

Consumption and Hegemony of Japan: A Case Study on Consumer Culture of Japanese Identity Products Toward Undergraduates

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Abstract

This research aims to find the relationship between consumer culture lifestyle and Japanese identity products with educational background. Through this research, would know the things that encourage consumer culture towards products with Japanese identity. The subject of this study were undergraduates of Jenderal Soedirman University majoring in Japanese literature survey method. This research analysis was descriptive qualitative using the perspective of the lifestyle-culture consumer-culture industry while the data is presented quantitatively. The study found that the tendency to consume Japanese-identified products was due to the impression that they were part of Japan and the belief that Japanese-style variants tasted better. There are no undergraduates majoring in Japanese literature who consider products with Japanese identity as ordinary goods. That shows that those who have studied Japanese have indirectly been hegemonized and become agents of cultural intermediaries. Through consumption culture, they give meaning to products with a Japanese.

Keywords

branding identity; consumer culture; cultural intermediaries; hegemony Japan; japanese snacks

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate students are representatives of the millennial generation, greatly affected by the immediate impact of the cultural industry exhaled through the mass media. The impact of the rapid influence of the cultural industry on students is a change in consumer behavior which eventually leads to a lifestyle. Lifestyle has a more limited sociological meaning referring to the typical lifestyle of certain status groups in contemporary consumer culture. It connotes individuality, self-expression, and a style of self-awareness (Weber, 1968; Sobel, 1982; Rojek, 1985 in Ibrahim, 2018). This lifestyle

includes tastes, habits, and consumption behavior (Featherstone, 2005).

Japan is one of the countries in the world where the culture is widespread and widely accepted in other countries. One of the efforts to introduce this culture to other countries is through mass culture so that it will create identity branding in countries outside Japan. Identity branding in the current era is not only through educational institutions but also through cultural industry products that have become mass culture,

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one of which is the production of food and soft drinks. The number of Japanese language learners in Indonesia continues to increase based on the 2018 JF survey (Miyashita, 2020), along with the rapid production of food and soft drinks with a Japanese identity. The practicality of packaged food and soft drink products influences people's lifestyles, especially the millennial generation. They buy products not only for use value but also to sign value as a social identity highlighted to be number one in consumption. There is a reciprocal and inseparable relationship between the existence of an image and a lifestyle. Lifestyle is how humans give meaning to the world of their lives, requiring a medium and space to express meaning in which the image has a central role. While the image as a category in the symbolic relationship between humans and the world of objects requires self-actualization into various worlds of reality, including lifestyle (Piliang, 2006).

Capitalist-processed products heavily influence their behavior and lifestyle. What they buy to consume is an 'impression.' Featherstone (2005) emphasized that consumer culture cannot be regarded simply as a rational materialist culture. It explains differences in consumption patterns and lifestyles based on class differences. He gives an understanding of the differences in consumption patterns and lifestyles, which are based on class differences in society.

The compilation of the high-selling value of Japanese culture in Indonesia and the habit of eating snacks has become a modern lifestyle. Makes snack products a strategy for market wars to compete between producers and, at the same time, take a place heart of "Japanese" lovers (Puspitasari, 2022). The massive product of Japanese identity and the growth of students and lovers of Japanese culture is an ideal compilation for industry players and consumers. Through products with Japanese identities, they can change consumer tastes through the cultural code in their products (Puspitasari, 2022). Buying goods means buying impressions and experiences. The individual is encouraged to indulge in lifestyle consumption, to be a model who is cons-

cious of his appearance and the impression it gives. In carrying out these consumption transactions, symbolic interactions occur where individuals buy and consume impressions (Featherstone, 2005). This research is to find to what extent these relationships affect consumption lifestyles for products with Japanese identity.

Within the circle of consumer culture, human lifestyles seem to be in the realm of dreams, illusions, fantasies, fantasies, and 'aesthetic hallucinations of reality constructed not only in socio-economic and political terms but also ideologically (Baudrillard in Ibrahim, 2018). This culture constructs a society where lifestyles are revered and culted, supported by the cultural industry, which constructs a society that is not only consumption-based but makes all cultural artifacts as industrial products and commodities (Ibrahim, 2018). According to Kozinet (in Arnould and Thompson, 2005), the term consumer culture also conceptualizes the interconnected system of images, texts, and commercial objects used by certain groups through the construction of practices, identities, and meanings. The consuming can then become a tool for someone to negotiate and articulate identity. Product packaging design is a mass media advertisement that encourages people to consume the advertised product and form an image of a product. Harsanto (2009) examines the phenomenon of modern lifestyles that are driven by advertisements to arouse shopping desires or make consumers shopaholics.

