

Modern J-Fashion

Kaydance Thomas, Sebbey Silipo, Maya Khaskhely

Introduction to Modern Japanese Fashion

和服 (wafuku) = traditional Japanese clothing



洋服 (yofuku) = Western clothing



Post-WWII rise of western clothing because of availability and cheapness.

Japanese Fashion Market Overview

Fast Retailing Co. is a Japanese retail holding company. It consists of Uniqlo, GU, Theory, and more. It is consistently in the top 5 grossing apparel companies in Japan.

International fast-fashion brands like H&M and ZARA are also among top profiting apparel brands in Japan.

92.1% of Japanese people surveyed for the 2014 yoron chosa considered themselves to be middle-class.

Fast-fashion retailers keep their position in the market by:

- Low prices
- Reflection of trendy designs
- Environmental consciousness



General Trends

- English words
- Oversized pants/shirts
- Layers and coverups.
- Sun covers
- Lack of bright colors in major fashion retailers

English Words

Similar to the trope of random Japanese words on t-shirts in America, when Japanese clothing has English words they often do not make sense.



Oversized Clothing & Layers

An observed trend across women's and men's fashion is oversized clothing and layers. When asked why this is, one Japanese Kansai student replied that he though Japanese people are self-conscious of their skin. Even in the heat of summer, Japanese people will suffer through the sweat in order to not show skin.

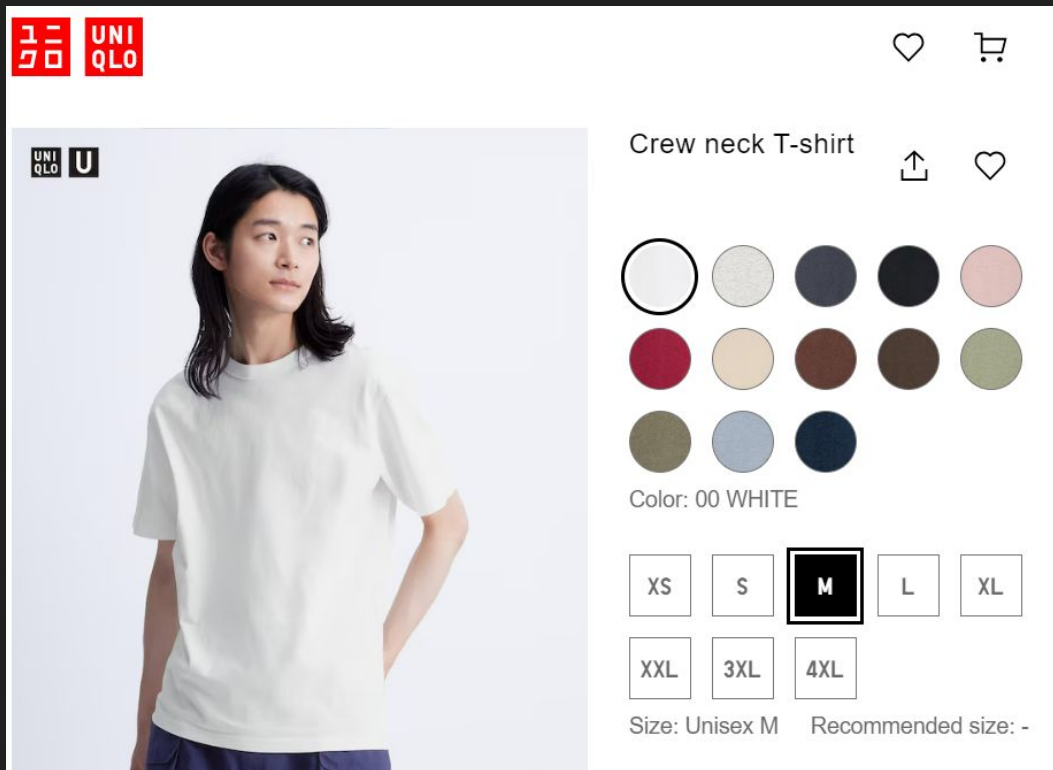


UV Covers

According to the same student, women usually wear UV covers to prevent skin damage but mainly to prevent from getting darker. Men's motivations are similar for wearing these. This most likely is attributed to the Japanese beauty standard of fair skin.



