashion has both internal and external causes. In a broad sense, the development of Japanese social history and a series of social changes are the external causes of Harajuku fashion; in a narrow sense, its cultural origins are the essential internal cause of the formation of Harajuku fashion.

According to its history, Harajuku's emergence as a centerpiece of youth subculture trends stems from the creation and evolution of "Yankee Style" in the history of Japan and Harajuku fashion. The term "Yankee" is an innovative Japanese term that began as a parody of the image of juvenile delinquents in the post-war era in the United States and Japan [4]. In terms of the evolution of "Yankee Style" itself, it began as a parody of American style and its image of a fashion group, and after becoming the fashion guide for relevant groups in Japan, epitomizing the Harajuku fashion as a whole fashion system. At the same time, the alternative characteristics of "Yankee Style" and the followers of it as a subculture style are representative of the whole Harajuku fashion.

Therefore, as a core element for the origin and development of Harajuku fashion and a representative of Harajuku style, this study will utilize "Yankee Style" as the main case and analyze it from the aspects of both external and internal causes to explore the reasons why Japanese Harajuku fashion has been shaped and developed, and become the fashion symbol for the world, and thereby to provide certain value revelations for the shaping of national culture.

3. External Factors: Historical Evolution and Consumer Attitudes

As a reflection of the spirit of the "national character", fashion is no longer a single concept, but has a symbolic and contemporary significance for society [5]. Therefore, the development of Harajuku fashion is closely related to the social and historical background of Japan. The term "Harajuku" is taken from the Harajuku area in Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan. After World War II, Harajuku was set up as a base for the U.S. military. As a result, the Harajuku area has experienced a significant influx of American cultural influence during the modernization that occurred after the war's defeat.

In the 1970s, Japan's post-war economy gradually recovered after years of reconstruction and entered a period of stable growth. The consumer concept of the masses began to change from the "functionalism" of the 1960s to "materialism" [3]. Moreover, the Japanese style based on the American style, as exemplified by "City Pop," laid the foundation for the Harajuku style to enter its golden age.

In the 1980s, when the economy was in the throes of a boom, Japanese society began to seek its own voice in fashion expression as a result of the growing sense of individuality. The local fashion

industry, centered on the Harajuku neighborhood, began to seek innovative change and independent development. At the same time, with the expansion of young consumers, the fashion concept of "wearing what you like the way you like it" came into being [5], gradually forming the cultural concept that focuses on diversity, openness, individual expression, and self-feeling above all else.

In the mid-1970s and early 1980s, the "Yankee Style", which was modeled after delinquent young men in American crime movies, became popular among rebellious young people in Japan. This style was characterized by fashion elements such as aviator hats and leather jackets, mainly featuring the rock 'n' roll style, with which teenagers adopted a tough and unruly image [4]. This unorthodox subculture fashion style spread among "dropouts and juvenile delinquents" and had become a symbol for rebellious youths to gang up, express themselves, and rebel against the higher classes of society. The young audience used Harajuku as a fashion stronghold to counter the mainstream culture and demonstrate their identities, launching a new revolution in anti-mainstream fashion. Nowadays, "Japanese delinquent youth", which represents the meaning of hot-bloodedness and righteousness, has become a characteristic subculture symbol in Japan.

The prevalence of the "Yankee Style" among the young community was based on the rapid economic development of Japan in the late 1970s. According to the theory of John Fisk, a scholar of the famous Birmingham School, the audience possesses subjective initiative in cultural consumption and concurrently has the ability to generate cultural products that reflect the group's identity [6]. It can be asserted that the thriving economy has altered the class of fashion consumers, thereby leading to the emergence of a new consumer class that creates its own consumer goods to distinguish between various audience groups.

In the historical context of the time, the booming economy made fashion no longer a status symbol just for the affluent class. The blue-collar teenagers in working-class created and followed the subculture of "Yankee Style" forming a non-mainstream fashion that rebelled against the affluent class, and injecting new subculture styles into Harajuku's fashion history while achieving their own class identity.

It can be seen that the birth of "Yankee Style" comes from the simultaneous evolution of consumer standards and consumer concepts under a specific historical background, as well as the fashion group identity generated by the cultural consumption needs of the consumer audience. At the same time, the confrontational nature between the "Yankee Style" and the mainstream of society has, to a certain extent, played an important role in the development of Harajuku style in the history of fashion.

4. Internal Cause: National Identity and Social Genes

Further, the reason why Harajuku style has been able to develop and form its characteristic fashion concept and cultural image in Japan has a deeper connection with the national identity and cultural genes of Japanese society. At the same time, Harajuku style, which represents Japanese street trends and alternative subcultures, has also become a symbol of national identity and representative characteristics of social phenomena in Japanese society.

