

# Consumerism of Japanese Popular Culture in the Cosplayer Lifestyle (Sociological Studies on Cosplay Communities in Makassar City)

Firdaus W. Suhaeb<sup>1\*</sup>, Neti Anggraeni<sup>2</sup>, M. Rasyid Ridha, Supriadi Torro<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Science and Law, Universitas Negeri Makassar*

<sup>2,4</sup>*Department of Sociology education, Faculty of Social Science and Law, Universitas Negeri Makassar*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of History Education, Graduate School, Universitas Negeri Makassar*

\*Corresponding author. Email: [firdaus.w.suhaeb@unm.ac.id](mailto:firdaus.w.suhaeb@unm.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

Excessive exposure of Japanese popular culture to cosplayers can erode the identity of the original culture and make them consumptive. This study aims to identify and analyze Japanese popular culture consumerism in the form of a cosplayer lifestyle in the Cosplay community in Makassar City. This research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The technique of selecting cosplayer informants was done by purposive sampling based on the established criteria. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used qualitative data analysis. The results of the study show that the need to look different from others and be the center of attention of others is a cosplayer in their daily lives, so that they become part of the Japanese pop culture lifestyle industry. This is in meeting the needs of their Japanese pop culture lifestyle, such as clothing and accessories, comics, amulet attributes and enjoyment of Japanese food. The high cost of goods and attributes of Cosplayers' collections, both export and import quality, as well as the pleasure of Japanese cuisine, have made some of the Cosplayers live a hedonistic lifestyle regardless of the amount spent. However, for some Cosplayers who have creative and independent souls, to meet the needs of these expensive collectibles, they are anticipated to make their own. And sell it to Cosplayers who are members of several communities.

**Keywords:** *Consumerism, Lifestyle, Community, and Popular Culture.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of modernization like today society can never be separated from technology, especially the media. Media in the era of modernization became a common tool used by the public in communicating and conveying messages. A society is said to be modern if the society is able to keep up with the times and follow the development of technology [1].

The development of media technology has now become an addiction for the community, and of course it will bring big changes, both changes in the fields of education, politics, economics, social, and culture. So that the media becomes one of the tools to bring change and social revolution, including in the aspect of people's lifestyles. Because lifestyle is awakened from images and information that are seen and disseminated every day through the media by the community. Such a phenomenon in the view of Baudrillard [2][3], as a phenomenon of hyperreality that occurs in modern society, where new realities are awakened by media

engineering, including social media that is widely used today.

The media has displayed or advertised popular culture products of other nations, which will indirectly influence and dominate the joints of people's lives who uphold their cultural values. Popular culture or pop culture is a subculture of culture that develops and becomes a pattern of behavior that is accepted and consumed by the wider community, through mutual agreement and acceptance as a shared culture. Similarly, popular culture that enters Indonesia, such as Japanese pop culture, Korean pop culture and other pop culture [4][5].

The exposure of Japanese popular culture which is currently growing rapidly among teenagers and Indonesian society, namely anime, manga and games. Anime is a cartoon or animation made in Japan, manga is a comic or pictorial reading, while a game is a digital game that is commonly played through Play Station, Gadget, or Computers. Excessive exposure to Japanese

popular culture by society, especially teenagers certainly tend to affect their lifestyle and tend to make teenagers will be more consumptive and dominated by outside culture, rather than their own culture. This can be seen from several cosplay communities formed by teenager Cosplayer, including in Makassar City.

Japanese pop culture lovers' community in Makassar, as seen in several cosplay communities, often organize events with Japanese cultural themes in the form of Cos walk race activities, where Cosplayer walks while playing the role of characters from the costumes they wear, in addition there are also dance cover competitions, and sing cover Japanese songs. As well as setting up various booths that serve food, clothes, or trinkets typical of Japan.

Through the activities of several cosplay communities, the existence of Japanese popular culture as a mode of production has entered the joints of the Indonesian economy, including in Makassar city. Without realizing it by Cosplayer who are members of several cosplay communities in Makassar City, that materially they have purchased or consumed these outside modes of production, for their daily lifestyle needs.

The success of exposure to the Japanese popular lifestyle through the behavior of Cosplayer as members of several cosplay communities in Adlin's view is the success of capitalism influencing its consumers to use mass products for the benefit of capitalist countries as producers [6]. The lifestyle in question includes habits, views and patterns of response to lifestyle as well as equipment for lifestyle. Some critics view the adoption of a particular lifestyle by many as indicative of massification, a problem caused by their inability to find themselves [4][7].

Such a view can be assumed that being exposed to Japanese pop culture excessively by Cosplayers who are members of several cosplay communities can erode their original culture identity. Based on the description of the above problem, this article will identify and analyze Japanese popular culture consumerism in the form of a cosplayer lifestyle in the Cosplay Community in Makassar City.

