THE IMPACT OF KAWAII CULTURE ON GENDER AND JAPAN'S NATIONAL IMAGE

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THE IMPACT OF KAWAII CULTURE ON GENDER AND JAPAN'S NATIONAL IMAGE

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The Impact of Kawaii Culture on Gender

and Japan's National Image

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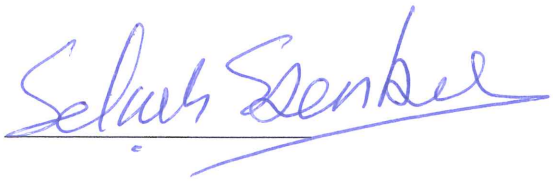
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Kawaii Culture on Gender and Japan's National Image

The aim of this thesis is to examine Japan's usage of kawaii culture as a soft power and to discuss whether it has been trying to change its worldwide image, while considering masculinity and femininity dimensions in culture. In this respect, historical progress and characteristics of Japan's kawaii culture will be analyzed, and the global effects of kawaii will be explained with examples. As a country with a high masculinity index, Japan always had a negative image of a tough, militarist nation. Recently, kawaii culture has been drawing attention with its feminine qualities and has sparked an interest both in Japan and around the world. Japanese government has also been contributing to the spread of kawaii culture and has made many attempts for that purpose. In this study, Japan in terms of masculinity and femininity dimensions will be analyzed and arguments about them will be evaluated. Emphasizing the importance of soft power, the influence of gender roles in Japan and kawaii culture will be studied, and as a result the direction of Japan on the international platform will be discussed. In order to discover to what extent Japan has achieved to replace its negative image with a positive one and affected gender role perceptions around the world, examples of kawaii's spread into other countries will be studied.

ÖZET

Kawaii Kültürünün Cinsiyet Rolleri ve Japonya'nın Ulusal İmajı Üzerindeki Etkisi

Bu tezin amacı erkeksilik ve kadınsılık boyutları göz önünde bulundurularak Japonya'nın yumuşak güç olarak kawaii popüler kültürünü kullanmasını incelemek ve bu bağlamda dünyada yeni bir imaj çizmeye çalışıp çalışmadığını tartışmaktır. Bu süreçte Japonya'daki kawaii kültürünün tarihsel gelişimi ve özellikleri ayrıntılı olarak analiz edilecek ve dünyadaki etkileri örneklerle açıklanacaktır. Erkeksiliği yüksek bir ülke olarak öne çıkan Japonya, tarihinde hep sert ve askeri bir imaj çizmiştir. Son zamanlarda kadınsı özellikleriyle dikkat çeken kawaii kültürü hem Japonya'da hem de dünyada oldukça ilgi uyandırmaktadır. Japonya hükümeti de kawaii kültürünün yayılmasına katkı sağlamakta ve bu amaçla bir çok girişimde bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Japonya erkeksilik ve kadınsılık açısından analiz edilecek ve bu konudaki argümanlar değerlendirilecektir. Dünyada yumuşak güç kullanımının önemi vurgulanırken Japonya'da ve kawaii kültüründe bulunan toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin etkisi incelenecek, sonuç olarak Japonya'nın uluslararası platformda ne yöne gittiği tartışılacaktır. Japonya'nın ne ölçüde negatif imajını pozitife dönüştürdüğünü ve cinsiyet rollerini nasıl etkilediğini ortaya çıkarmak için kawaiinin diğer ülkelere yayılma örnekleri çalışılacaktır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recognized as a masculine country and known for their militarist, aggressive sides during World War II, Japan's image was a negative one in the eyes of other nations for a long time. Recently, they have taken a much more different road and now they are recognized with their popular culture around the world. Japan's popular culture as a soft power has been the subject of countless research until now. However, the connection of *kawaii* with the changing image of Japan has not been a center of attention. Kawaii is a Japanese adjective meaning cute, adorable, sweet or lovely. It has become a globally known concept that has a long and deep history in Japan. Even though the nature and popularity of kawaii have been discussed many times, there is not enough research about its role in the change of country's dimensions from masculinity towards femininity.[1] This slow yet inevitable change is visible in many spheres of Japanese society. Furthermore, noticing the growing popularity of kawaii culture, the Japanese government has initiated numerous projects to spread this unique concept globally such as assigning kawaii ambassadors as part of the Cool Japan Project.[2] As a result, the country's image has been affected changing into a positive one in the worldwide surveys.

Until the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan was a secluded country under the Tokugawa Shogunate, with almost no foreign relations. After the Meiji Restoration, political, economic, social and militarist reforms took place and Japan started to

[1] Japan has been identified as a masculine country, which has distinct roles assigned to each gender. However, kawaii culture has had an impact on these roles and they have not been studied thoroughly yet.

[2] Cool Japan is a project, which has been initiated in 2006 by Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote Japan as a cool country to visit. After that, the project has taken many forms under other ministries.

become a world power. In a short time, the country's development of military and overseas expansion became very significant purposes.[3] However, the country's invasion of Mainland China and South East Asian countries during World War II (1941-1945) caused the image of Japan to turn into a negative one.

After the wars ended with Japan's unconditional surrender, Japan was occupied by the United States. The country's purpose changed from military development to the achievement and the continuation of peace and steady economic development. Around this time, Japanese society started to have changes in many areas, one of which was the gender role socialization of Japanese people. Marius B. Jansen talks about how Japan had undergone a progress of expeditious transition under the Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces (SCAP). One of these alterations was the liberation of Japanese women. The right to vote, freedom in marriage, gender equality in schooling and chances for employment altered the time ahead of Japanese women and girls. Turning their attention to economic growth, Japanese people, especially women, started to live a life of economic prosperity. There was a boom in the consumption of products, which continued until the early 1970s. Also during this time, kawaii emerged as a popular concept among young girls and women.[4]

Although kawaii had been around for a long time, it slowly gained incredible popularity in Japan after the 1970s. Possessing characteristics such as submissiveness that remind people of femininity and the male dominated gender roles, the phenomenon has divided into several subcategories, some of which hold masculine qualities and hint a future for women to live their sexualities more freely.

[3] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan,* 679-747.
[4] Kinsella, *Cuties in Japan*.

With the spread of kawaii culture around the world, the Japanese government saw the popularity of the concept as an opportunity to help the promotion of Japan as a cool and cute nation in 2006. After the term of soft power, which was first introduced by Joseph S. Nye Jr., became an important tool in foreign relations, there was a report by Douglas McGray in Foreign Policy about Japan reinventing a new kind of superpower. McGray talked about how Japanese popular culture had a lot of potential as a soft power resource. This report raised great awareness among Japanese government officials and it became the starting point for Cool Japan projects and initiatives.[5]

Kawaii culture, which has already been globally known, expanded its horizons thanks to the Japanese government's involvement. Even in a small and underdeveloped country such as Laos, one can find traces of kawaii culture and even big events about this cute phenomenon. Hello Kitty, the icon of kawaii, has fans who are small kids, women and sometimes even men. For instance, a retired Japanese policeman Gunji Masao is known for his Hello Kitty collection, which has broken the record of being the largest collection.[6] Hello Kitty is described not to be a cat, but a British schoolgirl. Depicted to be living in the suburbs of London, Hello Kitty was created as a British due to Japanese people's interest and love towards Britain during the time of her creation, Yano informs in an interview for BBC News.[7] This is an important fact in terms of Japanese popular culture. The characters that have had influence around the world such as Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse were mostly from the West in the past. The fact that Hello Kitty was created as British is a significant example of this influence on Japanese culture in the 1970s. However, the growing

[5] McGray, "Japan's National Cool."
[6] Stephenson, "Check out the Japanese collector who has the largest collection of Hello Kitty memorabilia."
[7] Butterly, "Hello Kitty is not a Cat - She's a British School Kid."

popularity of Japanese kawaii characters and popular culture around the world demonstrates the fact that the direction of this influence has reversed recently.

The general goal of this thesis is to use kawaii culture as a window to study kawaii culture's importance in changing Japan's image at home and in the eyes of other countries. Kawaii culture's role in the alteration of Japanese society's masculine and feminine identities will be examined. The thesis will evaluate the arguments of Aoyagi Hiroshi, Shu Min Yuen, Sato Kumiko, Sun Jung, Kam Louie, Theresa Winge and Christine R. Yano about kawaii culture's role in the change of Japanese masculinity and femininity dimensions. This change will be analyzed based on their foresights and remarks about kawaii culture's effect on gender role socializations in Japan. Significant examples will be taken into consideration in order to demonstrate that there is an existing change in gender role dimensions. Also by taking the procedures by which the government maintains soft power into consideration, and answering a wide set of questions about the Japanese government's promotion of kawaii culture, this thesis will shed light on the changing perceptions of gender roles in Japanese society and the image of Japan from the perspectives of other nations. The main and final focus of the thesis will be global results of the changing gender roles and the efforts of Japanese government to use kawaii culture as a soft power resource.

The purpose of this thesis is four-fold: (1) to look into the depths of kawaii culture in Japan and its globalization; (2) to analyze Japan in terms of masculinity and femininity dimensions and evaluate the arguments about them; (3); to emphasize the importance of soft power and Japanese government's involvement in kawaii culture's spread and (4) discover to what extent Japan has achieved to replace its

negative image with a positive one and affected gender role perceptions by giving examples of kawaii's spread into the countries around the world.

This study is a qualitative research based upon theoretical and empirical evidence from primary sources such as Japanese government polls, documents and statistical graphics, surveys done by other researchers, photos and video files about Japan's image around the world, kawaii's role as a soft power resource and its power to change gender role socializations. Secondary sources such as Japanese and English language academic journal articles, digital media, newspaper reports and social media platforms have also been referred to while analyzing the global spread of kawaii culture. In Figure 1, the layout of this study's purposes with the sources and methods of collecting data can be observed.

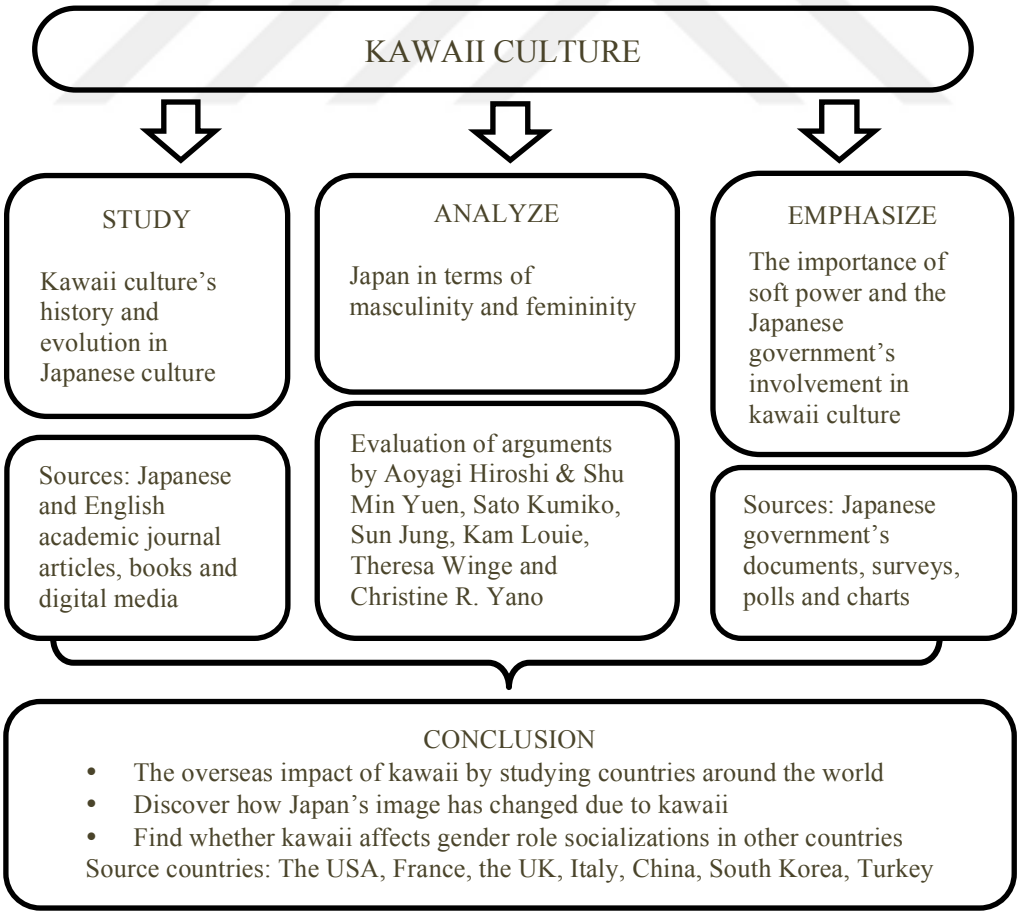


Figure 1. Layout of the study

The thesis is divided into five parts. In chapter 1, this study intends to demonstrate kawaii's roots in Japanese history, how it has evolved in time advancing in different directions, and whether there are any equivalents of the word in other languages. There have been many kinds of arguments that were held against or in favor of kawaii. Therefore, these arguments will be discussed and explained in the process of revealing its nature and evolvement. There are conservative arguments that say kawaii has made women and young girls immoral,[8] while there are many academicians such as Aoyagi Hiroshi and Shu Min Yuen who argue that kawaii has given women a kind of freedom in a male dominant society. In chapter 2, the dimensions of masculinity and femininity will be discussed, and gender role socializations of Japanese people will be argued while kawaii's role in the change of feminine and masculine perceptions will be investigated. In chapter 3, soft power and the importance of its usage will be discussed in the context of the use of kawaii concept by the Japanese government. The Japanese government has been taking advantage of kawaii culture since the 2000s, and the reasons behind this involvement will be questioned. In chapter 4, countries from different continents will be analyzed from the point of kawaii culture's place and the success of kawaii as a soft power resource in those countries. The study will put special focus on France, the USA, the UK, Italy, China, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey in terms of kawaii culture's existence and its effect on gender role socializations in those countries. The last and fifth chapter will be the summary and conclusion.

[8] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPT OF KAWAII IN JAPAN

Kawaii is a Japanese adjective that has become a phenomenal concept with followers everywhere around the world. This chapter will mainly focus on the word's history in Japan and how its meaning has changed in time with references to literary works. The translation of the word will also be analyzed and it will be discussed whether there is a need for translation. Even though the characteristics of something or someone kawaii differ a lot, the common usages and features of kawaii will be studied. Later in the chapter, the types of kawaii will be examined with images related to each type. Finally, the spread of kawaii culture into every part of daily lives such as fashion, stationery or technology will be discussed.

2.1 What is Kawaii?

Cute is a poor synonym of the word *kawaii*. Kawaii is a Japanese word that has become popular since the 1970s in Japan and it has gradually become a global phenomenon that presents itself in forms of art, fashion, music, food and so on. Women journalists of the time called the Shōwa Emperor Hirohito kawaii during his eighty-seventh birthday. For most people, it was a surprising definition of someone who had been known as the longest reigning emperor. Maybe, it was out of pity because of the remaining days of the old man or it was an expression of love and respect for him. In any case, kawaii was no longer a narrow concept. It became a popular word representing anything depending on the purpose. It is now an adjective that can be used for anyone or anything that is adorable, sweet, innocent, weak and

so on. Considering kawaii's expansion in meaning, it has reached various areas in people's lives all over the world as one of Japan's representatives for popular culture.

Different kinds of situations call for being addressed as kawaii. A change in the hairstyle or clothes, a slip of the tongue, childhood memories or communication with other genders may be reasons for it. Determined by the person using the word kawaii, anything and anyone can be described as kawaii. Hello Kitty, characters from *anime* and *manga* (Japanese animation and comic books) such as Pokémon's Pikachu or the famous fashion style Lolita are some of the contemporary examples of kawaii culture.

With regard to kawaii and its significant and popular use in Japanese culture, there have been essential studies about its long history in Japan. Kawaii holds a great meaning for everyone from teenagers to adults, from young females to old males in Japanese society. Having a long and strong history with girl culture in Japan, kawaii changed into various things due to different regional perceptions, consumption mentalities and mixture of cultures. There are no limits to the interesting or strange kinds of kawaii, and surely there are different explanations and examples behind each one. The word has also become globally well known in such a short time that it is now a worldwide used adjective, even got into English dictionaries in 2010.[9] Kawaii goods and fashion styles have spread around the world remarkably, turning into a great market. The Japanese government also entered in the process of kawaii culture's expansion. Not only in the country, but also for overseas they take great advantage of kawaii as a way of promoting Japan. Worldwide popular celebrities have taken part in the expansion of kawaii, restaurants and cafés related to kawaii culture have opened in many cities, conventions have helped it to get more

[9] Oxford, "New words list September 2010."

popularity, and so on. Now that it has become a global phenomenon, there is a need to further investigate its effect on Japanese society and other cultures around the world.

2.2 The History and the Transition of the Word Kawaii

Kawaii has been the subject of many researchers, and it holds a great importance in the middle of praise and criticism it gets from them. Even though there is no definite time of history when kawaii was first used, Yomota argues that its origin can be traced back to the word *kawayushi* かわゆし that is a word coming from *kahowayushi* かほわゆし. The word consists of two kanjis, the first is 顔 *kao* meaning face, and the second is 映ゆし *utsuyushi* meaning to be reflected on something. Utsuyushi is used at the end of words such as dazzlingly beautiful or bashful. Even today, the kanji means looking pretty 映える *haeru*. If literally translated, kahowayushi would clearly indicate a face that has become red due to some kind of excitement. Yomota puts forward the idea that the meaning of the word *moé* [10] is linked to this word's interpretation.[11]

Kinsella notes that kawaii with the meaning it holds today was first seen as *kawayushi* in dictionaries in Taishō period (1912-1926) and then as *kawayui* かわゆい until 1970s. In time, the meaning it possessed stayed almost the same with some nuances. The fundamental meaning of the word was shy or embarrassed, but it also

[10] Manga characters, who are cheesy and more than cute, are called moé. These characters are created in order to catch the attention of the male readers and geeks, so we see a glimpse of their underpants from now and then. The charm of the characters and the atmosphere they form around them empower the moé manga and anime.
[11] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 29-30.

meant pathetic, vulnerable, lovable or small. Modern term came to be used in the 1970s, yet it still has implications of pitiful.[12]

Even though it did not hold the exact same meaning, Yomota argues that kawayushi with a related connotation first appeared in the *Konjaku Monogatarishū* (Anthology of Tales from the Past), which is a tale compilation of the twelfth century in the history of literature. The meaning it held during those times was surely different from now. According to the Shogakukan Proverb Dictionary published in 1993, the word had the meaning of not bearing to see something, feeling pity. This dictionary also gives a meaning to *kahowayushi*, which is face turning red due to the feelings of guilt. The meaning we mostly use today, which is lovable, childish and cute, is only the third meaning in the dictionary. Yomota wondered what the people said in an era when there was no such word as kawayushi. Whether it was Nara or Heian period, he argues that there had to be cute girls or animals around no matter how ancient the times were. The answer is in the word beautiful *utsukushii* うつくしい. Noble class used the word until the Middle Ages when it gradually shifted towards slang. In the Heian period, the word was closer to the meaning of cute rather than its present use. The word *kotashi* こたし corresponded to the word utsukushii today.[13] However, the usage of these two words (kawaii and utsukushii) is very different from each other today. Compared to the concept of utsukushii, kawaii is a widely used word for most people and things. Masubuchi Sōichi claims that utsukushii is a concept of high-level value, while kawaii possesses average, reasonable value. In the beautiful-oriented past, utsukushii held an important place in

[12] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 221-222.
[13] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 30-31.

Japanese society. On the contrary, we have entered a new cute-oriented era with kawaii.[14]

Kawaii's appearance in the *Anthology of Tales from the Past* puts forward the hypothesis of its usage among the lower classes. During the Middle Age, the people in the Imperial Court used the word utsukushi. *Kawayui* started to lose its negative connotations such as pitiful and tragic, thus gaining superiority over its positive meaning lovely.[15] In 1603, Society of Jesus published *Vocabvlario da Lingua de lapam* (Vocabulary of the Language of Japan) in which there was a word called *Cauaij* meaning feeling empathy with emotions of pity.[16]

During Edo period, *可愛さ余って憎さが百倍 kawaisa amatte nikusa ga hyakubai* was a well-known phrase in Kabuki,[17] which meant the feelings of love for cute things are strong, yet the hatred becomes even more intense after being betrayed. In this period, there was also the new word *kawayurashi* かわゆらし derived from *kawayushi*. In the book *好色一代女 Kōshoku Ichidai Onna* (The Life of an Amorous Woman), there are young and charming kabuki actors, who were defined as kawayurashi, which has a direct connection to the meaning of *kawairashii* (lovely, sweet) we use today.[18]

Adding the suffix of *garu* to the root of *kawayui*, we derive the word *kawaigaru* かわいがる which is a widely used term. The suffix adds the meaning of feeling or thinking that way, so the result word means to love. Yomota quotes from *浮世風呂 Ukiyoburo* (The Bathhouse of the Floating World), a Japanese novel

[14] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 19.
[15] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 33-34.
[16] A male religious congregation of the Catholic Church, working in education, intellectual research, and cultural pursuits.
[17] A traditional form of theatre in Japan.
[18] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 34.

written by Shikitei Sanba between 1809 and 1813. The word kawaigaru holds the same meaning as it held during those times.[19]

There are many interesting examples of how kawayui changed into the frequently used word of kawaii. Yomota cites a passage from Futabatei Shimei's novel 平凡 *Heibon* (Mediocrity) (1907), known as the cornerstone of colloquial language. Calling his father's innocence, childishness and foolishness as kawayui, it was affection that Futabatei was trying to convey. Using this adjective (kawayui) towards old people was not a customary thing of the era. However, it can be clearly seen that it was already in use during Meiji period (1868-1912) that started Japan's modern era.[20]

In Hagiwara Sakutarō's *Tsuki ni Hoeru* 月に吠える (Howling at the Moon) (1917), there's a grotesque poet mentioning a dead frog and a child turning around it with hands full of blood. With an unexpected twist, Sakutarō depicts this child as kawayurashii, which means vulnerable due to being innocent and small in this case. It is argued that he may have wanted to convey a vivid description of cruelty holding on to innocence,[21] which brings *kimo-kawaii* and *guro-kawaii* to minds. Both terms, which will be discussed in detail later, are twenty-first century kawaii types that are disgusting or gross but cute at the same time.

The tradition of appreciating everything small and young could be seen in the famous book named 枕草子 *Makura no Sōshi* (*Pillow Book*) by Sei Shōnagon from eleventh century. It is seen as a passing period of life from immaturity into maturity. The famous term *mono no aware* もののあわれ of eleventh century is about the awareness of the impermanence of everything that causes appreciation of their

[19] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 34.
[20] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 35.
[21] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 35.

beauty, and stimulates a kind of sadness because of their passing. From this aspect there is an important similarity between the term and kawaii culture.[22] Giving a passage from the book, Yomota presents to us that the Japanese found small things cute, and this interestingly has not changed even thousands of years later. In the passage, the author talks about adorable things such as the face of a child eating melon, a baby sparrow eating from its mother's mouth or a baby of two crawling around. Sei Shōnagon's book gives examples of today's kawaii, like the innocence and purity, which require the protection of an adult person. Looking down on and controlling immature ones from the high spot of maturity, the writing suggests a positive feeling to being immature rather than being beautiful.[23]

In Japan, kawaii culture is essentially related to *shōjo* culture, which can be translated as girl culture. Basically, the things that interest young girls can be identified as part of shōjo culture. Leila Madge suggests that the spread of kawaii in Japan was due to girl culture. After the war, economic, social and cultural changes occurred in Japan, and a new subculture named shōjo culture emerged. Girls were associated with symbols of cute things such as pink, frilly clothes, ribbons or bows.[24] *女生徒 Joseito* (Schoolgirl) a short story by Osamu Dazai, holds an important place in the history of girl culture. Published in 1948, the story describes a daily life of a teenage girl from the first person point of view. The story is considered as a major monologue work that became an important genre in the post-war literature of Japan. The narrator talks about her inner problems and how she deals with her life with a pretense to hide her feelings from other people. Yomota gives parts from the story as examples of the shōjo culture's kawaii side. This story of Osamu Dazai demonstrates

[22] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 18.
[23] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 33.
[24] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 159.

a variety of kawaii meanings around the first person. Kawaii's content and sense change every time with subtlety, corresponding with the indecisive character of the narrator who wants to be a different person. Yomota suggests that the writer shows a good contrast between the cute that is close to us and the beautiful that is further away. He argues that this monologue kind of short story was the distant indication of today's subculture kawaii.[25]

Even though it includes every type of person, kawaii culture mostly revolves around young population, and most of the time they are the ones who get to decide on what possesses kawaii characteristics or what does not. They have enough reasons to include kawaii in their lives due to the stress of responsibilities and pressures of expectations of the modern time societies. As En suggests, girls' dissatisfaction with the society's expectations has always existed. Whether it was in Meiji era in Japan or it is in the contemporary Japan, the problem between young girls and the society never disappeared. Thus, the consumption and adoption of kawaii culture will continue to prevail.[26]

There is also an argument about how Japanese kawaii fashion is about an emotional journey into an idealized childhood and it sentimentalizes childhood against maturity. In a survey carried out, people talked about adulthood as a period of constraints and difficult labor. Adulthood meant responsibilities to their families, big institutions and the community, while childhood signified the unreachable freedom they longed for. Therefore, it is argued that kawaii fashion was a kind of rebellion against society and the restrictions that came with it. It was a rejection of social codes and obligations.[27] Masubuchi puts forward the idea that Japanese parents are okay as long as their children go to a good school and get good grades. They do not

[25] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 24-26.
[26] En, "Gendai Shakai ni Okeru 'Kawaii' Gainen no Seisei to Henyō," 82.
[27] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 243.

expect anything else, and they spoil them until they finish school. As a result, young Japanese do not want to grow up and become social workers in the long run. That is why; they cannot let go of their kawaii hobbies even if they become adults.[28]

Everyday use of kawaii turned into something that removes the density and pressure of life. While spending their money on anything, including kawaii, people reveal their longing to be refreshed and calm, which is connected to a pleasant remembrance of their infant memories.[29] In an interview, art director Sebastian Masuda talks about how people feel obligated to hide their true selves when they enter mature lives, meet responsibilities and see the pressure of anticipations from the society. Kawaii becomes a way of resisting against these without saying anything, just with their fashion. It indicates a disdain for the contemporary community created by adults.[30] Through making secure and exotic zones, kawaii brings joyful comfort into people's lives as they try hard dealing with the anxieties of their identities. In a society, where different authorities interchangeably collide, harmonize and work things out, adult people search for a getaway and find relaxation in kawaii.[31]

Even though kawaii was originally a term that associated with children and young girls, it transformed into something that anyone could be. Hence, it does not only interest children or teens anymore, the concept also includes adults and even older people. Appreciation of cute things should not be limited by the age of the person. In an interview, one of the kawaii ambassadors from Japan says, "I want to be called kawaii instead of beautiful or cool. Being kawaii is a longing for females and there are no words overcoming its meaning. I think it does not matter how old

[28] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 151.
[29] Allison, "Cuteness as Japan's Millennial Product," 40.
[30] Davison, "Cult of the Cute: Japan's 'Kawaii' Culture on Show at the V&A."
[31] Bryce, "Cuteness Needed: The New Language/Communication Device in a Global Society," 2271.

you are to be kawaii."[32] Kawaii is a way of self-presentation for many people. With the help of cute things, they can construct and enjoy a character they longed for becoming. It can be a character that seems worryingly harmless with lots of sexuality, or it can be an adult housewife gathering kawaii, floral underpants in order to indicate or remember her naive youth times.[33]

Kawaii plays an important role in people's workplaces or in their daily lives. Christine R. Yano argues that instead of helping people escape from responsibilities, kawaii prepares them to be able to manage these duties. Kawaii, Hello Kitty especially, constitutes a great place especially for the young office ladies and housewives. Free time in everyday lives offers the chance to focus on oneself alone and enjoy one's true desires and feelings (*honne*) so that one can be ready for/handle a schedule full of public face (*tatemae)*. Kawaii encourages giving presents to one another, thus supporting interpersonal relationships. It does not deny the existence of responsibilities; it encloses them in a special way in order for the person to become a better adult. Decorating around with Hello Kitty and teaching children help adults turn into a more peaceful person with stable and permanent relationships.[34] En suggests that adult kawaii is not so different. Especially women, who conform to the responsibilities of marriages, being housewives and so on, feel that it is hard to accept the idealized image and ways of life imposed by society. Putting up with these ways of life and not feeling satisfied is a universal thing for adults. Showing some passive resistance is something most women do in common all around the world.[35] In short, adult people also have a connection to kawaii culture and there are many reasons behind it.

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[32] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei,* 128.
[33] Bryce, "Cuteness Needed: The New Language/Communication Device in a Global Society," 2270.
[34] Yano, "Kitty Litter: Japanese Cute at Home and Abroad," 62.
[35] En, "Gendai Shakai ni Okeru 'Kawaii' Gainen no Seisei to Henyō," 55.

Iyashi いやし (healing) is an important term that comes out when the subject is kawaii culture for adults. Although healing is a term that has been related to medicine, psychology and religion since 1970s, iyashi was somewhat unrecognized by the people who did not hold an interest in religion. Only after 1990s that it became a popular subject in Japan.[36] Especially buying and spending time with cute character goods is the most popular kind of iyashi. Statistics have been put forward to justify this claim and a list of eight things that people said about what characters made them feel was made. At the top of the list was peace of mind. Characters helped them feel at ease and could enforce healing.[37] As these studies suggest, kawaii characters are an important part of people's lives, supporting them through a way of healing. That is why there are instances of adults and old people caring for and collecting kawaii goods.

Aside from the fact that it strengthens social relations, kawaii has a power to communicate things nonverbally. Kawaii gestures, actions, facial expressions, cute voices, the feelings that kawaii things give to people play important roles in communication, as they provide soft, warm feelings, give pleasure, healing and a sense of security. With their questionnaire, Aizawa and Ohno put forward that hearing the word kawaii gave people a positive feeling. Clothes, characters goods and plush dolls were the most given answers to things that people used the word kawaii. Babies, children and idols were chosen to be the ones that hold kawaii characteristics. People chose the face, gestures and the voice as kawaii mostly. The colors they associated with kawaii were pink, yellow and white in the order of choice. It is easy to notice that kawaii characters such as Hello Kitty and Pikachu are

[36] Yumiyama, "Varieties of Healing in Present-Day Japan," 272.
[37] Occhi, "Wobbly Aesthetics, Performance and Message: Confirming Japanese Kyara with Their Anthropomorphic Forebears," 111.

in these colors that give the image of affection, cheerfulness, purity, innocence, hope and pleasure.[38]

In addition to their conclusions about the questionnaire, Aizawa and Ohno suggest that kawaii will continue to be observed, imitated and reinforced by the people around the world, referring to Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura. As learning happens by observing behaviors of other individuals, kawaii behavior is also spread this way.[39]

Although the subject of kawaii and the cute speaking style continued to develop and change in the history of literature, it can be clearly seen from the examples that kawaii culture is not something belonging to this era only. If we want to place kawaii in a timeline, we can go back to Pillow Book of the eleventh century, then Edo Period's kabuki and novels, up to the writers such as Osamu Dazai of the twentieth century. It is as if there was an invisible thread linking these together to today's subculture. Small, vulnerable things that require the protection of others, and the birth of coquetry with monologue about oneself gradually defined the aesthetics of kawaii. It is unavoidable that kawaii culture has been turning into a huge industry, but the underlying aesthetics should not be forgotten.

2.3 The Translation of Kawaii

There is a general understanding that there is no equivalent word of kawaii in other languages. Many researchers looked into whether there were any words corresponding to the adjective kawaii. In English, the words cute and pretty are usually used to translate kawaii. However, their history for representing something kawaii stands for is not longstanding. There is the word acute meaning sharp, which

[38] Aizawa and Ohno, "The Background of Kawaii Culture," 27-29.
[39] Aizawa and Ohno, "The Background of Kawaii Culture," 32.

is the derivation of cute. The word comes from *acutus* in Latin. Acute was used to describe the seriousness of medical conditions in the fourteenth century. During the sixteenth century, the meaning expressed intelligence. The word cute, meaning smart, appeared in the eighteenth century. Yet, the word that is used to define children or small animals as cute did not emerge until the nineteenth century. It is more ambiguous in the case of the word pretty. The shape of the word changed from praettig to prati, then pretti to pretty. The meaning also shifted from cunning to clever, praiseworthy to pleasant, and finally cute.[40] The kanji of the word kawaii is 可愛い, which has characters for something allowed and love. Therefore, it is sometimes translated as lovable or lovely. However, Masubuchi asserts that kawaii has much deeper meaning than something lovely and it should not be written in kanji or translated into that word.[41]

Returning to the word kahowayushi, which had meant a blushing face and feeling ashamed, it can be clearly seen that kawaii in Japanese has experienced a different kind of linguistic development. As a matter of convenience, kawaii was translated as cute even though the cultural background and the history behind them were not similar. Therefore, cute appeared to be the translation of kawaii even if it was impossible for it to correspond with the word. Kawaii in Japanese does not possess any implication towards wisdom or intellectuality. Although they superficially resemble at first sight, kawaii possesses subtle characteristics that do not allow it to be translated universally due to its belonging to Japanese culture.

As for Italian, Yomota mentions *caro* and *carino* as translations of kawaii, and *bello* for utsukushii.[42] Caro means dear (to someone) and expensive at the same

[40] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 38.
[41] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 186.
[42] All the Italian words that are given as examples are in masculine form

time. Carino has the meaning of nice and intimate, but it also means cheap looking or cheesy. In Italian there's also *ino* that is a suffix giving the meaning of being small and cute when added to nouns and adjectives. For instance, *piaso* means dish, and *piattino* means cute, small dishes. However, the word carino, which is used for the translation of kawaii, does not hold the same impression. Yomota thinks that some dress can be called carino on the market stalls. But the brand goods that the Japanese girls would buy in Italy cannot be considered carino.[43]

In French, there is not a word corresponding to kawaii either, although there's *beau* for utsukushii. If we want to say cute for a child's face, *gentil* is used. But the word is used for many other different purposes. Then, there's the word *petit* meaning small, and *charmant* for attractive. Finally, *mignon* means adorably small, but the range is much more narrow than the Japanese word.[44]

In Indo-European languages, Yomota could not find a matching word to the kawaii's meaning of being small and weak, thus needing the protection of others. Taking a look at Hebrew, he argues that חָמוּד *hamudu* is closest to kawaii. It is the adjective form of the noun חמדה *hamuda* meaning desire, grace and aspiration. Yet, they still do not possess the meaning of small and precious.[45]

With respect to Chinese (Mandarin dialect), there is the word 可愛 *kuai* that is commonly used for translating the word kawaii. 好玩 *hǎowán* means something so small that can be carried in hand. When talking about cheerful things such as children or animals, 可愛 *kuai* is generally used. There are 美丽 *Měilì* or 漂亮 *Piàoliang* corresponding to the word utsukushii. However, ever since a Disneyland

[43] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 39-40.
[44] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 40.
[45] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 41.

opened in Hong Kong in 2005, a word has become popular in China. It is written as 咔哇伊 and read as kawaii.[46]

Finally, there is 귀엽다 *gwiyeobda* meaning kawaii, and 아름다운 *aleumdaun* corresponding to utsukushii in Korean. Nevertheless, saying things such as かわいい温泉 *kawaii onsen* (cute spa) or かわいい お爺ちやん *kawaii oji–chan* (cute grandpa) is unnatural and odd in Korean or Chinese languages. Yomota argues that calling old people cute might have something to do with the Japanese people who have forgotten morals of Confucianism.[47] The interesting thing is, even though there are words similar to the word kawaii in other languages, they somehow hold negative implications as well.

Taking a look for an equivalent Turkish word for kawaii, one comes across *şirin*, *sevimli* and *güzel* in the dictionaries. *Şirin* and sevimli are the closest to the meaning of kawaii. *Şirin* is a word that comes from another language, Persian.[48] *Sevimli* comes from the verb *sevmek*, which means to love. Although the verb's history goes back to the ninth century, the adjective *sevimli* came to be used only after the nineteenth century.[49] *Güzel* is very close to the meaning of *utsukushii*. As the other examples in languages, these words are not enough equivalents for kawaii.

