RE-COGNITION OF KAWAII TREND IN CATCH-UP AND SPREAD STRUCTURE

Based on Stationery and Car Design

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Abstract: This paper is the continuity of previous research on trend catch-up and spread structure for kawaii which taken fashion attire as the sample. The research aims to determine the kawaii trend transition in terms of its catch-up and spread including its adaptation and innovation to other places that concern on the background of region during the process of transition. By this study, the way of the trend transition occurs and its target result to other region can be forecasted, to be used as one of the design strategy during design development process. To obtain the study objective, 2 regions taken as the example of the trend transition which are Japan and Malaysia. Survey on kawaii image intimacy is done in each sample groups which are the stationery and car samples. For stationery survey, 30 samples and 10 respondents were selected. For car survey, 22 samples and 10 male respondents were chosen. Data collected is analyzed by MDS to determine the stationeries and cars intimacy position on kawaii image. Then, the MDS maps are grouped based on cluster analysis. A comparative study is done on each respondent’s trend groups. As the result, for stationery and car, 3 kinds of trend transition structures were determined. For overall result, there are 4 kinds of trend transition structures including the fashion area.

Keywords: Kawaii Trend, Catch-up and Spread, MDS

1. Introduction

Lots of products has been transfered from one region to other region and the way of the trend transition happen on each product is different. The acceptance and adaptation of the trend that being transited in the new region is difficult to be grasped and did by assuming only which is less in its precision. There is still no research that studies on the way of trend transition process happen. It is believed that with the knowledge on trend transition structure, it can contribute to initial idea towards the better forecast study during design development process.

This paper is the continuity on previous research which studies on structure of kawaii trend transition structure from Japan to Malaysia in terms of its catch-up and spread pattern which taken fashion area as the initial example.

As the result, there are 3 kinds of kawaii trend transition structure from Japan to Malaysia. First is the new trend that transited, adapted and innovated which bring new image and big impact to the new region. Next is trends that enhanced the existing trend which gain the high influence to the people in the new region. This kind of trend is easy to be re-arranged to look alike the origin style. The other is, trend that transited to be one part of the style in existing trend, due to the existing trend has a wider meaning and usage than the transited trend [1].

As kawaii trend is popular worldwide, it is taken as the example of the trend transition. Instead of the kawaii trend catch-up and spread structures for the fashion area, there might be others kind of potential kawaii trend structures of other kind of product area which remain a question.
2. Research Objective

The aim of this study is to observe the *kawaii* trend transition in terms of its catch-up and spread structure from Japan to Malaysia. By this study, it is believed that it can be one of the information to be used as the strategy in design development process.

3. Difference on Present Situation for Sample Category

In order to observe other kind of *kawaii* trend transition structure, stationery and car areas are taken as the research samples. The selection of sample based on its trend changes [2] duration which is short, intermediate and long. It is believed that different product sample will create own kind of trend transition structure.

For the short trend changes examples, the fashion attire is taken as the sample. In relation, the development process is also short and simple compared to the car. User easy to buy or replace it and easy to re-arrange to fit with their lifestyle.

For intermediate trend changes, the stationery is taken as the sample. In relation, the trend changes is intermediate between fashion and car. Usually, user select the stationery based on the preference and user experienced on its convenience and comfort ability [3].

For long term of trend changes, the car is chased as the sample. Compared to fashion and stationery, the car trend changes is long compared to fashion and stationery. Not all car model will has the style changes. Generally, higher user preference in a car will leads to more car style changes. Car developments process is quite long duration and complex. Even for the minor car style changes, it will take at least a year after mass-production. Due to high price of a car, it is not easy to replace and re-arranged. Car is used as per offered in the market.

As the fashion trend changes is short than other product, it is believed that its trend changes and user acceptance is faster than other product. So, the trend transition structure has a possibility to be difference than other product too. Stationery and car trend is used as per offered which it is difficult to be re-arranged. This kind of condition also will effect its trend transition structure. There might be a similar trend structure for stationery and car.

4. Kawaii Aspect Studies

a) Pre-research on *kawaii* aspect

A studies has been done to raise the potential key-words for *kawaii* elements such as [neutral - unneutral], [obvious-natural], as the major keywords which have been used for the map’s axis. Other than that, minor keywords to explain the detail of *kawaii* elements are such as [characteristic], [adult], [childish], [feeling], [colorful] and so on. In this research, all these key-words is used as guidance for the *kawaii* image group in perceptual map [4].

b) Categorization of *kawaii* image intimacy

Human knowledge structure is generated by the building of the dependence in intimacy category [5]. Based on this, the probability to study on *kawaii* image similarity evaluation in related respondents can be determined.

c) Selection of survey sample and respondent

This study is aim to discuss the way of Japanese *kawaii* trend that transited to other country in terms of structure on its catch-up and spread. In other words, it is to observe the analysis of other country towards *kawaii* trend with the consideration of culture, etc.