## 2. METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, with the aim of describing a situation or social phenomenon of Japanese popular culture consumerism in the lifestyle of cosplayers in Makassar, naturally or as it is.

Sociology studies in the community are understood as a sociological method or method that is carried out to analyze research objects that appear, are symptomatic, and become reality in social life, especially Japanese popular culture such as communication and interaction patterns, cultural values and traditions, social and economic level conditions. , education, and others adopted by cosplayers [8][9].

The location of this research was conducted in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, based on the fact that in this location there are several cosplayer communities as well as a place for activities or competitions held by the cosplay community. Determination of research informants, using purposive sampling technique, based on predetermined criteria against cosplayer informants as research subjects[10]. Collecting research data, using observation, interview and documentation techniques. Then the data is analyzed and processed into a written description that is easy to understand.

The process of analyzing research data is carried out through the stages of qualitative data analysis, namely the data reduction stage, the data presentation stage, and the conclusion drawing stage [11][12]. Then the technique of validating research data is carried out in four ways, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [13].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Japanese Popular Culture Consumerism in Cosplayer Lifestyle in Makassar City

Lifestyle can be interpreted as a pattern or way of life of a person which includes attitudes, actions and behaviors that are actualized in an activity of his daily life. A person's attitudes, actions and behavior determine the shape of their lifestyle. This form the lifestyle is a description of the characteristics displayed from the lifestyle patterns of the lifestyle habits of the Cosplayer community.

#### 3.1.1. Lifestyle industry

Appearance for how many people in the modern era today becomes a need that is no less important after primary needs. Cool appearance indicates that they are able to support their lifestyle, and display their social status. Same for Cosplayers.

As revealed by Cosplayer informants AM, MK, and HK, that different looks are important and look cool by others. To look cool, a Cosplayer must be able to combine fabric and armor, such as costume with the attributes of robots. Especially if the costume details are rich in anime attributes and supported by makeup that is always updated, it can make them confident in the community and others. Fondness for anime, makes them critical in appearance.

The Cosplayer informant's expression above indicates that a Cosplayer should always pay attention and update their appearance. The need in terms of appearance becomes something important for a Cosplayer to be fulfilled. This happens because the lifestyle industry through the excessive acceptance of a Cosplayer in Japanese popular culture, demands that

they always to pay attention to their appearance and update their dress style in their daily lives as an identity.

Chaney, states that self-appearance is precisely aestheticization, in everyday life. Even the body is actually aestheticized as a project, as well as being the seed of lifestyle seeding to describe one's fondness for modernity style [14]. That is why the lifestyle industry for most people is the appearance industry.

Lifestyle industries that produce appearance in the pattern of life in modern society, in Gramsci's view is a cultural hegemony including Japanese popular culture, produced by the capitalist state to dominate proletarian society into consumerism from the industrial practices of the capitalist state. This is in line with Neo-Gramscian analysis which later saw that popular culture can make active consumption of the texts and practices of the cultural industry in the lives of the people where popular culture is located [15].

Of course, the lifestyle industry cannot be separated from the existence of media in the marketing process, as Baudrillard started that the media plays a role in the daily life of today's society. What the media brings through its engineering organization, is the idea (ideology) of a world that can be well visualized, can be well cut well and can be read with images [2][3]. So that the exposure of the lifestyle industry media will be making the community group become a consumptive person, on style and appearance, as in the cosplay community.

### *3.1.2. Hedonistic lifestyle*

Hedonistic life can be interpreted as a life that is always looking for pleasure, without thinking in advance the benefits and the amount of funds spent, what is important for them is to get satisfaction. This can be seen in the large collection of costumes, equipment/attributes and others without thinking about the expensive goods purchased by Cosplayers.

As revealed by Cosplayer informants TR, AM, ID and HK, that they have a large collection of costumes, wig collections and other collections of attributes as the appearance demands of a Cosplayer. The collection has a price from hundreds of thousands of rupiah to millions of rupiah, especially if the collection is a complete suit. The high price of collectibles owned by some Cosplayers such as Myoji and Taobao costumes is due to the quality of materials and seams are neat and where to buy them in Jakarta and in Bandung even to China.

Apart from costumes, there are other items collected by Cosplayer informants, namely comics or manga, hanging anime keys, some action figures or posters, and some Omamori or amulets made by Japanese people as well as other collectibles. In terms of food consumption, Cosplayers enjoy consuming Japanese food, such as Mie Ramen, Pocky, Sushi, Takoyaki and Yakimiku. The fun on Japanese cuisine

they regularly post through social media. This shows that Cosplayers have become more consumptive and are deceived by the lifestyle of Japanese popular culture so that hedonic behavior is built with fun and hobbies.