Surely, utsukushi needs to be put aside during this analysis. Whether it is in Italy, the USA or South Korea, women tend to show their approval of something by saying beautiful, while they complain about being called cute because they feel that they are being treated like a child. However, Yomota argues that this is not the case in Japan. If a man says utsukushi to a woman, she would take it as a joke and burst into laughter instead of taking it seriously. But when the man says kawaii to that

[46] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 41.
[47] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 41-42.
[48] Etimoloji Türkçe, "Şirin."
[49] Nişanyan Sözlük, "Sevimli."

woman, she will most certainly regard it as important. Surely, there are exceptions to this situation, but what this comparison shows us is that using the word utsukushi in such circumstances is not something familiar in the current Japanese language.[50]

Geert Hofstede talks about how languages today use some words from others as exactly the same instead of circumlocution in order to indicate valuable concepts that have no counterparts in other languages.[51] Although one can give the desired meaning through explanations, sometimes there is no equivalent word just as in the case of kawaii. Sakurai suggests that there is no need to translate the word kawaii among young females around the world. He argues that it is enough to write the Japanese word in Latin alphabet. In his book, 世界カワイイ革命 *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei* (The World Kawaii Revolution), he puts forward the idea that kawaii is the most widely spread Japanese word globally in the twenty-first century.[52] The addition of the word kawaii into English dictionaries supports this idea of Sakurai. In September 2010, Oxford announced the list of words added to the new edition of the dictionary, and kawaii was in the list.[53]

2.4 Characteristics of Kawaii

There are several features one can count in the characteristics of a kawaii thing or person. Being small, pastel colored, soft, pure and vulnerable are only some of these features. Brian Ashcraft argues that kawaii is something obscure, special to every person, and it does not have to comply with any obligations of beauty. Beauty is

[50] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 42-43.
[51] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations,* 21.
[52] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei.*
[53] Oxford, "New words list September 2010."

something inborn and uncontrolled, while kawaii can be manipulated. It is obtainable; thus anyone and anything can be kawaii.[54]

There are many circumstances where the word kawaii is used. First, it can be said towards a weak one by a stronger one. The object in this case is mostly an infant, baby or a small animal. The subject possesses feelings of protection for the object. Second, it can be used for small things because they arouse no feelings of fear and tension. Third, the word is said out of compassion or pity. When people see something irresistible and poor, they say kawaii to express their feelings. Fourth, it is said with a meaning of childishness, containing emotions of a little disdain. Fifth, it conveys feelings of love and affection. There are times when it is used without a consciousness for gender, as preschool kids say kawaii towards each other's possessions. However, there are also times it is accompanied by sexual consciousness. It is a mixture of men's strategy and women's self-interest. As discussed before, saying beautiful to someone is hard in Japan. It is also difficult to express love, so Japanese men cling to the convenient word kawaii.[55]

Kawaii is somewhat different from the plain cuteness of something. Most of the time, they possess eccentric and unconventional characteristics. Quoting a designer at Sanrio, which is one of the leading Japanese companies in cute design, Yano argues that the quirkiness of Japanese kawaii is what makes it different from other kinds of cute such as Disney characters. Drawing an X instead of a plush animal's anus is given as an example to this quirky side of kawaii.[56]

Cuteness is not an aesthetic that is unique to Japan. However, as Brian J. McVeigh suggests, it is a specific aesthetic, which is greatly related to women, opposing the superior male view of uniformity, system, influence and logic. Being

[54] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool,* 104.
[55] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 199-203.
[56] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 159.

kawaii is a truly distinct way of showing singularity, diversion, independence, improvisation and character.[57] He also argues that cuteness has a very powerful position due to the fact that it conveys power associations and actions. It integrates vulnerability, obedience and modesty with power, dominance and influence. Thus, fondness is related with control, consistency with order.[58]

In her article, Koma Kyoko mentions discussions about the nature of kawaii culture. It is seen as an aesthetic that is native to Japan by scholars such as Inuhiko Yomota and Reiko Koga. They say that kawaii has no counterpart around the world, and it is unique to Japanese society. Some argue that it is an immature culture that encourages childishness. They discuss the possible reasons behind it and the need to go beyond its immaturity. Finally, there are others who say that it is a diffused and acculturated culture in foreign countries.[59]

These arguments led to the idea that kawaii culture may have an odorless characteristic. Several times, it has been discussed whether kawaii is something native to Japan or it is an odorless form of culture. Iwabuchi Kōichi argues that the impact of cultural commodities cannot be socially unbiased. Each cultural commodity has the signature (the odor) of the producer nation, though it is not perceived that way. He discusses that there are times when the cultural odor is evolved and turns into something agreeable in terms of culture and society, which is not decided by the people's awareness of the commodity's national background. It is mainly related to the universally spread representations of the country.[60] What can be concluded from this argument is that something can appeal the people around the world with the absence of cultural odor. In that respect, kawaii aesthetic seems to

[57] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan,* 16.
[58] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan,* 135.
[59] Koma, "Kawaii as Represented in Scientific Research: The Possibilities of Kawaii Cultural Studies," 105.
[60] Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism,* 27.

have an odorless nature. Hello Kitty, for example, is a product that makes 7 billion dollars a year and even though most people know that it is a Japanese product, it is not her Japanese characteristics that attract the global consumers.[61] As Koma suggests kawaii changes the importance of background circumstances, making it unrelated to the people who perceive it.[62]

McVeigh considers cuteness a multi-use concept asking the questions of "who is attracted to it, who wants to be it and who wants others to be cute?" Cuteness applies to the connection between the superior and the inferior associations such as family, hierarchical and female/male relationships. According to him there are three normative themes underlying kawaii of everyday life. First, it is hierarchy comprising the essential social structural components of Japanese society. Cuteness is often used as a way of gaining support and attention from the superiors. Sometimes, it is used as a means of presenting yourself nice to get the confidence of your inferiors and control them. In Japan, vertical relations between people are very strict and significant. He argues that kawaii is used as a method of moderating these relations and strengthen good attitudes of trust and assurance. Kawaii softens communication between people, changing the straight, strict and routine life into something more casual, carefree and affectionate. Considering the remarkably ambitious education system in Japan, people dying from working too much and the ritualized communication among people, it is understandable that kawaii culture is seen as a getaway fantasy. Being bright and cheerful help people continue their work steadily and effectively. Last theme is empathy due to the fact that being kawaii brings about an affectionate reaction from others. Because empathy is something superiors need to feel towards inferiors, cuteness supports the working women

[61] Fitzpatrick, "Hello Kitty at 40: The Cat that Conquered the World."
[62] Koma, "Kawaii as Represented in Scientific Research: The Possibilities of Kawaii Cultural Studies," 112.

during their daily work. McVeigh states that empathy is a key concept during the training of office ladies.[63]

McVeigh's perspective brings the term of *amaeru* to minds. Amaeru holds a great importance in social relations between Japanese people. It is a Japanese term derived from the word *amai* meaning sweet. It is the noun form of amaeru, a verb meaning to depend on another's love or indulge in another's kindness. It is the sweet sentimental connection between the powerful and the powerless. The one with less power is the dependent on the person with more power. Obedience is a culturally required characteristic in Japanese society. Children and women are expected to be obedient, submissive and co-operative.

The psychologist Takeo Doi noticed in the early 1970s a persistent immaturity or childish behavior among Japanese young people. This displayed a desire to be spoiled as if they were still children. In his famous study of amae in Japanese society, Doi shows that being willingly dependent on others is something romanticized by Japanese society. As a result, he argued that it could be considered a cultural specificity. The amae is children's way of denying admitting, in an adult way, the obligations they have towards the real world. These children hope being surrounded by the gentle affection of their mothers, who will not turn them down, and will maintain their surroundings adjusted to the wishes of the children's amae.[64]

In kawaii culture, feelings of desire to protect others are very significant. As a result, the position of the person changes from the one in amae, which is feeling dependent, to feelings of the ones being depended.[65] As kawaii culture encourages features of amae, being cute helps them fulfill what is demanded. Thus, amae carries a great importance in kawaii culture's characteristics. Amae originates in both the

[63] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan,* 138-145.
[64] Botz-Bornstein, "Wong Kar-wai's Films and the Culture of the Kawaii," 96.
[65] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 20.

longing for tenderness and the need to influence other people. Thus, looking at the kawaii culture from the angle of amae, one can easily see the similarities that these two concepts share. If people have desire to be kawaii, they usually try to look childish and needy, just like the children longing for their mother's tenderness. Kawaii lies behind the relation of amae between the powerful and the powerless, the incapable and the capable. Doi argues that this connection between people has a socially unique importance in Japanese society, not only in family associations but also in adult connections.[66] This relation between the kawaii culture and the concept of amae may be one of the reasons why cuteness became so popular among Japanese people. It is suggested that cute things are often weak or physically handicapped in order to appease the hunger for expressing compassion and kindness.[67] From the viewpoint of amae, it is almost a tradition for people to form a dependent relation between the incapable and the capable. Some people act kawaii, innocent and powerless, and others love and take care of these people, thus this hunger is satisfied.

In a survey she carried out, Kinsella found out that people used the term kawaii when people are childlike, innocent and naive in an unconscious and natural way. She also noted that if there was emotional contact between people and these emotions were sincere, people found it kawaii. Many people described being weak and not capable of coping with responsibilities as cute. Furthermore, there were people who associated fashion items, attractive people and animals with cuteness.[68] McVeigh also mentions that animals are a frequent feature of kawaii culture. He points to the fact that animals need the affectionate care of people, which is a fundamental element of being cute. There is also the absence of gender indicators,

[66] Doi, "On the Concept of Amae," 8.
[67] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 236.
[68] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 239.

therefore making them devoid of any sexual associations. Thus, there was a pet boom during the 1980s in Japan.[69]

Especially young population turns out to be trendy by acting weak, dependent and incapable instead of using their strengths and skills.[70] By means of a questionnaire, Yomota made an analysis of how the word kawaii is being used among college students. He argues that the media is giving people a stereotyped image of kawaii and showing it as a symbol of consumer society. The real image of kawaii is very different in real life. He conducted a survey about the term kawaii among students aged between eighteen and twenty-five from Meiji Gakuin University and Akita University. First university is a private and popular university in Tokyo and the latter is a national university that attracts nearby high school students in the city of Akita, chosen due to their contrasting environments. The rate of answers from Meiji Gakuin University was much higher due to the surroundings of consumer society and commercial distribution. The college students, they are easily exposed to kawaii culture compared to Akita University students. In Tokyo, college students are accustomed to being scouted for magazines on every corner they turn.[71]

Certainly, their answers reflected the differences in genders. Generally girls gave detailed descriptions and explanations, with illustrations. They talked about character goods, Rilakkuma,[72] stationery, pets, childhood photos, clothes, people around them or talent celebrities. On the other hand, male students mentioned animals, ball pens, long jeans, children until three years old, the voice of their girlfriends, babies, shoes or My Neighbor Totoro phone straps. Compared to the

[69] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan,* 140.
[70] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 237.
[71] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 46.
[72] a fictional character whose name means relaxing bear

female students' many examples, males gave simpler answers with fewer items. Moreover, there was no such answer from boys in Akita University. When asked whether they were called kawaii before, male students from Meiji Gakuin University had more percentage than those in Akita University. One third of the male students from Akita University talked about being called kawaii, and these were all from childhood memories. What all male students held in common was they were uncomfortable due to being called kawaii by girls. On the other hand, most of the female students wanted to be called kawaii. However, it was important for them to be kawaii without making any effort. Some girls were fully aware of the fact that being kawaii is a kind of strategy for getting things to be working in their favor. According to Yomota's questionnaire, 10% of the female students had never been called kawaii before. When he mentions this fact to his colleagues, men say that they will call everyone kawaii even for the smallest reasons from now on, while women sympathize with those girls with a bit of pity.[73] It is clear to see that kawaii became an important adjective especially in young girls' lives. Furthermore, from the time Yomota did his research, kawaii in young males' eyes has changed. As mentioned before, there are now young men who are interested in kawaii fashion and wish to be called kawaii as well.

McVeigh mentions two associations relating to the concept of kawaii. First one is conceptual or normative association, which relates kawaii to weakness, controllability, happiness, femininity, youth, etc. Second one is perceptual or concrete association, which connects kawaii with shiny colors, infants, children, young women, small sized things, toys, and so on.[74]

[73] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 49-52.
[74] McVeigh*, Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan,* 142.

There are several fashion magazines in Japan. They are important in analyzing the characteristics of kawaii culture. *Cawaii*, *CUTiE*, *JJ* and *YuYu* are some of the magazines targeting different ages and social classes in Japan. Cawaii and CUTiE are obviously about everything cute. JJ and YuYu sometimes mention the word kawaii on the front page. Readers of Cawaii are between fourteen and seventeen ages, while CUTiE's are from seventeen to twenty, JJ's from eighteen to twenty-two, and YuYu's are over fifty years old. According to the ones that target young population, it is a prerequisite for a girl to be kawaii in order to attract the men they like, and turn their eyes to themselves. Yomota argues that kawaii is an axis around which female magazines have transforming ideas of cute in different contexts. What the media is trying to convey through kawaii is that we are now seeing the victory of happiness, consumerism and physiological age. Kawaii is the secret pleasure of a person within the reach of a hand. It is something that contradicts with labor, history and other people in community. Kawaii is accompanied with terms such as nostalgia and career of life rather than history and labor. A person who is called kawaii will be addressed to a stereotype in one way or another, argues Yomota. Media that is concerned with kawaii is busy listing images of femininity, maturity around women. If the reader is passive, the media cannot keep on surviving. Thus, they create a myth of kawaii and encourage the readers to consume.[75]

Last but not least, the omission or reduction of certain body parts is a feature that can be seen in most kawaii characters. Daniel Black suggests that this is a result of people trying to create a body, which is impenetrable and pure. Kawaii construction of a body indicates restlessness towards social communication on one side and human's physical structure on the other.[76] Consequently, there are several

[75] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 149.
[76] Black, "The Virtual Ideal: Virtual Idols, Cute Technology and Unclean Biology," 39.

kawaii characters with these characteristics such as the popular kawaii character Hello Kitty has no mouth and Little Twin Stars have no nose (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Hello Kitty and Little Twin Stars
Source: Sanrio Website, (n.d.)

2.5 Kawaii Types

Kawaii culture has many kinds of cuteness: "there is baby cuteness; very young cuteness; young cuteness; maternal cuteness; teen cuteness; adult cuteness; sexy cuteness; pornography cuteness; child pornography cuteness; authority cuteness; and corporate cuteness."[77] The interest in kawaii aesthetic has grown so much that it is now hard to track the types of kawaii, especially in fashion.

When talking about kawaii culture, Ashcraft says: "Kawaii can describe just about anything and when kawaii alone won't do, things can be *kimokawaii* (creepy cute), *erokawaii* (sexy cute), or *busukawaii* (ugly cute)."[78] It is true that kawaii can be anything depending on the person who perceives it.

Kimo-kawaii is a type of cuteness that makes you feel frightened and anxious without a real reason, but that is what makes things cute at the same time. The term comes from the expression *kimochi warui* meaning feeling bad and disgusted.

[77] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan,* 135.
[78] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool,* 104.

Guro-kawaii is a style that integrates cute and grotesque characteristics. This kind of kawaii is a bit more drastic and exceptional than kimo-kawaii. *Gloomy Bear* is the most popular example of guro-kawaii. It is a pink bear with a murderous and predatory intent towards its owner who is a child named *Pity* (see Figure 3). Although it seems brutal and horrible at first look, the explanation and logic behind this character is interesting. The creator Mori Chack points out the fact that bears are actually quite terrifying animals even though most bear characters are soft and cute. In an interview, Mori Chack says his work takes a humorous and doubtful look at people's contradictions in life. Although bears and other animals in cartoons seem so cute, he thought that the people in real life are powerless compared to animals, yet they are always merciless towards them. To make something more real, he tried to create a cute character with a sense of terror.[79]

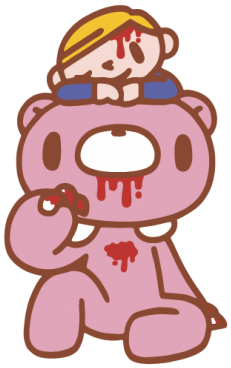


Figure 3. Gloomy Bear with Pity
Source: Mori Chack Website, (n.d.)

Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, who is a world famous Japanese singer, is one of the reasons why kimo-kawaii and guro-kawaii have become so popular. In her music videos, there are things such as eyeballs, sculls or brains. In an interview, she says

[79] Okazaki and Johnson, *Kawaii! : Japan's Culture of Cute,* 58.

she is interested in creepy things that become shocking with their cute nature.[80] According to her, cute things are overflowing around the world, so she wanted to adjust the cuteness with scary items (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Kyary Pamyu Pamyu's first album "Moshi Moshi Harajuku" cover
Source: Kyary Asobisystem, 2011

Busu-kawaii is another subcategory of kawaii culture. Someone or something is called *busu-kawaii* when they are not pretty but cute. This is somewhat appreciating the positive side of something negative. The most popular example of this kind of kawaii is finding bulldogs cute. Their faces seem sweet to some people even though they are quite ugly. In this category, there are many cosplayers[81] who are not pretty but look cute with their expressions and clothes.

2.6 Kawaii Everywhere

Cute design can be seen everywhere including bankcards, police stations, and kawaii apartments in wealthy parts of Japan. Companies arrange festivals, tours and even publish newspapers about kawaii things. You can encounter a girl with a kawaii

[80] Cooper & Masuda, "Interview: Kyary Pamyu Pamyu."
[81] Cosplayers are people who wear costumes to look like characters from movies, games or mangas.

schoolbag, a woman holding a kitty purse or a man with a kawaii character on his mobile phone. Today, kawaii is a part of everyday life from cute character posters as advertisements to cafés where kawaii girls serve you in maid clothes. People are busy trying to find a cute little present such as phone straps, key chains or hairpins for their friends. While watching anime on TV, reading manga at home, shopping Hello Kitty goods, taking photos at *purikura* (photo booths),[82] buying figures of characters or clothes of latest fashion, kawaii culture is everywhere. Even banks, which are normally solemn places, have cute large cartoon characters as decorations. Kawaii passes over the border of Japan beyond the barriers of language and ethnicity, and reaches out to other countries and people.

2.6.1 Cute handwriting

Even though kawaii culture is associated with fashion for the most part, handwriting holds an important place in kawaii's popularity. Kinsella notes that in 1974 many female teenagers began to write in childish characters, which became a nation-wide phenomenon in 1978. This handwriting looked like English with rounded characters and cartoon pictures. During the 1980s, magazines, mangas, advertisement companies and even document processing programs such as Macintosh started using this style. In contrast to most trends of youth culture originating in multimedia, this cute handwriting began among young people as a literary trend below the surface. Kinsella argues that using this writing style might have been some sort of rebel against traditional Japanese culture. Using English words with exclamation marks and writing horizontally were ways of identifying with European culture, which the young people assumed to be more entertaining.[83]

[82] Purikura is a photo booth where people can take photos with cute filters and stickers.
[83] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 222-225.

With the developments in technology, this trend showed itself in the fonts people use on their computers. There are several kawaii fonts you can download from the Internet. They are free for your personal use, and some of these fonts have been downloaded more than eighty hundred times. One example is Cat Cafe, a font with Latin, *Hiragana* and *Katakana* (Japanese lettering systems) characters. It is written in a kawaii style with cat figures, which is considered very cute anywhere around the world.[84]

2.6.2 Hello Kitty

Sanrio created their star character, icon of kawaii culture, Hello Kitty in 1974. Hello Kitty was their fictional British cat character, which later became a global product providing millions of yen just in domestic sales in Japan. Hello Kitty has kept an overwhelming brand power for over forty years ever since her first appearance.

Even though Hello Kitty merchandise was first seen on stationery items, Sanrio produced almost everything that comes to mind with Hello Kitty. In collaboration with many famous companies and celebrities, they made Hello Kitty globally known. Most people around the world recognize Hello Kitty whenever and wherever they see her. In 2015, Sanrio announced the animation movie of their famous character, broadcast of which was decided to be in 2019. There are hotels and amusement parks dedicated to Hello Kitty fans, restaurants and cafés that sell unique Hello Kitty food, fashion brands with limited items of her. Celebrities wear Hello Kitty products and she even appears on political stage. One of the latest announcements was her appointment as Special Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development by the United Nations.[85]

[84] Font Space, "Cat Café."
[85] Sanrio, "Company Profile."

Even though kawaii products seem to be for children and young teenagers at first sight, this is not the case most of the time. According to Bill Hensley, official spokesman for Sanrio Inc. the usual order of Sanrio goods' consumption is for kindergarten girls to become attached to Hello Kitty, carry on their with stationery products, food they eat, and their school bags, buy Hello Kitty items with a desire for everything cute until adolescence, and then abandon them when they start middle or high school. They might return to buying cute products when they become young adults, and specifically after they start to shop for their own kids, which finalizes the order and transfers it to the next generation.[86]

GUCCI, Puma and ASOS are among her collaborations with famous fashion companies. In 2014, her GUCCI special charm was released just for the readers of Vogue Japan. She was wearing from GUCCI's Fall / Winter collection (see Figure 5). In 2018, she collaborated with Puma, appearing on trainers, t-shirts, rucksacks and so on.



Figure 5. Hello Kitty GUCCI charm
Source: Vogue, 2014

Hello Kitty shows herself in every category one can imagine. In terms of technology, there are phone cases with Hello Kitty on them, straps, selfie sticks,

[86] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 157.

cameras, toilet seats with high technology and so on. Her latest appearance on *Shinkansen* (Bullet Trains in Japan) is one important example. Beginning its service in Summer 2018, Hello Kitty shinkansen got a lot of attention from everyone including adults and tourists. The shinkansen includes a car where people can buy souvenirs and another one named *Kawaii! Room* where people can take photos with Hello Kitty in Shinkansen uniform. The merchandise of this shinkansen, which is illustrated in figure 6, can be bought in stations (see Figure 6).[87]



Figure 6. Hello Kitty Shinkansen and merchandise at Hiroshima Station

She can be seen in the category of food as well. Kikkoman, one of the famous soy sauce manufacturers in the world, collaborated with Sanrio in 2015.[88] As a special edition, Hello Kitty appears on the bottle of soy sauce with a pink top. Besides, she has several restaurants and cafés around the world.

She has a great number of fans around the world. As described before, Hello Kitty is described as British. So her merchandise can be found easily in the United Kingdom, but the popularity of her goes beyond fancy goods. During London Fashion Week in 2017, a Hong Kong designer named Ryan Lo collaborated with

[87] Japan Rail Pass, "Hello Kitty Shinkansen: The Cutest Bullet Train."
[88] Sanrio, "Kikkoman x Hello Kitty Soy Sauce."

Hello Kitty. As he is from Hong Kong, he says he grew up with her as a part of his life. Being selected by the company, he expresses his gratitude to bring the brand to his second home, London.[89] His Hello Kitty collaboration clothes attracted quite an attention, as well as bringing kawaii culture to headlines once again.

When it comes to the popularity of this kawaii icon, the United States is one of the countries that have a great number of fans. In October 2008, Sanrio opened its first concept store, Sanrio Luxe, with designer fashions, watches, and luggage in New York's Times Square. What is more, the next year MAC released Hello Kitty Collection as a cosmetics line. Yano points to the fact that kawaii has traveled an amazing distance as Hello Kitty is displayed on a man's head during the launch of the collection.[90] Japanese cute transformed into something very different from what it had been in the start. Furthermore, Hello Kitty has shown herself in fashion weeks in collaboration with famous designers.

Hello Kitty Con in Los Angeles, California took place in 2014 in order to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Hello Kitty.[91] Being the world's first convention about Hello Kitty, there were many interesting attractions for the visitors such as pop-up tattoo store, stalls selling Beats by Dre's special edition Hello Kitty headphones and Hello Kitty Café food truck serving cute snacks. The convention attracted more than 250,000 people in total from all over the world.

Love for Hello Kitty does not stop with one convention in the United States. Hello Kitty Café Truck, journey of which started in 2014, draws quite an attention all over the country. Visiting important spots in cities, Hello Kitty Café Truck offers

[89] Edmonds, "Hong Kong Designer Ryan LO to Collaborate with Hello Kitty for London Fashion Week Show."
[90] Yano, "Wink on Pink: Interpreting Japanese Cute as it Grabs the Global Headlines," 682.
[91] Bender, "The World's First-Ever Hello Kitty Convention."

cute edible items and special gifts for the first comers on each day. The truck also visits pop culture conventions and always attracts the visitors.

What is more, Sanrio launched presidential campaigns in 2012 and 2016 putting Hello Kitty up for the elections of President in the United States.[92] Representing Friendship Party, she promised for fun, friendship and happiness (see Figure 7). As part of the campaign, several products were sold until the Election Day. Hello Kitty Café Truck also helped her transmit the message of friendship with their Hello Kitty for President special cookies.

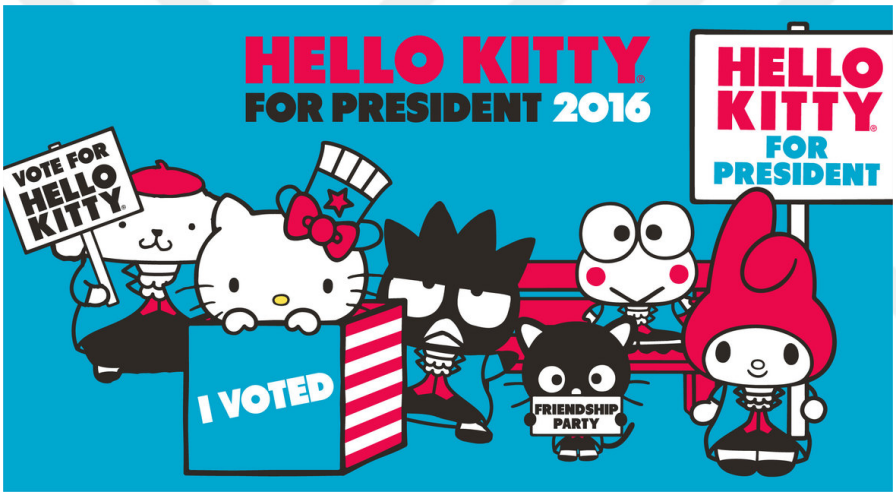


Figure 7. Hello Kitty-for-president campaign.
Source: Sanrio, 2016

Japanese American National Museum held an exhibition called "Hello! Exploring the Super Cute World of Hello Kitty" between November 2015 and May 2016.[93] The exhibition's aim was to show Hello Kitty's journey to her past and her impact on modern popular culture. There were collected items and art pieces

[92] Sanrio, "Hello Kitty for President."
[93] Japanese American National Museum, "On the Road at the EMP Museum - Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty."

displayed in the exhibition to demonstrate her past and transformation into a global icon.

Kawaii culture and Hello Kitty's effect on everything reached Barbie as well. In October 2017, Barbie's producing company Mattel announced their collaboration with Sanrio. Hello Kitty special Barbie doll is a significant example of how far kawaii culture has come around the world. With the signature red bow of Hello Kitty on her head, Barbie wears a Hello Kitty skirt and holds a purse of her with kawaii characteristics all over her (see Figure 8).



Figure 8. Hello Kitty special Barbie
Source: Sanrio, 2017

Germany has also become an important country in terms of love for Hello Kitty. There is a Sanrio Outlet Shop Wentorf in Hamburg, which attracts quite attention. There is also a website called Kitty Online Shop, where everything about Hello Kitty can be bought. Kitty's latest attempt to take the headlines in Germany

was her forming the Hello Kitty Gang. There was an exhibition at Berlin Fashion Week, where new products were demonstrated.[94]

Hello Kitty's popularity in Asia is an indisputable fact. In 2008, Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism assigned Hello Kitty as the tourism ambassador in China and Hong Kong as part of the Visit Japan campaign. The Ministry had chosen eleven people as goodwill ambassadors until then, and according to the authorities Hello Kitty was selected because of her reputation in China.[95] Chinese people love Hello Kitty so much that a Hello Kitty theme park was opened in 2015. In the next year, a themed restaurant in Shanghai began serving Hello Kitty's fans. The latest news in China is that an indoor theme park of Hello Kitty was opened in 2018. A news website wrote about the park saying "the popularity of this kawaii character can almost guarantee that the new theme park will be a success."[96]

As in all Asian countries, Hello Kitty is the most loved kawaii character in Malaysia. There is a theme park called Hello Kitty Town in Puteri Harbour. Inside this themed park, there are stores you can buy Hello Kitty goods, Cinnamoroll Café, shows and activities for Hello Kitty fans of all ages. Opened in 2012, it is also the first global Hello Kitty attraction. Gaining more popularity each and every day, Hello Kitty collaborated Hotel Jen Puteri Harbour. Situated near Hello Kitty Town, the hotel welcomes customers who love Hello Kitty with their twelve rooms that are themed around three different designs. Some rooms are designed for couples and others have bunk beds for families with young children (see Figure 9).

[94] Sanrio, "Hello Kitty Gang Takes Berlin Fashion Week."
[95] Japan Times, "Hello Kitty to be Goodwill Envoy."
[96] Time Out Shanghai, "Hello Kitty Shanghai Times."



Figure 9. Hello Kitty rooms at Hotel Jen Puteri Harbour
Source: Sanrio, 2017

Hello Kitty holds an important place in South Korea as well. For the reason that Korean people love cute things such as accessories and stationery items, it would be unthinkable for Koreans not to love her. She was appointed as Japan Tourism Ambassador of Korea and Taiwan in 2008. There is a Hello Kitty Café in Seoul and a Hello Kitty themed museum called Hello Kitty Island that is located in Jeju island of South Korea.

Taiwanese people also have a special place for the kitty. A Chinese cuisine restaurant collaborated with Sanrio and was opened in 2015. In an interview, the owner of the restaurant says that he thinks of Hello Kitty as a way of calming people who are under the pressure of Hong Kong's daily life.[97] Aside from the restaurant, Hello Kitty shows her face everywhere thanks to her long history in Hong Kong. One of the interesting examples was the pop up market that was open between February and May in 2017. Opened in YATA, a famous Japanese department store in Hong

[97] Okazaki, "Kawaii Hong Kong: "How City's Lolitas Live the Cute Dream."

Kong, Hello Kitty grocery store had everything one could buy from a supermarket such as apples with Hello Kitty designs, sushi and so on.[98]

Eva Air, which was founded in 1991, collaborated with Sanrio in 2005. Launching two jets that have Hello Kitty designs, Eva Air attracted a lot of attention (see Figure 10). Although their license expired in 2009, Eva Air and Sanrio started working together in 2012 introducing five planes.[99] Everything about Hello Kitty flights is designed specially for the kitty fans. Tickets, meals, seats, the staff's clothes, etc. are designed with Hello Kitty theme. Surely, the exterior designs of the planes are no different. After the planes became a big hit, Sanrio's other characters started to appear on the planes such as Gudetama and Bad Batz Maru.[100]



Figure 10. Eva Air's Hello Kitty plane
Source: CNN Travel, 2012

Hello Kitty's fame in Taiwan continued to increase and another significant example was the high-speed train designed with her (see Figure 11). It was also the result of a partnership between Taiwan Railways Administration and Sanrio with the support of Eva Air. Launched in 2016, the train drew quite an attention. Like the

[98] Sanrio, "Supercute Supermarket."
[99] Wong, "Hello Kitty Jets: 5 Cutest Airplanes Ever."
[100] Eva Kitty, "Hello Kitty Eva Air."

planes of Eva Air, the train's both exterior and interior designs are all about Hello Kitty.



Figure 11. Hello Kitty train in Taiwan
Source: CNN Travel, 2016

Sanrio's fictional character's journey does not stop with trains and planes in Taiwan. Hello Kitty areas at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport catch the attention of the travelers from around the world.[101] The world's first Hello Kitty duty free shop also opened here. The areas consist of Sanrio Gift Gate, Pink Kitty Departure Lobby, Hello Kitty Kids' Play Corner and Hello Kitty Baby Room, a resting and nursing area. Yet another Hello Kitty collaboration in Taiwan is the maternity hospital opened in 2008 (see Figure 12).[102] The purpose of this partnership was to lower the anxiety women feel during labor. On of the first women to give birth at the hospital said she fancied Hello Kitty very much and the place was nice because other hospitals were always white. The experience is different thanks to the

[101] Sanrio Taiwan, "Shops in Taiwan."
[102] Daily Mail, "'First Ever' Hello Kitty-Themed Maternity Hospital Opens in Taiwan."

Hello Kitty photos on the walls, bed sheets and everywhere you can imagine in a hospital.



Figure 12. Hello Kitty maternity hospital in Taiwan
Source: Daily Mail, 2008

Last but not least, Hello Kitty shows herself in Turkey as well as it is anywhere around the world. Nowadays, one can find Hello Kitty products everywhere from sweets to phone cases. The official arrival of Hello Kitty in Turkey was in 2012 with the opening of Hello Kitty World in İstanbul (see Figure 13). Kaleli family, owner of an iron-steel company, invested $15 million in order to open this one of a kind Hello Kitty World facility. Beste Kaleli Tekelioğlu, the chief executive officer of Hello Kitty World Turkey, partnered with Max Licensing and Sanrio, and made it into reality. In her speech at the launching ceremony, she expressed her love towards Hello Kitty as a thirty three year old mother of two girls. She said she was very happy to see her kids feeling the same excitement for Hello Kitty as she did. Tsuji Kunihiko, then vice-president of Sanrio, the Japanese consul and the president

of the Turkish Japanese Foundation were among the attendees of the opening ceremony in Ataşehir, İstanbul. In the store, there was everything from furniture to jewelry attracting attention of all ages.[103]



Figure 13. Hello Kitty World Ataşehir consisting of two buildings
Source: Icosnap, 2013

During the opening of Hello Kitty World, Turkish top model Tülin Şahin expressed her love towards Hello Kitty (see Figure 14). In an interview, she said there were worldwide known celebrities such as Lady Gaga, Cameron Diaz, Mariah Carey, Katy Perry and Paris Hilton among her friends. Claiming that all of her pajamas are with Hello Kitty design, she said she was falling asleep with her every night.[104]

[103] DHA, "Hello Kitty İstanbul'a Geldi."
[104] Milliyet, "Tülin'in Hello Kitty Arkadaşlığı."



Figure 14. Tülin Şahin with Hello Kitty Mascot
Source: Tulinsahinfanclub, 2012

However, the facility was closed after two years of service. As the reviews on a restaurant search and discovery service named Zomato suggest, the prices were a bit high for the customers, the taste of the food was average, the facility was disorderly and the staff were indifferent towards customers. Although the reviews were excellent at the time of the opening, they started to change for worse in time resulting in a closedown.[105]

Nevertheless, the closedown of the Hello Kitty World did not mean the end of the Hello Kitty wave in Turkey. Fenerbahçe, one of the famous football teams in Turkey, signed contract with Hello Kitty brand in September 2016. The general manager of Fenerium, the company selling products of the team, said that they wanted to attract women and little girls as well. That is why; they announced partnership with Sanrio's Hello Kitty (see Figure 15). He emphasized this contract's

[105] Zomato, "Hello Kitty World Cafe Restaurant."

significance by adding the fact that the brand chose Fenerbahçe after partnering with Milan, one of Italy's major teams.[106]



Figure 15. Fenerbahçe president Aziz Yıldırım at Hello Kitty collaboration press conference
Source: Fenerbahçe Official Website, 2016

Hello Kitty is at a stage she is becoming more and more loved by Turkish people just like it happened in Japan of the 1980s. November 1st is the date Hello Kitty is known to be born and her birthday is celebrated in many countries around the world. In 2017, Turkey joined these countries by celebrating her birthday for five days at one of the biggest shopping malls in Europe, Forum Istanbul (see Figure 16). Sponsored by LC Waikiki, a Turkish clothing company, Toyzz Shop and GiGi, the birthday party was well received by Turkish visitors of the mall. A special Hello Kitty mascot from Japan came to the party and entertained people. During the party,

[106] NTV, "Fenerbahçe Hello Kitty ile Anlaştı."

LC Waikiki also promoted the Hello Kitty girl clothes, which had just been launched by the company.[107]



Figure 16. Advertisement of Hello Kitty's birthday party at Forum Istanbul

Sakurai argues that Hello Kitty is the character that symbolizes kawaii. On the grounds that she has no expression, people easily empathize with her according to their moods.[108] Bryce suggests that Hello Kitty owes her constant global recognition to the complicated and excursive creation of cuteness. Her unemotional face with no mouth and little obscure eyes make a powerful impression of displaying slight differences and mirroring people's state of minds and feelings.[109] As a result, as long as kawaii and emotions continue to influence people's lives and values around the world, Hello Kitty will probably maintain her existence.

Even though Hello Kitty seems to appeal only to female part of the community, she also gives importance to male fans. There are a great number of Hello Kitty baseball goods on the website of Sanrio's shop such as key rings and

[107] Milliyet, "Hello Kitty Doğum Gününü Türkiye'de Kutluyor."
[108] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei,* 80.
[109] Bryce, "Cuteness Needed: The New Language/Communication Device in a Global Society," 2269.

pins. In the 40th anniversary of Hello Kitty, the designer Yuko Yamaguchi talked about how many young males did not consider her as something girlish, and how they heard from teenagers asking for Hello Kitty to match boyish trends more. That is why Sanrio announced their Hello Kitty Men clothing line in 2014 (see Figure 17).[110] First collaboration was with Hankyu Men's Tokyo department store. Introducing twelve items, Sanrio attracted a lot of attention. In 2016, another collaboration with a Japanese design company called Nendo was reported.[111] On Shibuya 109 department store's men floor, Hello Kitty Men merchandise pop-up store was opened for a limited time. Special designs of Hello Kitty's skeleton images for men who love fashion were on t-shirts, phone cases, bags and so on.