Thus, in this study, the *kawaii* samples were selected by the Japanese due to the *kawaii* origin is from Japan. By this, the actual categorization of *kawaii* image can be observed. In relation, it is assumed that the Japanese can emphasize the scale of *kawaii* image well. By the Malaysian evaluation on discussed *kawaii* samples, it could be inferred that the *kawaii* catch-up and spread structures were able to grasp.

In relation to that, both samples of stationery and car were selected by a group discussion of several Japanese students. For stationery, 30 samples of stationery based on different kind of usage and shape that believed has *kawaii* image were selected. 10 respondents is the Japanese and 10 more respondent is Malaysian. For cars, 22 samples based on its basic shape from rounded to boxy were selected. 20 people who are 10 Japanese and 10 Malaysian were selected as the respondents. All of them are male, due to they have higher preference, idea and understanding in car related matter such as in car design image and its market line-up.
d) Survey method

A questionnaire to observe the similarity of the *kawaii* image among each sample is done by *kawaii* image comparison in pairs. For stationery, there are 435 pairs of questions. For cars, there are 231 pairs of questions. Data collected by each respondent is then arranged in square symmetric in dissimilarity ordered class. Then, the data is analyzed by MDS. Cluster analysis is done to groups the samples in the MDS map. The nearer position among samples, the stronger relation of similarity among samples, and vice versa.

Then, the s-stress for both sample groups were analyzed. The stationery, there are 2 dimensional solution for both Japan and Malaysian respondent groups. For car, the Japanese group has 2 dimensional solution and Malaysian group has 3 dimensional solution. [Figure 1]

The MDS map is further analyzed by cluster analysis to group the samples. To determine the *kawaii* trend transition from Japan to Malaysia, the sample in each groups of Japanese is observed. Then, those sample is determined again in Malaysian MDS map by the position. By this way, we can see the understanding Malaysian people about the Japanese group sample. This is one of the way to know the *kawaii* image transition structure from Japan to Malaysia.

5. Result

a) *Kawaii* image understanding in MDS map [figure 2]

i) Stationery

*Kawaii* background studies showed that the Japanese enjoys to do and innovate things to be more interesting to entertain themselves and other people [6]. In stationery, the *kawaii* image application can be seen easily. Japanese MDS map has 2 axis which are [monotone-colorful] and [childish-adult]. The samples are groups into [simple], [funky], [elegant] and [feminine].

[Simple] *kawaii* image of stationery is grouped based on most of the samples are more to basic stationery design image. [Funky] group is more to childish, tiny and colorful design. [Funky] and [simple] groups are bigger than [feminine] and [elegant] groups. It might be due to its user high preference on it. [Feminine] group has *kawaii* image due to flower, shining and decorative design which more to attract female user. [Elegant] image is the stationery with design that more to wood look image in natural colors such as brown and black.

Malaysian categorized MDS map’s axis into [casual-dressy] and [childish-adult]. There are 4 kinds of *kawaii* image groups which are [series], [fancy], [luxury] and [plain]. Sample in [series] is categorized due to most of the samples looks *kawaii* when position together in different colors. [Fancy] group is the biggest group placed in between of axis [childish] and [dressy]. [Luxury] group of samples is categorized based on wood-look image. [Plain] is stationerios that grouped on its common design for stationery that can be seen in general shops in Malaysia.

MDS map axis between Japanese and Malaysia has similarity in Y axis name. In X axis, the category name between both regions are different. Japanese X axis is [monotone-colorful] and Malaysian X axis is [casual-dressy]. It can be said that there is similarity in the...
direction of X axis between both region. The categorized is based on simple towards decorative direction. The comparative study between both regions will be further explained later.

ii) Car

Japanese categorized car kawaii image by looking at overall car image. In the Mds map, there are 2 kinds of axis which are [boxy-round] and [heap-disperse]. Car samples are grouped into 4 groups which are [tall and short], [round and small], [significant bold] and [dynamic and robust].

[Tall and short] is categorized in the same kawaii groups due to its shape. Then, car sample that has kawaii image due to its rounded front view image and small shape is categorized as [round and small]. It is hard to named other 2 groups. However, based on the total car samples image, the groups are named as [significant bold] and [dynamic and robust].

For Malaysian, they grouped the kawaii image in car by looking at the car basic shape and category. In the Mds map, the 2 axis are [boxy-round] and [heap-disperse]. There are 4 groups of car samples which are [rounded-look], [sporty-look], [volumetric] and [boxy and small].

