

## Japanese Youth Subculture Styles of the 2000s

Japanese  
Youth  
Subculture  
Styles of the  
2000s

Judy Joohee Park

Ph.D., Dept. of Clothing and Textiles, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

**Abstract** Japan is an advanced Asian country with a young, visual and stimulating culture that fascinates even western countries. The aim of this article was to provide an in-depth understanding of youth subculture as a medium of interpreting contemporary Japanese society and fashion, and understanding the values of Japanese youths today. The study of Japanese culture, youth culture, and Japanese youth subcultures of the 2000s and their clothing styles are based on documentary research and internet research, including a wide range of books and dissertations, and English, Korean and Japanese websites. It studies the unique youth subcultures of the country from the perspective of a Korean researcher who lives in a more fashion-conservative neighbouring country.

**Key words** Japan, youth, subculture, style, 2000s

### **Introduction**

Japan is a significant subject country of youth subculture analysis, especially in terms of style, because it was one of the first Asian countries to accept western culture, including youth culture, and Japanese street style is developed to an extent where the west takes great interest. As a neighboring country of Korea and a country with unique established youth subcultures, it was considered an interesting subject to analyze from a more fashion-conservative Korean researcher's perspective. The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of youth subculture as a medium of interpreting contemporary Japanese society and fashion through literary research and observation and analysis of photographs of clothing styles of Japanese youth subcultures. This study is significant in that it provides a record and analysis of the most recent Japanese youth subculture styles and interprets the styles in relation to aspects of traditional Japanese culture and mainstream Japanese youth culture that affects the minds and values of Japanese youths today.

Six Japanese youth subcultures of the 2000s were extracted in the process of the study, and four most recent and relevant Japanese youth subculture style books containing hundreds photographs, and photographs of the six youth subcultures on the Japanese internet were used as subjects of visual style analysis. A total of 133 photographs were selected, analyzed and evaluated in relation to the background of Japanese society, the lifestyles of Japanese youths and the values and desires of Japanese youth subcultures in the 2000s.

---

### ***Traditional Japanese Culture***

An understanding of traditional Japanese culture and Japanese youth culture was necessary as a foundation to general social atmosphere and popular youth culture that is the backdrop of youth sub-culture, and such examinations were conducted through documentary research.

The general stereotype of Japanese people as shown in commercial books and films, like “The Last Samurai,” is people who live in a nation where society is important, a rational people, and cool-headed people who make decisions based on abstract principles. However, Japanese society actually emphasizes emotional and individual values that are not always rational. Japanese people are taught from an early age to have both personal and official sides in their life, and this duplicity is apparent in their personal lives and Japanese society as a whole. Home is *uchi* (うちは) in Japanese, and outside of home is *soto* (そと). Front is *omote* (おもてさんど) and back is *ura* (うら). *Uchi* and *omote* are a personal area of life, and *soto* and *ura* are a social and official area of life (Rosenberger, 1992: 25). The ideal Japanese individual is not an individual who has control and restraint, but one who understands both *omote* and *ura* and can easily move between control and emotions.

In a society that recognizes personal expressions and diversity of individuals, individualization of people’s lifestyles is gradually growing stronger and more apparent. There is a side of Japanese society that is standardized and predictable, but the individualization trend is leading to more freedom in personal decisions, through which youths live a riskier and less stable life compared to older generations (Kim, 2003: 129). The pachinko culture of Japan is a good example of the individualization tendency of a people who do not want to be interrupted by other people. Pachinko is currently the largest trend and culture in Japan. It is similar to the western pin ball machine, but unlike pin ball machines, which are mostly located at bars and offer a social experience even for those who are not playing, pachinko halls have rows of machines where people sit alone and play without having conversations or drinks with others (Richie, 2003: 22-25).

Another important value of Japan is the virtue of a young spirit. As a society that places importance on a good heart and honesty, a child-like mind is considered a higher virtue than maturity. This is why even adults have a preference for cute products and styles like the “Hello Kitty” character products (Richie, 2003: 60).

### ***Characteristics of Japanese Youth Culture***

Japanese youth culture is now so diverse that anyone can visually appreciate the unique styles and tastes of youths. Appearance is important in Japan, and thus it has a highly image-based, visual and stimulating culture. Mangas and video games are good examples of this point. Manga is the term used for Japanese comics, and is an important element of popular Japanese culture that is continuously maintained and developed. It is a preferred method of expression in many fields, and even corporate newsletters regularly print mangas (Richie, 2003: 105). Video games and computer games are also an important part of Japanese youth culture, and as the leader of image entertainment, Japan continues to make efforts to develop new images, through which Japanese youths feel emotions of building friendships, conquering an unknown and accomplishment.

---

Japanese youths have less power than older generations and establish values and an individual lifestyle later in life than western youths. Through Japanese character products like “Hello Kitty,” which are more simplified and expressionless compared to U.S. Disney characters, they reflect their emotion of choice on the character for a sense of satisfaction.

Japanese youths love all things modern and American. Thus, they like to wear clothes with English words on them because it is considered American. However, they only like the appearance of American things, not the American mind, values of political statements. Frequently, they will wear American clothing unaware of the political statement it makes, or wear clothes with misspelled words on them, just because it feels contemporary (Richie, 2003: 40-41).

It has been revealed through extensive research on Japanese youth culture that there are three characteristics of Japanese youths today that could be viewed as negative issues.

First, consumption is a problem. Japanese youths not only spend more freely than older generations, but also clearly spend more and place importance on brands, even though many do not have a job or still live with their parents because of insufficient financial abilities (Yuji, 2005: 26-28). According to MasterCard Worldwide, there were around 223 million “young premium consumers” who prefer high quality expensive brands in 2007, but the figure is predicted to rise to 232 million by 2017. Around 40 million of the 232 million will be consumers from wealthy countries like Japan or Australia (International Herald Tribune, 2008.5.5).

The second problem is, ironically, youth unemployment. Youths are overspending, but they do not feel the need to get and hold down a stable job. Needless to say, the economy is partially to blame for the number of unemployed youths. The aftereffects of the long-term bad economy since 1992 in Japan are taking its toll on the youth unemployment problem. However, many youths choose unemployment and either receive money from their parents or work part-time jobs when necessary because they want to enjoy a youthful, free way of life (Kim, 2004: 3). Under the presumption that the number of employed will change at the same rate each year, only around 50 percent of Japanese people will have a job by 2050. In other words, one in two people will be unemployed (Yuji, 2005: 26-28). Youths’ values and beliefs on work have changed. They do not think they have to be loyal to one job, and work is not as important to them as it was to older generations, because they prioritize fun and freedom, and do not see the logic in working hard at one job for they have seen their parents and the older generation let go from places of long term employment.

The third characteristic is excess interest in appearance and style. Physical image plays a key role in establishment and expression of oneself. According to Kaiser, appearance management is a process of playing the role of and expressing oneself through interaction with other people, and people recognize their own appearance through the continuously changing social standard of beauty (Kaiser, 1990). The current social standard of beauty in Japan is healthy and visually elaborate beauty. Even sport focuses more on trends and appearance than a healthy lifestyle. The most influential women’s magazine in Japan, *Anan*, writes, “Sporty is sexy!” (International Herald Tribune 2008.5.13). Japanese people, who used to think women should not perspire, now think it is beautiful and fashionable to work out and perspire. However, even sporty women focus on appearance and wear running skirts, leggings, a top that makes them look fit, rainbow-colored sneakers and international sports brands. The shape and design of a workout outfit is more important to Japanese women

than function, and makeup is very important, too.

***Method: A Study of Japanese Youth Subculture Styles of the 2000s***

Documentary research showed that keywords related to youth subculture, “Japanese subculture,” “Japanese youths,” “Japanese cultural homogeneity,” “Japanese youth styles,” “resistance of Japanese youths,” and “Japanese modern subcultures,” were significant keywords on subcultures, and studies, books and the internet were searched using the key words to gain information and proper understanding of current youth subcultures and extract the most pronounced Japanese youth subcultures of the 2000s.