Figure 17. Hello Kitty Men collaboration with Nendo
Source: Sanrio, 2016

Hello Kitty proves to the world that kawaii culture can be embraced by everyone. In 2016, Gunji Masao broke the record for possessing the largest Hello Kitty collection. Living in Japan, Gunji Masao is a sixty-seven year-old retired

[110] PR Wire, "Hello Kitty Men; Unveiling 12 Items in Collaboration with 6 Tokyo Men's Brands."
[111] Sanrio, "Hello Kitty Men."

policeman. He collected more than five thousand different Hello Kitty items with the help of his wife and neighbors in thirty-five years (see Figure 18). He explained in an interview with Guinness World Records that he loved Hello Kitty due to her expression.[112] She was with him whenever he felt sad or happy, and it was important for him that they shared same emotions. The news of a man breaking the record for the largest Hello Kitty collection attracted great attention from the people around the world. It is argued that Japanese people's culture is sentimental and society-focused while other cultures in the West are distant and self-absorbed. Iyashi, the Japanese term for healing that was mentioned before, turns up when explaining why an old man's Hello Kitty collection is welcomed in Japanese society. Shamoon puts forward the idea that Hello Kitty is iyashi for Gunji Masao. Although Japanese community is very strict at school and work, they adore and respect those who are unusual particularly when they are very young or old. Because people see him as an old and kawaii person, Gunji Masao's collection was received well.[113]



Figure 18. Gunji Masao with his Hello Kitty collection
Source: Guinness World Records, 2017

[112] Stephenson, "Check out the Japanese collector who has the largest collection of Hello Kitty memorabilia."
[113] Shamoon, "Commentary: The Underlying Kawaii Culture that Reinforces Japanese Masculinity."

In 2017, Hello Kitty also took a great step for her adult fans with the creation of Hello Kitty Gang. As Sanrio's European website informs, consisting of "Hello Kitty fans from the cool and creative worlds of fashion, health, and beauty, food and street style, Hello Kitty Gang offers exclusive urban, grown-up Hello Kitty apparel and an array of events throughout Europe, Middle East, and Australia."[114] As part of this initiative, there have been many projects such as the opening of a pop-up shop in London, or exhibiting at Berlin Fashion Week.

Giving presents to one another holds a significant place in the history of Japan. It has a great function in Japanese social relations. Sanrio excellently used this culture to their advantage in spreading kawaii culture. Yano talks about Sanrio's 50th anniversary celebration motto, which was small gift, big smile. Gift exchange custom became a task of encouraging people to show their genuine emotions to each other. Although traditional exchange of presents is done as a responsibility and with cautious estimation, Sanrio's aim was to add natural feelings to the process in order to help people form bonds. These casual and relaxing bonds are created with the help of kawaii.[115] This exchange of small and cute presents became an important part of Japanese people's daily lives. Instead of big or expensive presents, kawaii and low priced gifts are more welcomed and loved by Japanese people.

Hello Kitty is subjected to criticism mostly by feminists. Yomota mentions people who think that Hello Kitty with no mouth is a symbol of male dominance in Asia in order to force women into silence. In New York's Times Square, there are porn shops with Hello Kitty goods such as videos, dolls and all kinds of stuff.[116] Yano argues that Hello Kitty offends feminists and other people with her excessive

[114] Sanrio, "Hello Kitty Gang."
[115] Yano, "Reach out and Touch Someone: Thinking through Sanrio's Communication Empire," 24-25.
[116] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 16.

cuteness. Without a mouth, she is seen as promoting and inducing submissiveness. Critics who associate people's free willpower with spoken language see this as something alarming. Cute things are limited to kids and little animals in many countries, so Hello Kitty trespasses these limitations and forces her way into adult lives. As a matter of fact, what most critics are trying to tell is that Hello Kitty is only capitalism sneaking inside our lives through her harmless and simple cuteness.[117]

Japanese kawaii draws a specific zone for subversion in other parts of the world because it is distinct in comparison with the usual. We can see Hello Kitty turning into a punk, or loved by lesbian and gay communities, and even as hard-core Kitty. According to Yano, Hello Kitty is the symbol of complicated and versatile attractiveness, which is not Western. The subversions of Hello Kitty are generally taken from the vagueness of kawaii. They also emerge from Western enthusiasm towards Asia, which is a racialist idea of seeing it as an orientalized image and a place for alluring vulnerability. Eagerness towards having fun with Asia and Asian things can be explained with the international status of countries. If the case were the other way round and Asians were captivated by Disney characters (as most of them are), Yano suggests that there would not be these kinds of subversions. As Disney means America with a definite quantity of international status, the connection of the admirers and the characters would be different.[118]

2.6.3 Cute stationery

Although kawaii culture originated in youth culture, it was soon discovered by companies and market research agencies. In terms of kawaii goods, stationery was

[117] Yano, *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific,* 196-197.
[118] Yano, *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific,* 228.

one of the first fields that were capitalized on. It is an inseparable part of people's lives whether they are students or office workers.

Domestic sales on the Japanese stationery market were 469,200 million yen (4.2 million dollars) in 2017.[119] Toyokura Mina, public relations manager at a stationery company, states that women feel more motivated when they have cute things to work with.[120] Thus, kawaii stationery products are produced aiming to appeal such kind of customers. *Washi tapes* (masking tapes that are made from Japanese rice paper) are especially big sellers on the kawaii stationery market. People use these tapes with kawaii designs to decorate anything one can think of such as furniture, light switches, illustrations and diaries.

There are countless numbers of stationery items one can find in Japan. Stores such as Loft and Tokyu Hands sell kawaii stationery products such as clips, pens, stamps, erasers, sticky notes and so on (see Figure 19). The attracting side of stationery products in kawaii culture is they hold basic characteristics, as they can be very small and cute. Moreover, the fact that they are rather cheap makes them ideal for those who love collecting cute things.



Figure 19. Sticky notes in kawaii cases at Tokyu Hands

[119] Yano Research Institute, "Stationery and Office Supplies Market in Japan: Key Research Findings 2017."
[120] NHK, "Kawaii International Program."

One of the latest trends in stationery side of kawaii culture is *Hobonichi*. A Japanese company named Hobo Nikkan Itoi Shinbun produces planner notebooks called Hobonichi Techo that people can customize according to their taste. There are many varieties of the notebooks and numerous cover designs so that every person's planner can be unique on its own.[121]

2.6.4 Fancy Goods

Yomota states that even a small, ordinary object can be turned into something else with a sprinkle of cuteness magic. People are freed from the bonds of reality through shopping stuffed toys and dolls of their favorite characters, feeling infinite love and happiness.[122] Rather than being necessary, fancy goods are things that interest and attract people. From this aspect, items with kawaii aesthetics appeal to those who love fancy goods.

Kinsella stated that there were basic features of a fancy good. Being small in size, pastel colored, oval shaped, soft, in a foreign style, with frills and fluffy were some of these characteristics of fancy goods. A cartoon character is also an important ingredient of a fancy good. She argues that cute characteristics re-personalize everything that has been de-personalized by the capitalist ideas. Seeming to have personalities of their own, kawaii goods appeal to possible consumers. In other words, cute design adds a feeling of affection to the merchandised products.[123]

One can see many types of kawaii items and clothes on people during a stroll on the streets. For instance in Harajuku, a famous district of Tokyo, people can find anything they need to be kawaii such as Kiddyland where a great number of toys are

[121] Hobonichi Techo, "What is the Hobonichi Techo."
[122] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 15.
[123] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 225-228.

sold, or Daiso 100 Yen Store where cute items are sold for very cheap prices. In Harajuku, there is even a place called Condomania, from which different kinds of cute or interesting condoms can be bought.

Dolls are an important part of fancy goods in terms of kawaii culture. Licca dolls hold great significance in this case. When Barbie dolls entered the Japanese market, they could not draw sufficient attention because they did not look innocent and young enough. On the other hand, Masubuchi argues that they were scary and sexy adults in the eyes of Japanese girls.[124] McVeigh suggests that these bosomy dolls were not appropriate for the Japanese people. Thus, Barbies became shorter, younger with large eyes and less charm, and they got another name Licca.[125] When the history of Licca is analyzed, four generations of Licca seem to be changing according to kawaii culture. Even though the original Licca's face was remarkably cute, it was quite mature compared to the next generations. Every time a new generation of Licca was introduced, the face got cuter and cuter. However, the body's mature characteristics were strengthened and her breasts grew larger. According to Masubuchi, this transition reflects the reality of the increase in cuteness and youth of Japanese girls' faces while their bodies' mature. The face got more round and the eyes started to have stars in the pupils.[126]

Certainly, kawaii goods became so popular that people from other countries wanted to buy them. Thus, certain websites such as Kawaii Box and Blippo Kawaii Shop emerged. These websites sell kawaii products and they ship worldwide mostly free of charge. Kawaii Box provides a monthly subscription for $18.20 and they send you a box with ten kawaii items such as plush toys, stationery and candies (see Figure 20). Blippo Kawaii Shop offers a wide range of kawaii products like bags,

[124] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 63.
[125] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 174.
[126] Masubuchi, *Kawaii shōkōgun,* 91.

jewelry, snacks and so on. There is also Japan Candy Box, which is another website sending a box full of kawaii snacks and candies. These websites have a section where they share people's photos with their shipped products. The ones that buy and took a photo with these items are not only young women and children, but also young men. It's an interesting fact, which supports the idea that kawaii culture appeals to males as well.



Figure 20. An example of items in a Kawaii Box
Source: Kawaii Box, (n.d.)

2.6.5 Fashion

Fashion has held a significant place in kawaii culture ever since the beginning. The magazines, *An-an* and *Non-no*, about kawaii fashion took Japan by storm, publications of which came in succession in 1970 and 1971. They became very popular and became trendsetters in kawaii fashion. Non-no's publisher, *Shueisha*, even went further and created Men's Non-no in 1987, which is still published monthly.

Kinsella talks about fashion magazines suggesting girls a younger and more child-like look in the 1970's. An-an published a special article to inform the readers about a new concept of cuteness in May 1975. They advised girls to wear young themed and inexpensive clothes. Cute clothes were often pastel colors for women and bright colors for men. Kawaii fashion was about clothes with frills, puffs and ribbons or adorned with cartoon characters and catchphrases. These trends matured during the late 1980s. Girls were encouraged to be tomboys wearing baby-vest like T-shirts, dungarees and tight sweaters. This cuteness was somewhat bold and unisexual.[127] Continuing their kawaii support, the magazine published a special issue named Kawaii Adults in 2006. The whole issue was dedicated to encouraging adults that they could be kawaii as well. Finding the pure immaturity in oneself and staying in a state of postponing maturity and remaining young were advised to be a kawaii adult. Surely, the desire to become an adult and do something in society was not discarded. Adult kawaii put forward the idea that every woman had a little girl in her heart and should embrace that girl. As it can be seen, media is one of the means that kawaii culture uses to get into adult people's lives.

With the global companies answering the desire for kawaii and post feminism during the 1990s and making self-presentation of all sorts admissible and attractive, kawaii became an important part of adult fashion as well. A consumer trends forecaster Faith Popcorn suggests that women cannot be held back. They can wear a regular, single colored suit and suddenly bring out a Hello Kitty notepad. It is kind of saying that women are complex individuals.[128]

In Japan, kawaii fashion is a part of everyday life, especially of young generation. Harajuku being the center for young people to display their love of

[127] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 229.
[128] Yano, *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific*, 8.

fashion, many tourists visiting for shopping or just wishing to witness the unique, special and sometimes extreme fashion. It is not a place where worldwide known fashion brands have headquarters or important bases. Instead, there are small shops selling handmade or second-hand clothes that you can only find in Harajuku. Foreign people come all the way in order to buy what is only sold there. Many photographers of famous magazines hang around Harajuku to find stylish people with interesting clothes and take a street snap of them. That is why a great number of people specifically dress up and walk around Harajuku just to get their photos taken.

Shibuya also comes to mind when the subject is fashion and girl culture. A district of Tokyo, Shibuya, is the main destination for Japanese youth especially schoolgirls. The 109 building is the iconic department store, located just across the Shibuya Station. Opened in 1979, the store's main target was adult women who were enjoying the Bubble Economy.[129] However, when the Japanese economy collapsed, the only ones who still continued to shop without care were schoolgirls. With their pocket money, part-time jobs and relatives treasuring them, schoolgirls had money for shopping when others did not. That is why; they started to become the ones who determined the selling trends. Ashcraft argues that *purikura* (photo booths) is one of the many examples in which schoolgirls tell others what is cool and what is not. Originally aimed at salary men, purikura was quickly recognized by schoolgirls. It was turned into a big hit after the companies noticed and responded to what the girls wanted from the machines.[130]

Even though wearing principles in order to be kawaii varied in time, there are particular trends that have been famous in kawaii culture for a long time. There are

[129] After a thirty year long Economic Miracle, Japan experienced a bubble economy in which stock and real estate prices rose to incredible heights. Japanese people enjoyed wealth and high standards of living until 1989 when the Japanese economy crashed.
[130] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 99-100.

numerous kawaii fashion styles with many subcategories, which are closely associated with the femininity and issues related to it. They will be discussed and analyzed in the next chapter.

Cosplay, that is the shortened version of costume play, is an important subject related to kawaii culture in terms of fashion. Cosplayers, people who love costume play, wear costumes in order to look like their favorite characters from anime, manga, movies or games. They enjoy showing their costumes during conventions and events. It is a popular activity for those who enjoy creating their own costumes and accessories and there are even worldwide competitions about cosplay in many cities around the world.

2.6.6 Anime and Manga

Kawaii culture owns an important part of its widespread popularity to anime and manga. Targeting not only children and young population, both anime and manga interest adults as well. In Japan, it is easy to spot a man in his forties reading a manga on the subway or learn that your colleague at work is a fan of anime. They are almost a tradition for Japanese people and two of the things that come to mind when we say Japan to foreigners.

As mentioned before, girl culture is essentially related to kawaii culture. It holds a powerful place in the market of anime and manga. Shōjo manga is an important part of Japanese society. Yomota mentions how one can find a huge bookstore in which whole shelves are filled with novels and essay collections for girls, photo albums, design books, fashion related magazines, girls' manga and anything about girl culture.[131] It is also considerably popular outside of Japan. Bryce

[131] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron,* 12.

suggests that the popularity of manga and anime is because the skillfully intentional lacking of Japanese context helps foreign people value manga and anime without difficulty.[132]

Sakurai says that it was just a coincidence for him to meet kawaii culture, but it was something inevitable for kawaii to spread around the world thanks to anime and manga.[133] He talks about CLAMP, a group of female manga artists, and their popularity at Japan Expo (an event held in France). The group was so overwhelmingly popular among girls around the world that there were people coming from other countries such as Germany just to see them.[134]

Kawaii visuals, which are submerged in people's lives via anime, manga, TV and goods, created a mutual culture among the people around the world in spite of their age, gender or class. As Itō suggests, kawaii culture began to adapt itself international societies by way of localization thanks to anime and manga even though it was initially particular to Japanese culture.[135]

Miyazaki Hayao is one significant example of Japanese anime's proliferation around the world. Co-founder of Studio Ghibli, Miyazaki Hayao directed and produced many movies that are famous globally. His movie *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (Spirited Away) won Grand Prix award at the Berlin Film Festival in 2002 and Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film in 2003. Each of his movies possesses kawaii characters with cute features. Many cosplayers have tried their characters, and kawaii shops contain everything from plush toys to key chains about them. Most influential among these characters is Totoro from the movie *Tonari no Totoro* (My Neighbor Totoro). Totoro is a forest spirit that looks like a huge grey

[132] Bryce, "Cuteness Needed: The New Language/Communication Device in a Global Society," 2271.
[133] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 38.
[134] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 164.
[135] Bryce, "Cuteness Needed: The New Language/Communication Device in a Global Society," 2268.

cat. Even though it was made in 1988, the anime is still loved by millions of people around the world. Merchandise about Totoro is so popular that you can even find a bed shaped like Totoro or pajamas (see Figure 21). In addition to these, Studio Ghibli has recently announced that they will build a theme park about the movie in Nagayo, which will be opened in 2020.[136]



Figure 21. Totoro bed
Source: Amazon, (n.d.)

Anime is one of the important reasons why people have been trying to learn Japanese around the world. According to Japan Foundation's survey in 2009, the number of students learning Japanese reached about 3.6 million.[137] Thus, many people watching anime are aware of basic Japanese words; including kawaii. Having an interest in Japan through animation and games leads to interest in fashion as well. Sakurai also argues that interest in Japanese food and fashion is because of anime trend around the world. Thanks to the great diversity and possibility of everything in

[136] BBC, "Studio Ghibli to Open 'Totoro' Theme Park."
[137] Japan Foundation, "Present Condition of Overseas Japanese-Language Education."

anime and manga, people want to be like the characters, wear the same things and talk like them. For instance, European Gothic Lolita fashion appeared due to the influence of animes such as Nana and Death Note, and wearing uniforms became a fashion trend because of Neon Genesis Evangelion, Inuyasha, etc.[138]

2.6.7 Idols

Idol is a term for young Japanese stars who are praised for their cuteness. They are called *aidoru* that is the Japanese pronunciation of the English word idol. In the word, there is a kanji 会 *ai* which means to meet. This is because you can meet and see these idols up close unlike other celebrities. Interaction with their fans is an important part of their jobs, and preserving their good public image is significant.

Although idols seem to be a thing of the 2000s, Ashcraft argues that the idol age was dawning right after World War II. With French movies, choreographed dance routines and cover bands, he says that the new generation grew up in a different period from their families. Thus, being girl idols were not a dream anymore in the 1970s.[139]

Image they create has to be exemplary and the way they behave should be like a role model. More than their skills, their behaviors are important in their reputation. Yet, there are examples of famous idols with great musical talents in the history of Japanese idols. One of the first idols was Yamaguchi Momoe, who was thirteen when she had her first recording, and her songs were in deep contrast with the conservative age she lived in during the 1970s. Yamaguchi Momoe was one of those with great skill in music and model behavior.

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[138] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei,* 28.
[139] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 38.

In time, idols started to be more related to kawaii culture. Yomota talks about Sakai Noriko when he emphasizes the existence of kawaii culture during the 1980s.[140] Sakai Noriko, who debuted at the age of fifteen as a singer, used a different kind of kawaii words she called Nori P language. Later, they explained that it was a kind of advertisement strategy to help increase her publicity.

Matsuda Seiko, another singer who acquired her popularity through her childlike behaviors, is considered to be the queen of idol singers. She released many singles and albums, most of which became number one hit on music charts. Aschraft divides pop music in Japan into two parts: before Matsuda Seiko and after Matsuda Seiko. "She was a new breed of idol, an über idol of sorts, was dubbed burikko, which means a woman who acts young and girlish to appeal to men."[141] Pursuing her as an example, many idols aged between fourteen and sixteen appeared in music market.

Kinsella states many examples of young aged idols. There were sweet boy bands such as Tanokin Trio, SMAP and Hikaru Genji as well as female idols like Kyon Kyon, Nakayama Miho and WINK whose ages were ranged from fourteen to nineteen. Cute and young idols appeared on TV programs playing silly games and attracting more viewers than most programs. However, being young wasn't essential in terms of appearing kawaii to the viewers An interesting example is one hundred year old twin sisters, Kin and Gin, who were very famous which shows that a sense of vulnerability and disadvantage is a significant part of the kawaii aesthetic.[142]

Even though there was a downfall in the popularity of the idols some time, they are still famous in Japan and around the world. AKB48 is one of the most famous idol groups today. Their name comes from Akihabara, a district of Tokyo

[140] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 14.
[141] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 44.
[142] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 236.

famous for being an *otaku* cultural center, and 48 was the number of the group members.[143] With their popularity, members are about 140 right now. They have an official shop and café where you can buy items about them and enjoy videos and music at their theatre.

Morning Musume, another popular idol group, was formed in 1997. Their members continuously change with older members' graduations and new members' auditions. The group generally consists of girls in their early 20s or teenagers. Celebrating their 20th anniversary, the group is loved by millions, and they have fans from all over the world. They have attended conventions in France and the United States.

2.6.8 Technology

Japan is one of the few countries that come to mind when it is about technology. Worldwide known for their high technology, Japan also made a name for its power in unique expression. With their characters, games, anime and manga, Japan marked its name in the global market.

Customization of technological devices is something that can easily be seen around the world. Stickers on phone cases and laptops, kawaii character straps hanging beside mobile phones, homepage customization of websites can be given as examples of kawaii effect on technology. According to Hjorth, kawaii customization of mobile phones has great influence in Asia Pacific. She argues that it combines new technology with the older ones changing the dehumanized technology into something human.[144]

[143] Otaku are people who love everything that is computer related so much that they are no longer sociable. They are males most of the time and not much approved by the Japanese society.
[144] Hijorth, "Odours of Mobility: Mobile Phones and Japanese Cute Culture in the Asia-Pacific," 48.

Communication has become a great part of technology and people use messaging applications on their phones all the time. They express their emotions via *kaomoji* (face marks) and special characters of those applications. Kawaii, of course, holds a special place in the use of these programs. One of the popular messaging applications is Line, a Japanese subsidiary of Korean Internet search engine Naver. The application was created as a solution to the communication difficulties people faced after the Tōhoku earthquake in Japan in March, 2011. Allowing people to message privately, Line had only emoji at first. However, the popularity of the application increased when they introduced Line's cute characters, which people could use as stickers to show their feelings. Announcing one character after another, Line became worldwide used application. Aside from their own kawaii characters, they sell special stickers of famous characters such as Hello Kitty and Doraemon. Seeing the interest in these characters growing creators of Line opened Line Friends pop up stores in many places in Asia. There are now many stores around the world in cities such as New York City, Hong Kong, Seoul and so on.[145]

When it comes to technology, it is an age of video games and visual novels. Popular anime and manga have their own games most of the time. There are worldwide famous games that are turned into anime series as well. Pokémon, one of the most popular games, became a multi media success around the world. Allison argues that recognition of Pokémon was thanks to its character goods and kawaii nature aside from the game's quality. With their fictional yet authentic world, they reach out to their players.[146] Dependency and gentleness, some of the characteristics of kawaii, played an important role in the production of Pokémon. In order to attract

[145] McCracken, "How Japan's Line App Became a Culture-Changing, Revenue-Generating Phenomenon."
[146] Allison, "Portable Monsters and Commodity Cuteness: Pokémon as Japan's New Global Power," 382.

young people, females and more, Pikachu was selected as the main character. Kawaii and strong at the same time, Pikachu held emotions of devotion, caring and affection.[147]

One significant example of kawaii culture in technology is the virtual idols. As discussed in the previous subchapter, idols are an important part of Japanese culture. With the advancements in technology, virtual idols that are created by computers have emerged. The first virtual idol was Kyoko Date, created in 1996 by HoriPro, a talent agency in Japan. After that, more virtual idols have been seen in many countries. Black says that the main purpose behind these idols was to create someone that can withstand becoming older and keep away from public embarrassment. However, there was a problem with their voice. Their life span depended on their voice actor.[148] This problem's solution was Yamaha's singing voice synthesizer named Vocaloid. The application was first presented in 2004 and people using Vocaloid could produce singing by writing the words of a song. Latest edition Vocaloid 4 was released in 2014 and still continues to be updated.[149] One of the most famous virtual idols in the world, Hatsune Miku, was a successful result of this application. A young girl with long turquoise pigtail, she was created with Vocaloid 2 in 2007. In the same year, she became number one sold in software section of Amazon.[150] She has all the kawaii characteristics and has become globally known. Famous American singer, songwriter and producer Pharrell Williams included her in one of his music videos directed by Murakami Takashi, a popular Japanese artist. In the video Hatsune Miku was accompanied by an animated version

[147] Allison, "Cuteness as Japan's Millennial Product," 38.
[148] Black, "The Virtual Ideal: Virtual Idols, Cute Technology and Unclean Biology," 38.
[149] Time Graphics, "History of Vocaloid."
[150] Okada, "Unusual Demand for "Hatsune Miku"; the Music Maker Spread on Nico Nico Douga."

of Pharrell Williams and kawaii characters. Hatsune Miku also appeared in concerts of Lady Gaga before she came on stage.

According to Black, the strong interest towards virtual individuals and the combination of technology and female physique is merely due to a higher fondness for kawaii aesthetic in Japanese culture. Kawaii virtual characters have bodies that are normally beyond the bounds of possible biology. Their physical characteristics, capabilities and appeals are higher than normal, yet these features are not that great to displease or insult fans.[151]

Japanese people care about the aesthetics of the products they buy. They tend to purchase something when it is kawaii. Takamiya Shinichi, Partner and Chief Strategy Officer at Globis Capital Partners, argues that Japanese buyers appreciate things when they are kawaii, simple and humorous.[152] Thus, it is significant in the market of technology for products to be cute. That is why companies from other countries question their marketing strategies in Japan. In order to attract Japanese customers, they need to produce more kawaii products.

2.6.9 Food

Food is crucial for our health in everyday life and it is an important part of Japanese people's traditions. UNESCO selected the traditional Japanese cuisine *washoku* as an intangible cultural heritage in 2013.[153] Japanese people care about their food and kawaii culture is becoming an inseparable part of it day by day. Turning your meal into something cute is easy and fun nowadays. There are blogs and pages for moms, telling them how they can prepare cute meals for their children. It is also a good way

[151] Black, "The Virtual Ideal: Virtual Idols, Cute Technology and Unclean Biology," 38-42.
[152] Nordic Innovation, "Should Nordic Tech Companies Be Kawaii in Japan?"
[153] Japan Times, "Japanese cuisine wins cultural heritage status."

to make kids eat their meal on their own. Surely, creating kawaii meals is not just for children. Kawaii food appeals to both kids and adults.

In Japan, it is something traditional for people to put animal shaped sausages or make faces with dried seaweed on rice for their *bento* (boxed lunch). With kawaii culture's affect, changing your bento into a character has become very popular. These character shaped bentos are called *kyaraben*, which is the combination of character and bento's pronunciation in Japanese. Kyaraben became so famous that contests for making the cutest bento have been held. A well-known blogger Shirley Wong, who is known as Little Miss Bento on the Internet, published a book called Kawaii Bento in 2015 (see Figure 22).[154] Giving bento classes and workshops, she has won awards for creating interesting bentos.



Figure 22. A page of Kawaii Bento Book
Source: Little Miss Bento, (n.d.)

There is even a short film named Bento Monogatari meaning boxed lunch story. Directed by Belgian director, Pieter Dirkx, the film was selected for the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. It is about a woman who prepares kawaii bento for her

[154] Little Miss Bento, https://www.littlemissbento.com/ .

husband in order to save their marriage. The film is a good example of Japanese popular culture and kawaii's effect on other cultures around the world.

Sweets, cupcakes, doughnuts and chocolate are loved by everyone in this era. Turning these into kawaii things make them even more attracting for the customers. Kinsella argues that eating sweets is something that has associations with childhood. In Japan, consuming confection became popular among adults during the early 1980s. Associated with children before, ice-cream consumption by adults increased considerably until the late 1980s. Cute sweets were often small, fancy with Victorian age connotations. As they reminded people of their pleasant childhood memories, cute foods were also considered nostalgic.[155]

Japan is a land of characters and the number of Japanese food characters is noteworthy. The first character that comes to minds of kawaii fans is Kirimi-chan. It is a salmon fillet character, created by Sanrio in 2013. It came first in an election of food character contest by Sanrio. Another example is Gudetama, a lazy egg yolk that feels depressed and bored all the time (see Figure 23). The character became so popular that themed cafés were opened in Hong Kong and Singapore and a restaurant was launched in Los Angeles. The oldest but still one of the most famous characters is Anpanman, a bun filled with sweet bean paste. He is a hero with a red uniform and a cape. First published as a manga in 1973, Anpanman has anime and movie adaptations as well. Although the creator died in 2013, it is still running on TV and has more than one thousand episodes. Last but not least, little cat characters created by San-X (a Japanese stationery company) in 2001 are worth mentioning. They are called Nyan Nyan Nyanko, *nyan* standing for the word meow. These cats first appeared as *takoyaki* (octopus filled, ball-shaped snacks) and they turned into sushi,

[155] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 232.

burgers, sweets, etc. in time. This kind of combining animals and food is called fusion food, and it is really popular in Japan and around the world.[156]



Figure 23. Gudetama the lazy egg
Source: Sanrio, (n.d.)

Another perfect example of how kawaii culture can be seen in terms of food is Kawaii Monster Café opened in Harajuku, Tokyo in 2015. Designed by Japanese art director Sebastian Masuda, who will be talked about in detail in Chapter 3, Kawaii Monster Café is full of kawaii things such as a merry-go-round shaped like a cake, strawberries on walls, mushrooms overhead and so on. Kawaii things do not end with the interior design of the café. The menu also consists of kawaii meals, drinks and sweets. The moment visitors enter the café, one of the five monster girls guide them around and show their seats. According to their website, these girls are sweet Baby, selfish Dolly, happy Candy, sexy Nasty and moody Crazy.[157] They serve things such as blue burgers with kawaii monster faces and colorful rainbow pastas (see Figure 24). It is an unforgettable memory for a foreigner and admirer of Japan and kawaii culture. Kawaii Monster Café also holds events at night for adults such as Halloween parties and fashion nights.

[156] Lombardi, "Kawaii Japanese Food Characters."
[157] http://kawaiimonster.jp/day/pc/concept/gallery.html#!/5



Figure 24. Happy Candy and blue burger at Kawaii Monster Café. July, 2016.

Last but not least, Maid Cafés in Japan is an important example for showing how kawaii culture is in daily lives of Japanese people. In Maid Cafés, there are young girls dressed as maids who serve food and dessert. They entertain the customers acting in a kawaii way. The girls are chosen specially and they sometimes become famous in time. First opened in order to attract *otaku* customers, Maid Cafés now entertain tourists as well. Adults constitute the greater part of the visitors of Maid Cafés. Although some criticize them for taking advantage of men's Lolita Complex, Maid Cafés have proved to be far more than that. If the profile of the customers is examined closely, it can be clearly seen that there are as many females as the male ones. Mostly appearing in *otaku* areas such Akihabara in Tokyo or Nipponbashi in Osaka, they attract attention from the people so much that Maid Cafés have opened in many cities around the world. Appealing to anime and manga lovers worldwide, there are cafés in New York City, Toronto, Paris and so on. The café in Paris in Figure 25 is named Kawaii Café proving the popularity of kawaii culture.



Figure 25. Girls with maid costumes posing in front of Kawaii Café in Paris
Source: Facebook, 2012

As it can be seen, the concept of kawaii has a deep history in Japan and it has evolved into many things and spread into countless areas. It is not only an aesthetic that creates interest in different kinds of people, but also a culture with underlying principles. The facts that it has become a popular culture and it is appealing to both females and males are important. Kawaii has been playing a significant role in gender role socializations of people, whether it is directly or indirectly. Before exploring its role, dimension of femininity and masculinity needs to be analyzed, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

KAWAII'S ROLE IN THE DIMENSIONS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY IN JAPAN

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, put forward cultural dimensions theory that consists of typologies describing different characteristics of countries. One of these typologies is the masculinity and femininity dimension. Masculine and feminine characteristics of a society give many insights about how the gender socializations are different from or similar to each other. Geert Hofstede's research came to the conclusion of Japan as the most masculine country. The chapter will put forward some possibilities of a change towards femininity in Japan due to the existence and growing popularity of kawaii culture. [158]

Researchers such as Aoyagi Hiroshi and Shu Min Yuen,[159] Sato Kumiko,[160] Sun Jung,[161] Kam Louie,[162] Theresa Winge[163] and Christine R. Yano[164] have suggested a shift in the masculine ideals of women and kawaii culture's role as a way of feminine expression. This chapter will analyze the theories of these researchers and base the changes of these dimensions on examples. Kawaii culture has not only affected the femininity in Japan, it has also influenced the Japanese masculinity. There has been an increasing number of men with more feminine qualities or those who are interested in genderless fashion. Later in the chapter, kawaii culture and men

[158] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*.
[159] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan."
[160] Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan."
[161] Jung, "The Shared Imagination of Bishōnen, Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading DBSK, youtube.com and Transcultural New Media Consumption."
[162] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China."
[163] Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita."
[164] Yano, " Monstering the Japanese Cute: Pink Globalization and its Critics Abroad."

in the changing dimensions of femininity and masculinity will be discussed with illustrative examples.

3.1 Masculinity and Femininity

Hofstede put forward the idea that every human being possesses a particular mental programming that is steady in the course of time and causes the same human being to display approximately similar behavior in resembling circumstances. There are universal, collective and individual levels of mental programming. People probably inherit universal level mental programs as part of their genetics. The collective mental programs develop as a result of learning, thus shared with others. The final level is individual, where no one is the same with another. As a result, a great number of different actions in a society appear. [165]

With a purpose of illustrating distinct characteristics of nations, typologies can be used. Hofstede suggested five typologies in each of which every country can be located. First is the power distance that deals with inequality. Second is uncertainty avoidance that is about the stress degree in a society. Third is individualism versus collectivism that is concerned with the combination of individuals with groups. Fourth is masculinity versus femininity that pertains to the distribution of emotional roles between males and females in a society. Fifth is long-term versus short-term orientation that is concerned with the people's purposes for their efforts.[166] One last dimension was added later on, which is indulgence versus

[165] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 34-37.
[166] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 151-152.

restraint where countries with high indulgence focus on enjoyment and pleasure while countries with high restraint have rigid societal norms.[167]

In this thesis, the point of focus will be the masculinity versus femininity dimension. In order to look at societies in this dimension, the difference between what is feminine and what is masculine should be cleared up. It is important to state that behaviors that are straightly related to reproduction of human beings are feminine or masculine alone. However, a lot of behaviors that are not related to reproduction are considered appropriate for either sex. They are usually random choices, caused by cultural standards and customs.[168]

At this point, it is significant to point out the difference between sex, which is biological, and gender that is social. Anthropologist Margaret Mead put forward the idea that men are mainly related to power and success because of their biology that is unable to give birth to children. She suggests that women in every nation accomplish something permanent, thus leaving men with a need for accomplishment. As a result, women are expected to be at home, taking care of their offspring, possessing delicate and nurturing roles, while men are obliged to become forceful, ambitious and take up tougher roles than women. In this way, a difference between gender roles and sharing of dominance cause dominance by males.[169] Surely, this does not say that men always take on masculine roles and women take feminine ones.

The idea that gender socialization starts at home in the family is supported by many researchers in this field. This socialization goes on with friends in school, encouraged and strengthened by books, TV, newspapers and so on. Regarding emotional roles, there is no role separation or a weak one in feminine societies where

[167] Hofstede Insights, "The 6 Dimensions of National Culture."
[168] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 280.
[169] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 280.

men are also expected to be tender and interested in the quality of life, while in masculine societies this role distinction is very clear. In a masculine family, mothers deal with feelings and fathers are concerned with facts. Mothers and fathers both deal with feelings and facts in feminine families. A masculine society cares about work, while feminine societies try to balance work and family. Disdaining the weak is a feature of masculine societies, but having sympathy for the weak is seen in feminine ones.[170] Men are expected to be dominant, vigorous and competitive, while women are gentle and focus on family and relations. On the other hand, a feminine country is where gender roles coincide with each other and both genders are expected to be compassionate and care about the value of life.[171] Even though every person can be masculine and feminine simultaneously, what Hofstede argues is that each nation's culture is principally either masculine or feminine.[172]

In his study, he analyzed fifty-three countries and regions regarding work goals and converted their factor scores into a Masculinity Index (MAS). Main data for the analysis were collected from IBM, an international company. The survey results were confirmed with other data of countries from different international values surveys. The country Masculinity Index was verified with country data from other sources. These consisted of reproductions of the IBM survey on other societies but also large international analyses of values. People were first asked 22 and then 14 questions about work goal importance. Answers of different genders on these scores were very different. For instance, males gave importance to advancement, earnings or training, while women cared about friendly atmosphere, position security or

[170] Geert Hofstede Consortium, "Masculinity Versus Femininity."
[171] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 297.
[172] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 285.

cooperation. The results showed that women placed importance on social goals while men paid attention to ego goals.[173]

In Table 1, the masculinity index values for fifty countries and three regions can be seen. Japan is at the top (MAS 95), becoming the highest masculine country, while Sweden is the highest feminine country with the lowest score (MAS 5).

Table 1. Masculinity Index Values for 50 Countries and Three Regions

		MAS				MAS	
Rank	Country	Actual	Controlling for % Women[a]	Rank	Country	Actual	Controlling for % Women[a]
1	Japan	95	87	28	Singapore	48	52
2	Austria	79	75	29	Israel	47	41
3	Venezuela	73	70	30/31	Indonesia	46	
4/5	Italy	70	72	30/31	West Africa	46	
4/5	Switzerland	70	67	32/33	Turkey	45	53
6	Mexico	69	64	32/33	Taiwan	45	38
7/8	Ireland	68	74	34	Panama	44	
7/8	Jamaica	68		35/36	Iran	43	52
9/10	Great Britain	66	66	35/36	France	43	41
9/10	Germany	66	59	37/38	Spain	42	35
11/12	Philippines	64	58	37/38	Peru	42	32
11/12	Colombia	64	56	39	East Africa	41	
13/14	South Africa	66	60	40	Salvador	40	
13/14	Ecuador	63		41	South Korea	39	
15	United States	62	—[b]	42	Uruguay	38	
16	Australia	61	59	43	Guatemala	37	
17	New Zealand	58	55	44	Thailand	34	45
18/19	Greece	57	73	45	Portugal	31	32
18/19	Hong Kong	57	61	46	Chile	28	26
20/21	Argentina	56	50	47	Finland	26	51
20/21	India	56	47	48/49	Yugoslavia	21	42
22	Belgium	54	53	48/49	Costa Rica	21	
23	Arab countries	53		50	Denmark	16	22
24	Canada	52	53	51	Netherlands	14	—[c]
25/26	Malaysia	50		52	Norway	8	10
25/26	Pakistan	50	40	53	Sweden	5	6
27	Brazil	49	44				
					Mean of 53	**49**	
					Standard deviation 53	**18**	

Note: Reprinted from Hofstede, 2001, p. 286.