In a consumer culture, there are three main perspectives put forward by Featherstone (2008). First is the view that consumer culture has premised on the expansion of capitalist commodities that lead to massive accumulation of consumer goods. Second, the satisfaction that comes from objects relates to access to socially structured objects whose satisfaction has been determined so that, in this view, people use certain objects to make distinctions in society. Third, there is an emotional pleasure for consumption, dreams, and desires that are expressed in the imagery of consumer culture and vario-

us places of consumption that give rise to direct physical pleasure and aesthetic pleasure.

How do the consumers give their views and meanings of the products consumed. What do they consume because of the use value, or does it lead to symbolic interactions whose end is to give consumers a simulacrum that becomes a lifestyle. Baudrillard (2004) states that reality and fantasy have mingled and are mixed between values, facts, signs, images, and codes. In addition, learning experiences can be one of the motives for consuming a particular product. Research on the topic of consumer culture and student lifestyles has been investigated, including by Fatmawati (2020), who relates to online shops, and Putri (2019), who discusses the lifestyle of FOMO students (fear of missing out) formed due to habits and dependence on gadgets. Ridaryanthi (2014) and Kaparang (2013) discuss teenagers' lifestyles and consumer behavior due to the influence of Korean pop culture. Saufika (2012) discusses the lifestyle and eating habits of IPB students. Kushendrawati (2010) discusses consumer society as a cultural phenomenon in social reality. Research with objects of food and soft drinks with Japanese identity was investigated by Puspitasari et al. (2022), who examined the relationship between industrial culture and consumer culture.

As part of a community in society, undergraduates have a strategic function as social agents in their lives. Students' actions, behavior, and lifestyle complement the circle of capitalism and consumers. Undergraduates become a group that provides trends and tastes concerning culture. The role of cultural intermediaries involves a long time (Madrah and Suharko, 2019:132) as Bourdieu (1984) states the emergence of new cultural intermediaries, such as retooling the ethics of consumer capitalism and shaping tastes, and triggering new consumer dispositions. Not only undergraduates but the existence of products with Japanese identity are also cultural intermediaries through the cultural code embedded in their products. Through the reconstruction of cultural ideology, the

community as connoisseurs and consumers will be able to enjoy cultural diversity in various fields and encourage lifestyle changes in society (Puspitasari, 2022).

This study focuses on the relationship between student consumption patterns and Japanese-identified food and soft drink products. This research is to find to what extent relationships affect consumption lifestyles for products with Japanese identity. Students, especially the foreign language and literature department, will certainly learn the language and culture of the foreign country, which cannot be denied gradually and will hegemonize the behavior and behavior of the learner. Given that culture is one of the products in society that can influence the behavior and ideology of the community itself and people outside the culture itself.

METHODS

Participants

This study uses quantitative and qualitative methods. Data is collecting by using survey methods techniques. A survey method is a study in which the primer source of data and information is obtained by respondents as a survey sample using a questionnaire or questionnaire as a data collection tool (Singarimbun, 1995). Sugiyono (2013) explains that the research was carried out using a questionnaire as a research tool that was carried out on large and small populations, but the data studied were data from samples taken from the population so that relative incidence, distribution, and relationships between variables were found sociological and psychological. The type of survey method used is the explanatory method for measuring social phenomena that emphasizes the search for causal or causal relationships between the variables studied. Use this method because it adapts to the objectives to be achieved, namely to find a relation that connects consumer cultural lifestyles with products with Japanese identities to determine the factors driving consumer culture in respondents to products with Japanese identities. Respondents in this study were Jende-

ral Soedirman University students majoring in the Japanese literature department using simple random sampling. The total number of respondents was 58 students.

Instrument

Collecting data using survey instruments used in the form of a google form (GF) questionnaire to the intended respondents and focus group discussion (FGD) with random samples. The questionnaire instrument contains two types, mainly closed and open questions. Meanwhile, FGD is to confirm and obtain deeper information on phenomena adapted to research questions to achieve research objectives. In addition to questionnaires and FGDs, use literature studies, theories, concepts, and relevant research to help researchers to examine the problems being studied.