Research, analysis and critical review of the material by fashion scholars found that the Japanese youth subcultures of the 2000s were *cosupure*, *bikies*, *gyarus*, *gosuroris*, *emos* and *surfers*. The most recent and influential Japanese youth subculture style books; *The Tokyo Look Book* (Keet, 2007), *Gothic & Lolita* (Ishikawa and Yoshinaga, 2007), *Fresh Fruits* (Aoki, 2007) and *Street* (Jarrett, 2006), were searched for photographs, and the Japanese internet search Website *Yahoo! Japan* was also searched in the Japanese language by a native speaker of the Japanese language for additional visual material. *Yahoo! Japan* was the internet website of choice because *Yahoo!* has clear local characteristics according to region or country compared to other comprehensive search websites such as *Google*. A total of 133 photographs were found published together with verbal evidence stating the photographs were each of the respective youth subcultures, and showing full-length front views to allow clothing style analysis. Each of the photographs was analyzed focusing on the visual image in terms of items, color, materials, accessories and silhouette. The results are as follows.

***Results***

***Cosupure***

Cosupure is a Japanese compound word that combines the English words, “costume play” and “pure.” It is a large clothing culture where people wear unique, different and bold costumes. Clothing is a serious thing in Japan, where traditionally it is related to people’s occupations. Cooks wear cook uniforms, students wear school uniforms and department store salespeople wear department store uniforms. Cosupure allows people to wear fun costumes at public places to become someone or something different. It is a game, but also a way of resisting against a more controlled real life (Chung, 2007: 17). Cosupure events take place weekly, normally on Sunday, at cosupure spots like Shibuya, but some like to wear cosupure almost everyday.

Photographs of both young men and women who regularly participate in cosupure were analyzed. In terms of overall silhouette of the styles observed, only one of the women’s silhouettes was tight, while the rest were loose or big. There were both long and short lengths, but the most frequent silhouette was a knee-length A-line silhouette. Other silhouettes including round and H-line silhouettes were also found. The silhouette most worn for men was the H-line silhouette and a tight top with an A-line bottom silhouette (Figure 1). Other men’s silhouettes included round silhouette, A-line silhouette and diamond silhouette. Overall, the silhouettes were loose, comfortable and exaggerated for both

male and female subjects.



**Figure 1.**  
Japanese cosupure  
(Keet, 2007: 156)

The most worn color for women was white. Some wore white outfits, but most used white as a background color for bolder colors. Other colors were mostly bright primary colors such as blue, pink and yellow. The only dark color found was brown, which was only worn partially, for example, as part of an animal print. The most worn color for men was also white, and then black and blue, in order of frequent observation. Reds and oranges were found in more than half the cases, too. Primary colors were also worn frequently, but since men normally chose to portray martial artists or fighter characters, they wore darker colors than women, such as black, brown and khaki.

The most worn material for women was cotton or synthetic materials that looked similar to cotton. Next, lace and knit were found. Most of the cotton fabrics worn had diverse prints on them, and solid materials without prints were only worn in the form of t-shirts or pants. Prints included traditional Japanese prints for Japanese characters, stripes, flowers, and child-like patterns such as hearts or stars. The most worn material for men was also cotton, and polyester, fake fur and nylon were also found. Men wore more solid materials than women, and created a more drastic costume effect through props such as guns or other weapons. Patterns were worn partially, such as geometric prints, stripes, dots and cartoon prints.

The most worn items for women were dresses and hats, and next was t-shirts. However, most people wore another item such as a vest, zip-up hooded shirt, cardigan or shawl over their t-shirts. Some wore kimonos to portray traditional Japanese characters. Some women wore pants, but 20 out of the 30 women subjects wore dresses or skirts. Shoes were mainly sneakers, platform shoes or slippers, as worn by most Japanese cartoon or comic book characters. Men wore shirts, vests, pants and skirts the most. Skirts were worn over pants in most cases. Some wore actual costumes instead of ordinary items, and those who wore skirts without pants wore matching tights. The preferred choices of shoes were sneakers, platform shoes and traditional Japanese slippers.