4.1. The Confrontational Personality: Culture of Tolerance and Obedience and Self-Stabilization

In the Japanese traditional system of cultivating intrinsic qualities, such as patience and restraint, the maintenance of 'self-respect' serves as the standard by which Japanese people define themselves and expect others to adhere to. The educational principles of self-discipline and tolerance towards others have not only shaped the distinct 'culture of tolerance and obedience' within Japanese society but have also become integral to the self-esteem of its people in their daily interactions with others [7].

From the viewpoint of subculture ideology, young people's anti-mainstream cultural consumption behavior expresses, to a certain extent, cultural rebellion against traditional values [8]. Therefore, the

repression of personality and mental load caused by the "culture of tolerance and obedience" has shaped the release and expression of spirit in Japanese alternative culture creations.

Taking "Yankee Style" as an example, the difference in social class and the depression of real life have given birth to the youth to make up for the inner inequality and release the pressure through the fashion identity [9].

In order to express their confrontation with mainstream fashion and to highlight their cultural concepts of roughness, freedom and release, the youth consumer groups, mainly the middle class and working class, follow the role symbols of "Yankee Boys" characterized by "airplane heads" to realize the return and shaping of their own roles. It can be said that traditional cultural values have given birth to the production of subculture fashion connotations, and at the same time, the expression of subculture itself also reflects the resistance to social values.

It can be seen that the fashion concept of the Harajuku style originates from the pursuit and maintenance of "self-stability" in the face of social pressures. Shinji Miyadai suggests that around the 1980s, the "era of the self" began the prelude to the importance of "self-stability" [10]. It can be said that the subculture trend started by the followers of "Yankee Style" in the Harajuku streets created a virtual sanctuary of personality for the people of that time. In this era of high-cost consumption under the economic bubble, Japanese teenagers' pursuit of self-awareness transcended the original order of the times, and in order to realize "self-stability," they resist the shackles of the social environment and the shaping of their social roles in fashionable ways as well as created a virtual character with this fashion as a form of expression.

It is worth pointing out that it is precisely due to the non-socialized role construction that individuals gradually become separated from the real society [10]. Just as the "Yankee Style" symbolizes and attributes meanings to "delinquents", adolescents tend to engage in desocialization within real society as they identify with the virtual image. This phenomenon can be believed to be linked to the prevalence of juvenile delinquency in Japanese society during the 1980s and 1990s. Adolescents demonstrated self-consciousness and sought to confirm their individual status by engaging in unsocialized behavioral expressions originating from the characteristics of the virtual image.

Therefore, it can be seen that there is a circular interaction between fashion representations and spiritual values. Harajuku fashion, on the one hand, shows the spiritual values behind the social behavior caused by relevant fashion, and on the other hand, it is also the cause of some social behavioral phenomena under the semantics of subculture.

4.2. Featured Cultural Patterns: Utilitarianism and Hybrid Attributes

Since ancient times, Japan has pursued the principle of "peace is precious", which both is a cultural concept and has given Japanese people the psychological characteristic of "seeking peace" [11]. At the same time, because of objective factors such as historical changes and geographical location, cultural absorption is a necessary cultural mode in the construction of Japanese culture. Therefore, the Japanese people have a certain degree of inclusiveness and adaptability to foreign cultures. Besides, the cultural mode of absorbing foreign cultures has also shaped the Japanese people's adherence to their own cultural identity, so in actual cultural practices, the Japanese people are also highly utilitarian and purposive, which contradicts the inclusiveness and adaptability of cultural absorption itself [12].

Because of such contradictory personalities, it can be said that cultural creation in Japanese society is distinctly autonomous [13], which means they consciously identify with both foreign cultures and their own traditional cultures.

Based on the contradictory, utilitarian and conscious national character in dealing with culture, the overall cultural characteristics of Japanese society show a certain hybridity. The Japanese thinker, Kato Choichi, put forward the "hybrid culture theory" of Japanese culture [14], which reveals the cultural absorption method of Japanese culture in the process of breaking through the tradition and moving towards modernization. In the historical path of continuous innovation and reconstruction of

Japanese culture, its cultural model breaks through the monist model and forms the cultural production mechanism of "conflict, coexistence and integration" [11]. When Japanese society encounters a new cultural pattern, it fully incorporates foreign cultures while maintaining the original culture's constraints, making it the unique 'hybrid culture' of Japanese society. At the same time, it serves both as a cultural pattern and reveals its social and cultural product characteristics.

From the point of view of Japan's post-war fashion history, the Japanese people wanted to rebuild their own fashion order, and at the same time, they focused on their own cultural concepts. Harajuku's geographic characteristics of being edge location, and its quiet neighborhoods, provided natural historical conditions for Japan's independent street culture and youth fashion which is against the mainstream. As a key part of this, "Yankee Style" has evolved as a key part of this trend, incorporating American street elements such as baseball jackets and mambo pants. This style has gained popularity among relevant groups in Japan, who then develop into subcultures such as "Bikers" and "Rockers" [4]. Such fashionable evolution from imitating American style to copying group fashion reflects the openness and fusion of Japanese cultural mode.