Analysis

The results of the questionnaires and FGDs that have been collected are then recapitulated for processing. The next step is data identification. Identification to obtain a percentage of each answer on each question will appear. For questions with an open system, similar answers will be identified for each respondent so that each answer can be categorized and described descriptively. That is to facilitate the process of interpreting the data descriptively. The identified data is then processed to be presented as a frequency table—data analysis in the form of numbers and percentages of the results of the responses from respondents. The questionnaire data are then analyzed concerning the concept of consumer culture in the culture industry that affects the consumption lifestyle of the respondents in the form of a

narrative description.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The industry captures massive popular culture products that change market tastes as a cultural code that will provide economic benefits. The identities embedded in popular culture products are converted as business tools with the aim of profit as the industry's goal (Puspitasari, 2022). The Japanese identity in industrial glasses is no longer just producing merchandise but has penetrated basic human needs, namely food. Students, as consumers of popular culture products, contribute to the popularity of a particular product. Interests, motives, and impressions given by students as consumers will affect interest in the re-purchase of certain products. This discussion will discuss the relationship between educational background with interests and motives for purchasing Japanese-identified foods and beverages and the impression caused on certain products so that they become identity branding for students as consumers.

The Results of Processing The Questionnaire in Descriptive

There are 58 respondents with questions such as: how often respondents access everything about Japan, have ever consumed foods and drinks with a Japanese identity, things that encourage buying products with a Japanese identity, the main considerations in buying these products, frequency of purchasing these products and consuming them, reasons for consuming these products, responses, and impressions of products with Japanese identity, as well as the most frequently consumed products. The data is listed in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire Result Data Took on July-September 2022

Variable	Total	%
Access media to gain knowledge about Japan		
Always	34	58.6
Often	14	24.1
Sometimes	10	17.2

Variable	Total	%
The factor that encourages buying a snack and soft drink		
The shape and taste variants offer an 'international' flavor variant	10	17.2
Snack and soft drinks have become staple foods no longer snacks	0	0
As a practical snack and drink	23	39.6
The taste is delicious and varied	24	41.3
Other	1	1.72
Conditions when often consuming snacks and soft drinks		
Get together or chat with friends	19	32.7
Doing lecture assignments/other daily activities	27	46.5
When feeling stressed/stressed	9	15.5
Other	3	5.17
The main thing to consider when buying snacks dan soft drink		
These products are popular in the market and widely consumed	15	25.8
Attractive packaging design, both images and text	13	22.4
Innovation in the products	15	25.8
Informative packaging design	0	0
Companies that produce products	1	1.7
Other	14	24.4
Consuming Japanese-identified snacks and soft drinks		
Ever	57	98.2
Never	1	1.7
Frequency of consuming Japanese-identified snacks and soft drinks		
Every day	10	17.2
1 week 3-4 times	20	34.8
1 week 1-2 times	28	48.2
Reasons for being interested in consuming snacks and soft drinks products that have a Japanese identity		
Various Japanese-style flavors are offered (such as <i>nori</i> , <i>yakiniku</i> , <i>chiken katsu</i> , <i>matcha</i> , etc.)	34	58.6
There are writings/pictures with Japanese characteristics on the packaging	12	20.6
The price is low but has an 'international' characteristic in its packaging or taste variant	7	12.0
Other	5	8.6
Japanese identity snacks you've ever consumed (most 5 answers)		
Pocky	44	75.8
Kit kat	23	39.6
Nori	10	17.2
Hello Panda	10	17.2
Japota	20	34.4
Other	15	25.8

Variable	Total	%
Japanese identity soft drinks you've ever consumed (most 5 answers)		
Pocari	45	77.5
Ichi ocha	40	68.9
Varian matcha latte	8	13.7
Yakult	15	25.8
Oronamin C	10	17.2
Other	15	25.8
Feedback regarding snack and soft drink products that have a Japanese-identified packaging design (some writings and pictures represent Japan)*		
Attractive, full-color, simple, and cool, so interested in buying it again	28	48.2
Interesting because can know more about Japan (writing, taste, culture)	29	50
Ordinary	0	0
Other	1	1.7
The Impression when buying and consuming snacks and soft drinks that have a Japanese identity*		
Feel close to being a part of Japan	34	58.6
Delicious and cheap	12	20.6
Other	12	20.6

* For the other answers is vary greatly

From the results of processing the questionnaire data, the results were analyzed to find the relationship between consumer culture and educational experiences in products with Japanese identity.