The types of accessories worn by women were diverse, from rings and bracelets to necklaces. The materials were also unique, including plastic, steel, gold and wood. Many women also carried small fabric bags and wore partial wigs or hair wraps for a unique look. Some use tiaras or a magic wand to portray certain characters. Men carried across the shoulder bags and wore facial piercings or colored glasses, which have colored lenses but are not as dark as sunglasses. Other accessories included badges, belts, chokers, plastic guns or swords.

---

Cosupure styles can be summed up as being very exaggerated, unrealistic, bold styles that incorporate various silhouettes, textures and items in one look. Japanese youths seemed to express their imagination, hobbies and desires through another very visual aspect of Japanese culture.

### **Bikies**

Bikies are a subculture that resist against society. They are youths who have a large interest in motorcycles and scooters, and often form gangs. They wear clothes that are similar to or the same as each other, ride around at night and sometimes cause problems at public places. They ride motorcycles to have fun at a young age, but also to show themselves off to other people. Clothing stores for women bikies offer new styles on a weekly basis, creating new trends for a young crowd that quickly craves new things (Sugimoto, 1997: 240).

Two silhouettes were observed for women bikies, and three types were observed for men bikie silhouettes. Women's silhouettes were tight silhouette and natural silhouette, and men's silhouettes were slim silhouette, natural silhouette and baggy silhouette.

Black and white were used in all of the women's styles. Other colors found were yellow, blue, green, red and brown, in order of frequency of appearance. The most used color for men was black, and most men wore overall black looks with pops of red or white details. Traditionally people think of black leather jackets when they think of bikers, and this was also the case for Japanese bikies.

The most frequently worn material for women was cotton, because all cases wore T-shirts or sleeveless T-shirts. Next was knit, denim and wool or a wool mix. For prints, one large print on a T-shirt or solids with no prints appeared the most, and there were also animal prints and stripes. Fashionable styles such as spangled fabrics were also found. The most worn materials for men were cotton and denim, and next were leather and wool. They had a higher preference for solids than women and some added some pop with animal prints of studs on their leather jackets.

The most worn item for Japanese bikies was skirts for women, and then scarves and t-shirts. Even though bikies refer to young people who ride motorcycles or scooters, all women wore skirts, showing that they place more importance on style than comfort. Scarves were thin scarves worn for added style rather than warmth, and tight t-shirts were preferred. They wore casual or leather jackets for outerwear. Men wore jeans and belts the most, and t-shirts and leather jackets came second. The preferred style of belts was those with studs or bullets. Some men wore two belts, layering one over another. Sneakers or leather shoes were the popular choices of footwear, but some wore platform shoes.

Analysis of accessories worn by bikies showed that women all wore earrings, and the types were diverse from small studs to decorative dangly earrings. They also wore a variety of different accessories such as sunglasses, necklaces, safety pins and rings. Men wore earrings, thick ear piercings, hip sacks and rings.

The Japanese bikie look is generally leather and spikes, like well-known bikers in western countries, but bikies seemed to place more importance on looking fashionable and presentable. More focus was placed on appearance and opulence than practicality of clothes, which shows that showing off oneself and one's bike is as important as, if not more important than actually riding the bike.

---

## Gyarus

Gyaru is a Japanese youth subculture that really catches the eye of people in Shibuya, the center of Japanese youth style and culture. The term gyaru comes from the Japanese pronunciation of the English word “girl,” and is divided into a variety of feminine styles including witches and princesses. The person who started the gyaru style is famous singer Namie Amuro, who took Japan by storm in the mid-1990s. Gyarus are a youth culture who pursue fun and youth, and is especially a culture based on feminine styles, as the name of the subculture itself refers to girls with unique and strong styles. Men who wear styles similar to gyarus are called “senta guys.” Both young men and women gyarus put a lot of effort into their hair, makeup and clothes, and prefer a fun, exciting style that is the opposite of the style of adults. Sometimes their look can even make them look poor because they avoid sophisticated and elegant adult-like styles. They fake tan their skin even in the winter, as if they have just come back from the beach, bleach their hair blonde and wear bright-colored miniskirts. Gyarus do not believe they can show too much skin, and do not care if other people seem to disapprove. Gyarus know adults disapprove of their style, but they resist to a routine life by expressing their unique personality. They do not want to live the same lives as the older generation (Keet, 2007: 10-13).