[173] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 279.

Hofstede points out that gender is an uncontrolled personality feature, implemented by culture. People's nationality and gender unconsciously become parts of their mental programming. One of the columns in Table 1, named controlling for % women, displays MAS scores after the percentage of women in the sampling was controlled in order to see the scores that could have been acquired if all country samples had the same percentage of female respondents. However, the essential order of the countries was barely affected.[174]

3.2 Japan as a Masculine Country

According to the country MAS, Japan came at the top (MAS 95), making it the highest masculine country. As specified by the results of the survey, the country is directed by purposes of accomplishment, competitiveness and good outcomes. This becomes a standard system for people beginning with education and continuing for the duration of life.

It should be noted that almost forty years have passed since the data collection for Hofstede's analysis. Although Hofstede confirmed the results with other data in the second edition of his book Culture's Consequences, it is a fact that there has been a lot of change since then. Moreover, the survey was only about work goals, so overgeneralization might be a mistake.

After World War II, there was a clear inclination towards childish women by Japanese men. This inclination came to be referred as Lolita Complex. Lolita is a term first used in a novel written by Vladimir Nobakov in 1955. It is a nickname given to a 12-year-old girl by the narrator who is obsessed with the girl. The term came to be used later, referring to girls who barely reached the age of consent and

[174] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 284.

looks younger than that age. Buruma gives this situation an explanation saying that Japanese men were afraid of feeling powerless, which he associates with the defeat of Japan and the occupation by the US.[175]

There were also many differences in the way women behaved after the war. Wives and mothers, who were once passive and obedient in the family, started to act more aggressively. Madge connects this aggressiveness to the women's growing financial liberation. These new family roles confronting men's authority caused Lolita Complex to emerge as well.[176]

In Japan, most people strive for becoming the best, which is a masculine quality. As Japan is also a collectivist country, decisive and ambitious characteristics are observed in groups instead of individuals. The long and hard working conditions, the way Japanese people seek ideal brilliance in packaging or products are examples of masculinity in Japan.[177] However, doing what you love or loving what you do is a feminine quality, which is getting more and more important in many countries including Japan. In this respect, kawaii becomes a significant concept as a modifier of these dimensions in Japanese society.

3.3 Kawaii as a Modifier of Masculinity and Femininity

Kawaii culture is mostly criticized in terms of placing women in an indecent status, making them look childish and powerless. People against cute generally think that being kawaii is either too passive or foolish. Some think that women (especially young girls), who look naive with their attitudes, are silly. McVeigh argues that the

[175] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 164.
[176] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 164.
[177] Hofstede Insights, "Country Comparison."

description of women with childish attitudes in manga, advertisements and pornography shows how women are tried to be placed in a controllable situation. There are times that this seems to be true, but the kawaii enthusiasts argue that there is a difference between the real kawaii and the one male dominant part of the society enforces. The latter one is what they call the pretended cuteness.[178] Kawaii is a concept initiated by women and children, not by male-dominated society.

McVeigh gives *Burikko* (pretending child) as an example of the difference between real cuteness and the pretended. In order to be a Burikko, people dress up as innocent girls acting childish and talking like a baby. Kawaii women are actually cute thanks to being genuine, natural and unintentional. Yet, Burikko exaggerates everything and acts too cute on purpose. [179] McVeigh states that the promoters of these girls in the entertainment business openly admit that they intentionally try to interest Japanese men's Lolita complex. Popular young girls do not need to have any entertaining skills, all they have to be is kawaii. The reason behind this situation is that men are afraid of women who have apparent sexuality and burikko is not intimidating because of their childish characteristics.[180]

Japanese people's connection with kawaii has progressed on several distinct stages. During the postwar period, cultural tendency towards reliance and fulfillment appear to have caused the country to infer that their reliance on the US was the solution for prosperity. Sato argues that this kind of compliant connection to the US was probably the reason behind the nation's kawaii culture. According to her, the

[178] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 147.
[179] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 147.
[180] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 173.

description of the Shōwa emperor as kawaii that was mentioned in the first chapter could "symbolize the nation's conversion from military despotism to pacifism."[181]

Adding to this argument from the viewpoint of the dimensions of femininity and masculinity, Yano talks about Japan's two symbols: Godzilla and Hello Kitty. She describes Godzilla as contributing to the supremacy of masculinity while Hello Kitty as gradually advancing towards the feminine passiveness. Godzilla growls dangerously and represents aggression and violence. Hello Kitty possessing no mouth at all, on the other hand, quietly communicates kindness and meaning no harm. She argues that these two characters represent the periods they were created. During Godzilla's creation in 1954, Japan was shifting from restoration of the country after World War II to becoming an industrial and high-tech power globally. Some time later, Japanese people's center of attraction moved from manufacturing to the consuming of goods. Housewives, office ladies and female teenagers became the focus of attention. International journey of kawaii products created a pink globalization; pink signifying everything feminine, cute and sensual.[182] Yano's argument sheds light upon the significant fact that thanks to Hello Kitty feminine qualities are spreading around the world where masculinity prevails. It is a noteworthy situation as Hello Kitty has come to a position where everybody recognizes her in most countries.

In addition, Licca-chan's appearance as a substitute for Barbie is an important incident in terms of femininity and kawaii culture in Japan. As mentioned in the second chapter, Licca-chan's release was because Barbie was too sexy and intimidating. Licca's kawaii characteristics instead of sexiness can be perceived as

[181] Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," 42.
[182] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 153-154.

standing up to the expectations from women by male dominant society (see Figure 26).



Figure 26. Licca-chan dolls
Source: The Japan Times (2017)

In general, conservative academicians and people oppose the cute idea because it is led by females and against the traditional ideas and morals. Kawaii culture was criticized for the reason that young people would not acquire moral fulfillment by means of conforming to the responsibilities of everyday life. Rather, they would think that life is all about luxury and pleasure. By refusing to become submissive women as expected from traditions, cute women were blamed to be selfish because of their defiance of social anticipations. Madge talks about how she can not oppose the idea that the demonstration of young females as kawaii can strengthen the public perception of women as submissive, but she also wants to put emphasis on the fact that kawaii has a rebellious or escaping side to it.[183] Most of the time, the manner kawaii is put into practice by women suggests a protest against the ideals of femininity in a male-dominated society. They proclaim their sexuality with a deliberate denial of differentiation put forward by the social environment. Kinsella

[183] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 157.

states that women did not agree with going home and not working, expecting less from life. They showed off their shōjo personality more through kawaii culture.[184]

Going back to shōjo culture, which was briefly discussed in the first chapter, Madge talks about how many women became able to have more free time because of the welfare state in Japan during the late 1960s. Thanks to the economic prosperity, technological developments and the decline in the number of family members, women could spend more time on other things. After the war, there were riots to stop the renewal of the Security Treaty with the United States. When these struggles proved to be in vain, the people became indifferent to politics and started to have an interest in consumption. This generation was called the generation of three nihilisms. They lacked spirit, responsibility and concern about things.[185] There was a new awareness of social connections among people with a yearning for getting away from the responsibilities and obligations of everyday life. Thus, people began to buy things that made them happy and kawaii culture started to become an important part of Japanese adult community. During the same time, girl characters in mangas began to act kawaii. Characters and the world around them implied a new kind of culture that was centered on female companionship and romantic love affairs. Characters denied being subservient and they behaved in a kawaii manner as a form of escaping from their responsibilities. This was also a longing for freedom from long-established types of marriages.[186] As a result of such reasons, the girls began to be identified with the consumption of cute things in time.

Kinsella argues that young single women represented freedom due to the fact that they are usually excluded from work unlike young men who are obliged to labor.

[184] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 246-250.
[185] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 160-166.
[186] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 162.

When they are not married, young women are able to work as office ladies, spend time with their friends and focus on themselves. However, these advantages of single life are taken away with marriage.[187] Thus, they feel the need to show their desire about freedom and escape from responsibilities through kawaii culture. The women's place as mothers and caregivers at home happen in masculine countries. On the other hand, the fact that Japanese women have been trying to escape from marriage and expectations of the society can be seen as a way of defending their freedom in a masculine society.

This kind of escapism can also be seen in the sexual ambiguity in mangas targeting young girls. Increase in homosexual or hermaphrodite characters indicate a need to be asexual due to the fact that girls feel complicated about maturing. This also has a connection with the childish behaviors of the characters. Being young and immature means not being obliged to possess any responsibilities because of the social roles. It also gives them the freedom from gender discriminations that are more present in adults' lives.[188] However, this desire to escape is not exactly new to Japanese culture. Ninjo, which means human feelings, is the lenience of personality's instinctive tendency to neglect responsibilities. As Miyadai suggests, there is a *fuyuu kankaku* (floating feeling) behind kawaii culture. This feeling is the one causing people to avoid their liabilities in real life.[189]

Kawaii culture reflects altering situations in culture from the perspective of females and children, who are compelled to take the position of incompetent and dependent individuals on males. As the representations of disadvantaged classes' opposition and rebellion against the roles given by the long-established gender

[187] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 244.
[188] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 162.
[189] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 164.

system, kawaii culture's different and sometimes dark sides make the concept even more complicated and significant in understanding kawaii's importance in the nation's image change. In this case, Sato's argument is important as she suggests kawaii has become an instrument for revealing individuality in a society where the lack of strength can result in the undermining of authority.[190]

Although cute obsession of Japanese society is sometimes criticized because it is seen as the infantilization of the Japanese people after the Second World War, Ashcraft argues that it is just a great understatement of kawaii culture. As we have seen before, the roots of appreciating cute things are deeper than they seem to be at first sight. Aschcraft also suggests that this kind of thinking disregards the fact that childhood nostalgia is a global perception. Japanese people buying cute things have the same intention as Western people buying LEGO or model toys: they symbolize being young. He argues that the Japanese schoolgirls who grew up in the upturn of kawaii culture in 1970s did not leave behind their love for all things cute. They raised their children with an inclination towards cute, thus making kawaii culture sink into Japanese awareness nationally.[191]

After the stagnation of economy during the 2000s, Japan encouraged concepts of cultural diversity, individualism and globalization. The government started to support women's participation in the economy, named as womenomics. Aoyagi and Yuen assert that the perception of kawaii started to change in this different social atmosphere. The formerly obedient or oppressed features of kawaii became tools for young women to renew themselves as active contributors instead of passive sexual objects. As discussed before, there are many representations of kawaii such as kimo-kawa and busu-kawa that are deviant forms of cute. Through their interviews with

[190] Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," 42.
[191] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 105.

pre-adult and young adult females in Japan, Aoyagi and Yuen argue that these different representations of kawaii are not just fashion styles. They are closely related to those women's willpower to concentrate on the pleasure of freely self-revelation.[192]

Taking Aoyagi and Yuen's argument into consideration, kawaii's role in helping women live their femininity freely is important. Today, women around the world are in a troublesome state where they are expected to get and find the right way in the middle between indecency and ultraconservatism. When they wear flashy or transparent clothes, they are stigmatized as indecent. Yet, they are also criticized for putting on headscarves or wearing chadors. It is important to declare their unique identities and blend in at the same time. They have hard time finding ways to demonstrate their sexual freedom and not being seen as unreasonably sexy. Miller suggests that the different perceptions of kawaii point out young women's concerns about expectations from them and their denials toward these anticipations.[193] These looks are not something commonly accepted in societies and they are clearly signs of refusal to give in to anticipations. Adding to these, Yano (2006) gives examples of kawaii things such as Hello Kitty notepad acting as secret arms of femininity, a striking invasion of cute in a masculine society. Kawaii symbolizes a tiny move of rebellion, which reclaims and defends the cheerful and feminine in a masculinist environment.[194]

Consumers hold a significant power, which is being immensely conveyed by Asian women and young population. While doing this, they are changing the ideas of desirability in both genders. Louie argues that young generation leading the way to a

[192] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan," 100-101.
[193] Miller, "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan," 25.
[194] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 157.

dramatic change in the notions of sexuality.[195] While plain kawaii still attracts many buyers, the combination of distorted aspects with kawaii causes some commentators to look for associations to Japan's socio-cultural state. Kawaii things are cute since they lack strength and freedom. The way young population, females, and their precious possessions transformed from the sweet cute in the 1980s to the gloomy kawaii in the 90s is proof of how women who would stay compliant and needy are now revealing aspects of nervousness and worry that are natural in their helplessness. Here, Sato's argument about new versions of kawaii is noteworthy. Opposed to the kawaii of 1980s as a method of feeling sorry for oneself and wishful thinking, the current kawaii types are probably to puzzle our consciousness of kawaii regarding brutality, resistance, and unpleasant things. One of the best-selling girls' manga Nana illustrates the contrasting aspects of present-day females' individuality by displaying two main characters both named Nana, one of whom is a cool and confident punk rock musician and the other is a charming, easygoing girl looking for love. Such contrasting existences of cuteness indicate that more young population, specifically females, not accepting to be plainly compliant and needy, desire to challenge male-dominated system. Although the contradiction of kawaii and gloominess signifies their even now hesitating individuality, what is obvious is that the variations between women's real worlds and patriarchal supremacy are emerging finally.[196]

Ero-kawa, yet another type of kawaii, is a term comes from the English word erotic and its combination with cuteness. Kawaii and sexuality do not usually go together and the essence of being kawaii mostly lies behind its innocence and purity. However, this subcategory is also important in terms of femininity in Japan and it

[195] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China," 939.
[196] Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," 40-41.

became very popular among celebrities. Kōda Kumiko, a Japanese singer, is very famous for her ero-kawa style (see Figure 27). She is said to have begun ero-kawa trend in Japan. Mostly compared to Madonna, Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, Kōda took up a provocative and erotic style and became a pioneer in ero-kawa fashion. Standing up to stereotypes and taboos, she wrote songs about women believing in themselves. Due to her image's popularity, people started to wear lingerie outside and got used to the trend.



Figure 27. Kōda Kumiko's photoshoot from Trick and Japonesque albums
Source: Famous Fix, (n.d.)

Regarding the importance of ero-kawa for femininity in Japan, Aoyagi and Yuen's theories are essential. Japanese people, especially middle-aged men, feel uncomfortable about ero-kawa fashion. Aoyagi and Yuen talk about how female students do not meet the gender expectations by stressing their sexualities to a degree beyond people's ability to approve. Discussing the book *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex) by Simone de Beauvoir, they argue that the formation of a marginalized women category brings to light how a social system ruled by males attempts to

defend and strengthen the subordinate placement of women by establishing a group of scapegoats that defy expectations of males about how their sexualized others should act in the generalized land named modern society.[197]

Ero-kawa, referred as a hybrid and contrasting style, gives freedom to young Japanese females to situate themselves beyond the limits of expectations that communicate the sexualization of femininity. Aoyagi and Yuen argue that this trend is a uniting practice thing by and for young females in Japan's downtowns to openly liberate themselves through this exaggerated style. More importantly, the *ero-kawa* makes clear the anxieties in the midst of the patriarchal control of women's sexuality and young women's efforts to declare power and independence in present-day Japanese society.[198]

Adding to these arguments, Aoyagi and Yuen talk about how kawaii has been one of the most powerful expressions of pre-adult femininity. They argue that kawaii trend has been symbolized by teenagers who are supported by media and people who want to be like them. These celebrities show themselves as submissive, charming and compassionate agents of sexual promotion by adult males. On the other hand, they refer to the kawaii's other usage as a subcultural guide for young females to establish their own second domain, where they can struggle against the outcomes of adult life and welcome a naïve way of sexual innocence while staying away from the nasty world of adult power struggles.[199]

Ero-kawa trend can be seen as a catalyzer of the widespread tendency towards changing the traditional image of femininity from sexually submissive

[197] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan," 98.
[198] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan," 99.
[199] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan," 100.

objects to active subjects of sexual self-recognition where young females can also step forward and take the plunge. Accordingly, celebrities such as Ayumi Hamasaki (AYU) or Kōda Kumi offer patterns for young females to cope with the anxieties between the existing gender standards in today's Japanese society and their own personality options, which are frequently opposed to social anticipations. Aoyagi and Yuen interviewed young females about ero-kawa trend in 2008. The results made evident that these young women chose ero-kawa with an aim of enhancing their self-look, self-command and self-liberation in Japan, which had indicated femininity as an object of male glorification, where women are placed as the target of the males' fixed stares and are assessed by how satisfactorily they comply with men's gender assumptions. By means of the actualization and the presentation of ero-kawa trend as a consequence of consuming and acting like ero-kawa celebrities, young women feel like they can be in charge of their own sexualities, and these celebrities give valid reasons for their behaviors.[200] On the other hand, the ero-kawa trend may only be an instance of young women striving to discover approaches in order to accept male-controlled femininity. By including illustrative components to the concept of kawaii, they may just be acknowledging the obedience of women under male dominance. If the liberation of women can only be attained when the system of obligatory foundations that confine women are demolished, then ero-kawa trend might not be creating any difference in the current social gender standards.[201] Nevertheless, it should not be thought that the situation is an aimless one. The abolishment of the gender system is not the one people are looking for. Young women in Japan are just trying to find ways to display their femininity from a distinct and independent point

[200] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan," 105.
[201] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan," 107.

of view. Even though erotic and cute look far away from each other, the vagueness and the contradictory nature of their unification in a male-dominant society can be seen as a fracture in the system that can express femininity in different ways.

Wearing school uniform is an important representation of kawaii fashion and another subject that is criticized in terms of femininity. Kawaii school uniforms are not only popular in Japan, but also in many other countries such as France or Spain. Sakurai argues that it is hard to coordinate private clothes every day. Wearing the same uniform is easy, but people want to do something fashionable with it as well. You can quickly become stylish with small changes in accessories such as a necktie or ribbons, or you can change the color of your shirt or your cardigan.[202] Anime and manga are also important factors in the recognition of Japanese school uniform around the world. One of the most well known manga for this is The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi first published in 2003. In order to show the impact of this manga's character, Sakurai mentions someone he met in Milan, who is a twenty-year-old woman. Her comment about Suzumiya Haruhi is "I like her so much that I think of her as my own. I think her uniform is really cute."[203] Wearing school uniform is considered cute among the people who have high opinions of kawaii culture. A brand named *CONOMi* is famous for selling uniforms. On their website, they say the aim of the brand is to offer these products to girls who love fashion and kawaii. The brand is increasingly becoming more famous among the Japanese girls and the people around the world.

Regarding the criticisms on school uniforms, many Japanese men have an obsession over schoolgirls and they seem to find these girls sexually attractive. This causes much disapproval towards kawaii culture. Many psychologists have debated

[202] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 33.
[203] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 37.

the reason behind the issue. Miyamoto Masao, a male psychiatrist, talks about it to New York Times. He argues that adult women make Japanese men feel intimidated and younger girls make them feel superior.[204] Some supporters of feminism also argue that kawaii school uniform fashion came up due to the longing for being pretty and beautiful, which is a standard designed by males in a world ruled by them. Nevertheless, "there are also perspectives which focus on fashion and beauty as a source of power for women."[205] Moreover, this is what women do for themselves most of the time, and it gives them power to control their femininity even though it looks like something that men desire.

Likewise, Lolita fashion is one of the most spoken issues when it comes to kawaii culture. Lolita fashion, even though using the same name, does not hold the meaning behind the original Lolita. It is closely associated with kawaii culture because of young women wearing school uniforms and Lolita style items. Lolita fashion followers insist that their subculture does not hold the same interpretation, claiming that the Lolita character in the novel did not wear Victorian era clothes. Yet, Lolitas still face arguments as Winge suggests:

> The subculture's use of the name makes this is an all-too-easy interpretation; however, the Japanese Lolita subculture has redefined the name to create a new meaning that suits its own purposes. This new meaning reflects the modest, innocent, graceful, polite, and kawaii image of a Japanese Lolita; however, it also plays suggestively with the idea of a young girl as a forbidden sexual object. Japanese Lolitas claim they are not attempting to be sexually alluring and that they are frequently ostracized for a style of dress and a subcultural affiliation that lie outside the acceptable norms of the dominant Japanese culture.[206]

From the viewpoint of Japanese women, Lolita fashion is a way of fighting for equality. Although people would see them as objects to be obtained, this fashion

[204] Kristof, "A Plain School Uniform as the Latest Aphrodisiac."
[205] Toyoshima, "Kawaii fashion in Thailand: The consumption of cuteness from Japan," 190.
[206] Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita," 50.

establishes an area free from harm for Lolitas to be seductive, powerful and distinct at the same time.[207]

Lolita fashion subculture is incredibly renowned and it is what causes kawaii fashion to be more known universally. Wearing frilly and fluffy, soft colored Victorian era dresses with ribbons on curly hair; young women who love Lolita fashion are almost everywhere. According to Winge kawaii has an extra function in Lolita subculture. It gives an extreme femininity and cute visual character to Lolitas.[208] Although girls wearing Lolita fashion sounds a bit unrealistic in real life, this trend is not just prominent in Japan, the United States or France. There are even girls who wear Lolita clothes among Islamic people, an important fact that will be discussed in Chapter 5. Winge talks about kawaii culture as an important part of Lolita fashion. Since women use stuffed toys and appear childish with their Lolita style dresses, they convey kawaii aesthetics with their costumes and postures.[209]

Regarding femininity, another interesting and important subcategory of kawaii fashion is *gyaru* style (see Figure 28). During the early 1990s, girls with tanned skin, heavy make-up, incredibly short skirts and loose socks started to appear in the streets of Tokyo. Initially, they were high school girls who were rich and attending private schools. They were called *kogals*; the word coming from two words in Japanese; ko from koukou meaning high school, and gal from gyaru that is the transliteration of the word. Ashcraft argues that gyaru fashion did not emerge because Japanese girls were trying to look like Westerners. It was a way of standing up to the long-established ideals of a woman's beauty such as the pale skin or the black hair.[210] The *kogal* fashion became known through the magazine called *Egg*,

[207] Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita," 59-60.
[208] Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita," 59.
[209] Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita," 50.
[210] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 115.

and then it started to get more extreme. At the beginning, the kogals were a group of rich girls challenging the traditions. Then, they were taken over by the working class bizarre girls who were called *ganguro*, meaning black face. In order to get media's attention, the girls started to exaggerate, and the *buriteri* style emerged. The name originated from the soy sauce on yellow tail fish. Bleached hair, darker skin, incredibly light lipstick and eye shadow were its distinctive features. The most extreme subculture of gyaru fashion is *yamanba* style. Literally meaning "mountain witch", the style consisted of black faces with white makeup, stickers on the face and colorful hair.[211] These kinds of subcategories of gyaru fashion slowly faded away in the mid 2000s. But there are still girls who call themselves as gyaru and continue this trend. It is significant to emphasize why many young women were interested in these kinds of trends. The expectations of society towards women and these women's refusal may be regarded as their reasons behind these styles. Thus, it can be considered as a means of living their femininity free from the anticipations of male dominant society.



Figure 28. Gyaru, Ganguro and Yamanba styles
Source: Tokyo Fashion, 2012

[211] Marx, "History of the gyaru – Part Three."

Another distinct and extreme fashion style of kawaii is a genre called *Fairy Kei*. Wearing a combination of pastel and neon colors, Fairy Kei enthusiasts actually look like fairies from tales. Unicorns, rainbows with soft colors, hearts, candy and stars are some of the favorite items of this fashion style. Hair and make-up are also significant in order to be a part of Fairy Kei. Wigs in pastel colors are used in general and their make-up is not as exaggerated as other fashion styles. This style is also clearly a sign of refusal to grow up and answer the long established feminine norms of society.

Last yet significant example of kawaii changing the dimensions of masculinity and femininity is Aggretsuko. It is a Japanese animation series by Sanrio about a female red panda named Ritsuko. At the age of twenty-five, she starts working at an office in Tokyo, which is her dream job, yet she realizes this is not what she expected. During the series, she has to deal with a boss who talks as if she is inferior just because of her gender or her coworkers who are conceited and annoying. The name of the series, Aggretsuko, stands for aggressive Ritsuko. Even though she looks very cute and acts in that way, she is ready to burst out of anger. Thus, she goes to karaoke after work and relieves her feelings by screaming death metal songs. The series excellently displays women's ways of dealing with the expectations of society and the harsh reality of work life. Normally, aggressiveness is classified as a masculine quality. However, Aggretsuko is harmoniously cute, innocent and aggressive (see Figure 29). The series was first broadcasted on Tokyo Broadcasting System Television in 2016. Then, a new ten episode series reached worldwide audience on Netflix in 2018 and became very popular. The tension in order to be well-mannered despite all the sexist behaviours around women can be

nerve-racking and Aggretsuko's screams in karaoke rooms or inside her head is a kind of purification of the soul from the stress.



Figure 29. Aggretsuko in her two states of mind
Source: Sanrio, 2018

Kawaii culture's supporters argue that it is not an intricate facade to make women look powerless in front of men or put them in a controllable situation in society. If nothing else, kawaii gives women the freedom to live their femininity and face the anticipations that a masculine society creates. Even though there are examples that support the critics of kawaii, the culture is multifarious in itself and the number of people who enjoy kawaii just for their own pleasure or as an independence to express their femininity outnumbers those with the pretended cute. Adult women and young girls take part in this culture mostly because it is appealing, pure, fun and harmless, not because someone forces them to. It is a process of empowering themselves in order to show their sexualities in a way they want them to be, not for the desires of male dominated society. They are clearly demonstrating a rebellion while using kawaii as an instrument to achieve their goals.

3.4 Kawaii Men

Kawaii and shōjo cultures not only affected the way women lived their femininity, but also caused many changes in the masculinity ideals. 乙男 *Otomen*, which is the combination of Japanese word for young girl, and the English word men, became a popular concept in Japan in the late 2000s. It refers to a man with feminine characteristics. Sato points to the fact that Japanese women were becoming more assertive while men started to have doubts about accomplishments and moving forward. She talks about *Nikkei Woman*, a business magazine for women's report. The report is about how a quite number of males are getting more unassertive and fragile, especially about love affairs. Furthermore, her argument is significant as she points out that young population is being more and more doubtful about the idea of masculinity in the spaces of work and marriage. The female protagonists of shōjo anime and manga are depicted more masculine while there are more otomen.[212]

The concept of a feminine man can be found in the history of Japanese tradition. For instance, Kabuki always had feminine men playing female roles and singing. Furthermore, the image of *bishōnen* (pretty boy) has been publicized in manga since the 1970s, which is also the beginning of kawaii's popularity. Around the same time, there was also an emerging subcategory of manga, called Boys' Love (BL), which is generally about romantic relationship between two males. Young females usually produce this kind of manga, addressing the audience of young females again. Bishōnen image and BL manga have become very popular among Japanese youth. In this respect, Louie's claim holds a significant place. She suggests that women creators of these manga have established a make-believe world where

[212] Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," 41.

men are feminine and connect with each other by deep affection instead of rivalry.[213] Appearance of this kind of males with feminine qualities and leaving their masculine characteristics behind were revolutionary for a masculine country.

There is also the term, herbivorous men, which was first introduced in 2007 by Fukasawa Maki to describe males who show feminine qualities instead of possessing masculine ones. One of the examples of this is Kusanagi Tsuyoshi, a member of a boy band called SMAP. His talent with Korean language made him a well-known idol in East Asian countries. The boy band SMAP formed in the 1990s and got famous among the countries because of their juvenile appearances giving the feeling that they are non-intimidating, pleasant fellows. Louie puts forward the idea that Japanese boy bands with feminine appearance and manners have affected the desired masculinity for women.[214]

As a consequence of the boy bands in Japan, many groups in Asia have emerged, especially in South Korea. Korean boy bands usually present cute boys acting all feminine and gentle. Regarding this subject, Jung Sun's argument needs to be discussed. Jung argues that these kinds of boy bands evidently symbolize a feminine masculinity that young females consider appealing. Jung calls this feminine masculinity as soft masculinity, a characteristic largely existing in images of male celebrities in East-Asian popular culture. According to Jung, this pan East-Asian soft masculinity has been created via the presentation and consumption of feminine masculinity in popular culture. Jung also connects this aesthetic to the concept of bishōnen characters of Japanese shōjo manga. Due to the extensive distribution of manga and anime through Internet access, local and worldwide viewers now

[213] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China," 934.
[214] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China," 935-936.

cherish the imagination of bishōnen masculinity or East-Asian soft masculinity in common. He argues that this is due to the consumption of Japanese pop culture, which has obtained a great influence over the Asian region. He calls it Japanisation of the Asian countries and argues that this situation can be observed both in the consumption and the way that pop cultures imitate Japanese popular culture, especially in South Korea.[215]

One of the most popular South Korean boy bands called BTS is one significant example of the Japanese bishōnen culture spreading around the world. The band has become so well known that their songs have already hit the top of the Billboard 200 two times and they even gave a speech about empowering young people at the United Nations in September 2018. [216] In Figure 30, the members of BTS can be seen posing in kawaii manners for a Valentine's Day photo shoot of Puma. The followers of BTS are almost fifteen million on Instagram as of 2019 and they are from all over the world.



Figure 30. BTS members in Valentine's Day photo shoot for Puma
Source: allkpop, 2017

[215] Jung, "The Shared Imagination of Bishōnen, Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading DBSK, youtube.com and Transcultural New Media Consumption."
[216] Herman, "Here's Just About Everything BTS Did in 2018."

Combining the arguments of Louie and Jung, a new ideal image of a man appeared in these boy bands. Louie argues that the examples of beautiful man spread into "the gender and sexual ideals among younger people in East Asia."[217] The Japanese boy band SMAP, which was mentioned before, is an important illustration of this new image. Each member had tender and thoughtful characteristics while writing books about cooking or looking after kids on TV shows. These are all important signs of changing gender roles. An interesting fact is the name of the managing agency of the band, which is *bidanshi fakutorii* meaning pretty man factory. Jung puts forward the term of soft masculinity as the result of this new image.[218]

The change in the image of Japanese men can be summarized as Sato suggests:

> Contrary to the stereotypical image of Japanese men in the seventies and eighties as corporate warriors, contemporary men seem to be reinventing the alternative culture that was once vigorously explored by the most "unproductive" population, i.e., women and children. Cuteness also has become a key for men who are exploring unconventional gender models that exist across paradigms of masculinity and femininity.[219]

Even though kawaii culture is generally associated with young women, there are many male participants. Kinsella points to the fact that kawaii is very popular among men because they are eager to see young women who were acting cute.[220] Surely, their interest is not just for women to be kawaii in their eyes. Some of them also take part in this unique culture. McVeigh talks about boys who are seen wearing cute clothes every now and then, and young men who wear sports clothes but have

[217] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China," 933.
[218] Jung, "The Shared Imagination of Bishōnen, Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading DBSK, youtube.com and Transcultural New Media Consumption."
[219] Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," 41-42.
[220] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 243.

cute accessories around them or truck drivers with stuffed animals on their vehicles. This is an indication of kawaii culture's vague essence with multiple meanings.[221] He also argues that make-up practices such as trying to make your face look smaller are closely associated with the aesthetic of kawaii. The interesting thing he discusses is the fact that these kinds of practices are not just for females. Surely, more and more men are using cosmetics and there are even make-up materials just for them. They take care of their skin and hair, and they consume lotions and beauty products. They indeed read fashion magazines regularly like most women.[222]

There are intriguing examples of males with kawaii phenomenon. There was a band called *LADYBABY* a Japanese kawaii metal group including two Japanese female models, Kaneko Rie and Kuromiya Rei, and an Australian persona called Ladybeard who is actually a professional wrestler named Richard Magarey. Formed in 2015, the group attracted many people around the world. Wearing kawaii clothes such as school uniforms and maid outfits, they combined heavy metal music with Japanese pop. Their first song *Nippon Manju* (Japanese Bun) became such a big hit that there are over 25 million views on Youtube.[223] The video of the song and the lyrics are about what the members love about Japanese culture, drawing attention to both traditional and popular sides of Japan. In Figure 31, one of the members of the group steps on Laydbeard in their photoshoot, hinting another change in the dimensions of masculinity.

[221] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 136.
[222] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 111.
[223] LADYBABY, "Nippon manju Music Clip."



Figure 31. Members of Ladybaby
Source: Reformatt, 2015

Combining kawaii with musical elements, Masatoshi Hamada is a great example of how men can be a part of this cute phenomenon. He is a Japanese comedian who created a character named Hamada Bamyu Bamyu on his show. The character's name sounds like Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, who is mentioned before for her cute and disturbing style on her music videos. As the character became quite famous, Kyary's art director and songwriter collaborated with Hamada and directed a song for him. His song *Nandeyanennen* (What the hell) became very popular and has views of more than 30 million on Youtube. [224] In Figure 32, Kyary Pamyu Pamyu and Hamada Bamyu Bamyu can be seen posing in a kawaii manner together.

[224]Yoshimoto Kōgyō Channel, "Hamada bamyu bamyu - nandeya nen nen full ver."



Figure 32. Kyary Pamyu Pamyu and Hamada Bamyu Bamyu posing together
Source: Twitter, 2015

Kawaii culture seems to be challenging the standard ideas of gender roles head on. A recent trend among young people is genderless fashion (see Figure 33). Although it is about both genders wearing unisex clothing, the trend is very popular among boys. Wearing feminine clothes and accessories, many boys in Asia choose to establish new genderless beauty norms. Trendsetters of genderless fashion such as Kondo Yohdi (a model and singer) and Ryucheru (a model) have been catching the attention of people with their cute genderless styles. Even though gay people sometimes use this genderless fashion aesthetic as a way to show their true self, the people who appreciate this style do not have to be from LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) movement. It may be the male version of escaping from the expectations from one's gender roles. On the other hand, these might be the result of the change in the contemporary women's desire of masculinity. One important example of this is Ryucheru who has over one million followers on his Instagram

account. He announced his marriage with his girlfriend Peco who is also popular for her kawaii style.



Figure 33. Kondo Yohdi and his genderless fashion friends
Source: Instagram, 2015

This style is not something unique to Japan as it can be seen in other countries. Famous designers Rick Owens or Stefano Pilati have used genderless fashion items during their fashion shows. Moreover, renowned stores such as Zara and H&M present unisex clothing around the world.[225] Another example of this style's popularity is the celebrities showing interest in this trend. Ariana Grande, an American singer and actress spent time with the couple when she visited Japan. Even though she is not a part of this fashion, she is a means of advertising this trend to the world. In Figure 34, Peco and Ryucheru can be seen holding hands after their marriage. They also announced they were going to have a baby in the summer of 2018. The couple is clearly an example of how gender roles are becoming different

[225] Rao, "Why Genderless Fashion is so Important — & Why You Should Be Paying Attention."

in Japan once again. In an article on CNN Style, Jennifer Robertson argues that genderless fashion followers with their kawaii styles indicate a colorful new masculinity.[226]



Figure 34. Peco and Ryucheru holding hands
Source: CNN Style, 2018

In addition to these trends among men, Lolita fashion has a lot to offer for male participants of kawaii culture. With various subcategories, Lolita style gets attention from young men. The most important one is *Ouji* or *Kodona* trend, which emerged in Japan as the male adaptation of Lolita fashion. Japanese people called this trend Ouji, meaning prince in Japanese, because young men wear Victorian era clothes for boys. However, people from other countries misunderstood the word Kodona, which is used to refer to the feeling this style gives. Kodona means a person neither a child nor an adult. In short, both words indicate the same style. There are also *Aristocrat* and *Dandy* styles, in which men wear clothes that make them look like aristocrats from Victorian era.

[226] Robertson, "Exploring Japan's 'genderless' subculture."

Brolita, among all styles of Lolita fashion for men, draws the most attention. They wear the same clothes as Lolita women do, and they are accepted well in their Lolita community (see Figure 35). In an interview, a Brolita who calls himself Loli, talks about how he is welcomed in Canadian Lolita community.[227] He mentions a fan expo where a Lolita fashion show took place, and there were three Brolitas among twenty-five Lolitas. Although in a masculine world it seems impossible for such trend to be accepted and welcomed at first look, this is a minor yet important example of kawaii culture's acknowledgement by males around the world.