Consumption, Lifestyle, and Hegemony of Japan

The opening of foreign cultural flows that enter Indonesia also affects the socio-cultural of Indonesian society. Lifestyle is one aspect that is also influenced by cultural influences considering that nowadays, there has been cultural globalization that is evenly distributed throughout the world. Just like the Korean Hallyu phenomenon, cultural phenomena will produce culture as a product of globalization related to imperialism which refers to the imposition of cultural values, knowledge, behavioral norms, and lifestyles of a country which then affects consumerism, hedonism, and the development of mass communication (Yang, 2012: 107). Lifestyle cannot be separated from consumer behavior in everyday life. Consumers usually consume something related to social

life, social identity, family, rituals, culture, symbols, and history that are understood together (Semenik et al., 2012: 196). Concerning consumers, it cannot be separated from the influence of the media. As stated by Semenik et al. (2012: 196), culture includes the creation, transmission, reception, and interpretation of advertisements and brands when related to consumption and advertising.

Basically, Each individual will be the decision maker in the purchase. Tomlinson (2005) states that a person's motivation to consume products can be influenced by lifestyle related to social class. Tomlinson's statement is also supported by Semenik et al.'s (2012) arguments, which state that humans consume something based on functions and emotions related to pleasure and lifestyle. A person's motivation for an item cannot be separated from the socio-cultural construction of consumers. Various socio-cultural factors can influence a person to purchase a particular product and even eventually become a need for symbolic identity. The needs and desires that lead to the

behavior of consumer goods or services are seen as a form of therapy, appreciation, and entertainment as part of the emotional process (Tan 2010). Here the purchase occurs for the fulfillment of consumer emotions. Consumer behavior is related to a series of processes in which each individual tries to fulfill his or her needs to benefit from products and services (Semenik et al., 2012).

Snack and soft drink products with Japanese identities are widely circulated in the Indonesian market, especially driven by the role of the media, making these products widely consumed by the public, especially young people. As part of the youth, students make snack and beverage products that are often consumed daily. Based on the top three answers in Figure 1, 41.3% answered that the taste was delicious and varied, causing respondents to buy snacks and soft drinks. Students considered snacks and soft drinks as practical snacks/drinks, with a percentage of 39.6%, and 17.2% answered the buying factor because of the existence of variants on products that image an international identity. From the top three answers, if one product carries the concept of a practical snack with various flavor variants and is suitable for the tongue of the Indonesian people, it will indirectly place the product as a best-selling product, especially among students.

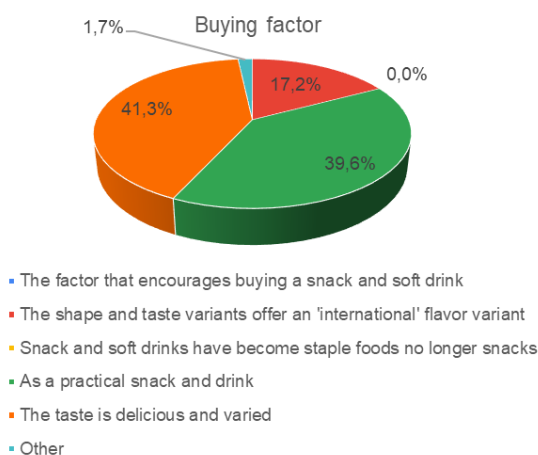


Figure 1. The factor that encourages buying a snack and soft drink

Moreover, the activities of students who do a lot of outdoor activities with fri-

ends are one of the supporting factors that students often consume snacks and soft drinks. In figure 2, the number one answer, 46.5%, stated that students would often be accompanied by snacks when doing lectures or daily activities. When hanging out with friends is 32.7%. From this, it can be concluded that snacks are mandatory snacks that must be in the routine of a student.

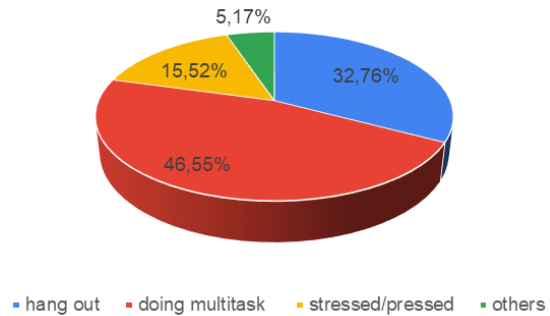


Figure 2. Conditions when often consuming snacks and soft drinks

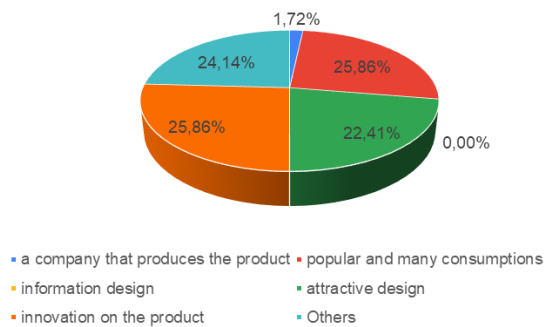


Figure 3. The main thing to consider when buying snack dan soft drink

This factor shapes student lifestyles through snack and soft drink products. Culture encompasses the creation, transmission, reception, and interpretation of advertising and brands (Semenik et al., 2012) when it comes to consumption and advertising. The popularity of a product inspires consumers to make purchases not just once but many times. A product that becomes popular and routine daily consumption cannot be separated from the interference of marketing and advertising. Figure 3 shows that one of the motivations for undergraduates to consume snacks and soft drinks is the popularity of the products and that they are widely consumed.

The product's popularity becomes a keyword that dominates the community through the stages of feeling interested, wanting to try, deciding to buy, and trying. When at the trying stage, consumers may make a repurchase if it suits their tastes and trends. It is like a circuit that will always be connected between consumers-products-producers-X factors. The X factor is broad and can be habitus, learning experience, and others. Like the booming McDonald's in China, where people in several provinces see this phenomenon as a new cultural experience, eating Western-style food is an experience of being able to travel to various cultures without having to move (Rirdaryanti (2014)). That is the same as the phenomenon of Japanese street food in campus areas and the development of Japanese restaurants in small towns. When trends and culture shift in society, it can then impact consumer preferences. All this cannot be separated from the hands of capitalists and industry, which create a trend of industrial culture (Puspitasari, 2022). That also happens in Indonesia with the rise of snacks and soft drinks with a Japanese identity.

Undergraduate consumption preferences have begun to penetrate snacks with Japanese identities, one of which is through the flavor variants offered in the packaged products. According to Puspitasari (2022), a product is accompanied by an identity that refers to particular culture or nation. These identities can be words, phrases, and images that have been around for a long time. It is just that sometimes people as connoisseurs do not realize it. In Figure 4, most number one the frequency of consuming snacks and soft drinks with Japanese identities is 1-2 times in one week (48.2%). That implies that respondents with an educational experience in the Japanese language and culture must consume Japanese snacks or soft drinks. There is a possibility that the experience of learning the Japanese language will lead them to be able to know more about Japan or can be said to have a high curiosity about that country.

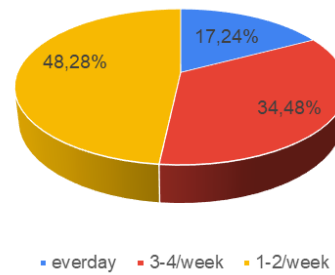


Figure 4. Frequency of consuming Japanese-identified snack and soft drinks

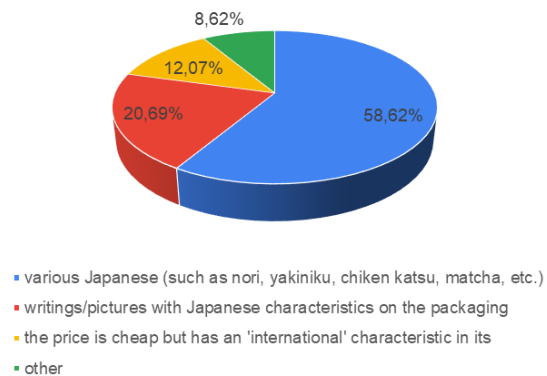


Figure 5. The reason for consuming Japanese snacks and soft drinks

Likewise, when asked about the reasons for consuming Japanese identity snacks and soft drinks, the answer number one is because of the various taste of Japanese on that products (Figure 5). Several flavors spread in snacks and soft drinks with Japanese identity are wagyu, umami nori, matcha, yakiniku, nori, chicken katsu, and others (Puspitasari, 2022).