An analysis of the silhouettes of gyaru styles found showed that most were short, natural silhouettes. There were also short and tight silhouettes, short baggy silhouettes and short A-line silhouettes. Most men wore natural silhouettes created by clothes that comfortably fit the body, and one slim silhouette and one over-sized baggy silhouette each were discovered.

The color most worn by women gyarus was black. However, they did not wear outfits that were black overall, but used black tops or bags as a backdrop to other colors, aiming to create a modern and fashionable look. The second most frequent color was white, and other colors included blue, yellow, gold and gray. Black and white were found the most in men’s photographs, too, and other colors worn by men included pink, yellow and blue. Overall, many different colors were found to be worn simultaneously in one look for both gyarus and senta guys.

Analysis of materials showed that the most frequently worn material was cotton, and next was knits. They sometimes added flair with fake fur or velour. Materials without patterns were preferred to materials with prints because they made their elaborate accessories stand out more. The prints that were worn were feminine and elaborate, such as animal prints, stripes, letter prints, floral prints and checks. The most worn material by men was cotton, and other fabrics such as velour were observed, too. Similarly to women, men also wore solid materials, and those with big floral prints, letter prints and animal prints.

The item most worn by gyarus was knee-socks, and next was boots. Skirts, belts and t-shirts coordinated with the footwear were the next frequent. When they did not wear boots, they were found to wear high heels or mules. When they wore pants, they wore fashionable track suit bottoms or shorts, and most times wore short skirts or dresses. Women also used arm warmers and scarves for added flair. Men wore t-shirts the most, and casual hooded coats came second. The most popular coat was the Alba Rosa coat – a coat of the brand that women gyarus originally wore, but soon senta guys ended up wearing too, after copying their girlfriends’ styles. Men wore cotton pants or track suit bottoms, and sometimes wore a wrap skirt over their pants. The choice of footwear for



**Figure 2.**  
Japanese gyaru (Keet, 2007: 31)

men was sneakers, and one senta guy wore unique colored socks and Hello Kitty slippers.

Women gyarus wore a wide variety of accessories, including necklaces, bracelets, messenger bags, hair clips, hair wraps and sunglasses (Figure 2). Unique accessories included a decorative thigh band. Men too wore diverse accessories such as necklaces, hair wraps, sunglasses, hats and shoulder bags to complete their look.

The gyaru style can be summarized as being very wild, colorful, sexy, free and young. The exaggerated tan, boldly colored hair and multiple layers of clothes and accessories show how strongly gyarus want to stand out, and look different yet very girly at the same time.

### **Gosuroris**

Gosuroris are a category of and the most well-known group of the Japanese Lolita subculture. The word gosurori is a combination of “gothic,” a dark form of rock music and culture, and “Lolita,” a film that features a precocious and sexually attractive young girl. Gosurori is the most well-known Lolita culture because both the “goth” culture and Lolita culture have spread widely in Japan, and gosurori is a combination of the two. Lolita is a visually stimulating subculture that wears styles that are different from the general youth styles of the mainstream. The signature items of Lolitas are frills, petticoats, ribbons, Mary Janes and bonnets. It is a cute and feminine style chosen by young women who feel prettier through their unique choice of dress (Keet, 2007: 60). Gosuroris, according to the colors and accessories they wear and the style

they pursue, are divided into sub-styles such as “classical gothic-Lolita,” “punk gothic-Lolita” and “pink-Loli.” Classical gothic-Lolita wears pastel colors, punk gothic-Lolita adopts punk elements like leather, and pink-Loli wears a lot of pink (Kawamura, 2007: 345). Gosuroris have a similar mind of resistance to gyarus in that they reject normal and ordinary things through their clothes and choose to live a unique life.