Figure 35. Loli in a Brolita dress
Source: Vice, 2017

Yoshikawa Yoshino, a musician and producer, is another example of males related to kawaii culture. Yoshikawa has been in music business since 2009. Due to the sound and names of his songs, many critics have labeled his style as kawaii. Some of his popular songs are named Kawaii Macaron and Kawaii Candy. In an interview with Japan Times, he says he felt a difference in the perception of kawaii

[227] Tierney, "What It's Like to Find Belonging in the Lolita Community."

between Japanese people and the Westerners. He wanted to show this difference in his songs.[228]

A football team called Wana FC from Vietnam showed up with Hello Kitty uniforms at a football festival in Thailand in 2018 (see Figure 36). The team that consists of middle-aged players attracted a lot of attention. Bastille Post, a news website, posted an article about the team. The article ended saying "It is obviously that they are satisfied with these cute jerseys which help them become the focus of the football ground. Maybe they still keep young hearts."[229]



Figure 36. Wana FC team members in their Hello Kitty uniforms
Source: Bastille Post, 2018

Another important instance of this subchapter is a kawaii contest winner called Sean Chong-Umeda from the USA. Chosen as the second winner of Kawaii.i Fashion Contest that was held by NHK World TV's program named Kawaii International, which will be discussed in further chapters. He was chosen due to his style that is a mixture of traditional and modern style with kawaii characteristics. In Figure 38, his winning photograph for the competition can be seen. With his pink

[228] Michel, "Yoshino Yoshikawa Switches up His 'Kawaii' Sound on 'Event Horizon'."
[229] Bastille Post, "Old Man with Young Heart? Football Players Shows up in the Pink Jerseys with Hello Kitty."

hair, fan, kimono and shoes, he proves that gender cannot limit kawaii fashion (see Figure 37).[230] Furthermore, his style is an example of changing masculinities thanks to kawaii culture.



Figure 37. Sean's photo that won the second prize of Kawaii.i fashion contest
Source: Kawaii International, 2018

An interesting and unusual example of men who are attracted by kawaii culture is Kobayashi Hideaki. Born in 1962, he is a computer engineer who took an interest in cosplay photography. His decision to try cosplaying himself was in 2010 when he heard a famous cosplayer was going to see his photos. He dressed up as a schoolgirl at the event. Kobayashi thinks that the sailor suit makes middle-aged men feel nostalgic. It reminds them the times they were in school and had a crush on one of their female classmates.[231] After the event, Kobayashi started to go out and wander around the streets of Tokyo with his sailor suit schoolgirl uniform. People

[230] Kawaii International, "Sean♥gouk prize♥Kawaii.i Fashion Contest 2017 My Kawaii Personal Style."
[231] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 30.

took photos with him and he became an Internet sensation as the Sailor Suit Old Man (see Figure 38).



Figure 38. Sailor Suit Old Man posing like a cat in Akihabara
Source: CNN, 2014

From all these examples, it can be clearly seen that there have been noteworthy changes in the dimension of masculinity as well. With the emergence of Boys' Love manga genre and bishōnen, the desired characteristics in a male has become very different from the traditional masculine gender roles. The appearance of boy bands has helped this transition of women's expectations from men. The increase in the number of otomen and herbivorous men indicate that this change is real and progressing towards an unconventional revision of gender roles. All these changes are also small signs of Japan becoming a more attractive country in the eyes of other countries. Due to the fact that Japan started to promote itself with kawaii culture, there have been more positive opinions about Japanese people, which will be the center of focus in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE KAWAII CULTURE AS A RESOURCE FOR SOFT POWER

Kawaii culture has expanded its horizon ever since it emerged as a popular culture in Japan during the 1970s. With a growing number of fans all around the world, kawaii has achieved to catch the attention of Japanese government officials as well. The use of popular culture as a resource for soft power has become one focus of interest for the Japanese government since 2006 and kawaii was one of these resources. Japan has an image of a country with masculine qualities because of its aggressive and militarist past. However, kawaii culture offered a chance to change this image into a more feminine and soft one. In this chapter, the image of Japan in the eyes of other nations and how it has recently been changing will be discussed. Surveys and polls about the image of Japan from the past and the present will be investigated. Then, the term of soft power will be studied and creative industries including kawaii culture will be a point of focus as they are resources for soft power. The Japanese government's involvement in the spread of kawaii culture and the reasons behind their connection to kawaii will be analyzed. The connection of kawaii culture to the changing image of Japan thanks to Japanese government's engagement will be discussed.

4.1 The Image of Japan

Japan's national image is an essential factor for its economy and the social systems, which assist it in return. However, these created a not so positive image of a country that had failed to catch its chances in the 1990s. In order to remove such an image,

Japan needed to advertise a different national image by making use of Japan's soft power resources.[232]

During World War II, Japan drew an aggressive and hostile image. Especially in the eyes of South Koreans and Chinese, Japan's image is a negative one. In this respect, opinion polls are necessary informants about a country's image, however it should be noted that they are not perfect. The results may change according to the way that questions are asked, and they would not give a steady meaning unless they are asked periodically.[233]

In a poll in 1996, Chinese people were asked about what sides of Japanese culture were appealing. While machines for usage at home (72%) and Japanese approach in work administration (61%) got higher percentage, television (11%), music (5%) and lifestyle (7%) got the lowest percentages. Likewise, another poll in 2001 showed that a greater part of Americans (65%) thought of Japan as praiseworthy. On the other hand, many South Koreans (59%) regarded Japan as conceited. However, Nye argued that a change was possible considering the history of Japan's reinvention of itself two times, the intelligence and the abilities of Japanese people, the stable state of the society, the technological advances of the country and the production talents.[234]

It is a fact that Japan has been steadily changing its image in the eyes of its neighbors and all the countries around the world. In a country ratings poll by BBC in 2017, Japan came third with 56% mainly positive and 24% mainly negative. On the website, it says "In the ranking of favorably-viewed nations, Canada and Germany are followed by Japan, whose perceived positive influence has strongly bounced

[232] Matsui, "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The "Cool Japan" Craze among c-Central Ministries in Japan," 89.
[233] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 18.
[234] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 87.

back (56%, up 6 points), ending a correction period that started in 2013."[235] Even though the lowest view still belongs to the Chinese participants, negative views have fallen fifteen points (75%) in three years and positive views have advanced with seventeen points (22%). In Figure 39, it can also be seen that Australia, Canada and France are the first three countries with the most positive opinions about Japan. Furthermore, the global average in this survey is more than fifty percent in terms of positive opinions.

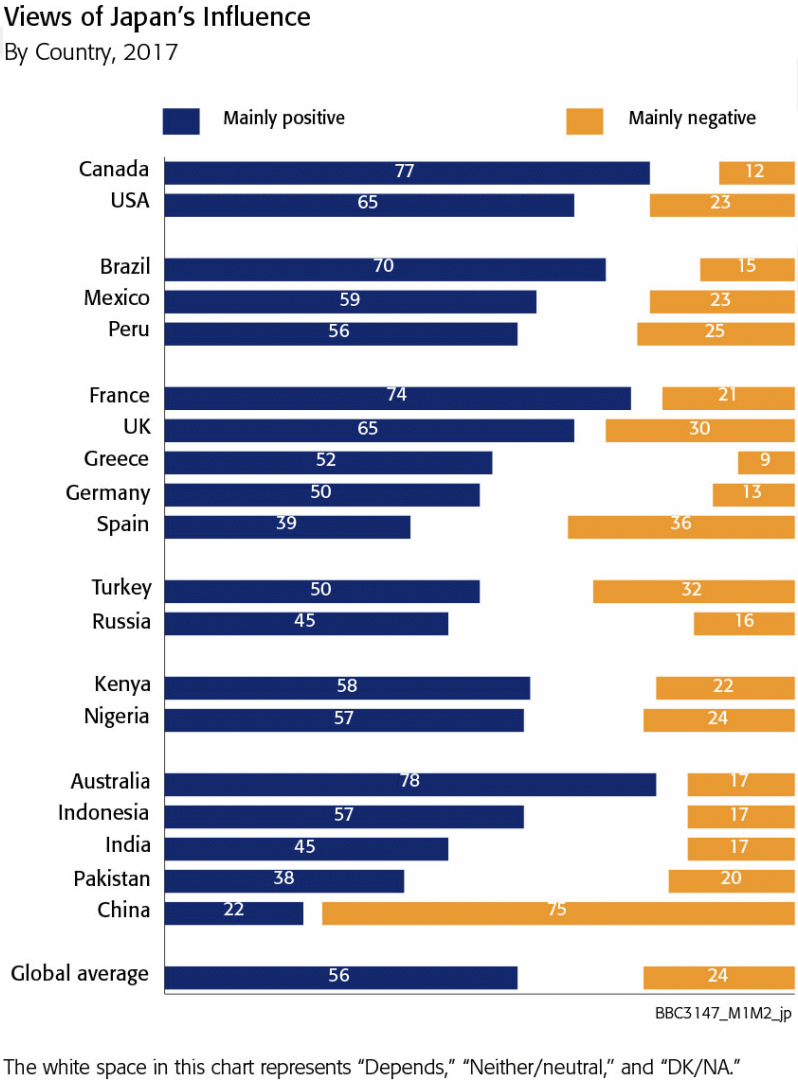


Figure 39. Views of Japan's influence by country
Source: Global Scan, 2017

[235] Global Scan, "Sharp Drop in World Views of US, UK: Global Poll."

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs also authorized a German company named Infratest dimap to carry out a representative survey in France, Germany, Poland, Spain and the UK about the image of Japan in 2015. In this survey, the image of Japan as a country that has great tradition and culture had ninety-three percent in total. Moreover, Japan as a country that disseminates new culture to the world had sixty-nine percent. In terms of topics of interest, the section of culture including traditional culture, popular culture, music, etc. has the most votes with seventy-three percent. In the second part of the topics of interest, Japanese movies and dramas, fashion and animation were in the top five categories. Japan's reliability as a partner for people's own country due to Japan's attractive culture scored seventy-eight percent. When the people who took this survey were asked whether they find G20 countries reliable or not, Japan 77% came as the fifth country after Canada 88%, Australia 81%, The UK 80% and France 79%.[236]

These opinion polls and surveys indicate a better image of Japan. There are several reasons behind this change towards a more positive image. Surely, one of these reasons is the Japanese popular culture and how Japanese government has taken advantage of this cool culture as a soft power resource. Before analyzing the government's involvement in kawaii culture's spread, the term of soft power needs to be studied.

4.2 Soft Power

Countries always made use of hard power such as armed forces or economies in order to get what they wanted in the past. They still use such hard power as nuclear

[236] MOFA, "Image of Japan in Five European Countries."

weapons so that they become superior and fearful in the eyes of less developed countries. However, the times are changing and there is now soft power to help countries reach their goals. In the late 1980s, Joseph Nye put forward the idea of soft power, which is the capability of achieving what you desire by way of appeal instead of pressure or installment of fees. Soft power originates in the allure of a country's culture, administration or political views. When others see a country's administration as valid, soft power of that country is improved. It depends on the capability of forming the choices of others.[237]

Nye argues that soft power is the appealing power and its resources are services that generate such appeals as economic aids, peacemaking. These resources can be classified into three: culture, political values and foreign policies. In terms of culture, it can be divided into two categories. These are high culture, which attracts high-class persons, and popular culture, which draws the attention of the masses. While explaining the power of popular culture, Nye talks about how Pokémon will not be able to give the political results that Japan desire. However, he claims that popular culture creates images in others' eyes, which can be more powerful and sufficient than politics. Some researchers confuse the concept of soft power action with the cultural resources that assist to create it.[238]

Soft power relies on the presence of eager commentators and recipients. The appeal usually has a scattered impact, so it cannot be immediately perceived. As a result, it will probably have an effect on the countries' goals in a general scope.[239] Therefore, waiting for a result without delay would be a mistake if the point in question were soft power.

[237] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 5.
[238] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 11-12.
[239] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 16.

Soft powers and hard powers are inseparably entwined together in global affairs. They strengthen or obstruct each other every now and then. In a world where various countries exist, the military, economy and soft powers continue to be significant in various extents in diverse relations.[240]

As Nye suggests Asian countries possess extraordinary capacity of soft power resources such as their culture, fashion, food and art. According to him, Japan is the country with a capability for soft power resources more than other Asian countries. It became the first country in the East to achieve modernity and become equal with Western countries in terms of technology and economy while retaining a rare and intriguing culture.[241] Even the economic stagnation during the 1990s could not eliminate Japan's soft power resources. Around 2000, Japan's gross domestic product and the yen were down and full employment was replaced by near record rated of unemployment. However, as McGray says, "Yet Japan is reinventing superpower again. Instead of collapsing beneath its political and economic misfortunes, Japan's global cultural influence has only grown."[242] The anime images lead many foreigners' ideas about Japan, pop music and fashion continue to expand their horizons, Japanese cuisine is one of the top in the world, and not but least kawaii is being more and more known by nations around the globe.

4.3 Creative Industries Becoming Soft Power Resources for Japan

Creative industries are the cultural economy that deals with the development and taking advantage of the innovative side of the society. They are industries that depend on content and they include media, film, theater, arts, music and design.

[240] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 30.
[241] Nye, *Soft Power – The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, 85.
[242] McGray, "Japan's National Cool," 47.

These industries have been one of the most important soft power resources of countries around the world because of their contribution to economy and tourism.

After Japan's economic stagnation in 1990s, the popularity of Pokémon, Hello Kitty, Nintendo games and PlayStation helped Japan gain the self-confidence that they lost during the economic crisis. Miyazaki Hayao's Spirited Away winning the Academy Award demonstrated the truth of anime being watched by adults as well. Matsui adds to all these saying that "this new self-image of Japan was endorsed by the striking news that Miss ko2, a 188-cm, cartoon-like figure created by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, sold for US$567,500 at Christie's (fine art auction house) in New York."[243]

The first appearance of the word content in Japanese politics was during the General Policy Speech in 2000 by Mori Yoshiro, then Prime Minister of Japan. In 2002, Intellectual Property Council prepared a strategy outline suggesting encouraging the production of content and the advertising of such content in order for it to spread. In 2003, Koizumi Junichiro talked about Spirited Away in the General Policy Speech, becoming the first Prime Minister to mention popular culture. As a result, Intellectual Property Headquarters was founded in the same year.[244]

In 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) encouraged the Japanese business community to work with diplomats to promote Cool Japan culture as an initiative. Embassies, consulates and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) offices outside Japan began promoting this soft power in numerous ways. As a result, export amounts and income from culture-related products and services more than

[243] Matsui, "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The "Cool Japan" Craze among c-Central Ministries in Japan," 83.
[244] Matsui, "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The "Cool Japan" Craze among c-Central Ministries in Japan," 86.

tripled from a combined total of ¥837 billion (US$8.37 billion) in 1996 to a combined total of nearly ¥2,539 billion (US$25.4 billion) by 2006.[245]

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) had not paid attention to the media and content industry areas until the early twenty-first century. After the stagnation of economy in the 1990s, the soft power of culture caught the attention of the authorities in METI as well. The Media and Content Industry Division, which was founded in 2001, initiated the Content Industry International Strategy Study Group. The group's recommendations were to call for the content industry to be the new major industry to empower Japan's economy and to provide help to increase the worth of content economically and culturally.[246] The division formed a study group on the Content Industry's Growth Strategy in 2010.[247] The aim of this group was to talk about the issues that the content industry would face in the future. The group discussed the importance of the content industry, how Japan's creativity held significant role in this industry and their target for 2020.

The Media and Content Industry Division summarizes the current status of the content industry in Japan in their latest report in 2016. The market size of Japan's content industry is ¥12 trillion, making the country second after the USA. Respectively, high sales ratio belongs to manga, games, character merchandise and anime. The total sales ratio of Japanese content in foreign markets is close to 2.5%, which is US$13.8 billion.[248]

In terms of supporting Japanese content's promotion, one of the most significant projects held by METI is CoFesta. First arranged in 2007, it aims to

[245] Tsutomu, "Japan's Creative Industries, Culture as a Source of Soft Power in the Industrial Sector," 141.
[246] Matsui, "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The "Cool Japan" Craze among c-Central Ministries in Japan," 88.
[247]METI, "Content Industry."
[248] METI, "Content Industry: Current Status and Direction of Future Development."

improve advertising effectiveness of events that have connections with content industries. CoFesta organizes film, manga, fashion and other content related festivals such as Tokyo Game Show or Japan Fashion Week.[249]

The METI also established the Creative Industries Promotion Office under the Manufacturing Industries Bureau in 2010. This division of the METI has also been concerned with Japan's promotion of cultural industries. Related to the concept of Cool Japan, the Creative Industries Division promotes cultural industries in cooperation with the private sectors by facilitating their overseas expansion and human resource development. Since its establishment, the Creative Industries Division has been putting real emphasis on the importance of spreading Japanese culture worldwide and the Cool Japan strategies have been regularly organized. According to the report in January 2012, capitalizing on the popularity of Cool Japan could accomplish the bringing the domestic demand to light, the incorporation of foreign demand, and the transformation of industrial structure. These accomplishments could secure new income sources and jobs, leading to regional economic revitalization. The conclusion of the report was that Japan's fashion, food, and content were very popular overseas, but not necessarily profitable. After considering a few study cases around the world, the decision was to make strategic expansion overseas that can turn popularity into added value, making them into revenue sources.[250]

After the report in 2012, METI decided to start Cool Japan Fund in 2013. The government of Japan and private enterprises invest in the fund, the aim of which is to help businesses promote the growth of overseas demand for unique Japanese content. Interestingly, they first invested in *Tokyo Otaku Mode, Inc*., which is a website

[249] Matsui, "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The "Cool Japan" Craze among c-Central Ministries in Japan," 89.
[250] METI, "Cool Japan Strategy."

giving the latest news on Japanese popular culture. They also have an online shop selling merchandise about anime, manga, character goods and so on. The fund agreed to support the company by investing up to 1.5 billion yen (13.6 million dollars) over the upcoming three years.[251]

In order to improve content industry, some policies were administered by METI. First was the localization and advertising of Japanese content around the world. TV programs such as Channel JAPAN and Wakuwaku Japan are run in Asian region. Anime and digital manga are distributed globally. Moreover, holding events associated with content to attract people, backing company projects to support products that are special to Japan in foreign markets, holding and attending to international conferences about joint problems and resolutions of Asian countries' content industries and finally encouraging preventive actions towards copying and robbery of contents are among these policies. There is also emphasis on promoting marketing and supporting study in overseas companies in order to bring out more experts and providing for technological developments in content industry.[252]

Importance of content industry can also be seen in the area of tourism. The promising nature of popular culture to give rise to the number of Japanese tourists as well as the foreigners. Fans of anime and manga comment on Japan as a holy site for pilgrimage. They visit shrines and leave wooden plaques carved with their favorite characters. Many fans visit the sites the anime or manga takes place. As a result, Japan's well-known tourism agency JTB also took part in this and started a campaign through which fans could propose new sites for pilgrimage paths.[253]

As it can be clearly seen, the Japanese government has taken part in the use of popular culture as a soft power resource and still continues to do so. Overall, the aim

[251] Cool Japan Fund, "Telling the World about Japanese Pop Culture."
[252] METI, "Content Industry: Current Status and Direction of Future Development."
[253]Alexander, "'Contents Tourism in Japan': How Popular Narratives Drive People to 'Sacred Sites'."

of these projects and initiatives is to create an interest in Japanese cool content and an appeal towards Japan, help and promote businesses overseas in order to increase sells abroad, and finally encourage foreigners to visit Japan. In Figure 40, the outline of Cool Japan Strategy also summarizes the purposes of the initiative. This surely involves cultural, economical and touristic outcomes, which will be helping Japan create a more positive image.



Figure 40. Cool Japan strategy outline
Source: METI, 2016

4.4 Government's Exploitation of Kawaii

As part of the Japanese government's involvement in using soft power resources to create a better image, kawaii has had a great significance. The government has been taking advantage of kawaii culture ever since its popularity started to have an impact on Japanese people and others around the world. There are several examples of government using kawaii to its own benefit and many reasons lay behind them. Kawaii culture holds great potential as a soft power resource in creative and content industries, which helps Japan's economic growth. It is also an important tool in both domestic and international political relations. Thus, kawaii is what Japanese officials needs in their path to change country's image.

There are many reasons behind why Japan chose kawaii as a soft power resource. Yano puts forward the idea that Japan faced difficulties and criticism

politically while its military forces had little role in international conflicts. Moreover, China had risen as an economic power and challenged Japan that was facing a general fall globally. Under these circumstances, selecting kawaii culture as a soft power was a comfortable retreat for Japan. Kawaii contributes as an international currency in the industries for young people, who are known to rule the world in modern times. There were concerns about Japan being too cute or childish and shallow because of its cuteness aimed at young population and females. Still, the Japanese government stuck with kawaii culture because it was both benign and powerful in changing the image of Japan with samurai soldiers and politicians.[254]

Arguing about the nature of kawaii's spread around the world, Yano agrees that what makes kawaii including Hello Kitty so popular is its characteristics that are similar to soft power. As part of Japanese Cool, kawaii is becoming a great reason for Japanese people to be proud. The Japanese government has acknowledged the soft power of cute fundamentals, and has been taking an interest in it and encouraging its spread. [255]

As a contributor to the creative industries, kawaii holds a great place for the Japanese government. In a research, the sales of products, which have not attracted much attention until then, 40% increased with kawaii designs and decorations. Not only young people and women, but also middle-aged men accepted these kawaii-designed products. Thus, it can be easily concluded that kawaii culture is directly connected to consumption behaviors.[256] McVeigh argues that being cute necessitates buying and this calls for support of corporate organizations.[257] With a cultural focus, kawaii promotes cultural diversity among society. Since the twenty-first century,

[254] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 684.
[255] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 163.
[256] Aizawa and Ohno, "The Background of Kawaii Culture," 23.
[257] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 157.

Japan has been one of the leading figures in terms of creative industry's share as discussed before. Among the contributing factors to this economy, kawaii culture holds an important place in the creative industry of Japan.

Surely, the importance of kawaii culture as an economic element was noticed long ago in Japan's history. As Riessland argues:

> Historically, the use of cuteness for marketing purposes in Japan is almost as old as Western-style marketing itself. The first signifiers of cuteness used for commercial purposes were company logos, some of which are still extant today: in 1905 the dairy factory Morinaga introduced their cherub logo, and in 1922 Q. P. Corporation, at that time still a fish carmery, followed with the adoption of a popular baby doll known as the Kewpie doll as their company logo.[258]

Kinsella talks about an increase in the consumption after the last student riots against the renewal of the Security Treaty during the early 1970s. Companies in Japan realized the importance of kawaii style and began investing on it.[259] As stated before, one of the first companies to recognize the possible profit in kawaii consumption was Sanrio. After gaining success over cute stationery, Sanrio broadened its variety of products. The company now has theme parks called Sanrio Puroland and Harmony Land, galleries in Osaka and Kyoto, TV animations, stores, cafés and restaurants in cities and airports around the world. Now it is a company with revenue of approximately $563 million.[260]

In the 1980's teens and young women had large sums of expendable money, thus shaping the economic nature of kawaii culture. Kinsella notes that kawaii is something particularly reachable through consumption. She claims that kawaii culture supported hedonism and physical satisfaction that required consumption. Furthermore, kawaii could be enjoyed momentarily in private, as it was hard for

[258] Riessland, "Sweet Spots: The Use of Cuteness in Japanese Advertising," 130.
[259] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 225.
[260] D&B Hoovers, "Sanrio Company."

Japanese people to focus on it all the time. They did not have time for kawaii to become their ways of life, so they started to consume cute through products.[261] Different from other youth cultures, kawaii culture did not denounce the desire for possessions or the demonstration of prosperity. By approving consumption, kawaii culture went against the former social values of Japanese people.

Yano calls the global spread of kawaii as:

> "Pink Globalization" – the widespread distribution and consumption of Japanese cute goods and aesthetics to other parts of the industrial world. Notably, Hello Kitty was always intended as a global product … it is Hello Kitty as a global wink – cultural, national, transnational, gendered, and, ultimately corporate – that draws our attention.[262]

Going back to Iwabuchi's argument about kawaii possessing an odorless nature, it should be noted that it has become an important part of Japan's national pride. There is a time when a cultural odor becomes a fragrance, which is something admissible in terms of society and culture. The way kawaii is perceived has changed a lot in time and the Japanese government's role should not be underestimated. According to Yano, there has been a shift from odor to fragrance in terms of kawaii changing the image of Japan. From an unbiased or rather a negative one, it has been turning into a positive and attractive country image with the increase in its commodities' worldwide appeals. The perception of both commodities and the image of Japan are closely associated in a changing society. She says "Hello Kitty's cute/kitsch becomes Japan's global face; Japan's economic might frames Kitty's purr."[263]

Aside from the using kawaii due to its economic contribution, Japanese government has been taking advantage kawaii for many other purposes in Japan,

[261] Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 245.
[262] Yano, "Wink on Pink: Interpreting Japanese Cute as it Grabs the Global Headlines," 682-683.
[263] Yano, "Monstering the Japanese cute: Pink globalization and its critics abroad," 164.

from warning signs in local areas to politics as a soft power. McVeigh suggests that demonstration of powerlessness by government leaders or people with power is a way of moderating associations of hierarchy. Assuming that authority leaders gain the confidence of their inferiors and make them believe that they are not threatening, it becomes less difficult to convince, impress and manipulate them. Young women attending campaigns together with authorities can be seen as an example of moderating associations of hierarchy. He also mentions competitors in politics giving away cute toys that look like themselves such as Hashimoto Ryutaro from Liberal Democratic Party in 1996. Furthermore, cute characters are used by many authorities like Japan Railways, Worker's Union or Self-Defense Forces. McVeigh argues that the use of kawaii by the police demonstrates the vague and polysemic characteristic of cuteness. Tough look of the police is softened by their armbands with smiling suns.[264]

Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications is one of the many examples of Japan's government involving in kawaii culture. In order to encourage young people to write letters more, the ministry suggested making stamps of purikura, photo booths in which people can take photos and put cute stickers or edit their face and background in a kawaii way.[265] The Japanese postal service released Hello Kitty stamps in 2004 and 2008 and has continued to do so. There have also been using cute characters such as Detective Conan and Hello Kitty on the surface of their stamps, which shows the power of popular culture in Japan.[266]

Another popular use of kawaii culture by the government is the cute barricades set up in construction sites or sides of the road (see Figure 41). It was first used as a monkey in the city of Asahikawa in 2006. Because it was very popular with

[264] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 150-152.
[265] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, 171.
[266] Stamp World, https://www.stampworld.com/en/ .

tourists who came with sightseeing buses, it spread all over the country. There are also theories behind its popular use. One reason may be that many drivers would not want to drive over them because of their kawaii and innocent look. Another reasons might be that it would decrease the anger of the drivers and diminish the tough look of construction sites.[267] These kawaii warnings are not just used for these purposes. They can be seen anywhere such as train stations, hospitals, schools and so on. In order to show people the possible dangers of something, posters and flyers with kawaii figures are produced. Riessland suggests that these cute designs are not meant to reduce the importance of the issue. They suppress the weighty feel of the situations with their kawaii nature, but they are compact and educational at the same time.[268]



Figure 41. A kawaii warning sign in front of Meiji Shrine

Madge suggests that kawaii images came to be associated with democratization and egalitarianism because of the renouncement of responsibilities. This gives us a sensible explanation for the reason why public organizations and government divisions use kawaii in their campaigns and publicities. She argues that

[267] Matome Naver, "Yuru Character at the Construction Site."
[268] Riessland, "Sweet Spots: The Use of Cuteness in Japanese Advertising," 148.

the Japanese government uses kawaii as a way of abandoning or rather concealing its authoritarian history. Iwao stated that the kawaii aesthetic symbolized an equal, emotion-based society with a more affectionate environment in contrast to the conventional male aesthetic that is related to hierarchical, power-based and serious environment.[269]

Besides working on kawaii culture's soft power in Japan, they also gave importance to advertising kawaii globally. As mentioned before, Minister of Foreign Affairs started the promotion of Japanese popular culture in 2006. Included in this campaign, manga contests, concerts of J-Pop, anime screenings were held by embassies, consulates around the world.[270] Alongside anime and manga, fashion also became an important diplomatic tool. It is a fact that many foreigners are interested in Japan because of the unique fashion trends in areas such as Harajuku. That is why Foreign Ministry of Japan announced three girls as Japan's Kawaii Ambassadors in March 2009 (see Figure 42). These girls were chosen to be trend communicators of Japanese pop culture and represent three styles of Lolita, Harajuku teen and Schoolgirl. During the introduction of these ambassadors, head of the Public Diplomacy Department at the Foreign Ministry Monji Kenjiro stated that popular culture was assumed to encourage people around the world to learn more about modern Japanese culture along with the traditional side of Japan.[271]

[269] Madge, "Capitalizing on Cuteness: The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," 167.
[270] Miller, "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan," 19.
[271] White, "How the center holds: Administering soft power and cute culture in Japan," 100.



Figure 42. Kawaii ambassadors Aoki Misako, Kimura Yu and Fujioka Shizuka
Source: Apalog, 2009

Aoki Misako represents Lolita fashion style and she is also the president of Japanese Lolita Association. Kimura Yu's Harajuku street style is named after the Harajuku area of Tokyo, which is frequently visited by young enthusiasts. She rearranges old clothes and creates her own unique fashion. In addition, she is a vocalist of a band called *PEEP 4U*. Finally, there is Fujioka Shizuka appears as a schoolgirl in uniform. It is a style that is increasingly popular with young women in many countries.[272] These ambassadors have participated in cultural events abroad and talked about their styles ever since they were chosen.

In his book, Sakurai talks about why kawaii culture was chosen as a diplomatic tool. He argues that Japanese people's consciousness for the power the word kawaii holds is not as big as the foreigners'. That is why they did not have to put a commentary under the word kawaii for the foreign media when they talked

[272] Yano, "Wink on Pink: Interpreting Japanese Cute as it Grabs the Global Headlines," 685.

about the ambassadors. He says kawaii was no longer a Japanese word, but an international one.[273] He discusses that kawaii culture's spread and popularity are similar to those of anime or *Ukiyo-e* (a genre of art developed in Japan during seventeenth century). Even though the Japanese people were not aware of their importance globally, people around the world appreciated them.[274]

In the book *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential*, Brian Ashcraft argues that Shizuka Fujioka's role was "to show the world how cute Japanese school uniforms are". Under the title of Diplomatically Cute, Ashcraft argues that the Japanese government was taking advantage of the Japanese kawaii around the world.[275] Fujioka, who visited Thailand's Japan Expo as one of the ambassadors, talks about her realization of her role's importance. In Sakurai's book, she says, "If you like or have an interest in the same things, the borders will disappear. I can understand this and my job as an ambassador."[276]

In 2008 Aoki Misako attended Japan Expo with Sakurai Takamasa, who is also the advisor to the director of Pop Culture Diplomacy. She talks about a tea ceremony organized by *Baby, The Stars Shine Bright*; a Japanese clothing brand mentioned before and has a branch in Paris. She remembers everyone calling her kawaii when they saw her in this brand's clothes. The tickets for the ceremony were sold out four times in a row. She argues that wearing Lolita fashion was something Japanese for French people. Moreover, there were people who wanted to have a face or nose like Japanese girls.[277]

Sakurai visited thirteen countries such as Czech Republic, Saudi Arabia, Spain, France, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and Switzerland. What he saw was people

[273] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 117.
[274] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 124.
[275] Ashcraft, Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool, 23.
[276] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 52.
[277] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 22.

were interested in Japanese popular culture and kawaii. He argues that cultural diplomacy as soft power can definitely contribute to the peace in the world. Of course there are many people who like fashion, anime and popular culture of Japan, but there are some people who like everything about Japan.[278]

The participation of the Japanese government in the spread of kawaii culture, especially the selection and the promotion of kawaii ambassadors, took negative criticism from many researchers. The arguments are closely associated with the dimensions of masculinity and femininity. As an example of criticism towards the ideology held by the Japanese government, Miller views the subject from a feminist point of view. She argues that Cool Japan ideology symbolizes and sponsors male geek culture formally. During the promotion of kawaii culture, women who did not comply with a limited model of cuteness were not included. The kawaii culture is actually deep and diverse, and the one displayed by the Japanese government is something that might cause a misunderstanding of the real kawaii. Changing the true meaning of cuteness, Cool Japan's kawaii approach appears to be some kind of oblivious consumption by young women. What is more, she questions the intention of the government officials who excluded those women.[279]

Likewise, White argues that Sakurai Takamasa's presentation of the girls during the trips they made around the world gave limited information about their fashion, enthusiasm, jobs or what they do in their free time. According to him, Sakurai portrayed these girls as unidentified and without any character as if they were from a two-dimensional art.[280]

Even though the government officials' ways of presenting kawaii culture with the ambassadors has taken a wrong turn in terms of femininity, their assistance in

[278] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 55.
[279] Miller, "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan," 19-22.
[280] White, "How the center holds: Administering soft power and cute culture in Japan," 109.

spreading kawaii cannot be undervalued. The three ambassadors have achieved to reach many people around the world and informed them about kawaii culture and fashion styles. As a result, people from other countries have also been familiarized with kawaii and may use it as a way of feminine expression. By means of these ambassadors, kawaii has increased its influence and helped the image of Japan become a more positive one.

Kawaii also constitutes an important part in projects of METI. In 2013, the project called Asia Kawaii Way was initiated in order to spread Japanese girl culture, fashion, beauty-related products and contents in Asian countries.[281] The project aims to develop platform businesses that will help Japanese companies enter the Asian market and encourage small and medium sized enterprises in particular areas related to beauty contents. First two countries in target were Indonesia and Singapore. In AFA (Anime Festival in Asia) held in both countries, test marketing was done and sampling products were handed out, catching the attention of one and a half thousand visitors in each. In 2015, Asia Kawaii Way undertook another project called Face Tokyo. It is a box of seven cosmetics products helping you do four different types of looks depending on the views of Japanese women who attended an event called Tokyo Girls Collection. The event is an important fashion festival happening twice a year. Fashion models, who are not usually well known, display the latest trends with Japanese brands. Sometimes, famous celebrities walk on the runway because of being inspirations for certain styles. All in all, the event is significant in terms of Japanese fashion, and the attendees of the event decided on these four look. There is also a pamphlet in the box with easy instructions.

[281] METI, "Creative Industries 2013."

Another interesting event, that is in cooperation with METI, is *Japan Beauty Week* held in *Cosmoprof Asia* in 2017.[282] Cosmoprof Asia is a cosmetics promotion event in Hong Kong. In order to display Japanese cosmetics and latest styles, a make-up and fashion show was organized, that is Japan Beauty Week. The show's theme was decided as "Catch up! Japanese NEW Kawaii Beauty". Cooperating with the magazine non-no, the show aimed to promote Japanese products by demonstrating their value and charm through kawaii culture (see Figure 43). This proves the fact that being kawaii counted as beautiful has started to become intriguing for women in other parts of the world.



Figure 43. Non-no magazine featuring Japan Beauty Week
Source: METI, 2017

In 2002, the cabinet released a basic plan for the Management of Economy and Finance and Structure and asked the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) to raise the number of tourists visiting Japan. As a result, MLIT initiated Global Tourism Strategy with a view to advertise Visit Japan Campaign. In

[282] METI, "Cosmetics Promotion Event Titled "Japan Beauty Week" to be Held in Hong Kong."

2006, managed by the Tourism Industry Association of Japan and Akihabara Electrical Town Organization started the New Discovery of Akihabara Tour.[283] Recognized as the heart of Japanese popular culture, Akihabara is a must-visit destination for anime, manga, game and cosplay fans. As a non-profit organization, Akihabara Tourism Promotion Association (ATPA) was founded and they opened Tourism Information Center, conducting tours for tourists who wish to see the center of Japanese cool. There are also private tours that attract many foreigners such as Akibaland Tours available in English, French, Spanish and Japanese. Akibaland Tours also offers other tours such as Harajuku tour and Asakusa Kimono tour for tourists who are interested in kawaii culture (see Figure 44).[284]

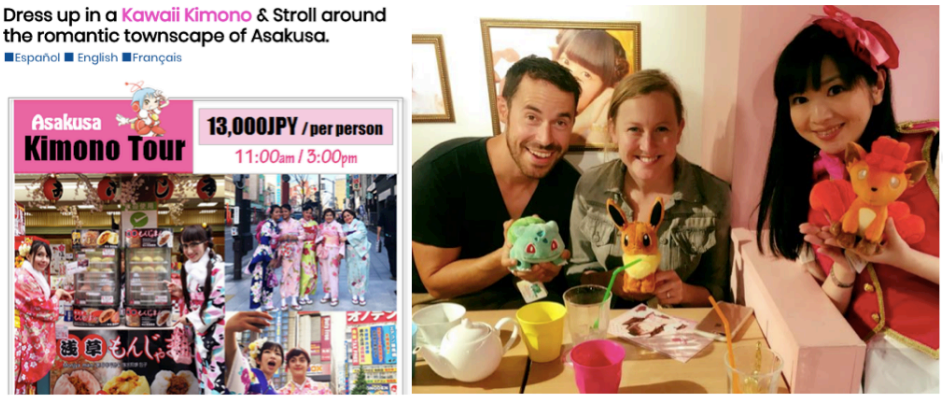


Figure 44. Asakusa Kimono tour and a couple at Maid Café during their tour
Source: Akibaland Tours, (n.d.)