Besides having a collection of goods for appearance purposes, it is also seen that the eating culture of Cosplayers has changed. This means that for them eating is no longer just a physical need but food and eating activities are part of their lifestyle [16]. Uploading photos of food before and while eating to social media by cosplayers can be interpreted as a form of prestige and social status, in terms of eating culture [17].

Hedonistic lifestyle Cosplayer with pleasure to find entertainment outside the home, more play, happy in the city crowd, happy to buy expensive items that he likes, and always wants to be the center of attention. This is in Gramsci's view (Sugihartati 2017:50), that the social construction of capitalist countries such as Japan in marketing its industrial results through popular culture is adopted by the people of developing countries. Apart from being strategy to dominate through industrial practices that can be consumed by the community where the popular culture takes place. Social construction can be seen taking place in places such as malls, schools, workplaces, homes and other public spaces.

### *3.1.3. Independent and creative lifestyle*

In addition to the hedonistic lifestyle, some of the Cosplayers come from lower-middle income families so it is less possible for them to always depend on their parents to meet their needs as Cosplayers because they need large funds. So that some Cosplayers try to live independently by saving up to odd jobs. This was revealed by Cosplayer informant TR, WW, HK that if they used to join when they were still in school but now it is working, so the income received is partly saved. Cosplayers who have creativity and sewing skills, usually make their own costumes and attributes. If the results of their creative work are liked by friends in the community, then they take orders. The proceeds of the sale of their work are not only saved, but also to meet the needs of their hobby as Cosplayers.

That means, apart from some of the Cosplayers living independently, on the other hand they also become creative through odd jobs due to the lifestyle needs of being a Cosplayer that is not cheap. For this reason, Cosplayers are required to be able to open their own job opportunities through their skills, apart from not burdening their parents as an embodiment of independent lifestyles.

Although the lifestyle of the Cosplayer seems hedonistic, but on the other hand they are able to live independently and creatively. Thus in the view of

Chaney, states that with an independent lifestyle, the culture of consumerism no longer imprisons a person because they will be free and free to make their choices responsibly, and lead to creative innovations to support that independence [18].

The adoption of a culture can shape the lifestyle a person, group in society. Because lifestyle is a principle that can be used as a basis for understanding the behavior behind the typical nature of the individual. Lifestyle is also a guide in one's life and is fought through the realization of behavior [19].

Consumptive behavior displayed through cosplayers' lifestyles shows their self-concept. Cosplayer's self-concept, drawing their self-image and self-esteem in connecting with others and their ever-changing and evolving environment. Through the use of the collection of costumes and attributes used, reading, and pleasure in Japanese specialties as a representation of the Japanese pop lifestyle, cosplayers indirectly want an impression of themselves through the views of others or society. This is in line with Cooley's opinion, that self-concept is related to feelings about his impression of himself as an assessment of others' views of him [20].

Currently, there are many forms of lifestyle that have emerged as an impact of changes in society, one of which is the hegemonic impact of popular culture. The inclusion of popular culture in a society, of course, will bring a shift in cultural values in that society. One of the impacts of cultural shifts is seen through changes in lifestyle. The concept of hegemony in Gramsci's view is used to describe and analyze how modern capitalist society was organized in the past and later [20].

A person's lifestyle can form habits and vice versa habits can shape a person's lifestyle. The habit of adopting pop culture has made them accustomed to consuming popular culture products such as Japanese popular culture, can shape consumerism behavior and can be echoed by Japanese pop culture. The consumerism of society, according to Baudrillard is a characteristic of the consumption society that is ongoing at this time [2].

These habits can be obtained from the results of learning through parenting, play activities, and community education in the broadest sense. The learning occurs subtly, unconsciously and appears as a natural thing, so that it seems to be something natural and as if given by nature [21]. Meanwhile, according to Bourdieu Habitus is a crucial aspect means a combination of various tendencies so that actions and attitudes in everyday life become habits so that they are finally taken for granted, no longer thought of because it is like that [22].

The reality of symbols that are used as habits and consumed by the community through media presentations are usually used as the main reference for the community beyond the reality itself. So that popular culture that is adopted becomes a habit [23] for some people, no longer based on benefits but rather based on symbols and prestige in their daily lives. And have its own stratification in the life of the community. This is a reality that occurs in postmodern society.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The need to look different from others and be the center of attention of others is a demand for a Cosplayer that is always shown both in his daily life and in the activities and competitions conducted at the level of the cosplay community in Makassar City. Cosplayers delight in Japanese pop culture performance styles, thus making them part of the Japanese pop culture lifestyle industry itself. This triggers Cosplayers to meet the needs of the Japanese pop culture lifestyle, such as clothing and equipment, comics, fetish attributes and fun in Japanese food. The high cost of goods and attributes of Cosplayers' collections both export and import quality, as well as the pleasure of Japanese culinary so that makes some Cosplayers lifestyle hedonists regardless of the amount spent. But for some Cosplayers who have a creative and independent soul, to meet the needs of expensive collectibles, anticipated by making their own. As well as selling it to Cosplayers who are members of several communities in Makassar City.

#### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

1. Firdaus W Suhaeb as the head of the research implementer is responsible for coordination and research ideas and Corresponding author.
2. Nety Anggraeni as a member I, acted as the initial problem analysis at the research site and helping data analysis and finalizing article manuscripts and acts as a data collector in the field.
3. Rasyid Ridha and Supriadi Torro acts as a data collector in the field.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Researchers give appreciation to the entire Cosplay Community in Makassar City and Cosplayers who are happy to provide research data so that this research can be carried out properly.

**REFERENCES**

- [1] B. Latour, "Technology is society made durable," *Sociol. Rev.*, vol. 38, no. 1\_suppl, pp. 103–131, 1990.
- [2] D. Mann, "Jean Baudrillard: A Very Short Introduction." 2019.
- [3] M. Bamber and S. Abraham, "On the 'Realities' of Investor-Manager Interactivity: Baudrillard, Hyperreality, and Management Q&A Sessions," *Contemp. Account. Res.*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 1290–1325, 2020.
- [4] G. Lux, "Cool Japan and the Hallyu Wave: The Effect of Popular Culture Exports on National Image and Soft Power," 2021.
- [5] G. Gunawan and Y. Noda, "E-commerce for Japanese pop-products in Indonesia: the sign of decline stage," in *International Conference on Informatics, Technology, and Engineering*, 2019, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1–6.
- [6] L. E. Kane, "Why cosplay? Motivations behind participation and use of social media among cosplayers who maintain Facebook artist pages," 2017.
- [7] A. S. Darwis and F. W. Suhaeb, "Gaya Hidup Remaja Pekerja Seks Komersial," *J. Sos. J. Has. Pemikiran, Penelit. dan Pengemb. Keilmuan Sociol. Pendidik.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 117–127, 2021.
- [8] C.-P. Chen, "Exploring the use of line stickers to bridge the gap in developing parent–emerging adult relationships: Taiwanese emerging adults' perspectives in family communication patterns and their influence strategies," *Chinese J. Commun.*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 425–443, 2020.
- [9] Y.-I. Hsieh, "Organizing Attention: Caring for Japanese Popular Culture in the New Political Economy." Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, School of Graduate Studies, 2020.
- [10] D. Hidayat and Z. Hidayat, "Anime as Japanese Intercultural Communication: A Study of the Weeaboo Community of Indonesian Generation Z and Y," *Rom. J. Commun. Public Relations*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 85–103, 2020.
- [11] M. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Method Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- [12] M. B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. sage, 1994.
- [13] E. G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln, "Competing paradigms in qualitative research," *Handb. Qual. Res.*, vol. 2, no. 163–194, p. 105, 1994.
- [14] B. Neumann, "Being prosthetic in the first world war and Weimar Germany," *Body Soc.*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 93–126, 2010.
- [15] E. G. Traube, "'The popular' in American culture," *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 127–151, 1996.
- [16] P. Rozin, "The meaning of food in our lives: a cross-cultural perspective on eating and well-being," *J. Nutr. Educ. Behav.*, vol. 37, pp. S107–S112, 2005.
- [17] L. A. Moreno *et al.*, "Assessing, understanding and modifying nutritional status, eating habits and physical activity in European adolescents: the HELENA (Healthy Lifestyle in Europe by Nutrition in Adolescence) Study," *Public Health Nutr.*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 288–299, 2008.
- [18] J. Berra, *Declarations of Independence: American cinema and the partiality of independent production*. Intellect Books, 2008.
- [19] M. Bevir and F. Trentmann, "Civic choices: Retrieving perspectives on rationality, consumption, and citizenship," *Citizsh. Consum. Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke*, pp. 19–33, 2008.
- [20] R. R. McCrae and P. T. Costa Jr, "Age, personality, and the spontaneous self-concept," *J. Gerontol.*, vol. 43, no. 6, pp. S177–S185, 1988.
- [21] S. R. Kellert, "Experiencing nature: Affective, cognitive, and evaluative development in children," *Child. Nat. Psychol. Sociocult. Evol. Investig.*, vol. 117151, 2002.
- [22] S. Akram, "Representative bureaucracy and unconscious bias: Exploring the unconscious dimension of active representation," *Public Adm.*, vol. 96, no. 1, pp. 119–133, 2018.
- [23] F. W. Suhaeb and M. A. Kahfi, "Fenomena hiperrealitas masyarakat pada makanan," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Himpunan Sarjana Ilmu-ilmu Sosial*, 2017, vol. 2, pp. 315–320.