All the gosurori styles analyzed were of course women’s styles, since there are no male gosuroris. The main silhouette of clothes worn by gosuroris was an A-line silhouette made by their A-line skirts or dresses (Figure 3). There were also longer A-line silhouettes created by long skirts or dresses, and a few tight silhouettes.

The most popular color of gosuroris was predictably black, and many wore head-to-toe black. Other colors that appeared were white, red and purple etc. in order of frequency, and some feminine colors such as yellow and pink appeared, too.





**Figure 3.**  
Japanese gosurori (Aoki, 2007: 22)

The most worn material was cotton, and next was lace. Other materials chosen for gosurori looks included feminine and soft materials such as polyester, chiffon and velour. Frills were matched the most with solid materials, and prints included playing card symbols such as clubs and spades, crown prints, floral prints and bird cage prints. The materials all seemed to focus on a feminine and doll-like image.

The items most favored by gosuroris were the petticoat skirt, skirt and dress, and tights, and knee-socks were worn together with the skirts or dresses. The most worn top was a blouse or corset top, and shoes were Mary Janes, T-straps or lace-up shoes. They also wore feminine items such as cardigans, capes and boleros, and sometimes added a youthful look with arm warmers.

An analysis of accessories showed a lot of feminine accessories such as necklaces and handbags. Unique accessories included a pretty umbrella that matches the clothes, even when it is not raining, a doll-like bonnet, and a small hat or crown that is placed on the head and laced up under the chin. There were also accessories that emphasized the gothic side of gosuroris, such as face piercings or stone stickers for the face.

The gosurori look is a style that can be considered unwearable in many other parts of the country, but it is a part of daily life for some young women in Japan. The

petticoats, platform shoes, doll-like make-up and very feminine accessories all help gosuroris express their own personal style, whether it is femininity with an edge or a strong, dark look with a pop of girlishness.

### ***Emos***

Emo is a short form of the word “emotional,” and the culture started as a genre of rock music in the west. Emocore music, which is a combination of hardcore and rock, especially started to appear in Sapporo in the late 1980s in Japan, but the word emo only started to be used in the late 1990s.

Emocore rock festivals are held in rural areas of Japan and many young people gather to these festivals, but emo is not simply a type of music. It is a youth subculture group that expresses the pains of daily life and loneliness of people’s lives in the modern day in a sensitive way. Young people who call themselves emo enjoy emotional music, like to write and enjoy being alone. They do not enjoy sports or other physical activities, and tend to communicate with others on the internet or mobile phone.

All the photographs of Japanese emo styles examined were men, because although there are

women emos, it is mostly men who play emo music and it is as of yet a male-dominated culture in Japan and there is a lack of sufficient visual material on women emos.

Emo style silhouettes were found to be either slim or natural. Most were slim.

The most worn color was, as predicted, black, and generally emos were found to wear black or blue jeans and a black top, or t-shirts of another color with a black shirt or jacket.

The material that appeared the most was cotton, and next was denim. Other materials included mixes of polyester and wool. Solids without any patterns were the most frequent, and stone-washed jeans appeared a lot, too. The few prints that did appear were letter prints, checkered prints or military prints.

The favorite items of emos were t-shirts, jeans and sneakers, and next were cotton pants and shirts. They were also observed to wear hooded sweatshirts, denim jackets and trench coats. Above all, it was clear that they pursue a simple and non-decorative style.

Analysis of accessories showed that most did not wear accessories, and those who did wore one as an accent to their look, such as a necklace, watch, chain attached to belt, hat or badge.

Emos dress similarly everywhere in the world. Pictures of American emos, for example, can be seen wearing skinny jeans and Converse sneakers. However, Japanese emos especially have naturally dark hair and very skinny physiques, and their minimal accessories rather help express emotions like solidarity and sadness in an otherwise very decorative and visually stimulating society.

### *Surfers*

Japanese surfer culture and fashion first appeared between the late 1970s to the early 1980s, when it immediately became a huge trend, and still remains as a major youth subculture. Japanese surfers are similar to American surfers in that they like to surf, live free and active lives, and enjoy the thrills of speed and danger. However, there is another group of surfers in Japan called oka-surfers, who do not actually surf, but sympathize with the lifestyle and values of surfers and like to wear surfer styles of clothing.

Surfer style is an important part of the surfer subculture, and characteristics of the style are tanned skin and light American casual clothes. The surfer style was especially popular from the 1970s to the 1980s, focusing on the Americamura shopping area in Osaka.

There was a lack of visual material sufficient to analyze women surfers, so only men surfer styles were observed and analyzed. In actual fact much more men surf than women in Japan, and surfing is still a male-focused subculture.

Surfers like to wear a wetsuit top when surfing, so the most frequent silhouette was a tight top and baggy bottom. However, semi-baggy and natural silhouettes also appeared out of the waters.

The most popular colors worn by surfers were black and white, and next were khaki and red. Other colors included blue and brown.

The most worn material was polyester, which was used for swimsuit trunks, and neoprene, used for wetsuit tops, as seen in Figure 4. Other materials were cotton and denim. Most were solid without patterns, and the items with small areas of print that mixed together were logo prints, floral prints, checks and stripes.

The most popular items were swimsuit trunks and Bermuda shorts similar to the shape of swim-



**Figure 4.**  
Japanese surfer (<http://www.sourceokinawa.com>)

suit trunks. Next were wetsuit tops and t-shirts, and the choices of footwear were sandals or waterproof sneakers.

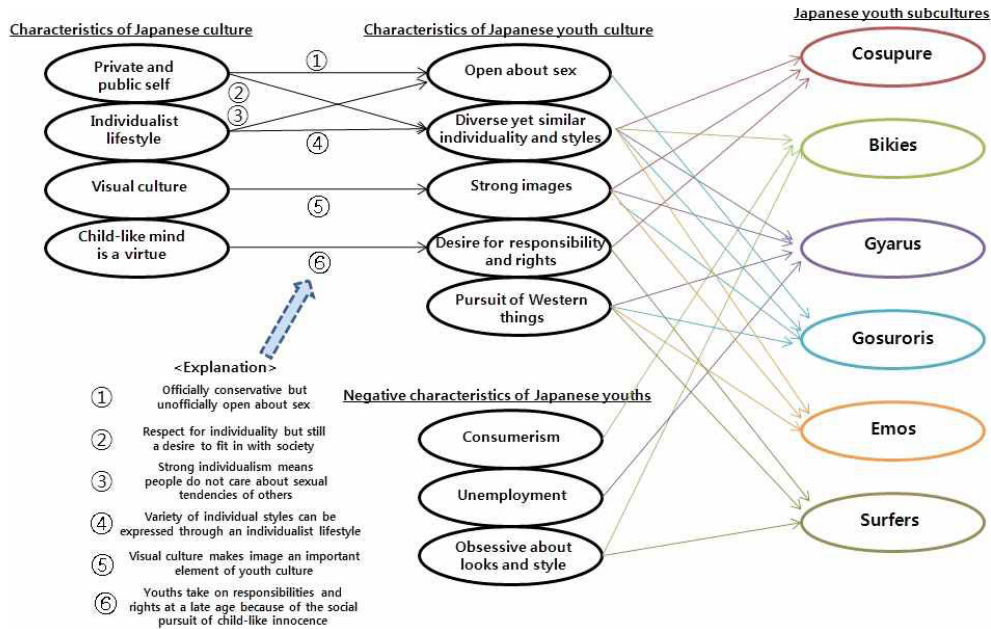
Most surfers wore baseball caps as an accessory, and some wore ankle bands, necklaces and watches. Not many carried a bag, but when they did, it was either a shoulder sports bag or a backpack.