At the same time, the popularity of "Yankee Style" became the beginning of subculture fashion in Harajuku, making Harajuku a fashion mecca for local independent brands, attracting different kinds of subculture groups to innovate on the local trend, and they also chose and imitated the existing fashion elements, so as to blend and create their own alternative fashions, echoing the Japanese society's cultural concept of "mix and match of the self" [3] at that time and slowly forming the present-day pluralistic and open Harajuku style with local characteristics.

It can be said that the diversity and alternativeness of Harajuku fashion come from the national character and cultural behavior behind Japan's cultural production mechanism, and it also reflects the hybrid nature of its society under this model.

5. Revelation and Reflection: Indigenous Cultural Mechanisms under National Cultural Characterization

It is worth mentioning that Japan is good at establishing brand symbols and values belonging to the localized society from imitation and innovation. The author suggests that the brand here does not refer to a specific commercial brand, but a sense of image shaping and a manifestation of style characteristics. As "Yankee Style" was popular in Japan in the last century, the copying and imitation of "Yankee boys" came from their own conceptual needs, and at the same time, they expressed their own attitudes in the prevalence of the trend, which ultimately pushed the evolution of Harajuku fashion and evolved into a distinctive fashion symbol belonging to the Japanese style.

Throughout the theory of popular culture, new culture comes from selective acceptance and subjective fusion. However, Japan has been able to develop its own "hybrid culture" based on such a theoretical structural paradigm, i.e., the ability to transform cultural genes into cultural brands. Japanese society is characterized by "hybrid attributes," and through this, they have integrated their own cultural character and genes into the operation of the cultural mechanism. Through innovation and transformation based on their original culture, they have formed their own cultural brands and style symbols. It symbolizes and brands the cultural styles and the concepts contained therein, and establishes a popular culture with a national characteristic cultural image, from which it reflects its own social and cultural value.

The model of cultural hybrid and branding is the reason why Japanese society has found its own inclusive cultural identity and developed "hybrid culture" as an alternative culture, making cultural hybrid itself a cultural characteristic and valuable forming conditions. The strong innovation ability and branding mode not only provide a source of power for the development of popular culture, but also provide certain value and inspiration for the adaptability of national culture and the vitality of its inheritance in the times.

From the perspective of China's cultural system construction, it is the mission of Chinese modernized society to spread national own external discourse and build up national cultural self-

confidence by integrating popular culture and innovating traditional culture. However, on the basis of constructing an appropriate external discourse system and promoting the long-lasting traditional civilization, China's cultural image and symbols still suffer from the problems of stereotyping and homogenization in the foreign market.

Therefore, in terms of cultural innovation, apart from the integration of popular and traditional content and the development of media technology, there still not be established a cultural image with great influence, wide dissemination and deep conceptualization in the cultural market.

The diversified national culture and deep heritage are cultural advantages, however, when establishing cultural image, it is necessary to make good use of the cultural advantages, integrate the cultural character and national inner value behind the cultural traditions, carrying out concept dissemination and symbolic creation in the direction of branding ways, and avoid fuzzy conceptual positioning and superficial forms of fusion.

Therefore, from the perspective of cultural innovation and popularity, the distinctive cultural symbols and cultural concepts generated by Japan's brand awareness and cultural mechanism are of great revelation to the integration and innovation of national cultural character and its distinctive cultural creations and images.

6. Conclusion

This study analyzes the historical and economic background of Harajuku fashion, tracing its development. It concludes that both external and internal factors contribute to Harajuku fashion. Socio-economic background and group consumer concepts are identified as external causes, while deeper traditional cultural values and national cultural genes are seen as internal causes. Also, the study discovered that Harajuku fashion serves as a representation of its underlying causes, indicating a two-way interactive logical relationship between the two. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of transforming cultural characteristics into mechanisms for branding operations and cultural production. This provides insights and prompts considerations for the development and construction of China's national cultural image. This research contributes to the investigation and analysis of fashion and society within the field of popular culture studies.

However, the development of Japanese fashion history has a great correlation with media publicity, the industrial economy, global cultural integration and other real factors and theories. Meanwhile, the concept of Harajuku fashion is open and widely branched, so this paper only focuses on the process between the 1970s and 1980s to carry out cultural research and has not yet done in-depth research in the industry area.

In addition, the Japanese national character is "endogenous", so its popular culture lacks an international vision of popularity and the impetus for industrial expansion. This paper only analyzes the good aspects of its social culture and lacks certain discussion and research on the reflections brought by its shortcomings.

To summarize, the development of Harajuku fashion is inextricably related to the changes in social history and the influence of cultural values. It is concluded that the development of a national cultural image through branding operations needs to start from the essential cultural character and value. Besides, how to establish a correct cultural mechanism and create a characteristic cultural image is a cultural practice issue that is constantly promoted and evolved in the innovation and exploration of fashion and society.

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