Lack of Bright Colors/ “Flashy” Clothes in Major Fashion Retailers



With a focus on minimalism and simplicity, Fast Retailing brands like Uniqlo and GU are known for their typically neutral and muted color tones. These colors are strategically chosen for their ability to be incorporated into countless outfit combinations thus making it a staple in any wardrobe.

Japanese Men's Fashion



Japanese and American Streetwear

Japanese and American streetwear brands have coexisted since the early to mid 2000s. The most prominent of each is Japanese brand Bape and American brand Supreme. Japanese streetwear features bold and innovative designs that are heavily art based. It also heavily emphasizes quality in both fabric and designs. American streetwear on the other hand stems from active wear and skate culture. Supreme and many other American streetwear brands started off as, or still are skate companies.



What Defines Men's Street Fashion?

- Japanese fashion and outfit curation is defined by uniqueness and individuality
- Although there are trends that exist and are widely followed, many people tend to add their own touch to reflect their personality
- Current Men's Fashion Characteristics:
 - Oversized silhouettes, specifically baggy denim/cargo pants
 - High fashion or business wear mixed with more casual street clothing
 - Heavy emphasis on layering and texturization
 - American Hip-Hop culture and streetwear influence
 - Lots of accessorizing (bags, jewelry, etc.)

High Fashion/Business Wear

As opposed to other cultures, Japanese street fashion is heavily influenced by designer clothing and runway collections. Designers Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo popularized the oversized and asymmetrical silhouette through their runway shows.

Business wear such as dress shirts and shoes are also popular among a certain demographic of the Japanese Youth. Collared shirts and polos are sometimes used for layering, or to just bring a more mature look to an outfit.



Layering and Proportions

Layering is key to any successful Japanese outfit. Even in the Summer, many Japanese men will wear some sort of Jacket or long-sleeved top. This functions as both a fashion statement and a way to cover one's skin from the Sun. Mesh clothing is another way of layering on hotter days, as well as the use of tactical and fishing vests.

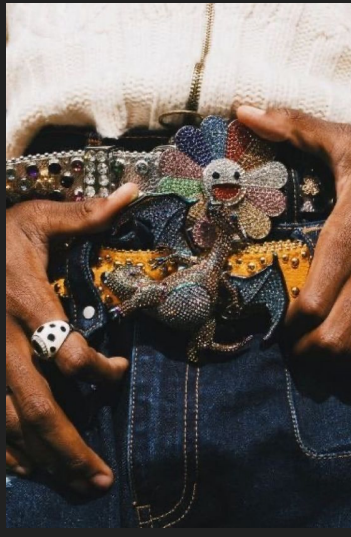
Similar to Yamamoto's outfits on the previous slide, sizing and proportions are also important. This could refer to a long jacket on top of a shorter shirt, or even a, oversized pants and undersized top combination.



Accessorizing

Almost anywhere in the world, an outfit wouldn't be considered complete without at least one type of accessory. In Japan, one accessory is not nearly enough. Accessorizing an outfit truly brings it to life, and allows people to have a "staple accessory" that they feel reflects their personality.

Accessories can range from bags to jewelry to chains, and even to random little things that someone may decide to include in their outfit. Chunky sneakers such as Rick Owens and various Converse are used to amplify one's style.



Japanese Fashion from My Perspective

From my perspective, men's Japanese street fashion is comforting. I personally have always dressed very similar to the way that most of the Japanese youth does, so seeing everyone walk around in cool outfits and genuinely caring about their fashion makes me feel at home. In America, the majority of the population is very lazy when it comes to what they wear. This is reflected through the amount of pullover hoodies, sportswear, and even pajamas that most people wear when going about their day in the US. In Japan, pullovers are almost never seen, and sportswear is only worn when people are actually doing something active. So through my perspective, Japanese street fashion is something I can relate to heavily. However, through the eyes of most Americans, I can see Japanese street fashion being off putting because of how different it is.