The focus of the Japanese surfer look appeared to be on looking healthy and “American.” Surfers naturally have tanned skin and muscular bodies, but Japanese surfers were found to apply fake tanning lotion on top of their tans, and even those who did not actually surf wore the surfer style, showing the importance on the visual aspect of the culture.

### ***Discussion and Conclusion***

The characteristics of Japanese culture and Japanese youth culture, and negative characteristics of Japanese youths that affect Japanese youth subcultures are shown in Figure 5. Negative characteristics refers to the three characteristics mentioned above -- strong char-

acteristics of Japanese youths that can be considered a problem or issue from a general, unbiased perspective. As shown in Figure 5, modern Japanese youth subcultures express identity, but they do not express only masculine styles like male-dominated subculture of the past such as British punk culture, and are affected not only by popular western music like rock ‘n’ roll and its effect on subcultures in the 1950s, but a wide variety of cultures such as electronic music, Japanese music, games, animations and cartoons. The influence of music has decreased compared to the past, and more focus has shifted to personal satisfaction and pursuit of a fun life. The unchanging point is that youths continue to enjoy being the center of attention and being different from others, and keep this in mind when they style their clothes. Each subculture has its own unique style code, or iconic item that symbolizes their subculture. A variety of styles exist in the cosupure culture because it is a culture that focuses on wearing costumes, but since they mainly aim to look like characters from cartoons or games, high platform shoes are the major style code. The major style code of bikies is the leather jacket, and the symbolism of biker jackets and leather jackets with studs is especially strong. The Alba Rosa brand coat is the style code of gyarus. Although the item started out as women’s wear, it is an item much loved by men now, too. The style code of gosuroris is a petticoat skirt, and that of emos is skinny jeans, just like the style code of emos around the world. Lastly, the important style code of surfers is Bermuda shorts.



**Figure 5.** Characteristics of Japanese culture and Japanese youth culture, and negative characteristics of Japanese youths that affect Japanese youth subcultures

Japan is a country with strong groupism in some respect, but individual space is respected simultaneously. They have a two-sided culture where young people especially try to find a way to escape from reality and restraints of the adult world and express their individuality through exaggerated and unique subculture styles.

The limitation of this study is that it only studied photographs of Japanese youth subculture styles. If members of Japanese youth subcultures had been interviewed and observed directly, it would have led to a more detailed and accurate study. For further depth, future studies should collect more cases, directly meet with, interview and take photographs of Japanese youth subculture members in Japan, and present more cases that clearly show the unique styles and cultural characteristics of each subculture group.

### References

- Aoki, S. (2007). *Fresh Fruits*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Chung, K. J. (2000). *A Comparative Study on the Lifestyles and Clothing Actions of Cosupure wearers and Non-cosupure wearers*. Sookmyung Women's University Master's Degree Thesis.
- International Herald Tribune (2008.5.5). *Young, hip and eager to spend*. by Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop.
- International Herald Tribune (2008.5.13). *Working up a sweat for beauty's sake in Tokyo*. by Kaori

- 
- Shoji.
- Ishikawa, K., Yoshinaga, M. (2007). *Gothic & Lolita*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Jarrett, M. S. (2006). *Street - The Nylon Book of Global Style*. New York: Universe Publishing.
- Kaiser, S. (1990). *The Social Psychology of Clothing*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kawamura, Y. (2007). *The Fashion Reader, Japanese Street Fashion: The Urge To Be Seen and To Be Heard*. New York: Berg.
- Keet, P. (2007). *The Tokyo Look Book - Stylish to Spectacular, Goth to Gyarū, Sidewalk to Catwalk*. Tokyo: Kodanasha.
- Kim, H. C. (2003). Changes in the process of Japanese youth turning into adults - Integration of system to escape from system. *Youth Studies Research*, 10(2), 128-154.
- Richie, D. (2003). *The Image Factory: Fads & Fashions in Japan*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd.
- Rosenberger, N. R. (1992). *Japanese Sense of Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sugimoto, Y. (1997). *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yuji, G. (2005). *A Nagging Sense of Job Insecurity - The New Reality Facing Japanese Youth*. Tokyo: International House of Japan, Inc.