MEDIA CONSUMPTION OF JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE
AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUNG ADULTS

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The purpose of this study was to understand the media consumption experiences of Japanese popular culture among Malaysians. Such a study is important in order to understand the consequence of the consumption of foreign cultural products since the development of information communication technology has brought changes to the consumption styles of media entertainment, especially among the younger generation.

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach, a qualitative research methodology, was employed in this study. This approach was considered the most appropriate for describing and understanding individual media consumption experiences in a particular context. Twelve Malaysian young adults were selected by criterion and snowball sampling techniques. In-depth interviews, which lasted between fifty minutes to three hours, were conducted by this researcher. Each interview was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed via thematic analysis. The other documents related to the production, representation, identity and regulation of Japanese popular culture were obtained as supporting data from both Japan and Malaysia.
The findings from this study provide insights into the consumption process, which constitutes four components: engagement, accumulation, decoding, and appropriation. The component of engagement was described in relation to technological development and free distribution through the Internet, which remains unregulated. The component of accumulation was found to be an important part of media consumption in developing the young Malaysian consumer’s mindset towards specific formats, genres or products from Japan. Accumulated consumption experiences of cultural products resulted in different outcomes from the decoding of media texts. The findings also reveal that the participants considered a part of the texts as ‘foreignness’ or ‘Japanese-ness’ according to their social positions. While the participants expected to find a sophisticated depiction of human beings in the products that they would reflect on or relate to, they also developed their own ways of thinking during media consumption.

As part of the media consumption of Japanese popular culture in Malaysia, the findings also indicate that a new identity, ‘otaku identity,’ has emerged through the participants’ sharing activities of Japanese popular culture among online fans and other Malaysians. Japanese popular culture can be appropriated as part of the participants’ own lifestyle through accumulative consumption experiences. It can even become a basis for establishing good companionship with other people or having an impelling motive to determine their actions in the near future.

This study concludes that the media consumption of Japanese popular culture is fundamentally shaped by an individual’s capacity to handle the latest information technology, especially the Internet. The contents of Japanese popular cultural
products are crucial. Without a sophisticated depiction of ‘an essential human aspect’ to which young Malaysians could relate, Japanese popular culture would not be well liked. The depiction of human aspects in the products may provide some sort of valuable life lessons for young Malaysians despite the differences that exist between the lifestyles of Japanese and Malaysians.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PENGUNGAN MEDIA BAGI BUDAYA POPULAR JEPUN DALAM KALANGAN ORANG MUDA MALAYSIA

oleh

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Ogos 2011

Pengerusi: Prof. Madya Ezhar Tamam, PhD
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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami pengalaman menggunakan media bagi budaya popular Jepun dalam kalangan rakyat Malaysia. Kajian seumpama ini adalah penting untuk memahami kesan daripada penggunaan produk budaya asing memandangkan perkembangan teknologi komunikasi maklumat telah membawa perubahan terhadap gaya penggunaan media hiburan, terutama dalam kalangan generasi muda.


v
Hasil kajian ini memberikan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang proses penggunaan yang mencakupi empat komponen, iaitu penglibatan, pengumpulan, penafsiran, dan pengamalan budaya berkenaan. Komponen penglibatan dihuraikan dengan berdasarkan upaya responden mengikuti perkembangan teknologi maklumat dan penyebarannya secara percuma melalui internet, yang masih tiada kawalan. Komponen pengumpulan didapati menjadi bahagian penting dalam aktiviti penggunaan media dari segi pembinaan cara berfikir orang muda di Malaysia dalam memilih format, genre atau produk yang tertentu dari Jepun. Pengalaman penggunaan dengan cara pengumpulan produk budaya mengakibatkan penafsiran yang berbeza terhadap teks media. Penemuan juga menunjukkan responden menganggap bahawa sebahagian daripada teks sebagai 'asing' atau 'kejepunan' bergantung pada status sosial mereka. Walaupun responden menjangkakan dapat menemui gambaran manusiawi canggih dalam produk yang digambarkan atau dilibati, namun mereka juga membina cara berfikir yang tersendiri semasa menggunakan media.

Sebagai hasil penggunaan media bagi budaya popular Jepun di Malaysia, penemuan juga menunjukkan bahawa identiti baharu, iaitu identiti ‘otaku, telah muncul melalui aktiviti perkongsian budaya popular Jepun dalam kalangan peminat yang sama dan rakyat Malaysia yang lain. Budaya popular Jepun boleh diamalkan sebagai sebahagian daripada gaya hidup responden melalui pengalaman penggunaan secara pengumpulan. Malah, amalan ini boleh menjadi asas untuk membina persahabatan yang baik dengan orang lain atau menjadi motif pendorong untuk menentukan tindakan mereka pada masa terdekat.
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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all young Malaysians who have embraced the Japanese popular culture. I hope those visual creations from Japan have enlightened them and thus, more people in Japan would share their passion, interests, and exchange knowledge and ideas with them for further development of popular culture or creative works in both countries.
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 16 August 2011 to conduct the final examination of Eriko Yamato on her thesis entitled "Media Consumption of Japanese Popular Culture among Malaysian Young Adults" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

ERIKO YAMATO
Date: 16 August 2011
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BIODATA OF STUDENT

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS