UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

MEDIA CONSUMPTION OF JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUNG ADULTS

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By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MEDIA CONSUMPTION OF JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUNG ADULTS

By
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Chair: **Assoc. Prof. Ezhar Tamam, PhD**
Faculty: **Modern Languages and Communication**

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.

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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

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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.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PENGGUNAAN MEDIA BAGI BUDAYA POPULAR JEPUN DALAM KALANGAN ORANG MUDA MALAYSIA

oleh

ERIKO YAMATO

Ogos 2011

Pengerusi: Prof. Madya Ezhar Tamam, PhD
Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

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.

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi hermeneutik yang berdasarkan metodologi penyelidikan kualitatif. Pendekatan ini dianggap paling tepat untuk menghuraikan dan memahami pengalaman individu dalam penggunaan media dalam konteks tertentu. Dua belas orang muda Malaysia dipilih dengan teknik persampelan berkriteria dan *snowball*. Penyelidik mengadakan wawancara secara mendalam dengan responden untuk sesi antara lima puluh minit hingga tiga jam. Setiap wawancara dirakamkan, ditulis kata demi kata, dan dianalisis mengikut tema yang direncanakan. Dokumen lain yang berkaitan dengan penghasilan, penggambaran, pengenalpastian dan pematuhan ciri budaya popular Jepun turut diperoleh dari kedua-dua negara, iaitu Jepun dan Malaysia sebagai data sokongan.

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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.

Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa penggunaan media bagi budaya popular Jepun pada dasarnya dibentuk oleh keupayaan individu untuk mengendalikan teknologi maklumat terkini, terutamanya internet. Namun demikian, kandungan produk budaya popular Jepun sangat penting. Tanpa gambaran canggih tentang 'aspek manusiawi penting' yang diidamkan untuk dimiliki oleh orang muda Malaysia, budaya popular Jepun tidak akan digemari. Penggambaran aspek manusiawi dalam produk dapat memberikan semacam pelajaran hidup yang berharga bagi orang muda Malaysia walaupun perbezaan sedia wujud dalam gaya hidup orang Jepun dan Malaysia.

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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.

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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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		ii
ABSTRAK		v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		viii
APPROVAL		xi
DECLARATION		xiii
LIST OF TABLES		xvii
LIST OF FIGURES		xviii
NOTATION		xix
CHAPTER		
1.	**INTRODUCTION**	
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background of the Research Problem	3
1.2.1	Japanese Popular Culture as Content Business	3
1.2.2	Flow of Japanese Popular Culture Outside of Japan	7
1.2.3	Reception Study of Japanese Drama in Asia	8
1.2.4	Japanese Popular Culture in Malaysia	9
1.3	Statement of the Problem	10
1.4	Research Questions	13
1.5	Significance of the Study	13
1.6	Scope of the Study	15
1.7	Limitations of the Study	17
1.8	Definitions of Key Terms	18
2.	**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**	
2.1	Introduction	22
2.2	Circuit of Culture	22
2.2.1	Encoding/Decoding Model	23
2.2.2	Johnson's 'Circuit of Culture'	27
2.2.3	Circuit of Culture Model	29
2.2.4	Studies Using Circuit of Culture	33
2.2.5	Beyond the Circuit of Culture	38
2.3	Japanese Popular Culture	40
2.3.1	Quality of production	41
2.3.2	Representation	43
2.3.3	Identity: 'Japanese' or 'Not Japanese'	47
2.3.4	Distribution and Regulation	51
2.3.5	Consumption	61
2.3.6	Hegemony	67
2.4	Popular Culture in Asia	70
2.5	Methodological Aspect	74
2.6	Media Consumption in Malaysia	79
2.7	Framework of the Study	83

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3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design 88
3.2 Philosophy of Phenomenological Tradition 90
3.3 Hermeneutic vs. Transcendental Phenomenology 92
3.4 Hermeneutic Phenomenology as Methodology 96
3.5 The Researcher as an Instrument 97
3.5.1 Experience of the Researcher 98
3.5.2 Pre-understanding of the Researcher 100
3.6 Selection of Participants 101
3.7 Data Generation 104
3.7.1 Reflective Journal 108
3.7.2 In-depth Interviews 109
3.7.3 Member Checking Interviews 111
3.7.4 Supporting Data 113
3.8 Preliminary Study 114
3.8.1 Participants for the Preliminary Study 115
3.8.2 The First Attempt 116
3.8.3 The Second Attempt 117
3.9 Data Analysis 119
3.9.1 Thematic Analysis in Hermeneutic Phenomenology 119
3.9.2 Data Analysis Procedure 123
3.10 Rigorous Research 126
3.10.1 Rigor in Qualitative Paradigm 126
3.10.2 Rigor in Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach 128

4. **FINDINGS**

4.1. Introduction 131
4.2 Engaged in Consumption of Japanese Popular Culture 135
4.2.1 It's not Just a Passing Fad 135
4.2.2. The Broadband Internet Creates 'Heaven'
4.2.3 It's Part of Everyday Life 145
4.2.4 Click, Click, Click: Pleasure and Frustration 148
4.3 Accumulation of Japanese Popular Culture 154
4.3.1 Keeping and Sharing for Appreciation 155
4.3.2 Affection towards 'Made in Japan' 159
4.3.3 Defining Taste 164
4.3.4 Expectation for Sophisticated Content 168
4.4 Decoding Media Texts of Japanese Popular Culture 173
4.4.1 Root of Differences 174
4.4.2 It Doesn't Affect Us, It's about Them 178
4.4.3 Growing up: From Fantasy to Reality 183
4.4.4 Generating Thinking 188
4.5 Appropriation of Japanese Popular Culture Consumption 193
4.5.1 Collectible Consumption 193
4.5.2 Otaku Identity 199
4.5.3 Power of Companionship 205
4.6 An Additional Finding: Hegemony 215

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5. **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**
5.1. Summary of the Study 220
5.2 Discussion and Conclusion 222
5.2.1 Engagement 222
5.2.2 Accumulation 224
5.2.3 Decoding 227
5.2.4 Appropriation 232
5.2.5 Media Consumption of Japanese Popular Culture 235
5.3 Theoretical Implications 237
5.3.1 Structure of Media Consumption 237
5.3.2 Articulation with Circuit of Culture Model 240
5.4 Methodological Implications 244
5.5 Practical Implications 246
5.6 Future Research Recommendations 250

REFERENCES 253
APPENDICES 269
A Consent Form 270
B Sample Reflective Journal Entry 271
C Interview Guide 273
D Short Questionnaire 275
E Interview Summary 276
F Sample Extracts from the Analysis of the First Five Participants 280
G Sample of Original Transcription 284
H Sample of Analysis Data: 286
Summary of Each Participant's Experiences
I Audit Trail 288
J List of Japanese Popular Culture 292
BIODATA OF STUDENT 294
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 295

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