Also sponsored by ATPA, there are events such as Akihabara Festival. In October 2018, there was an announcement of a new ambassador for Come to Japan Campaign's New York branch by JNTO. Kizuna AI, a virtual youtuber who has over two million subscribers, was inaugurated during Akihabara Festival (see Figure 45).

[283] Matsui, "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The "Cool Japan" Craze among c-Central Ministries in Japan," 91.
[284] Akibaland Tours, https://akibaland-tours.jimdo.com/.

On the website of the campaign, Kizuna AI gives video lessons with English subtitles about Japanese culture. Possessing kawaii characteristics, she has caught incredible attention. On one of her videos about pop culture, she talks about Harajuku's popular Takeshita Street and says, "Since I'm the world's greatest representative of kawaii, I'd love to visit Takeshita Street!"[285]



Figure 45. Kizuna AI on the website of JNTO
Source: JNTO, (n.d.)

The number of tourists visiting Japan over the years became an evidence of the change in the attitude of Japan's neighbors. In the last three years, beginning in 2016, the overall visitors have been over twenty million in a year with a grown rate of 1.8% in 2018. As shown in the data of Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) presented in Figure 46, 69.5% of the visitors in a month are from East Asia, most of which consists of Chinese visitors followed by South Koreans. In 2010, JNTO started a plan called Visit Japan with an aim towards transforming Japan's

[285] JNTO, "Japan's Unique Pop Culture."

image into a travel destination. During that time, the number of visitors was almost ten million. Less than ten years later, they managed to reach more than the double of this number, becoming the fastest growing destination in the last ten years.[286] In 2013, Japan loosened up the visa regulations for visitors from Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. In 2015, it started to loosen up the restrictions for Chinese visitors as well. The number of countries that can visit Japan without a visa is sixty-six, which helped the country become a major tourist destination.

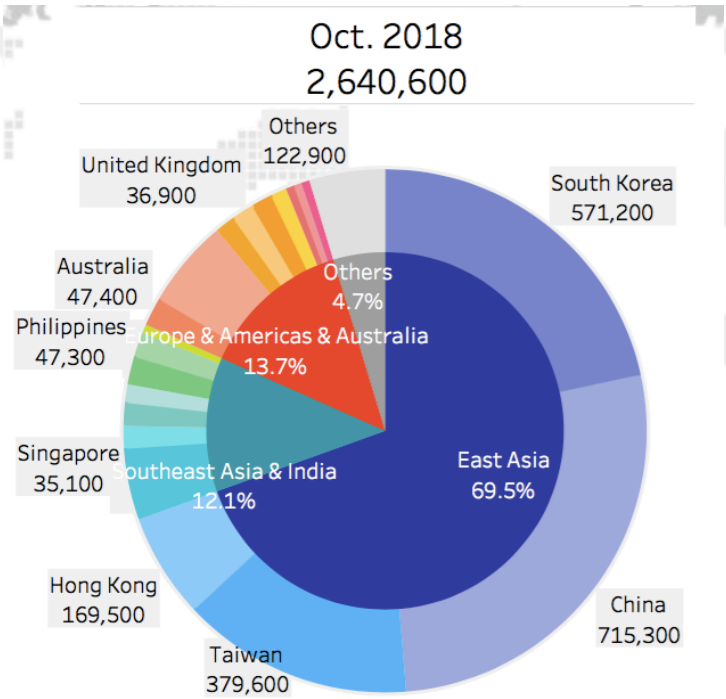


Figure 46. JNTO statistics visitor arrivals to Japan by country/area
Source: JNTO, 2018

It is a clear fact that Japan's power to attract foreigners increased thanks to its forceful soft power resources. In that respect, soft power's genuine potential is argued to generate new approaches of appreciating the current time and its

[286] Smith, "How the World's Fastest Growing Travel Destination is Becoming the Next Overtourism Battleground."

connection to the old times as well.[287] Thus, popular culture of Japan including kawaii culture helps Japan as a country to get more attention in a better way among others, including a better economy and tourism. All the examples that have been discussed point to the direction of changing the image of Japan in the eyes of the world's nations into a more positive, enjoyable and a cooler one. As a result, people in other countries' interest in Japanese popular culture is increasing and think Japan as a cool and cute place to visit.

[287] White, "How the center holds: Administering soft power and cute culture in Japan," 112.

CHAPTER 5

THE KAWAII CULTURE OVERSEAS

Kawaii is not only a Japanese word now but also a phenomenon all around the world. It has managed to spread into many countries and snuck into people's daily lives. This chapter will explore some of the countries in different continents in terms of kawaii culture's popularity. While analyzing all the countries, kawaii's impact on the femininity and masculinity dimensions will be explained. First, kawaii's expansion thanks to the term's usage by celebrities will be studied. Then, countries where kawaii find followers easily such as the USA, France, the UK and Italy will be analyzed. Asian nations, especially the ones Japan has strained ties with, will also be studied. In the further parts of the chapter, Muslim countries and particularly Turkey will be the focus and how the religion effects kawaii's expansion will be discussed.

5.1 Kawaii as a Global Term

Kawaii is becoming a world wide known Japanese adjective day by day. Even though there are words such as cute and lovely, as it can be seen from the previous chapters there is not a word equivalent enough. Sakurai supports this idea by arguing that there is no other word that exactly fits the concept, and that is why it has become a value of standard around the world. It is an important judgment criterion for the people using the word, whether something is kawaii or not. For instance, most young people think that Japanese people are kawaii people ethnically. [288] Kawaii culture is accepted and loved by many communities around the world due to its nature to evolve and change according to the people who see it. Yomota suggests that kawaii,

[288] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 41-44.

as a unique culture to Japan, caused cute things that originally existed in other countries to awaken.[289] Most people in the world have feelings such as nostalgia over childhood and love for small and cute things, but it is not expressed as much as it is in Japan. In other words, kawaii has a specific universality to it. It is just that Japanese people named these feelings as kawaii and treated as a culture. Kawaii is recognized as a value that is applicable to all things and it enables those feelings to be revealed around the world.[290]

As different versions of kawaii such as the usual childish and pure, or the amusing, strange and unrecognizable suggest, there are no limits to kawaii culture's perceptions. It has proved to broaden its range beyond the boundaries of shōjo culture. Therefore, kawaii has a power to pervade the world as an aesthetic.[291] Furthermore, kawaii culture's influence as a modifier in the dimensions of masculinity and femininity should be taken into consideration. In a world where the gender roles are now examined and questioned a lot, kawaii culture's globalization is inevitable. There are a great number of kawaii culture's global expansion's examples, some of which will be discussed in this chapter.

Kawaii culture owes its popularity to many things and people. Murakami Takashi is one of the significant figures in kawaii's immense spread around the world. Contemporary Japanese artist Murakami Takashi follows a similar path of Andy Warhol in weakening the fragile border between art and the marketing world. His name caught great attention with his exhibition called Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture. Little Boy was the name of one of the atomic bombs that destroyed Japan in World War II. Through otaku culture, his first intention in this work was to point out the effects of the war on the Japanese artists, who mostly

[289] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 186.
[290] En, "Gendai Shakai ni Okeru 'Kawaii' Gainen no Seisei to Henyō," 66.
[291] Bryce, "Cuteness Needed: The New Language/Communication Device in a Global Society," 2271.

had neglected the dreads of the war and the embarrassments of the US takeover after the war. He argued that the reality people did not want to face could be seen in *otaku* culture. These subjects of reality were only visible in anime and manga, but without a reference to their historical context. He noticed that people despised when someone was called *otaku* because of their introverted and inferior social status, but in fact they were in a similar situation after the war just like those otaku. Thus, he used popular media of otaku to show people that otaku culture is a disadvantaged truth and they had to realize the fact that they were the same. In time, his focus changed to kawaii culture with a similar purpose.[292]

Inventing the term *superflat* that is the two-dimensional form of anime and manga, Murakami created an art movement.[293] His creations are often fun, playful, unique, captivating and strange at the same time, carrying the kawaii characteristics. As Cooperman describes, his work includes vivid and influential illustrations that possess distinguishable Japanese anime and manga features, and long established Japanese artistic expressions as well. She suggests that Murakami's work is the consequence of an elaborate mixture of influential elements such as kawaii that is not too commonplace or silly, and encourages people to ponder ceaselessly.[294] Until now, he has designed and produced several cute characters such as multicolored mushrooms, flowers with a happy expression and so on. He is now even more famous thanks to his collaborations with worldwide famous brands such as Louis Vuitton, Casio and celebrities like Kirsten Dunst, Britney Spears and Pharrell Williams as mentioned before. Some of his famous works were also displayed in Turkey at an exhibition called Printed'16 in 2016.[295] The fact that his kawaii works

[292] Lubow, "The Murakami Method."
[293] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 822.
[294] Cooperman, "The Beauty of the Past and Present: Takashi Murakami at the MFA."
[295] Mixer, "Printed'16."

are valued by celebrities of different genders is the consequence of changing gender socialization roles around the world.

There is a three-story store named 6% DokiDoki and located in the famous Harajuku district of Tokyo. Opened in 1995, the store's owner is Sebastian Masuda, who is well known for his Sensational Kawaii movement. In an interview with Japan Times, he says he wanted to use English words to describe his shop's style due to his history in the UK.[296] Although his first choices were sensational and lovely, the reaction of the customers became kawaii in time. Thus, the name of the movement changed into Sensational Kawaii. In 2009, he wanted to spread kawaii culture around the world via The Harajuku Kawaii Experience world tour. The fashion shows featuring 6% DokiDoki's unique looks took place in Harajuku, London, Paris, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Masuda says even though kawaii is understood by other societies, they are not ready to wear that kind of fashion because it needs a lot of courage.

Sebastian Masuda's Sensational Kawaii was introduced to the crowds when he directed the Kyary Pamyu Pamyu's music video of PonPonPon in 2012. In the video, Kyary sings and dances in a room full of bright colored things. There are interesting visuals in the video such as flying sculls, eyeballs or donuts. Ashcraft argues that the music video was a presentation of Masuda's view of kawaii, which is an interaction between the cute and the disturbing.[297] Masuda and Kyary Pamyu Pamyu's combination of kawaii and gloomy things can also be seen as a way of opposing the qualities given to the cute idea and women in general. Kyary Pamyu Pamyu has had a great influence in kawaii's global success. PonPonPon got lots of attention around the world after it was released. Sharing her song's video link,

[296] Thomas, "Let's Talk 100 Percent Kawaii!"
[297] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool*, 108.

American singer Katy Perry said “I’m so in love with her but she also makes me feel HIGH” on Twitter. Having always admired Katy Perry, Kyary met her several times after this. In an interview, she says “I don’t have Katy’s sexy style so I’m focusing on introducing Japan’s unique cuteness and quirky music to the world.”[298] Her description of kawaii using the word quirky and the disturbing images in her music videos are examples of kawaii’s involvement in the altering dynamics of femininity. She has been achieving her goal so far as American singer Lady Gaga who is famous for her interesting style also met Kyary Pamyu Pamyu on a TV Show. She even tried kawaii fashion with makeup that made her look like an anime character (see Figure 47).



Figure 47. Lady Gaga and Kyary posing together
Source: Asian Junkie, 2013

Returning back to the works of Sebastian Masuda, they do not stop with these only. In order to spread Kawaii culture, he has many projects going on. The most

[298] Japan Times, “Kyary Pamyu Pamyu Wants to Conquer West.”

famous project of his is the Time After Time Capsule (see Figure 48). First launched in Miami in December 2014, the aim is to bring together objects that are sentimentally attached to their owners. Until now, capsules that are shaped as Hello Kitty and a kawaii characters have visited cities such as New York City, Seattle, Washington D.C. Kawaii enthusiasts from all around the world joined the event in order to witness and be included in the project. Ten translucent capsules will be in the whole project. Filled with kawaii objects and happy memories by visitors, the capsules will be joined in Tokyo in 2020 and they will be opened in 2035 twenty years after the project's start.



Figure 48. Hello Kitty and Domo-kun shaped capsules
Source: Sebastian Masuda website, 2016

Events hold a great place in popular culture, because people who are like-minded enjoy coming together and events such as conventions are the best ways to do that. ASOBISYSTEM, a Japanese company whose aim is to spread Harajuku Culture around the world, holds Harajuku Culture Festival. As part of this festival, their first event in Japan was called HARAJUKU KAWAii!! FES in Hiroshima in

2012. Then in 2014 and 2015, they organized HARAJUKU KAWAii WEEK in Harajuku, the center of kawaii culture and Harajuku fashion. In these events, there were fashion shows, live acts, and interviews besides brands introducing their latest products. The company also have a website called Harajuku Kawaii Style, in which they give news and information about latest trends. The website is still active and announced the 10th anniversary of the company in 2018. One of the many things the company does to introduce Harajuku and kawaii culture is the event called KAWAii!! NiPPON EXPO held in 2014.[299] It was a compilation of high quality contents of Japanese culture such as Harajuku, Akihabara cultures or J-Pop and Anime songs. Their vision was the overseas expansion of these subcultures. Last but not least, they created an official Youtube program called Harajuku Kawaii. The program's aim is to deliver kawaii culture centered on Harajuku fashion, music and art. They upload interviews with celebrities such as Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, live fashion events, kawaii music videos, instructive videos about how to do things and so on. Reaching more than three hundred thousand people on some videos, the channel has more than forty thousand subscribers proving the global spread of kawaii culture and popularity of Japanese cool image once more.

One of the popular projects by the same company was Moshi Moshi Box in Harajuku. They cooperated with Shibuya City Tourism Association and Harajuku Merchants' Association in this project. Moshi Moshi Box, which was launched in December 2014, is known as Harajuku Information Center. It provides necessary information about Shibuya area to the tourists as well as free Wi-Fi and activities such as karaoke. There is also a souvenir shop and a crepe store inside the building.

[299] Asobisystem, "Kawaii Nippon EXPO 2014."

The world clock outside the building, which was designed by Sebastian Masuda, became Harajuku's symbol (see Figure 49).



Figure 49. Harajuku World Clock by Sebastian Masuda
Source: Japan Times, 2014

The events about Japanese pop culture attract so many people around the world that a new project is heard every year. One of the most known events is Tokyo Crazy Kawaii, a cultural event aiming to bring Tokyo's interesting parts to the world's attention. First held in Paris in 2013, Tokyo Crazy Kawaii chose its second destination as Taiwan in 2014. Their third stop was Bangkok, Thailand last year in 2016.[300] In the event, the visitors get the chance to see different zones designed like popular areas of Tokyo. These areas include Harajuku, Shibuya, Akihabara, Asakusa, Tsukuji and Nippon. During the event, they hold fashion shows, cosplay competitions, live concerts and so on. Thanks to these kinds of events, foreign people's idea and image of Japan shift towards a better one.

[300] Crazy Kawaii, https://www.crazykawaii.com/ .

The word kawaii and its meaning have taken the world by storm as well. There is a website called Kawaii Project, changing famous people, diplomats and movie characters into kawaii with big eyes, red cheeks or pink clothes. The page's creators transformed many numbers of people and characters between the years of 2012 and 2013. Their archive is full of pictures made in return for the requests from their followers (see Figure 50). [301]



Figure 50. Kawaii Gandalf from Lord of the Rings, E.T. and Barack Obama
Source: Kawaii Project, 2013

After the popularity of kawaii project grew so much, other websites have appeared with similar purposes. Kawaii Trump[302] and Kawaii Bernie[303] are some of the interesting examples of the kawaii culture's spread around the world. Both blogs started during the 2016 general elections in the United States (see Figure 51). They have numerous pictures of both politicians displayed as kawaii. Whether these images are out there for criticism or admiration, it is a fact that kawaii has been an influencer on the changing dimensions of masculinity around the world.

[301] Tumblr, "Kawaii Project."
[302] Tumblr, "Kawaii Trump."
[303] Tumblr, "Kawaii Bernie."



Figure 51. Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders portrayed as kawaii
Source: Kawaiitrump, 2016

Many singers who are internationally famous such as Gwen Stefani and Avril Lavigne made songs about Harajuku fashion and kawaii. Gwen Stefani's Harajuku Girls is about how she is interested in the way girls in Harajuku wear their clothes. A part of the lyrics says "Harajuku Girls you got the wicked style. I like the way that you are, I am your biggest fan."[304] Avril Lavigne's Hello Kitty, as the name suggests, is about her love for the character Hello Kitty. The music video was filmed in Tokyo and there were references to Kawaii fashion. Even in the first line of the song says "Minna saikō arigatō, K-k-k-kawaii, k-k-k-kawaii" (Literally meaning everyone is awesome thank you, cute).[305] Their songs and videos were considered racist by the media because of their context. They were criticized for strengthening stereotypes against women in society. But both singers objected these views and stood up for their songs saying that these were only because of their love towards Japanese culture. Despite the criticism they got, these songs are the examples of how kawaii culture is made globally known and can be put into the same category with the fans of *ero-kawa*. Exaggerating the cute and sexy, these videos can also be seen as a means of standing up to the gender expectations by emphasizing sexualities to a

[304] xMaud1990, "Harajuku Girls."
[305] Lavigne, "Hello Kitty."

degree beyond people's acceptance as Aoyagi Hiroshi and Yuen Shu Min suggested.[306]

In addition to her music video, Gwen Stefani named her first solo tour Harajuku Lovers Tour in 2005. Same year, she also started a fashion brand called Harajuku Lovers. From fragrances to bags and watches, the brand introduced many kawaii items. The brand's social media accounts explain the brand as celebrating all things kawaii. In 2015, Stefani also created an animated series for Nickelodeon, a television network targeting kids and teenagers. Named Kuu Kuu Harajuku, the series is about five girls forming a music band performing in Harajuku. The series have episodes such as The Kawaiifier or Super Kawaii Sunday (see Figure 52). Gwen Stefani continues to be criticized everything she does relating to Harajuku and Japanese culture. However, she carries on saying that this is her love and view, and she does not care about what others think about it. Her way of defying the general expectations of society and continuing to do what she loves is similar to the kawaii movement of Japanese women and the changing dimensions of femininity.



Figure 52. Gwen Stefani from the theme song video of Kuu Kuu Harajuku series
Source: Youtube, 2016

[306] Aoyagi and Yuen, "When Erotic Meets Cute: Erokawa and the Public Expression of Female Sexuality in Contemporary Japan."

Karlie Kloss, a famous American model, visited Japan with her sister in 2016. It is not a remarkable thing for a model to visit Japan, but a fashion magazine used the headlines of "Karlie Kloss Hits Up Tokyo with Her Sister Kimberly in Kawaii Style" for the news about her stay. Kloss had a satin bomber jacket with Japanese embroidery on her back and she had styled her hair into double cute buns, resulting in the headline with the word kawaii in it. In the report, Jones describes the word as "super cute in Japanese as Gwen Stefani reminds us", proving once again the global popularity of kawaii culture. [307]

Aside from kawaii's spread around the world thanks to celebrities and characters, there have been quite many efforts made by Japanese companies and TV shows to make kawaii culture an international phenomenon. Run by NHK, a Japanese national public broadcasting organization, NHK World TV is an international broadcasting service. It is also one of the biggest supporters of kawaii culture via its programs. One significant example is Kawaii International, which is about all things cute in Japan. The program introduces itself by saying "From Japan, home of kawaii culture, we bring you the latest trend of kawaii, captured in Tokyo." In 2013, the program chose five kawaii leaders from Indonesia, the Philippines, France, Germany and Hong Kong.[308] These non-Japanese girls who love kawaii fashion introduced themselves in an episode. Later, they experienced a tour in Tokyo and displayed their cute styles in a fashion show. They actively send their cute styles and messages to the public on the Internet, spreading this unique culture around the world. They also become reporters about kawaii events in their home countries. On a regular basis, the program selects new leaders with a contest.

[307] Jones, "Karlie Kloss Hits Up Tokyo with Her Sister Kimberly in Kawaii Style."
[308] NHK, "Kawaii Leaders."

Last but not least, kawaii's spread around the world also effected non-Japanese companies and some of them have taken an interest in kawaii things. One of the most famous cosmetics manufacturers launched mascara named "Miss Manga Mascara" at the end of 2013. On a fashion website, the mascara was presented as kawaii-inspired, confirming the widespread effect of kawaii culture once more.[309]

In the next subchapters, countries from different continents will be discussed about their relations with kawaii culture and how kawaii affects the dimensions of gender role socializations.

5.2 The USA

The United States of America is one of the most important countries in terms of kawaii culture and the cool image of Japan. As early as 2004, when even the Japanese government had not realized the importance of kawaii, a group of East Asian researchers Harvard University gathered in order to discuss cutism in 2004. It was a one-day conference hosted by the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations and the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies.[310] The conference analyzed the importance of kawaii culture in Japan. Cuteness, which had long been a significant part of Japanese popular culture, had not been explored thoroughly during that time.

In terms of Japanese pop culture, there is incredible amount of interest in the USA. There is Tokyopop, for instance, founded in 1997 by Stuart J. Levy. Ever since its foundation, the company has issued countless books, distributed anime and Asian movies, licensed products to companies, produced graphic novels and so on.

[309] Muttucumaru, "L'oreal Launches Miss Manga Mascara."
[310] Yang, "Re-Interpreting Japanomania: Transnational Media, National Identity and the Restyling of Politics in Taiwan."

Tokyopop helps kawaii culture spread as well. For example, they published English version of Gothic & Lolita Bible, a Japanese fashion magazine and book.

As usual, kawaii culture shows itself in conventions in the USA as well. One important event is J-Pop Summit, which is held in San Francisco. The aim is to make Japanese subcultures known to the people in the United States. In the first event that was held in 2009, Gothic and Lolita fashion show was organized, and Harajuku Kawaii held a make over competition. The events in the following years continued to have fashion shows related to kawaii culture. In 2013, there was a pop up shop organized by ASOBISYSTEM as part of their Harajuku Kawaii project. The shop remained open even after the summit's end. In the same year, fashion designer Sebastian Masuda and Kyary Pamyu Pamyu also attended the event. In 2014, ASOBISYSTEM arranged Kawaii Stage in the summit after the launch of Moshi Moshi Nippon Project. Alongside the pop up shop, live performances and autograph and photo sessions with celebrities were organized. Every year after that, they continued to support kawaii culture in each event.

Kawaii culture's another significant display can be seen in Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. There is a kawaii culture exhibit held in Bijutsu-kan Gallery at the Japan Pavilion. Initiated by Sebastian Masuda, the exhibition consists of kawaii culture's most important and popular items. The visitors get informed about the history and evolution of kawaii in Japanese culture, while walking around the gallery, which is a reproduction of a modern Japanese home. From a Totoro shower curtain to cute bento boxes in the kitchen, everything is kawaii at the exhibition.[311]

[311] Disney World, https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/attractions/epcot/bijutsu-kan-gallery/

One of the Japanese pop culture events in the United States is Waku Waku + NYC festival, first held in New York City in 2015. The name of the festival comes from the Japanese expression *waku waku* meaning being too excited in a dream-like state. The festival's aim is to bring those who are interested in anime, manga, games, music and fashion of Japan together. Kawaii side of the festival consists of cosplay contests and Lolita fashion shows. NHK World TV's Kawaii International was also at the event. One of the hosts of the program, Misha Janette, organized a fashion show called Tokyo Above-Underground introducing Tokyo's leading trends.[312] Misha Janette picked out twenty designs symbolizing Japanese cultural subgroups. The models were chosen among the watchers of the program. Famous fashion brands were presented in the show and the purpose was to make the audience acknowledge the inspirational artistry of Tokyo's subcultures.

Lolita fashion holds an important place in the USA. Important brands such as *BABY, The Stars Shine Bright* and *Angelic Pretty* sell clothes and accessories of Lolita fashion. Both brands have shops in the United States. Furthermore, most conventions and events about popular culture invite Lolita brands from Japan. For example, Juliette et Justine, a Japanese Lolita brand founded in 2001, was invited to such events twice in 2014 and 2016. The brand held fashion shows at both events.[313] Similarly, Sakura Con, which describes itself as the oldest and largest convention about popular culture in the Pacific Northwest, invited another Japanese Lolita brand called Moi-même-Moitié in 2018.[314] There is also a group of American designers who formed Lolita Collective in 2013. Their aim is to help Lolita fashion enthusiasts

[312] NHK, "Tokyo Above-Underground" Fashion Show @Brooklyn.
[313] Juliette et Justine, https://juliette-et-justine.com/
[314] Moi-même-Moitié, https://moi-meme-moitie.com/

find items they need for their unique style. [315] They attend conventions and sell accessories and clothes they design themselves.

A great number of conventions, fashion shows and communities that are related to Japanese popular culture and kawaii suggest that Japan has a considerably positive image in the eyes of American citizens. In masculinity index of Hofstede, the USA is also one of the countries with high masculinity (MAS 62).[316] The USA's masculinity rate is much lower than Japan, thus it is closer to become a feminine country considering the growing interest in the Lolita fashion style and kawaii culture, especially Hello Kitty's influence.

5.3 Europe

5.3.1 France

In an interview with Wall Street Journal in 2013, Manami Okazaki (the author of the book *Kawaii: Japan's Culture of Cute*) stated that France was probably the country where kawaii culture was the most popular outside of Japan. She gave two important reasons for this guess. First, France was the second biggest fan of manga. Second, Japan and France have had strong relations through fashion. More importantly, there is Japan Expo (the biggest event about Japanese culture in the world) attracting over two hundred thousand people in France. During her visit, she noticed that a big number of people were into kawaii fashion.[317]

French people have been interested in Japanese popular culture for a long time. On the website of Japan-Expo, it is said that the interest in Japan began in the late 1970s. Animes such as UFO Robo Grendizer, Candy Candy, Captain Harlock

[315] Store Lolita Collective.
[316] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 286.
[317] Okazaki, interview.

were shown on French television and became hits. During the early 1990s, mangas were translated into French and many of them became very popular such as Dragon Ball, Sailor Moon and Ranma ½.[318] From the standpoint of femininity and masculinity, Ranma ½ is an important manga. The main character Saotome Ranma is actually a boy who knows martial arts. In his adventure with his father to learn more about martial arts in China, he accidentally falls into water that turns him into a girl. While cold water makes him a girl, hot water turns Ranma into a boy again. This gender change happens constantly in the series and raises awareness on male dominated society and Ranma develops empathy about femininity. The fact that the series was popular in France suggests some awareness there as well.

French people who loved Japanese anime and manga started to take an interest in Japanese culture. Thus, the need for an event became clearer each and every day. The founders of the Japan-Expo were people who grew up in the 1980s and 90s. In 2000, the first event was held with 3,200 attendees. The number of those attending the event increased considerably with more than 250,000 people in 2016. Even though there were only photo exhibitions and small activities at the first event, Japan-Expo holds meetings, panels, signings, workshops, competitions, concerts and performances now. In terms of fashion, designers and fashion brands about Japanese fashion appear in Japan-Expo. Young designers in Europe also present their creations influenced by Japanese trends.[319]

As part of Japanese government's involvement in the spread of kawaii culture, a researcher and promoter of Japanese anime culture diplomatically, Sakurai mentions his first visit to Japan-Expo in 2008 when he was trying to figure out how the government should be involved in this event. He was surprised to see many

[318] Japan Expo, https://www.japan-expo-paris.com/en/
[319] Japan Expo, "The History of Japan Expo."

numbers of girls wearing Harajuku fashion. Gothic Lolita, Lolita and schoolgirl uniforms were the most popular styles. When he asked where they bought their clothes, some said they found on the net, others said they sewed them by themselves. When they got their pictures taken, the pose was always Japanese style with a victory sign. Kawaii has become a familiar word for the people in France. When Sakurai told French girls that they were really kawaii, he says they were all happy from the bottom of their hearts. But the most surprising thing for him was the fact that there were girls who were saying "I want to be Japanese". It was a bit shocking to him, as he argues that there is something called "Western Complex" in many Japanese people. They grow up listening to the Beatles, watching French movies, longing to visit a Western country someday.[320] That is why it was an interesting experience for him to hear Western people wishing to be Japanese. According to Sakurai, Japanese anime and fashion attract French people because the creative genres in Japan have the freedom to do whatever they want. The people he interviewed always used the word freedom when expressing their interest in Japanese fashion and culture.[321] This certainly includes feeling independent in terms of social gender roles and kawaii culture plays an important role here as well. Moreover, French people's interest in Japanese culture and their wish to be like Japanese people indicate a better image of Japan too.

Sakurai argues that the interest in Japanese fashion seemed to get stronger after Tsuchiya Anna, a popular Japanese-American singer, performed a live show at Japan-Expo in 2006. In the following year, Japan-Expo held Laforet Harajuku Collection, an event that presented Lolita trends. The event got so much attention

[320] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 19-21.
[321] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 71.

that there were fifteen thousand French girls in the next year's event.[322] In 2012, ASOBISYSTEM's Harajuku Kawaii project was held in Japan-Expo and they invited Kyary Pamyu Pamyu to have a live performance. They had a fashion show as well.

Lolita Fashion is one of the most important parts of kawaii culture that attracts many girls in France. One reason is Rococo style which Lolita fashion uses a lot. Rococo is an eighteenth-century artistic movement and style, developed as a reaction to the previous Baroque style in France. It uses a more lighthearted, floral, and elegant approach. The global popularity of a manga named *Berusaiyu no Bara* (Rose of Versailles) is one example of how Japanese Lolita fashion found fans across the globe especially in France. The story takes place in France and some characters, Marie Antoinette particularly; wear frilly clothes with lace and ribbons.[323] The manga is significant in terms of femininity, as the story is about a girl who was raised like a boy because her father wanted a male heir. She becomes an outstanding combatant as the head of the palace guards. However, she often suffers from her contradictory longings to live as a combatant or a common woman. The manga is a good example of women's hardships in a male dominant society, as she has to live up to the expectations while dealing with her own feelings. Adding to the popularity of Lolita fashion, one of the kawaii leaders that were chosen by Kawaii International program was Marie from France. With a spreading popularity around the globe, Lolita brand Angelic Pretty also opened a store in Paris.

Licca-chan, which was mentioned before as Japan's substitution for Barbie dolls and important in terms of expectations from women, holds a significant place in France. As she is told to be a half Japanese and half French, an admiration of France

[322] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 25.
[323] Monden, "The "Nationality" of Lolita Fashion," 169.

appears in the world of Licca-chan. In 2016, an exhibition called "Licca ~ Symbol of Kawaii" was held at the Japanese Culture House in Paris. Arranged by the Japan Toy Culture Foundation, the event's purpose was to commemorate Licca-chan (Japan's Barbie) doll's 50th anniversary. The exhibition had four sections, where her history was explained shortly first, then two of Licca-chan dolls that show strong French-Japanese connection were displayed, after that there was the larger part of the exhibition where pieces that symbolize kawaii culture were presented. Licca-chan as Hatsune Miku or with a Hello Kitty bag were some of these pieces. In the last part there were dolls that represent traditional Japanese culture. At the exhibition, young designers' creations for Licca-chan with the topic of futuristic kawaii were selected and displayed as well.[324]

5.3.2 The UK

The power of kawaii also affects the United Kingdom greatly. Over the last fifteen years, the country's youngsters have started to accept kawaii as a whole, from the extremes of cosplay to the purchasing of accessories designed with cute anime and manga characters. Even though members of the society may not actually realize this fact, kawaii culture has also started to be seen in mainstream art and fashion according to analysts who attended a panel discussion in London on the kawaii craze in 2011.[325]

In 2015, Victoria and Albert Museum in London restored and opened Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art. At the gallery, there were a quite number of kawaii items alongside various artifacts such as silk kimonos and samurai swords. Talking to Financial Times, the lead curator of the gallery, Rupert Falkner, suggests that kawaii

[324] Otaku Mode, "Licca ~ Symbol of Kawaii" Exhibition Coming to Paris: Licca-chan Helps Japanese-French Cultural Exchange!
[325] Hollingworth, "'Kawaii' culture taking hold in U.K."

items present a truly intriguing contrast to the remainder of the gallery. He says that kawaii is a powerful part of modern Japanese culture and even though kawaii phenomena such as Hello Kitty was intended for young girls at first, there are now grandmothers possessing her products.[326]

Like any other countries, the places you can realize the effects of kawaii culture the most are conventions. One of the oldest conventions in the United Kingdom is called Minami Con. First held in 1995, it is an anime and Japanese culture convention. According to the website of the convention, first intentions of the people who founded Minami Con were to popularize the cuter aspect of anime.[327] For the reason that only the adult and serious versions of anime were accessible in the UK. As it can be seen, kawaii aspect of Japanese anime and culture was the reason behind this convention's foundation. One of the attractive sides of Minami Con is the Cosplay Café where maids and butlers serve the visitors, which is very similar to Maid Cafés in kawaii culture.

Although Minami Con is the oldest convention there, Hyper Japan Festival is the biggest convention about Japanese culture in the United Kingdom, held in London twice a year. The event was first held in 2010 and thirteen thousand people attended. The event continues to attract more people every year, reaching more than fifty thousand attendees. Hyper Kawaii area in the festival provides a broad selection of apparel, makeup, wigs and accessories that are made by Japanese or local UK designers influenced by Japanese fashion.[328] Aoki Misako, kawaii ambassador, also attended the first event and there was a fashion show presenting six well-known Japanese brands. They also sold their unique products at the event. In 2016, a British Kawaii leader chosen by Kawaii International program of NHK World TV attended

[326] Davison, "Cult of the Cute: Japan's 'Kawaii' Culture on Show at the V&A."
[327] Minami Con, https://www.minamicon.org.uk/
[328] Hyper Japan, "Hyper Kawaii."

the event as well as Japanese kawaii fashion model Yabe Yuuna. They joined Sebastian Masuda in his projects called *Domobics* and *Time after Time Capsule*. The first project's name comes from Domo-kun, which is the official mascot of NHK. First they performed Domobics, a kind of dance and workout in a fun way. Then, everyone wrote kawaii letters to be read in twenty years and filled a Domo-kun shaped time capsule.

The important thing about kawaii culture in these conventions is that there are always stalls selling kawaii items. Stores such as ARTBOX, Tofu Cute and YY Kawaii, which specialize in kawaii fancy goods, attract the visitors with their full of kawaii stalls (see Figure 53).



Figure 53. Tofucute stall at Birmingham MCM Comic Con
Source: Facebook, 2013

Besides the conventions mentioned above, there are also MCM Comic Con, AmeCon, Abunai, J-Con and Kitacon. All of these events are dedicated to Japanese popular culture. Each event holds events and workshops with a hint of kawaii culture. For instance, a workshop about making your own kyaraben was held in

Abunai 2017. [329] Another interesting example is J-Con visitors dressed as samurai dancing to the song *PonPonPon* by Kyary Pamyu Pamyu.[330]

Even though it usually seems like it is a phase for young people who attend these conventions because of their love for Japanese anime and manga, there are many adults who come with their children and babies. People, who enjoy Japanese popular culture in their own ways, embrace the unique and quirky side of Japan and find a way of self-expression thanks to it. This is either with a style of fashion or an inclusion of cute things in their daily lives. As a result, the image of Japan changes into a better one thanks to its pop culture offering a kind of freedom in expression.

There is a store named CutesyKink that is an important example of kawaii culture in the UK. Based in Hampshire and by four girls who are interested in kawaii culture and Lolita fashion, the store's aim is to "share the philosophy of kawaii and the culture of Japan".[331] This store and many others are examples of how kawaii and Cool Japan image have reached other parts of the world.

Kawaii characters are also very popular in the United Kingdom. A store called Artbox in London sells kawaii character goods and has an online shop as well. The store calls itself as the UK's dream destination for cute characters and kawaii inspired brands. In August 2017, Sanrio announced the official arrival of Gudetama, the lazy egg character whose fame has recently reached many places around the world (see Figure 54). Gudetama is one of the examples of kawaii culture's attracting sides for males. Stationery items and bags started to be sold in collaboration with Artbox. Gudetama's popularity among both women and men is a significant case in terms of merging dimensions of masculinity and femininity.

[329] Abunai Con, https://www.abunaicon.nl/
[330] Halloween Queen, "J-Con Ninjas – PonPonPon"
[331] Cutesy Kink, https://www.cutesykink.co.uk/



Figure 54. Gudetama launches stationery in the UK
Source: Sanrio Europe, 2017

5.3.3 Italy

Yomota mentions that in a village called Porrona in Italy, he saw a poster of a girl wearing sailor clothes announcing the arrival of summer in 1994. The interesting thing was the manga drawings on the posters that were about a travel campaign. Soon before these advertisement posters were posted, the Japanese anime Sailor Moon had started to air on an Italian TV channel. The main character Usagi Tsukino's face was on those posters. Furthermore, the manga series were being sold. He states that there were many young people who had more knowledge about Sailor Moon than he had. A year later, a comic book shop opened in Bologna, a small town in Italy. There were recruitment posters in universities with the pictures of characters from the anime. In a refugee camp, Serbian and Albanian children that were being taught by Yomota were watching Sailor Moon without subtitles or dubbing. He says

that there was something cute, romantic and intimate about it, arguing that it was the Japanese culture, which made it attractive to the people.[332]

First held in 2001, Romics is important in terms of Japanese popular culture's importance in Italy. It is an anime, manga and gaming convention in Rome. It is a popular semiannual event that takes place during spring and autumn. Cosplay is one of the important parts of the convention as usual.