Women's Fashion

Although there is a communal feeling of fashionable wear/trends and the importance of getting ready for the day, women tend to fall into a subgroup then add their own flare to make it individual from others.

Characteristics:

- Baggy cargo pants and floor length skirts
- Cardigan and sheer cover ups
- Chunky sandals, heels and casual shoes
- Curated goods from thrifts or second hand consignment stores
- Consists of baseline “basics” from stores such as uniqlo and GU



Layered and Neutral

As previously mentioned layering clothes plays an important role in making a J-fashion outfit. Even when walking around retail stores you will find that a handful of clothes already come pre-layered making it easier to throw an outfit together. If the clothes do not come pre-layered there are many coverups within stores to also purchase.



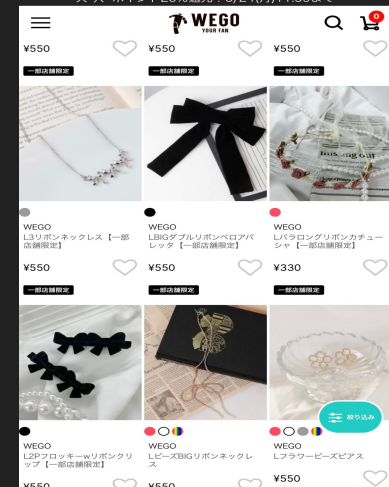
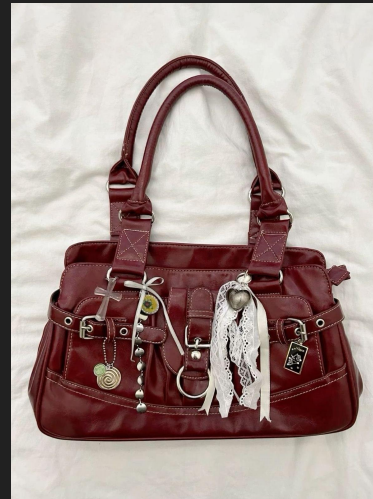
Versatility and Substyles

One key difference that was noticed between mens and womens street fashion is that women tend to have more substyles to alter between. Women also have been seen to have more versatility when it comes to unisex outfits.



Accessories

Just as layering accessorizing is just as if not more important. Here accessorizing doesn't only pertain to jewelry but also goes as far as to accessorizing and customizing bags, phone cases, the outfit itself and hair. Fast fashion chains such as wego have made this trend highly accessible on a base market.



Personal Outlook

When walking around I noticed that many people here start their day ready, fully dressed, never wearing pj's, leggings, or athletic/comfort wear. Compared to where in America there is not much care about under dressing, in my personal opinion it is about how you feel rather than what you look like. In America people do dress to the same degree as japanese street fashion but it is at a lower volume of participation.

Conclusion

In Japan, fashion is much more important than it is in America, especially among the youth. Japanese people use fashion as a way to express themselves and portray their personal identities. Trends are commonly followed here, but not the same way they are in America. Trends in the US are straight up ripped from the internet and are almost always followed 1 to 1. In Japan, trends are used as a baseline for outfit curation. Oversized silhouettes and various forms of layering are considered to be “trendy” at the moment. However, you will never see two people wearing the same exact outfit. The Japanese take pride in their clothing and an outfit is almost seen as an extension of one’s personality. As opposed to America, where fashion is lazy and unmotivated, everyone puts thoughtfulness and effort into their outfits daily, which can even be seen as a reflection of each country’s overall culture.

Sources

Assmann, Stephanie. "Consumption of Fast Fashion in Japan: Local Brands and Global Environment". *Consuming Life in Post-Bubble Japan: A Transdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Ewa Machotka and Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018, pp. 49-68.

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