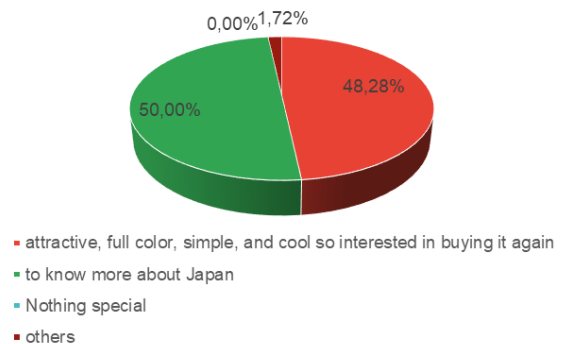


Figure 6. Feedback regarding snack and soft drink products that have a Japanese-identified packaging design

Figure 6 indicates that what they consume helps them to learn about Japan and get closer to Japan. That will relate to the results of Figure 5. The variants of flavors inserted into food and drink products and the use of Japanese writing on the product packing design have indirectly succeeded in representing Japan in the world and winning the hearts of Indonesian consumers, especially Japanese lovers in Indonesia (Puspitasari, 2022). That can be seen in Figure 6.50% of respondents answered that by consuming snacks and soft drinks with a Japanese identity, they would be able to know more about Japan. They know how to read the writing on the packaging, forms of Japanese writing, the vocabulary of packaging, and the meaning of identity pictures on the packaging. Besides, there is an impression of pride when they can read Japanese writing on the product packaging. An impression of pride is attached to undergraduates studying Japanese because not everyone can read Japanese writing. Pride and feeling like being part of Japan were the highest answers when asked about the impression when consuming Japanese-identified products (Figure 7).

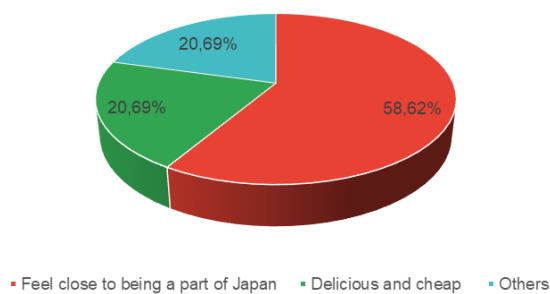


Figure 7. Impression when buying and consuming snack and soft drinks that have a Japanese identity

Almost half of the respondents said they felt closer to and became part of Japan. Undergraduates, as intermediaries and cultural agents, will provide a self-image display like an imitation of the things they consume because it is not surprising if certain products contain prestige that encourages

someone to consume them. Even in today's era, whatever is consumed is inseparable from camera shots, WhatsApp statuses, and uploads on social media. By uploading or status on WhatsApp, other people will know what is being consumed. If someone always consumes something consistently, an identity or self-image will indirectly be embedded in that person. Studying the language and culture of another nation over time will reconstruct self-concepts, perceptions, and preferences. It is not wrong to say that there is an understanding of culture and its influence on consumer behavior. That is closely related to a culture defined as the beliefs, values, and habits learned by a certain group of people that help direct consumer behavior (Hudani, 2020). Feeling closer and feeling proud is the key to maintaining Japanese cultural hegemony in consumer behavior, bearing in mind that consumer behavior will determine the level of consumption.

CONCLUSION

Consuming snacks and soft drinks have become mandatory and routine for students to consume, especially when doing lecture assignments. Respondents' consideration in consuming snacks and soft drinks is due to the popularity of these products which consume a lot. Consuming products that have a Japanese identity for undergraduates of Japanese literature with the consideration that there are writings or pictures that represent Japan. Apart from that, because of the impression they made. A psychological, perception of an individual that is generated when consuming these products is to feel close to and be part of Japan 58.6%. The background of the learning experience makes the respondents interact with all things related to Japan for a long time. Hegemony participates in constructing patterns of consumer behavior so that it creates the perception of feeling part of Japan. From this, undergraduates become part of cultural intermediaries to strengthen perceptions and preferences for consumer behavior.

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