The universal fair Expo took place in Milan in 2015. Kyary Pamyu Pamyu was one of the guest stars. Making her debut in Italy, she expressed in an interview that she was excited to visit Italy and make Harajuku fashion and culture known there as well.[333] She said, "People will say things like kawaii back to me. It's in those moments when those culture and language barriers come down." In the same year, Hello Kitty was selected as the official ambassador of the Japanese Pavilion.[334] She accompanied the guests inside the hall to explore the exhibition.

Certainly, kawaii culture does not stop with conventions and cosplay. There is a website called Kawaii Gazette about kawaii culture.[335] Created by two Italians named Alessandra and Deborah, the site's goal is to celebrate kawaii lifestyle and Japanese fashion. They talk about kawaii news, events and give suggestions about kawaii shopping in Italy. Their aim is to acquaint people with Japanese kawaii characters such as Hello Kitty, Rilakkuma or Kumamon.

One of the latest news on kawaii culture in Italy was Pokémon's emergence on fashion stage in Milan Fashion Week in September 2018. A fashion brand called GCDS, an Italian based street wear brand, presented Pokémon designs on their show (see Figure 55). Not this brand only had Pokémon related clothes; there was also a

[332] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, 8.
[333] Michel, "Kyary Pamyu Pamyu Brings 'Kawaii' in Italian Debut."
[334] Talon, "Hello Kitty Japan's Ambassador at Milan Expo 2015."
[335] Kawaii Gazette, https://www.kawaiigazette.com/en/

Pikachu designed dress in the show of Jeremy Scott, a worldwide popular designer. This is an important example of how cuteness of Pokémon characters help feminine qualities infiltrate into both gender's fashion senses.



Figure 55. Pokémon on the fashion stage in Milan Fashion Week
Source: Milano Moda Donna, 2018

5.3.4 Other European Countries

Other parts of Europe also have interest in Japanese popular culture and kawaii. Spain is one of the countries that Japanese popular culture holds a great place in the society. There is Salón del Manga first held in 1995, that is an anime and manga convention in Barcelona. The number of visitors reached 148,000 in last year's event. It is the second largest organization after Japan-Expo. Sakurai argued that the organizers of this event were aware of kawaii's power as one of the biggest projects of the event. When he attended Salón del Manga in 2008, he says that there were girls wearing Harajuku fashion there. However, it could be considered few compared

to the number in Japan-Expo. He argues that the opinions of Spanish girls who were wearing Japanese school uniforms were equal to those in France, even though their number was fewer.[336]

There are many shops where people can buy kawaii goods and clothes in Spain. For instance, Momo Store's owners in Barcelona describe it as a shop in which kawaii merchandise can be found. A fashion store called Madame Chocolat also introduces their style as inspired by kawaii culture. Last but not least, there is a store named Pika Pika Shop in Barcelona, as Pika Pika probably the sound Pikachu from Pokémon makes. The store's website is *kawaiibarcelona* and everything on the site is categorized according to their connection to kawaii. They have kawaii character goods such as Rilakkuma, Totoro or Sailor Moon's figures and fashion items. When the shop is closed, a cute Totoro with kawaii bcn (Barcelona in short) written above can be seen on their wall.

Japanese culture and merchandise draws great attention from German people. There is a Japanese town in Düsseldorf, a shopping and dining area. There are shops selling Japanese goods such as manga, anime or magazines, and restaurants serving Japanese meals. Sakurai indicates that Japanese people constitute 1% of the population, but Japanese sales comprise 10% of the city's sales.[337] It shows how much Japanese cool image effects German people. In terms of kawaii and popular culture of Japan, it is not a surprising to see girls who are wearing Lolita fashion in Germany's big cities. There are many meetings and events held every year in many parts of Germany.[338] As mentioned before, one of the first kawaii leaders chosen by Kawaii International was from Germany with fairy kei style. There is also a popular German YouTuber named Cathy Cat who introduces Lolita fashion to her followers

[336] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 26.
[337] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei,* 45.
[338] Court of Fables Germany.

while making videos about Japan and Lolita fashion.[339] Considering these, kawaii culture's fashion side holds an important place for Germans. There is a shop named J-Store in Berlin where you can buy character goods from anime and manga, Japanese sweets and clothes. A part of the store is called Harajuku Closet, in which people can find many kawaii brands. Another interesting part of the store is the purikura machine. Customers can take several kawaii photos in this purikura.[340] There are also online shops such as Kawaii und Bastelshop, where kawaii plushies, stationery items and decorative craft supplies can be bought, or Candy Zombies, in which the creator sells cute handmade pins, accessories and hairbands. Both shops mention the word kawaii for their products, which indicates an interest and familiarity toward the word.

There is a pop up store called Cute Story Shop in Sweden opened by Carolynn Piittisjärvi and Eva Dejmo in 2014. Having been a fan of kawaii culture since the early 90s, Piittisjärvi wanted to spread the happiness and make Japanese culture reachable to Sweden and even all over the Europe. She partnered with a friend and made this possible. The shop was full of Japanese kawaii character goods, stationery, accessories and collectibles. The store's aim was to attract customers who would be interested in cute things. After a while they started to co-operate with another shop called Lolitabutiken that specializes in Lolita fashion. Today they still do business via the Internet.[341]

Kawaii culture always finds followers even though they are not many. In Netherlands, there is an online shop called Most Cutest that was founded in 2008.[342] They sell kawaii goods such as do-it-yourself kits and snacks to Dutch people and

[339] Jfashionista, "One Cool Cat."
[340] J-Store Berlin, https://www.j-store-berlin.de/
[341] Nilsson, "'I'm Spreading Japan's 'Cute' Culture in Sweden.'"
[342] Most Cutest, https://www.mostcutest.nl/

other countries in Europe as well. Marjet, the owner of the shop, calls herself a kawaii fan and she opened the shop because she could not find cute things in Netherlands. Being a small shop at first, Most Cutest grew into a larger shop appearing on famous magazines in the country.

When we take a look at all these countries with kawaii investments, there are a considerable number of personal investors who have an interest in this cute phenomenon. Local people's efforts are undeniable and an important part of kawaii culture's spread around the world, even though companies such as Sanrio play the bigger part of this expansion. These initiatives also suggest that Japan's cool and positive image has reached many parts of the world and given people the courage for self-expression.

5.4 Asia

Asian countries hold great significance for Japan with respect to their similar cultures and shared history due to their close geographical locations. As discussed before, countries such as China and South Korea do not have great relations with Japan because of Japanese aggressive and militarist actions during the World War II. However, the opinions of Asian people about Japan and Japanese culture seem to change towards a more positive way and this is thanks to popular culture and kawaii mostly.

Japanese fashion styles are of great importance in Asian countries. Non-no, a famous Japanese kawaii fashion magazine mentioned before, carried out a survey in 2016 in order to find out whether their contents were acceptable in other Asian countries. Style coordination photos from the magazine were shown to young females. Their opinions about those styles were asked and even though answers were

not the same as Japanese people's thoughts, the reactions were good. A session named *The Outreach of Japan's Kawaii (Cute) in Asia!* was organized with regard to explaining the results of the survey.[343] The presenter Kobayashi Wataru, who is also the chief editor of the magazine, argued that the fashion styles blended so much in Asian countries that it was no longer easy to identify people's origin with their clothes like they did in the past. The conclusion of the session was that Japanese fashion was being accepted overseas more and more.

Surely, kawaii as part of Japanese popular culture has spread around Asian countries and it has become a word that almost everyone knows. Sakurai talks about his astonishment towards the word kawaii on a clothing store's sign in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos.[344] This is a significant and one of many examples of kawaii culture's expansion in Asia. Due to the close relations between Asian countries and Japan, kawaii can be seen in those countries much more clearly, thus changing the image of Japan into a better one while affecting the femininities and masculinities in these countries as well.

5.4.1 China

China and Japan have a bitter history because of the massacres that happened in China during the World War II. A Japanese BBC reporter Oi Mariko talks about how what Japanese soldiers did effects the relations between the two countries now. Even though there were attempts to make things better, big protests against Japan occurred in 2012. However, there is also hope despite the protests and political tensions between two countries. Although there is a reasonable amount of anti-Japanese feelings among Chinese people, she argues that both countries' new generations are

[343] Kobayashi, Fukaya and Okada, "The Outreach of Japan's "Kawaii (Cute)" in Asia!"
[344] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 15.

open to improving these relations. However, it is a hard thing to do as long as the leaders of these countries continue taking up strategies against each other.[345]

Popular culture of Japan is one significant tool to make these bitter relations better. Through anime and manga characters, which were brought from Japan, China encountered kawaii culture in the 1980s. After being familiar with these kawaii characters and their decoration items such as plush toys, Chinese people got used to the concept of kawaii.[346]

As discussed before, Hello Kitty is the most loved kawaii character in China, where there is a theme park dedicated to her. However, she is not the only character that has good relations with the country. In 2008, Masahiko Komura, Japan's then Foreign Minister appointed Doraemon as the cartoon culture ambassador, handing a certificate at an inauguration ceremony. He had said "Doraemon, I hope you will travel around the world as an anime ambassador to deepen people's understanding of Japan so they will become friends with Japan." In 2015, Doraemon repealed a 3-year Chinese embargo on Japanese movie imports and hit a record in Chinese box office with its animated movie "Stand by Me Doraemon". The film scored a four-day opening total of RMB 239 million (US$38.5 million), overturning box office records for animated films. It is clear to see that breaking the ice between China and Japan is not an easy thing to achieve. Yet, Doraemon has certainly helped Japan receive plenty of goodwill from Chinese people.[347]

The popular pop group, SMAP and one of its members, Tsuyoshi Kusanagi, who was discussed before as an example of herbivorous men, visited China in 2011 and 2012. Louie describes their concerts as being "a part of a conscious push for a

[345] Oi, "China and Japan: Seven Decades of Bitterness."
[346] Marcus, Kurosu, Ma and Hashizume, *Cuteness Engineering: Designing Adorable Products and Services.*
[347] Cain, "Japan's Unlikely Ambassador: a Cartoon Robot Cat From the Future Wins China's Hearts and Minds."

greater unity in East Asia."[348] Singing songs like Thank You China, the group was showing their gratitude for China's help during the 2011 earthquake and disaster. Their popularity is another proof of the change in the dimensions of femininity and masculinity in the world. In addition, the group and other boy bands' recognition in China also show that there is an influence on Chinese women's masculinity ideals as well.

According to Louie, young population in China is likely to associate Japanese celebrities with modernity, and the pretty boy image had become popular in China by the 1990s.[349] As a result, the soft masculinity where men are expected to possess feminine qualities as a criterion for the ideal type started to be seen in young Chinese people as well.

5.4.2 South Korea

South Korea comes after China for having not so good relations with Japan due to their tragic past in World War II. However, it is also the country where Japanese popular culture has one of the most influences. Korean dramas, boy bands and the people's love for cute things are some of the examples that can be given for these influences over South Korean culture.

Yomota talks about young women who screamed kawaii in Japanese language when they saw Asano Tadanobu at a Busan Film Festival. It was an unforgettable scene for him because Japanese music and performance were prohibited in South Korea only two years before this event was held.[350] The thought of a man as cute has become an important criteria for South Korean women in time.

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[348] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China," 936.
[349] Louie, "Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with Special Reference to China," 933.
[350] Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*.

Increasing number of boy bands with feminine qualities such as BTS is a sign of changing dimensions of femininity and masculinity in South Korea as well.

Lolita fashion is another important part of kawaii culture in South Korea. As part of the government's Kawaii Ambassadors program, Sakurai mentions Aoki Misako's tea party in September 2009. After Aoki Misako wrote she wanted to visit South Korea, a Korean Lolita community organized a petition campaign for a sponsor. When the sponsor contacted, Sakurai talks about how much they were surprised to find out that the community had one thousand and eight hundred members at the time.[351] Tea parties are very important in Lolita communities. Eating sweets and drinking tea while chatting, they encourage each other's devotion to kawaii culture. This event and the size of Lolita community in South Korea reveal a freedom of expressing femininity.

Aside from Hello Kitty's popularity in South Korea with a museum and a café in the country, South Koreans also love LINE Friends characters a lot. There are ten stores of the company just in Seoul, selling a great number of kawaii products. There are also two stores at the Incheon Airport. Furthermore, the famous BTS members became the first to join a project named Friends Creators to create new characters for the company. BT21 characters were presented in September 2017 and all of the eight characters became popular in a short time. The stickers of the characters were downloaded more than eight million times in their first month, and there are now pop-up stores and cafés about them.[352]

There are countless numbers of boy bands in South Korea, most of whom are very popular around the world. As Jung has suggested, these boy bands and the characteristics of the members are the results of "the transcultural process of

[351] Sakurai, *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei*, 106.
[352] Sheffield, "Part of the BTS ARMY? Time to Fall in Love with BT21."

hybridization and Japanisation of East-Asian popular cultures." It is argued that South Koreans not only consume Japanese popular culture products, they also imitate them. For instance, there were TV series similar to Japanese ones in South Korea although there was a ban on Japanese ones during the 1990s.[353]

Beauty products, anime, manga and TV series also possess great importance in South Korea, and Japanese products' exports to the country are on the rise. Nikkei, the largest financial newspaper, reports that there is a mutual fandom between Japanese and South Korean youth. The percentage of Japanese cosmetics export to South Korea has increased more than twenty per cent in 2016. Moreover, South Korea comes third in terms of overseas licensing for Kodansha, which is a Japanese manga publisher. Last but not least, the popular anime called "Your Name" became the most viewed anime in South Korea, surpassing three million viewers.[354] All these examples suggest a much better relation between the two countries, and make the fact that South Korean popular culture is affected by both soft masculine ideals and kawaii culture clear.

5.4.3 Thailand

Toyoshima argues that an interest in Japanese kawaii fashion started in Thailand during the late 1990s.[355] Siam Square, one of the important shopping districts in Bangkok, is often likened to Tokyo's Harajuku district. Scouts wait and spot young women, so there are a lot of people wearing trendy clothes walking down the street. Many of the fashion magazines about kawaii styles are translated and published in Thailand. Japanese magazines such as Cawaii! or Ray also hold contests in Siam

[353] Jung, "The Shared Imagination of Bishōnen, Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading DBSK, youtube.com and Transcultural New Media Consumption."
[354] Matsui, Hosokawa and Shibata, "What politics? Japan, South Korea See Big Bang in Consumption."
[355] Toyoshima, "Kawaii Fashion in Thailand: The Consumption of Cuteness from Japan," 193.

Square catching people's attention even more. Toyoshima adds J-music, anime and dramas to the list of things that bring kawaii culture to Thailand.[356] It is a fact that some vocational schools in Thailand changed their uniform style into sailor uniforms in order to appeal to girls interested in kawaii fashion. Wearing school uniforms as a fashion style gets a lot of attention in Thailand. As college students also wear uniforms, wearing them fashionably is important there. Uniforms are always featured in magazines and advertisements for shops. Wearing mini skirts with shirts became a theme called sexy cute and there are high schools that are popular just because of their Japanese style uniforms (sailor suit tops and tartan checked mini skirts). When they are asked why they chose that kind of school, one of the big reasons for girls was because the uniforms were cute.

Japan Festa, first held in Bangkok in 2005, attracted 3,000 people. Supported by the Embassy of Japan in Thailand, the name of the event changed into Japan Expo in Thailand in 2014 and it now attracts more than 400,000 visitors. During Japan Expo in Thailand in 2009, a fashion contest named Kawaii Festa was held. The participants were judged according to their sense of the kawaii fashion.[357]

5.4.4 Taiwan

In Taiwan, Japanese culture holds an important place due to both countries having colonial experience in the past and being near geographically. Everything about Japanese popular culture is trendy in Taiwan, and kawaii culture is no exception. People's way of contacting one another, their behaviors, fashion and food can be given as examples of kawaii culture's impact on Taiwanese people.[358]

[356] Toyoshima, "Kawaii Fashion in Thailand: The Consumption of Cuteness from Japan," 199.
[357] Japan Festa, http://japanfesta.com/
[358] Chuang, "Kawaii in Taiwan Politics," 3.

Kawaii characters are very popular in Taiwan. Aside from Hello Kitty's great recognition as always, Gudetama is another character that came to Taiwan in order to spread more kawaii around the world. Gudetama Chef was opened in 2016 as a themed restaurant in Taipei. Every detail in the restaurant is about the lazy egg Gudetama from toilets to light bulbs. They serve a broad selection of food and desserts.

School uniform is significant in Taiwan related to the fashion side of kawaii culture. Young Taiwanese girls has become so interested in their school uniforms that a school uniform website organizes a yearly contest where people upload their photos with their uniforms to be voted the best. Ministry of Education has also taken part in this trend and started a contest for best school uniform design. Students design their dream uniforms, which may be permitted as official uniforms in schools. According to Taiwan News, the purpose of the contest was to publicize an appealing image of schools and encourage a better school atmosphere.[359]

Kawaii culture also shows itself in interesting areas in Taiwan. Chuang talks about the A-Bian doll, which is an interesting example of kawaii in Taiwanese politics. In 1998, Democratic Progressive Party designed and manufactured a toy that looks like Chen Shui-Bian, candidate for the Taipei mayoral elections. The doll and its accessories were such success that the party continued to produce them during the presidential elections as well. The general manager of the company that produced the doll clearly said that they chose kawaii style because it was more popular among Taiwanese people than European or American culture.[360] Kawaii's characteristics of softening relations prove to be useful, and turning a politician into a doll signifies kawaii's effect on masculinity in Taiwan as well.

[359] Deaeth, "Student Designers Awarded in Taiwanese High School Uniform Contest."
[360] Chuang, "Kawaii in Taiwan Politics," 4-5.

Yet another significant example is Kawaii Pop Fes that was held twice in Taiwan.[361] In the event, Japanese idol groups consisting of girls went on stage and had performances. The first events, which were held in Hong Kong in 2013, were a success. Having taken place two times in Hong Kong, the event chose Taiwan as their next destination. As the name suggests, the event's theme is kawaii and the idols are selected accordingly. The event was sponsored by Zepp Live Entertainment, which is a subsidiary of Sony Music Entertainment in Japan.

5.4.5 Other Asian Countries

The countries mentioned until now are some of the significant ones that kawaii culture has effected so far. Surely, this does not mean other countries are not influenced by the phenomenon. Laos, for instance, is an important example of kawaii culture's reach around the world. In 2014, Embassy of Japan in Laos arranged an event called Cool & Kawaii Japan in two cities of Savannakhet and Vientiane, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. J-Pop live concerts and cosplay showdown were organized. The event is still held in Laos, increasing cultural exchange between Laos and Japan.[362]

Just like China, Hong Kong has a special place for kawaii culture. Kawaii designs and characters are very popular among the citizens of Hong Kong. There are character cafés and restaurants, Japanese style kawaii cosmetics and Hello Kitty designs on everything one can imagine. Kawaii fashion, especially Lolita subculture, has followers in Hong Kong. Lolita fashion lovers express their tolerant environment there, where people are open to different fashion styles. The number of Lolita fashion followers in Hong Kong is almost five hundred. Fashion brands and magazines are

[361] Kawaii Pop Fes, http://at-jam.jp/kawaiipopfes/.
[362] Embassy of Japan in the Lao PDR, https://www.la.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/00_000025.html

accessible through stores and bookshops. Having visited other important cities for Lolita fashion, Lolitas living in Hong Kong talk about how it is one of the best countries around the globe to be a Lolita fashion follower.[363] Furthermore, cosmetics stores such as 759 Kawaiiland sell beauty products from Japan. As the store's name suggests, kawaii is a known word for the people of Hong Kong. Kawaii items can be found from online stores as well. Stationery items, plush toys, ornaments are sold on these websites, not just for kawaii lovers in Hong Kong but also for people around the world.

Kawaii characters such as Sanrio's Gudetama have themed cafés in Hong Kong and many well-known companies such as McDonalds collaborate with Sanrio and launch plush toy sets and character gifts every year. Hello Kitty, Pompompurin and Gudetama are some of the characters that appeared in Happy Meals of McDonalds through the years. There are also famous restaurants opening pop-up cafés of Japanese characters. For instance, Izumi Kitchen in YATA opened a pop-up café of Kumamon, the mascot of Kumamoto prefecture in Japan. Besides the menu designed around Kumamon, there are a lot of fancy goods people can buy there.[364]

One can easily understand that Singaporean people also like kawaii culture and cute characters. That is why character cafés are very popular in Singapore. Aside from Hello Kitty, Gudetama, the lazy egg character of Sanrio arrived in Singapore in November 2016, soon after Hello Kitty. Singaporean companies Joe & Dough and the Soup Spoon collaborated with Sanrio and opened Gudetama Café.[365] Shirley Wong, a Singaporean bento artist that was discussed before, discusses her involvement as Gudetama Café's food designer and menu advisor. She talks about Gudetama as a character everyone can empathize with, because everyone can

[363] Okazaki, "Kawaii Hong Kong: "How City's Lolitas Live the Cute Dream."
[364] Next Stop Hong Kong, "Pop-up Kumamon Café by Izumi Kitchen at YATA."
[365] Sanrio, "Gudetama Café Singapore."

sometimes feel down and search for ambition in life. Cinnamoroll, one of Sanrio's famous characters, is also spreading kawaii culture in Singapore. A pop-up café was opened in May 2017 until August 2017. Shirley Wong was also behind this café's preparation of the menu. As there are Muslim people living in Singapore, the menu was also halal certified. Yet another pop-up café was Pokemon café, where Pokemon lovers of all ages enjoyed meals and sweets shaped like their favorite pokemon Pikachu. The café was open between May and July in 2016. Yet another example of kawaii characters' fame is an online shop called Rilakkuma Shop. Opened in 2010 by two fans, the shop sells items of Rilakkuma, the bear who likes relaxing very much.

The Philippines is yet another country within kawaii culture's horizon. One of the kawaii leaders that were chosen by Kawaii International program at the first round was Kaila from the Philippines. Having lived in Japan since 2011, she created a blog named Rainbowholic about her life and kawaii culture there. She and her friends have done so much for kawaii culture's spread around the world. Having created a website called Japan Lover Me, they aim to inform people around the world about Japan and kawaii culture. They also have a store selling bomber jackets called Sukajan, vintage fashion items and unique things about Japan. Aside from kawaii enthusiasts' efforts to spread it, kawaii culture in the Philippines has been embraced by the local people. Recent news in December 2017 was that Tokyo Girls Collection's opening a store in Manila. The news reported its opening was planned to be in Japan Town part of the city. Although the fashion style of this collection is not just about kawaii, the news had the headline of *Kawaii fashion heading to the Philippines*, which demonstrates the word's impact once again.[366]

[366] Okutsu, "Kawaii Fashion Heading to the Philippines."

All in all, kawaii has positive perception in most of Asian countries. Despite the hardships and tensions between some of the countries and Japan, the country has been drawing a new image all thanks to its popular culture and kawaii. They have become incredibly popular due to the arrival of cute character themed hotels, hospitals, restaurants, or fashion styles and boy bands.

5.5 Muslim Countries

5.5.1 Muslim Lolita

People who are familiar with kawaii culture may think that it is not something that can be attractive to Muslim communities because of their conservative values. However, there is a new trend that might prove them wrong. There are Muslim girls dressing up in Lolita fashion around the world. Their trend even has a name called *Musu-Rori*, short version of Muslim Lolita. On the Internet, especially Japanese people reacted very well to this trend. They find the acceptance of their cute culture and creative change that Muslim girls bring to it as interesting and kawaii.

Noor Al-Kattan known as SugarNoor is the first example of Muslim Lolita (see Figure 56). With Iraqi origins, she lives in the UK as a married woman. Starting her blog in 2008 and wearing Lolita fashion with headscarf, SugarNoor became an important symbol for the Muslim Lolita community. She talks to the fashion magazine Vogue about how she was bullied a lot on the Internet at first, but she endured and kept posting.[367] The negative comments eventually decreased and people who supported her increased. Her Lolita look was even displayed in V&A Museum of Childhood's The Alice Look exhibition.[368] The exhibit was celebrating the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland and

[367] Minthe, "The World's First Lolita Hijabista in Her Own Words."
[368] Sugarnoor Tumblr Blog.

the purpose was to show how the main character had been accepted and adjusted around the world. Recently, she has not been wearing Lolita fashion the reason of which is not told, but she continues to keep her love for kawaii culture. On her Instagram, she posts about cute things she possesses such as her unicorn shaped bag, Hello Kitty pins, kawaii earrings and so on.



Figure 56. SugarNoor in Lolita fashion
Source: SugarNoor, 2013

Alyssa Salazar is also very popular among Muslim Lolitas (see Figure 57). She shares her style on her website that is called The Hijabi Lolita (Hijabi meaning a woman who wears a headscarf). Living in California, she talks about how people criticized her wearing a headscarf before. However, people reacted to her Lolita fashion with headscarf much better. She explains that people might be thinking that she is cosplaying and that is why they act differently. A question that comes to mind is what these Muslim Lolitas' parents think about their choice of fashion. Both SugarNoor and Alyssa's parents approved their styles as long as they continued to conform to Islam's requirements. Alyssa's first post on her blog says, "Felt like

dressing up this morning. It's the first time my dad has seen me in Lolita. It went very well".[369] Instead of wearing tights as they do in Lolita fashion, they wear a bit looser clothes and they carry on wearing their hijabs. In an interview with Vice, she talks about how Lolita community accepted her as she is and welcomed her more than Muslim community.[370]



Figure 57. Alyssa Salazar with her Lolita style pastel colored clothes
Source: thehijabilolita, 2014

Due to the growing popularity of Lolita fashion style among Muslim community, there was even an event in Asakusa in November 2017. The event, Kawaii Hijabi Collection, took place at Halal Expo Japan that is an exhibition to encourage Muslim visitors and multiculturalism in Japan. At the exhibition, there was also Tokyo Modest Fashion Show for Muslim women who are interested in fashion. Kawaii Hijabi Collection was a part of this show and specially dedicated to Lolita fashion lovers among Muslim women. It was the first effort to put on a fashion show for Muslim Lolitas. There were also a tea party and an experience to try on

[369] The Hijabi Lolita Tumblr Blog.
[370] Herwees, "Meet the Hijabi Lolita."

Lolita clothes for those who are interested in this culture. People attending the event were taught to wear their hijab in a cute way.[371] In Figure 58 two young Muslim women can be seen wearing Lolita clothes and posing at the event. The Muslim women's interest in Lolita fashion is clearly a sign of altering dimensions. Even though there are a handful of people who are taking part in this fashion style, it is not impossible to say that Muslim women can also find freedom in expressing their femininity thanks to kawaii culture.



Figure 58. Two Muslim women in Lolita style clothes at Halal Expo Japan
Source: Lucu Lucu Press, 2017

There is one more interesting example. This person is not just wearing Lolita fashion, but being kawaii in hijab. Sherry Sheema from Indonesia explains her style as Kawaii Muslim style and calls herself *Kawaii Hijabi*. Instead of doing full cosplay, she tries to coordinates her daily clothes and still looks like anime characters. She can be seen in Figure 59 as Sailor Moon's main character Tsukino Usagi. In terms of Muslim views about how she dresses, she got positive feedback from Muslim community. In an interview with Geek & Sundry, she says "I believe

[371] Halal Expo, https://halalexpo.jp/en/

dressing modestly is always about personal process and interpretation."[372] Even though there are people who disagree with her style, she still thinks she is keeping her morals while doing kawaii fashion. She has recently become a mother and continues to spread kawaii culture.



Figure 59. Sheema Sherry as Usagi Tsukino
Source: Sheema Sherry, 2017

All these women's interests in Japanese kawaii fashion were due to their affection to Japanese anime and manga. Cosplay is the common pastime activity of those who love them. Nowadays, hijab cosplayers have also started to appear on the Internet. So, one last young Muslim woman who is worth to mention is Misa from Perlis, Malaysia (see Figure 60). Twenty-two year old Misa has been into cosplay for a few years and has been getting more attention each day. She became very popular after her gothic cosplay of Sailor Moon and every article about Misa describe her as kawaii. She uses Kawaii Misa as her nickname on Facebook as well. On Cosplay

[372] Nugent, "Hijabi Lolita: Conversations on Faith, Fashion and Fandom."

Türkiye's website, there is an article about her, which starts with the sentence "hijab is not a hindrance for cosplay".[373]



Figure 60. Misa posing like a cat in a kawaii manner
Source: Instagram, 2018

Kawaii International, NHK World TV's popular program that was mentioned before, also encourages Muslim women to get involved in kawaii culture. In 2017, famous fashion brands collaborated with the program and they had a global contest called Kawaii.i Fashion Contest. Among the winners, who were announced in March 2018, there was a Muslim girl named Sano from Bahrain (see Figure 61). In an interview with the program, she describes kawaii fashion as the style she has been searching for her whole life.[374]

[373] Cosplay Türkiye, "Başörtülü Cosplayer Misa."
[374] Kawaii International, "Sano♥gouk prize♥Kawaii.i Fashion Contest 2017 "My Kawaii Personal Style."



Figure 61. Sano in her kawaii outfit that won the contest of Kawaii International
Source: Kawaii International, 2018

With the interest increasing towards anime, manga, games and cosplay in the Middle East, Abu Dhabi started to hold an event named AN:ME in United Arab Emirates in 2016. Encouraging visitors to enjoy popular culture of Japan, the event offered various activities and welcomed famous manga and anime creators. Maidreamin, a popular Maid Café in Japan, displayed an original and entertaining performance during the event, spreading kawaii culture to the Middle East.[375] The event continued under the name of Middle East Film & Comic Con. Another example of kawaii culture's influence was Emma's Kawaii-verse, a kawaii fan selling decorative phone cases with cute items at this convention.[376]

It can be concluded that kawaii culture finds a place in every society no matter what their religion is or how different their lifestyles are. Kawaii can be anything and everything one can imagine. The religious views of the women that were mentioned in this chapter did not prevent them from indulging in this culture of

[375] Kawaii Kakkoii Sugoi, "Maidreamin Brings Akihabara's Maid Culture To ANI:ME Abu Dhabi."
[376] Emma's Kawaii-verse Facebook.

cute. In their points of view, they only enjoy the things they find interesting and make them a part of their lives without defying their beliefs.

5.5.2 Turkey

When asked if they like Japanese people, Turkish people tend to answer positively. It is a fact that there is a mutual understanding between two countries' people and they get along really well. In a speech during a conference on Japan in the Global 21st Century, ambassador Murat Yavuz Ateş, who is assistant undersecretary in Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, talks about how two nations feel close to each other. The friendship between these countries began in 1887 when Japanese emperor sent prince Komatsu Akihito with presents to Ottoman Empire, then sultan Abdülhamit II wanted to send a frigate as a sign of goodwill. Ertuğrul frigate arrived safely in Yokohama port of Japan, however the frigate with a crew of six hundred people crashed near Kii Ōshima in Kushimoto due to a typhoon. Having lost many people because of cholera before, only sixty-nine members of frigate could be saved with the help of Kii Ōshima islanders. The unselfish efforts of Japanese people towards saving Ottoman crew started a long-lasting friendship. This grew even more in 1985 when two hundred and fifteen Japanese were stranded in Tehran because of an aviation blockade. Due to Iran-Iraq war, an air attack was expected and there was no help for the Japanese people in Tehran. Then Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal decided to send a Turkish plane to save Japanese people. These two incidents became milestones in forming a friendship and trust between Turkey and Japan.[377] There is one more occurrence that has increased the love towards Japanese people among Turkish citizens. In 2011, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.1 happened in

[377] Ateş, "Opening Address."

the city of Van, Turkey. As a member of Association for Aid and Relief Japan, a Japanese doctor named Miyazaki Atsushi came to Turkey to help relief activities. However, he also died when his hotel collapsed because of an aftershock. This incident also effected Turkish people deeply and built an even bigger trust. After his death, parks, streets and schools were named after him in his honor and a statue was revealed during the opening ceremony of Miyazaki Park in Sarıyer, İstanbul.[378]

In terms of masculinity and femininity, Turkey shared the ranks of thirty-two and thirty-three with Taiwan in Hofstede's Masculinity Index.[379] This points to the fact that Turkey is a country close to a feminine one. It is significant to remember that Hofstede's analysis was made regarding work goals. One should be considering the fact that working class consists of educated part of the society in Turkey.

In Turkish society, customs originating in Turkic heritage from pre-Islamic period, Ottoman and Islamic traditions, and Mediterranean way of life had shaped gender and family connections.[380] After the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923, the revolutionary emancipation of women happened with the changes in laws regarding women's status thanks to reforms by Atatürk. Under the law, there was no longer inequality of sexes. Even though the reforms were claimed not to change the women's status in Turkey in terms of their lifestyle circumstances, they were a big step towards the liberation of Turkish women. It is argued that legal or institutional reforms only are not enough to alter lifestyles.[381] It is important to note that Turkish women's antecedents from pre-Islamic period had higher status. Deniz Kandiyoti cites Afet Inan's book, The Emancipation of the Turkish Women, saying that there was a downturn in the status of Turkish women after conversion to Islam. This was

[378] Japan Today, "Turkey Continues to Honor Memory of Atsushi Miyazaki."
[379] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 286.
[380] Sümer, "Family Relations: Turkey," 146.
[381] Kağıtçıbaşı, "Status of Women in Turkey: Cross-Cultural Perspectives," 485-486.

due to the social traditions of Arabic and Persian people, so the new Turkish women of the republic still had the chance to look back on her antecedents and change her status.[382]

Even though the country is closer to a feminine one, expressions of femininity is still an issue in Turkey. They, just as masculinities, became indicators of class, cultural preferences, and trends but they were under "an ambivalent male gaze that continued to sexualize the female body and presence." Because of this dilemma, it is barely startling that the pursuit for new and more permissive "expressions of femininity should take contradictory and sometimes conflictual forms."[383] Under these circumstances, kawaii culture's spread and influence should be investigated in Turkey.

The implications of kawaii culture can be seen in many areas in Turkey. Although many Turkish people include kawaii things into their lives without knowing its Japanese background, this does not mean it is not related to kawaii culture. As Ashcraft suggests, during 1970s Snoopy bags were popular among Japanese teens even though they might not have been familiar with the comic Peanuts. Although it might be somewhat ignorant, he argues that the ability to welcome things without having information about their authentic context draws attention to the tendency towards accepting foreign culture simply depending on attractive visual details.[384]

Kawaii culture shows itself in many forms and in different areas. Young females speaking in a childish manner, people making a peace sign when their photos are taken, mothers preparing cute meals for their children or people using kawaii stationery items are currently familiar things for Turkish people. All of these

[382] Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State,* 41.
[383] Kandiyoti, "Some Awkward Questions on Women and Modernity in Turkey," 283.
[384] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool,* 104.

examples carry a part of kawaii culture with them, even though people doing them are not aware of it consciously.

Aside from Hello Kitty, which was discussed in detail before, kawaii culture shows itself in many other things. Turkish community has been influenced by kawaii culture through a number of animes for a long time. The list of the animes that have been broadcasted by Turkish TV channels is a long one. Among them, there are several animes with kawaii lead characters. One important example is Sailor Moon, initially a manga by Takeuchi Naoko. It is an anime centered around a junior high school girl named Tsukino Usagi. Having magical powers, she is in fact the princess of the Moon Kingdom, who was reborn on Earth. She becomes the leader of Sailor Warriors, and they protect the universe together. Both versions of Sailor Moon were big hits around the world, including Turkey. First broadcasted by *atv*, a nationwide TV channel in Turkey between 1996 and 1998, then the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, TRT in short, between1999 and 2003, Sailor Moon was watched by thousands of Turkish schoolgirls. Especially middle school students at the time enjoyed watching Sailor Moon so much that they rushed to get back home just in time to catch the anime. As Ueda Miwa, a Japanese manga artist, suggests in an interview with Ashcraft, young girls admire these kinds of fantasy stories because of the transformation. They change into cute and beautiful girls with a magical wand.[385] Sailor Moon's success around the world was due to the characters' powerful, cool and kawaii figures. As the Japanese schoolgirl image symbolizes opportunities of being young, naive and independent, they appeal to everyone around the world. On the Internet, there were lots of forums and sites with Turkish girls talking about the characters, manga and so on. As the language of the theme song of

[385] Ashcraft, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential: How Teenage Girls Made a Nation Cool,* 190.

the anime was not changed, they all knew the Japanese song by heart. Thus, the Japanese background of the anime was also known in detail. Interesting thing is that the anime is still broadcasted by a TV channel called Kidz Animez TV.[386] The broadcast time, that is 11:30 pm, suggests that the viewers are a bit older now, maybe the generation who watched the anime in the late 90s.

Candy Candy, an anime about an orphan girl, was also one of the most popular animes in Turkey. The name of the anime was *Şeker Kız Candy* (Sweet Girl Candy). Şeker is an adjective mostly used towards things people like and find cute. It also means sugar or candy, so the word was very appropriate. The main character has kawaii characteristics such as being sweet, kind, childlike innocent, helpful and warmhearted. She has big green eyes, golden curly hair with pigtails, which have red ribbons on. She wears dresses with frills and bright colors, closely related to Lolita fashion style. Most people would remember watching it with their mothers. It was a romantic, tragic yet happy story.

Another example was Kamikaze Kaitou Jeanne, which was broadcasted as *Sevimli Hırsız*. The name can be translated as cute thief. Although the original name did not contain the word kawaii, they called it cute in order to attract the viewers' attention. This is an important example of how cuteness catches the attention of people in Turkish culture, especially young girls.

Pokémon, yet another famous anime, was loved and still have many fans from all ages. As mentioned before, the game for mobile phones has countless players even though it is not officially released in Turkey. Aside from the game, the anime is very popular as well. First broadcasted in 1999, it attracted so much attention that Pokémon goods began to be sold all around the country. Newspapers

[386] Animez Kidz http://www.kidz.com.tr/yayin-akisi.

gave Trading Card Game of Pokémon, *tazos* (round discs with a Pokémon on each one) could be found in potato chips' bags and plushies of Pikachu and other Pokémons were sold in toyshops. However, there was an incident of a girl jumping off a five-story building thinking that she was a Pokémon herself in 2000, after a year of his first broadcast. Fortunately, she was only injured but the incident became a news event and public reaction was, by and large, negative. The Ministry of Health gathered a *Pokémon Board* consisting of children and mental health specialists. The council decided that Pokémon affected children's mental health negatively and thus *RTÜK* (Radio and Television Supreme Council) began to pressurize the channel by explaining that it had taken the most complaints about Pokémon since its establishment, and closed the channel for a day. After this event, the channel was left with no choice but to bring the anime to an end. With this incident, Pokémon became the first anime that was seen on the news and became a reason for a channel's closure. It can be concluded that these probably happened because the children of the time were not familiar with fantastic creatures and adventurous shows on TV before Pokémon was released. Considering the fact that animes such as Digimon, which resembles Pokémon in many ways, were broadcasted after Pokémon and no similar incidents happened. Most likely, children became acquainted with such animes in time and their families became more conscious of raising their children to be aware of what they could do or could not do. However, the interest in Pokémon was so great that the discontinuity of the anime did not have the expected impact. In 2001, the movie Pokémon 2: The Power of One came out in cinemas and did very well in box office. After some time, another TV channel Star TV started to broadcast Pokémon and it is still on air, watched and loved by millions in the country.[387] It is

[387] Mynet, "Pokémon Çılgınlığı Yeni Başlamadı Aslında 20 Yıldır Devam Ediyor."

easy to see Pikachu on fancy goods or balloons on the streets alongside Hello Kitty, which can be seen in Figure 62.



Figure 62. Pikachu and Hello Kitty among some balloons in Bayrampaşa, Istanbul

Doraemon is the cartoon ambassador of Japan and another character that comes to mind when the subject is kawaii. Its anime is being broadcasted by Disney Channel Türkiye.[388] The anime has a lot of fans, especially among elementary school students. One can spot coin purses, stickers, erasers or drawings of the character in the possession of these students.

In addition, young Turkish population that grows up watching anime on TV is effected in terms of drawing styles. One cannot help but notice the big shiny eyes with kawaii features in students' pictures. Kawaii characteristics can easily be seen among the pictures that are hung on the wall of a school.

Anime and manga in Turkish society resulted in an interest towards cosplay as well. Although it is not many, the number of people doing cosplay should not be ruled out. There have been various conventions about anime, manga and games around Turkey. Especially university students with an interest in Japanese culture come together and form clubs. They generally hold meetings once a year and invite

[388] Disney Channel Türkiye, https://tv.disneyturkiye.com.tr/

people to talk about anime and manga. The most important part of these meetings is often cosplay contests.[389] Surely, these meetings are the small part of the attention to cosplay in Turkey. İzmircon, one of the big and long-standing conventions, has been held since 2003.

As it can be seen from Table 2, cosplay related events are usually held in universities and organized by student groups that are interested in subcultures, games, animes and so on. It is clear that the amount of interest towards these kinds of events has increased since 2015, as the number of events grew considerably.

Table 2. Cosplay Related Events in Turkey

Name of the Event	Place	Active Since	Hosted by
Metucon	Middle East Technical University	1997	Metu Science Fiction and Fantasy Community
İzmirCon Subculture Convention	Tepekule Convention and Exhibition Center	2003	A group of volunteers
YUCON	Yeditepe University	2010	Yeditepe University Science Fiction Club
KUnvention	Koç University	2011	Koç University Fantasy Role Playing Club
Hücon	Hacettepe University Beytepe Congress Center	2015	Hacettepe University Anime Manga, Science Fiction and Fantasy, Electronic Sports Communities
ConBo	Boğaziçi University	2015	Boğaziçi University Game Club
Geek Festival Avrasya	İstanbul Kültür University	2015	Lilium Advertising Firm
HalicoN	Haliç University Sütlüce Campus	2016	Haliç University Science Fiction and Fantastic Culture Club
GIST (Digital Entertainment and Game Expo)	İstanbul Congress Center	2016	GL Events
ConEtü	TOBB University of Economics and Technology	2016	TOBB ETU Science Fiction and FRP Club
İKÜ Cosfest	İstanbul Kültür University Ataköy Campus	2017	İstanbul Kültür University Social Media Club
Comikon	Caddebostan Culture Center	2017	Kyoto International Manga Museum, Beam Comics, French Institute

[389] Mynet, "Türkiye'deki Cosplay Sanatçılarının Eksiği Yok Fazlası Var."

Another important convention started in 2017, Comikon, attracts great attention in İstanbul. With the collaboration of Japanese Art Center and Japanese Consulate, Kadıköy Municipality, Kyoto International Manga Museum, Beam Comics and French Institute, the event took place in Caddebostan Culture Center in early October 2017 for the first time. Apart from the cosplay, there were screenings of short animes, workshops, speeches by famous manga artists, anime song competitions and so on. The mascot of the event was chosen as fox (kitsune in Japanese) as shown in the poster of the event (see Figure 63).[390] It can be clearly seen that the fox was drawn as something very kawaii, which shows us that using something cute is important to get the attention of Turkish people as well.



Figure 63. Comikon's mascot on the website's banner
Source: Comikon, 2017

There was also a show of Japanese idol group Electric Ribbon, which attracted lots of interest among the visitors.[391] The girls wearing maid like costumes were definitely carrying kawaii culture to Turkey. In Figure 64, the members of the group can be seen in their costumes for the announcement of their appearance at Comikon.

[390] Frpnet, "Comic Con'un Ülkemizdeki Muadili – ComiKon."
[391] Ohtamış, "'Comikon İstanbul 2017' Geçtiğimiz Haftasonu Gerçekleşti."



Figure 64. Electric Ribbon's announcement on Comikon's twitter
Source: Twitter, 2017

Aside from cosplay, an eye-catching kawaii related attraction took place in one of these conventions. In Figure 65, a group of six students who organized a maid and butler café at Hücon 2015 can be seen. This kind of organization is an important representation of kawaii culture's effect on Turkish community.



Figure 65. Students who arranged Maid and Butler Café at Hücon
Source: Facebook, 2015

In 2010, Japanese consulates started to hold a travelling exhibition called *Japan: Kingdom of Characters* in many cities around the world (see Figure 66). As they must have noticed the increasing interest in anime and manga in Turkey, they held the exhibition first in İstanbul and then in Ankara in 2013. The exhibition was divided into four sections: first the display of images, videos of characters that represent each decade, second Hello Kitty's room, third images and mascots of characters that were created to represent municipalities in Japan, and lastly a presentation of relationship between Japanese people and these characters. On the brochure, there is a girl with pink pajamas with pigtail styled hair and Hello Kitty hanging beside her phone. The same girl is in school uniform on the other side of the brochure. Everything about it including the font style and pink color of the headline possesses kawaii characteristics. The exhibition was a success with many people attending the event.



Figure 66. The brochure of the exhibition Japan: The Kingdom of Characters
Source: Geekstra, 2013

There was also a manga seminar held a year before this exhibition in 2012.[392] A manga researcher named Hosogaya Atsushi from the manga department of Tokyo Polytechnic University conducted the seminar. The steps to become a manga artist were discussed in the seminar. Hosogoya Atsushi's translator was also his student from the university. She was a Turkish student, who was a senior at the manga department. At the end of the seminar, there were young people who had brought their own manga to show him, a situation that confirmed the popularity of manga in Turkey. The seminar was held in three places in Turkey and attracted great attention mostly from young people. It also appeared on news because of the high interest toward it. Manga fans in Turkey can also find a chance to improve their manga drawing skills at *Japon Sanat Merkezi* (Japanese Art Center). The center offers classes called *Manga Akademi* (Manga Academy) both for young people aged between eleven and fifteen, and professional artists.[393]

Anime and manga also lead to an interest in purchase of figures and collectibles. There are shops in Turkey where people can buy character figures and fancy goods. Though not many in number, these shops attract a lot of attention. Gerekli Şeyler and The Dreamers Figure in Kadıköy and Arka Bahçe in Beşiktaş are some of the popular comic book shops in İstanbul. At first glance, they seem to target males with their action figures and comics. However, all these shops have kawaii figurines of anime characters and they sell shōjo manga, mostly in English. Gerekli Şeyler, known as the first comic book shop in Turkey, also started publishing manga in Turkish. This was an important step for helping Japanese popular culture get known by Turkish people, along with kawaii culture.

[392] Japanese Embassy in Turkey, https://www.istanbul.tr.emb-japan.go.jp/consulate_t/bunka/gyouji2012_t.html#11
[393] Japon Sanat Merkezi, https://japonsanat.com/index.php/manga-akademi/

Aside from comic book stores, there are a lot of shops in the touristic areas where you can buy kawaii goods. This is not to say that non-touristy regions do not have shops selling kawaii items. Though fewer in number, kawaii fancy goods can be seen in unexpected places. For instance, purses with Line characters, Sanrio's Little Twin Stars and Kumamon can be seen in Figure 67 at a shop in Gaziosmanpaşa, which is a developing municipality of İstanbul, thus not a touristic or elite part of the city.



Figure 67. Kawaii character purses at a shop in Gaziosmanpaşa. April, 2018.

Totoro is probably the most famous kawaii character after Hello Kitty in Turkey. It is a familiar sight to see a mug or coin purse with Totoro on them. The famous cat draws quite an attention, especially of female customers. One can also find phone cases or socks with Gudetama on them, snow globes with anime characters, Rilakkuma pencils and *Manekineko* (traditional Japanese lucky cat decoration) in these shops (see Figure 68).



Figure 68. Totoro coin purses and Gudetama phone case at a shop in Kadıköy. May, 2018.

With the access to the Internet rapidly increasing in Turkey, there are countless people who become bloggers and share their experiences and lifestyles on their websites. Most of these people also have Youtube accounts and being a Youtuber is a dream of most kids nowadays. One can find many bloggers sharing their points of view about a product or fashion style. On some of these *vlogs* (video blogs) by Turkish girls and young adults mostly, one can find instructions for buying and information about what kinds of things are included in a Kawaii Box, which was mentioned in fancy goods subchapter. As it can be seen in the Figure 69, some of the videos for unboxing a Kawaii Box are very popular with views of six hundred and eighty two thousand. The people who prepare the videos range from teenager girls to young adult women in their twenties or early thirties. Some of these Youtubers also draw lots and give the winner a Kawaii Box as a present. All these videos have been posted in recent years (2016-2018).

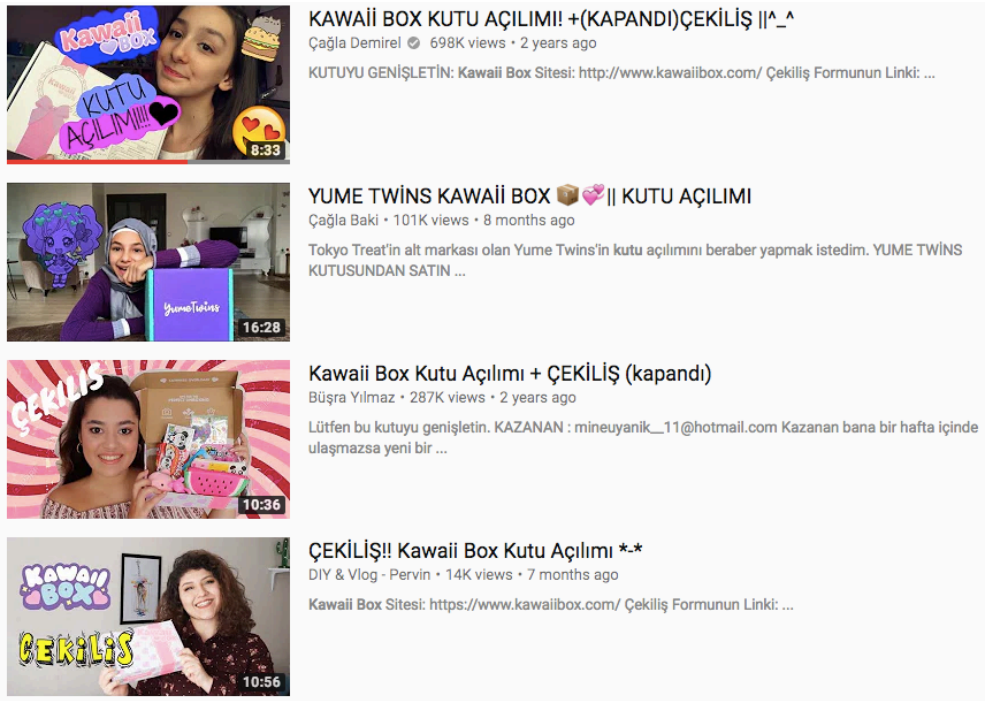


Figure 69. YouTubers introducing and giving away Kawaii Box with videos
Source: YouTube, 2018

As stated before, stationery products hold an important place in kawaii culture. This trend also cast a spell on Turkish people. Cute stickers, pencils, washi tapes, post-its, erasers, etc. are very popular. There is a website called "Minnoş Dükkan" that sells cute products at reasonable prices.[394] The word "minnoş" meaning something very small and cute gives us the feeling of something kawaii. Interesting thing is that they use the word "washi" instead of calling them just "bant" (meaning tape) in Turkish (see Figure 70). This shows us the fact that there are people who know these products' Japanese background in Turkey and buy them because of it. Moreover, there are also well-known Japanese character goods such as Rilakkuma and Hello Kitty.

[394] Minnoş Dükkan, https://www.minnosdukkan.com/



Figure 70. Minnoş Dükkan's washi tapes and Rilakkuma products
Source: Minnoş Dükkan, 2017

Kawaii stationery wave's another important example is the company *iwako*. Opened in 1968, iwako is a Japanese company that went global in 2017. Famous for their cute and detailed erasers, iwako products are distributed in Turkey by Novestro, a Turkish trading company. Besides fruits, animals, cars or food, there are traditional cute dolls such as *kokeshi* dolls and *daruma*, a doll shaped as the traditional Buddhist monk Daruma. The advertisement of the company says, "Beautiful things come in small packages." This brings to mind Sanrio's motto of small gift, big smile. Encouraging people to buy them for collection or giving them as presents, it indeed resembles Sanrio's objective. Iwako products are sold in many distinguished bookshops and stationers.

One of the latest trends in Turkey is to wear jackets that look like *Sukajans*. Sukajan is an embroidered souvenir jacket that came into style after the World War II. These jackets showed up in Japan during the American occupation after the war. Americans started tailoring their military jackets with Japanese designs such as dragons and cherry blossoms, and they took these Sukajans back to their homes as souvenirs. The cut of these jackets is similar to the American baseball jackets. There

are two theories about the etymological background of the word. The name might come from sky dragon, which was a popular design on these jackets, or it could come from *Yokosuka jumper*. The second theory also seem possible, due to Yokosuka being an American military base in Japan, and the place of origin for these jackets.[395] As people in Turkey loved these kinds of jackets, even the world famous brands such as Mavi joined this trend and put some jackets up for sale in 2016. Continuing the trend, embroidery became so popular that jeans, jumpers and shirts were sold with embroidery on them in 2017 (see Figure 71).



Figure 71. Denim kimono with embroidered back and bomber jacket with details
Source: Mavi, 2017

Kawaii food characters also found their way to Turkey. H&M, one of the biggest clothing companies around the world, sell clothes with cat sushi that has been discussed previously. Not to mention they have tops with Hello Kitty design for adult women or makeup bags with sparkling Manekineko on them as well (see Figure 72).

[395] Ashcraft, "Jackets So Badass, They'll Punch Your Teeth In."



Figure 72. H&M's kawaii designed products
Source: H&M, 2017

One of the latest examples of kawaii culture in Turkey is the store called Miniso. Introducing themselves as a Japanese designer brand, Miniso stores are opened one after another in Turkey. They sell kawaii items such as the popular Japanese character Kumamon's plush toys, key chains, pillows and so on (see Figure 73). With the first store opened in December 2016, Miniso had 31 stores as of March 2019. Moreover, the company is planning to open more stores all over the country. Miniso was founded by a Japanese designer and his Chinese partner in 2013. They reached revenue of nine billion dollars in 2015, and increased the number of their stores around the world. So far, they have stores in countries such as the United States, Russia, Dubai, Canada and so on.

Even though the brand is advertised as a Japanese company, there are only four stores in Japan, and the company's headquarters and more than one thousand stores are located in China. This issue caused consumers to question the Japanese genuineness of Miniso. As the founders explain in an interview, there are many settled rival brands in Japan, and it is simply people choosing one brand over

another.[396] Although there are many arguments about the Japanese side of the company, it is clear to see that people are inclined to buy their products, thinking they are made in Japan. For instance, Turkish people believe that something is more reliable and good when it is made in Japan. This is probably because of the long lasting friendship between two countries, which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. There is also the fact that Japan is one of the leading countries in the technology field and that their products are often of good quality and sturdiness. On the bags of Miniso in Turkey, the word Japan is written in capital letters. Miniso stores attract customers from all ages and genders in Turkey. With their kawaii products for daily use, they seem to get even more attention from now on.



Figure 73. Miniso store and kawaii character pillows in Forum Istanbul

Another kawaii trend that is worth mentioning is *amigurumi*. It is a Japanese art form of knitting and crocheting little animals, people or objects. Turkish people,

[396] Woo, "Miniso is Japanese, Say Founders."

especially women, love this kind of handwork; therefore it became a popular thing in Turkey as knitting already has a place in Turkish culture.[397] Because *amigurumi* works are little, cute and soft, they have a kawaii nature to them. Among the patterns and designs people use, Hello Kitty is a popular one. One can even find and buy blue Hello Kitty with a bowtie for boys or a Pokémon in the shape of an amigurumi. There is also pixel bead art, where you use tiny plastic fusible beads and turn them into cute characters or things. It has become a popular trend as well. The results of these pixel bead arts can be used as a magnet, put in a frame as a decoration and so on. It is easy to find pixelated kawaii characters like Totoro, Pokémons and Hello Kitty as always. Likewise, things with kawaii characteristics such as rainbows, unicorns and clouds with cute eyes are trendy too. People use them as pins on their bags or shirts as accessories. The images below are amigurumi versions of Pokémon characters and pixel bead arts of Hello Kitty as Star Wars characters with the caption saying "those who caused Darth Vader to end up like this should have no comfort in the afterlife but it is still so cute" (see Figure 74).



Figure 74. Amigurumi of Pokémons and Hello Kitty as Star Wars characters
Source: Instagram, 2017

[397] Amigurumi Turkey, https://www.amigurumiturkey.com/tr/Ana-Sayfa/0/0.

Last but not least, Aleyna Tilki is an important celebrity in terms of kawaii culture and femininity in Turkey. At an early age of sixteen, she first became popular with her song *Cevapsız Çınlama* in 2016. Even though she was criticized a lot for performing in bars and clubs while not being of legal age, she has achieved to steal Turkish people's hearts quickly. Saying that she was always a popular kid and there were people who did not like her all the time, she gave her answer to the criticisms, thus having a big impact on media.[398] Her videos of Cevapsız Çınlama in 2016[399] and *Sen Olsan Bari* in 2017 became the most watched music video on Youtube in Turkey.[400] Regarding kawaii culture, cute elements in her videos are particularly noteworthy. Sen Olsan Bari's video caught incredible attention with her cute behaviors and sweet elements. In the video, she is dressed in cute pajamas looking childish with her pigtails. She is accompanied by a big pink bear and everything else in the video is pastel colored including a unicorn (see Figure 75). Even though there were many criticisms saying that the video was giving the message of pedophilia, she refuted these arguments and said "I don't know what it has to do with pedophilia? They stamp me in different ways and make me more mysterious. I'm not complaining about that. My mind isn't enough to send a secret message."[401] She is not the type to become ashamed of what she does and she stands by her actions and behaviors. As a result, even though she gets criticism because of her way of standing up to the expectations of society and living her femininity, she continues to break the norms. Getting so popular at such a young age, she is especially taken as a model by teenagers, which might change the future of feminine expression in Turkey.

[398] Mynet, "Aleyna Tilki Eleştirilere İsyan Etti!"
[399] BirGün, "Youtube 2016'nın En Popüler Videolarını Açıkladı."
[400] Seyhanoğulları, "Türkiye'de En Çok İzlenen Klipler."
[401] Şengül, "Cahilliğimden Dolayı Yanlış Yaptım."



Figure 75. Aleyna Tilki on her Sen Olsan Bari's music video
Source: Youtube, 2017

She was the director of her music video *Yalnız Çiçek*. With the help of her sister, who is only thirteen years old, she edited and directed the video. This also shows Aleyna's own involvement in cute culture. She is seen in a bathroom wearing pink tights and pastel colored sweatshirt. She eats pink donuts, popcorns and takes a bath full of colorful cereals (see Figure 76). There is once again a unicorn in the same room.



Figure 76. Aleyna Tilki on Yalnız Çiçek's music video
Source: Youtube, 2018

Her latest song *Dipsiz Kuyum* was also directed by Aleyna Tilki. The music video contains components of a different kind of kawaii. This time, the music video gives the viewers a feeling of what guro and kimo kawaii possess. There is a dark red and black colored room, and a neon pink colored bathroom. She has two outfits, one of which looks like a gothic Lolita costume. The shiny chopsticks, IV bags with pinks gems on them, silvery egg and a heart shaped candy are some of the cute elements in the video. There are also scenes where Aleyna Tilki throws up shiny things into the toilet and pours pink liquid into glasses (see Figure 77). All these hint a similarity in characteristics with kawaii culture and they are getting people, the viewers, used to cute details in life.



Figure 77. Visuals from Dipsiz Kuyum's music video
Source: Youtube, 2018

Although Turkey's being a Muslim country seems to be standing in the way of kawaii culture at first sight, it does not stop it from interfusing with people's lives. For instance, one can easily find religious or advisory captions with a man and a woman with headscarf drawn in kawaii style on the Internet. On the website of *Yeni Akit*, a Turkish daily newspaper, which is conservative and Islamic fundamentalist, there is a photo gallery about seven things that violate marriage. The gallery is full of kawaii pictures of a husband and wife who seem like they are from an anime, one of which can be observed in Figure 78.[402]

[402] Yeni Akit, "Nikahı Bozan 7 Şey."



Figure 78. Muslim couple drawn in kawaii style
Source: Yeni Akit

It is significant to remember that being kawaii is not just being overly cute and dress in pink clothes. In order to be kawaii, wearing Japanese kawaii fashion brands is not a necessity either. As Toyoshima suggests, kawaii fashion can be the result of combination of cute clothes that have been made in different countries.[403] Even little things such as hairclips, key chains or the pens you use in your everyday lives can be turned into something kawaii. As the customs and lifestyles differ between countries, Japan and Turkey are not the same in some ways. Japanese people have a long history about women and children being kawaii. Most of the time, it is something expected from them. However, in Turkish society these expectations start to change when children enter puberty. Women in general are required to be more demure and mature with their behaviors. That is why; it may be difficult to find a young Turkish woman in Lolita style on the streets. Toyoshima argues that social norms and environmental conditions affect people's choice of fashion styles.[404] Even though there are always older people not approving new styles of fashion, young generations defy social norms and expectations of society due to the examples of celebrities such as Aleyna Tilki. Thus, it is possible that kawaii culture can help change the expectations of society from women and men in Turkey as well. Today,

[403] Toyoshima, "Kawaii Fashion in Thailand: The Consumption of Cuteness from Japan," 190.
[404] Toyoshima, "Kawaii Fashion in Thailand: The Consumption of Cuteness from Japan," 209.

girls wearing men's clothes and boys wearing women's clothes, or buying unisex fashion items are becoming normal day by day. Moreover, kawaii culture cannot only be limited to fashion as suggested before. Kawaii has already become a part of Turkish people's lives with cute and sweet characters from anime and mangas. Most women have an affectionate memory of watching Candy Candy or Sailor Moon, and some of them still watch these animes. Small children easily distinguish characters like Doraemon and they have knowledge about cute animes such as Pokémon with their access to the Internet. Hello Kitty, the icon of kawaii culture, is also becoming an important part of Turkish children's lives and it is significant to remember that they will become parents some day.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Cute things do not belong to Japan only, but it is an indisputable fact that Japanese people have an absolute quantity of cuteness in their country. The birthplace of the word kawaii, Japan has a lot to offer in terms of cute things. As a remarkably flexible term with an ambiguous description, kawaii has spread around the world in no time. It also affected the perceptions of masculinity and femininity both in Japan and other countries. Kawaii, especially its fashion styles, has played an important role in the societies that are usually male dominated. The cute culture has gotten so popular that the Japanese government could not resist the idea of kawaii as a soft power resource. Kawaii and all the examples of popular culture proved to be changing the image of Japan from a negative one to positive. They have also become significant assets for the country's economy and tourism. The spread of kawaii culture around the countries confirm the positive outcomes of the government's initiatives and the power of kawaii in attracting people regardless of their age, skin color or language.

6.1 Kawaii: A Culture with a Deep History

The word kawaii's existence goes back to eleventh century with a slightly different meaning of a face turning red due to feelings of excitement. Its use and meaning changed in time with minor distinctions, yet it is an undeniable fact that kawaii culture's past extends very far in history. Significant literary works such as Pillow Book of eleventh century are the examples of the tradition of appreciating the cute, small and young in Japanese society. Even though there are words that describe cute things in every society, there is not a word that has as long history as kawaii.

The word is so intertwined with this tradition that it is almost impossible to give the same feeling with any other word in the world. Kawaii culture's relation to shōjo culture is also significant in understanding its origin in Japan. Anything that attracts or interests girls can be counted as part of shōjo culture, and kawaii is an important part of this girl culture.

Kawaii characteristics consist of many elements depending on people's mood or perspective. Typically, smallness comes to mind when the subject is kawaii. Small children and animals are common examples of what people call as kawaii. The shape of kawaii objects are usually small, round shaped and pastel colored. Though this does not mean that big or dark colored things cannot be kawaii. The concept's scope is so wide that it would not be an exaggeration to say anything can be kawaii. Dependency is another characteristic of kawaii, as something or someone that is in need of caring from others is generally described as kawaii. This is closely related to the concept of amae in Japanese society. Children and women are traditionally expected to depend on people around them as they are seen as powerless and incapable of taking care of themselves. Amae is seen as the reason for Japanese people acting innocent, childish and powerless in order to be described as kawaii. Although it originated in Japanese society, kawaii is considered to have an odorless nature by some researchers. Without a direct indication to its Japanese background, kawaii culture has spread around the world. Despite the fact that there are people who are aware of its national background, most people adore and take part in this culture not because it is Japanese, but it has an attracting quality to it. It is argued that kawaii culture owes some of its global acceptance to this odorless characteristic.

Kawaii has almost infinite varieties, each of which appeals to someone in some way. For most people, kawaii is expected to be cute, pink and lovable at first

sight such as the iconic character Hello Kitty. On the other hand, there are several types of kawaii that might surprise those people with dreamy expectations. Such examples as busu-kawaii that is ugly but cute, or guro-kawaii that is gross but cute, are some of the many kinds of kawaii.

There is no limit to the things that can be within the range of kawaii culture. The concept first showed itself with the popularity of cute handwriting. Some argue that it was kind of a rebellion against the traditional writing system in Japanese society. Then, kawaii culture moved to its next target that is stationery. Stationery items hold a great place for the fans of kawaii. Cute pencils or pens with characters on them, erasers, notebooks, stickers and everything with kawaii characteristics can be observed in any country around the world. However, fancy goods and fashion are the ones that spread the fame of kawaii globally. Plush toys, phone cases, mugs, calendars are some of the various examples of fancy goods. Stores that sell only this kind of products are extremely popular not only in Japan but also in many countries.

Manga and anime, which can be considered as the most important parts of Japanese popular culture, have great influence over kawaii culture's expansion in the world. Comic book of Japan, manga has all kinds of genre and stories one can think of and has reached young and old alike. Japanese animation, anime is also loved and watched by people all around the world, and they are the adaptations of popular manga series most of the time. Visuals with kawaii features, cute behaviors or clothes of characters, manga and anime that directly aim girl readers are all contributing to kawaii culture's fame. Not to mention their high effect on fashion in real life, anime and manga are inseparable parts of kawaii. Cosplay, as mentioned considerably, is an important result of love towards Japanese anime and manga. Cosplayers wear clothes, wigs and make-up in order to become like their favorite

characters. They even design and build their own clothes and accessories. Cosplay is loved and carried out in almost every country around the world, especially in popular culture conventions.

Aside from these main areas that kawaii has influenced, there are also music, technology and food that are worth mentioning. Idols are Japanese stars that fans can meet and watch closely. They act in childish manners and are adored because of their kawaii nature. They are one of the pioneers of kawaii behavior in Japan. Especially, idol groups attract many people in Japan and abroad, resulting in their attendance in conventions and concerts globally. Technology has also played an essential role in terms of kawaii's spread. With the use of cute emoticons in messaging applications, stickers and kawaii characters such as Line's, customization of devices, video games with cute characters like Pokémon's Pikachu and virtual idols are some of the remarkable examples of technology and kawaii collaboration. Last but not least, food can be considered one of the most used areas of kawaii culture. Preparation of cute lunch boxes that are called bento, character cafés and restaurants that attract quite attention around the world, and maid cafés in which people are served by maids who act in kawaii manners can be given as examples.

6.2 Changing Dimensions of Masculinity and Femininity

The masculinity and femininity concepts are important concepts in terms of kawaii culture's effects on Japanese society. Geert Hofstede's international survey about culture's dimensions describes Japan as a masculine country. However, the influence of kawaii culture and its fashion subcategories are proofs of the changing situations in modern Japanese society and the world.

From a traditional male-dominated society's perspective, kawaii culture defies all the expectations from women as they act the opposite of what is anticipated from them. On the grounds that women and young girls behave childishly and avoid the responsibilities of life, they are criticized for not conforming to moral rules of society. In a way, they are trying to display their shōjo personalities via different kawaii fashion styles or behaviors.

Although kawaii seems to encourage women to be obedient and childish, thus positioning them in a controllable place, many researchers of kawaii culture argue that the criticisms should be directed to the pretended kawaii, which is created by male dominant society, for the reason that real kawaii is for the people who enjoy being cute and take part in this culture willingly, not for the sake of others, especially men. The females that participate in kawaii culture are simply trying to go against the ideals that are established by masculine societies. As a result, they find different versions of kawaii as methods of self-expressions.

Kawaii culture, with all the criticism and support, has become a crucial part of Japan. Acceptance and spread of kawaii among young Japanese population, especially females, were largely due to shōjo culture in Japan. The rising amount of free time and money for young girls who were not married and work after World War II enabled them to consume whatever they wanted. Popularity of shōjo manga with characters that escape from responsibilities of everyday life and behave in a kawaii manner helped young women to indulge in kawaii culture even more. With their pocket money, part-time jobs and family members favoring them with money, young people get the chance to focus on their style and spend freely for their personal interests such as buying their favorite character's goods all the time. As

long as this continues and young population decides what is cool or not, kawaii culture will hold its place.

As for adult part of the Japanese society, kawaii is as powerful as it can be in a country. Kawaii is a solution for the longing Japanese people feel for their childhood, a getaway from the pressures of hard work life, a way of resisting to the great expectations of the society, a means to form social connections with others and a kind of healing method for those who need to be comforted by something. All these examples are of people giving more importance to the quality of life, which is a feminine characteristic.

With regard to fashion, kawaii has many forms and types that might be extreme or surprising for many people. It is one of the essential means through which kawaii culture became so popular. Kawaii has contributed so much to fashion and gender understandings around the world. From Lolita style to the extremes of gyaru style where girls with tanned skin wear heavy make-up, kawaii fashion has a lot to offer. Although some of kawaii fashion styles such as Lolita style may seem to be something uncomfortable to wear on the streets, kawaii does not mean you have to wear eye catching or extraordinary things. By carrying a pastel colored purse, attaching cute pins to T-shirts or wearing a rainbow colored trainers; anyone can take part in kawaii fashion. It is the freedom of choice that makes kawaii intriguing for women and an essential concept for a change in the perceptions of gender roles.

Surely, kawaii culture includes men as well; even though it may give the impression that kawaii is for the female part of the society. The appearance of feminine males, bishōnen or otomen in shōjo manga resulted in an adjustment of desired male characteristics. Women's expectations from men have become more feminine qualities and males who are tender and sensitive have increased in number

in recent years. These feminine expectations from males, which is called soft masculinity, have also spread around the world. Boy bands and celebrities who behave in feminine manners also affected the understandings of masculinity. Moreover, with the production of unisex clothes by famous brands and an increase in the use of cosmetics by males with the intention of taking care of their looks, kawaii culture's effect on men is an expectable result. There are also interesting and few in number situations such as males wearing schoolgirl uniforms, Lolita style clothes or taking part in genderless fashion for their personal preferences. In addition to these unusual examples, the fact that the person with the world's largest Hello Kitty collection is a man is also very significant in revealing the place of kawaii culture in male part of the society.

6.3 The Image of Japan: Is a Change Possible?

The history of Japan draws a negative image especially in the eyes of its neighbors. Because of their aggressive and offensive actions before and during the World War II, the Japanese people had their neighbors sided against them. After the war, the nation has adopted a pacifist view in and outside of their country. Heading towards economy, Japan became one of the superpowers around the world. However, the stagnation of the economy in the 1990s made the country look for other solutions as power. Around this time, soft power became a part of the Japanese government's political agenda.

The ability of achieving what a country wants by using their attractive sides is called soft power. During the early 2000s, Japan came to realize the importance of its popular culture as soft power resources, including kawaii. Beside their economic contribution, these resources help Japan change their image into a positive one.

Starting their Cool Japan initiative, almost all of Japanese government's ministries take part in the spread of Japanese popular culture. The METI helps companies related to popular culture get globally known by giving funds with private enterprises. The MOFA does projects in different countries in order to inform foreigners about cool Japanese culture, one of which is the kawaii ambassadors passing on the kawaii culture. The MLIT organizes the Visit Japan campaign and gives a great deal of importance to the advertisement of Akihabara, using a virtual kawaii ambassador. As a result of these strategies and plans, Japan has managed to increase the number of inbound tourists and its creative industries' contribution to the economy is noteworthy.

6.4 Kawaii and Japan in the Eyes of the World

Regarding the popular culture and kawaii, Japan has affected almost every country one can think of. As many opinion polls and surveys indicate, most people think of Japan as a peace-loving country with a unique culture. In terms of the topics of interest in Japan, popular culture almost always comes first.

With the help of TV programs such as Kawaii International and the popularity of fashion styles, kawaii is becoming a culture that is recognized more and more in time. Especially the icon of kawaii, Hello Kitty, and her creator company Sanrio has contributed immensely to the expansion of kawaii. With cafés, restaurants, theme parks and shops about kawaii characters such as Hello Kitty or Gudetama, the feminine qualities are creeping into everyday lives of people.

From developed countries such as the United States to developing countries like Turkey, kawaii has found followers everywhere, even in conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia. Even though in small numbers, it is a fact that Muslim Lolitas

exist. As Yano suggested before, the international spread of kawaii merchandise resulted in a pink globalization; pink indicating everything feminine, cute and sensual.[405]

Women and men are including kawaii in their lives with pins, bags, tattoos, mugs and anything cute. Shōjo anime and manga can be found in English or translated into different languages. With feminine males or masculine girls, these popular culture products are slowly changing the understandings of gender roles in the world.

6.5 Is the Future Feminine?

Although one cannot precisely know the future of femininity and masculinity, assumptions can be made with today's facts. Technology continues to progress and allow women to be more active outside their homes. With the industrialization of countries, women can work in more positions held by men, thus resulting in feminine values appearing in more space in society. Hofstede suggests that the mechanization of jobs is inevitable and the rest of the jobs will have to deal with the context of people and relations. Therefore, feminine values will be very essential as much as masculine ones.[406] Moreover, the spread of feminine cultures such as kawaii will probably change the ideals of femininity and masculinity more and more in the world, as it does right now in many countries.

On a final note, women's hardships and responsibilities in a world masculinity dominates, and their reactions to it should be carefully examined. However, the change in the expectations from men and their actions in response to this change should not be put aside as well. With young population's increasing

[405] Yano, *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific.*
[406] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 335.

usage of the Internet and social media and their access to information, the transformation of the gender roles is inevitable. In which direction the kawaii culture will evolve, and to what kind of consequences it will produce, should be observed and analyzed for further research on the gender role socializations and popular culture's growing influence in modern world.

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