[Rounded-look] is grouped due to similarity in its soft image on its shape. [Sport-look] group is car sample that being categorized for its similarity in sporty image. One of the reason is, Malaysian has higher preference in sporty

Figure 2  Mds map on kawaii image intimacy evaluation
image of car regardless car types. Then there is [volumetric] group. It is hard to give a name for this group. However, this group is named based on total image. [Boxy and small] car group is categorized based on the boxy and small car. The comparative study between Japan and Malaysia will be studied further.

b) Understanding of Japanese kawaii image in Malaysian Mds map.

Kawaii trend is believed has been catch-up and spread in Malaysia. The way of it transition can be observed on the positioning of Japanese kawaii group in Malaysian Mds map.

i) Stationary (figure 3)

Stationary samples in Japanese [simple] group are positioned in Malaysian Mds map in the several groups which are the [fancy] and [plain] group. [Funky] samples is seen in Malaysian positioned in several groups which are the [series], [fancy], and [plain]. For [simple] and [funky] groups, it can be said that the kawaii trend transfered to be in combination in several kawaii groups in new region.

[Feminine] samples are positioned in Malaysia Mds map as one of the small part in [fancy] group. This trend is transfered to Malaysia to be one part of the Malaysian existing trend. [Elegant] samples are positioned in Malaysian group as [luxury] group. There is a similarity in the samples for both [elegant] and [luxury] groups. This trend is transited as a new trend in Malaysia.

ii) Car (figure 4)

[Tall and short] car group in Japanese Mds map is positioned in Malaysian Mds map as [boxy and small]. [Round and small] is positioned in Malaysian in several groups which are in part of [rounded look]. [Significant bold] is positioned in Malaysia as several groups [rounded look] and [sporty look]. [Dynamic and robust] is positioned in Malaysia as a part in [sporty look].

6. Conclusion (Figure 5)

Studies on Japanese kawaii image in Malaysian point of view leads to the understanding on trend caught-up and spreaded structures between regions. Impact of kawaii trend transition from Japanese to Malaysian can be further analysis by observing the culture, user preference such as the way of kawaii image adaptation and innovation. There are 4 kinds of total kawaii trend transition structure including fashion area. Due to the different product categorization for each samples, each samples has its own and unique trend transition structures explained as below:

a) Stationery

For stationery, it is hard to determine the impact of the trend transition to Malaysia due to there are less studies on stationery kawaii image in Japan and Malaysia. Based from the Mds map of both Japanese and Malaysian, it can be said that the groups that represents the understanding on kawaii image is different. Japanese, who keen to kawaii term usage grouped the stationery based on total image. For Malaysian, they grouped the kawaii stationery more on shape, the way it is position and familiarity. There are 3 kinds of trend transition structures can be seen. First is the trend that transited to new region as the new trend. Next is the trend that transited to be a new type in the existing trend in new region. Then, the trend that transited to be a combination in several existing trend.

b) Car

Kawaii image of compact car has been one of the criteria in Japanese car selection [7]. Recently, there are lots of Japanese car design towards friendly companion, not only as a machine for moving around also has a kawaii image [8].This showed that kawaii elements is one of the important criteria for Japanese user in buying a car. Recently, as kawaii trend has been popular throughout the world, there is also a possibility that user in other region will consider kawaii element in buying a car. Based on that, there is also the possibility of kawaii trend transition to Malaysia. Japanese car is accepted and innovated to suit the Malaysian preference which towards sporty image [9].

Car trend transition structures have 2 kinds of patterns which are the trend that transited to be a new trend in new region and the trend that transferred to be a combination for other kind of trends in new region. Trend catch-up and spread structures for car are very limited due to several reasons. For example, car has limitation in certain aspect such as its material and complex technology. Furthermore,
Figure 3 Understanding of Japanese stationery *kawaii* group in Malaysia
Figure 4  Understanding of Japanese car *kawaii* group in Malaysia
c) Fashion

For fashion, there are 3 kinds of trend transition structure. First is the trend that transited to be a new trend. Next is the trend that created a new type in existing trend. The other is trend that transited to expand the existing trend in new region. It is due to the fashion attire can easily be rearranged to fit with the trend that they prefer, which is not applicable to stationery and car.

d) Future work

By the Malaysian evaluation on discussed kawaii samples, it could be inferred that the kawaii catch-up and spread structures were able to be grasped. This study also can be considered as the initial study for impression towards kawaii image between countries. To know further kawaii impression in Malaysia, a comprehensive further work is needed to determine the local adaptation and preference on kawaii trend.

In the other hand, this is also the initial study for kawaii trend transition structure in selected type of products. By this study, a designer can refer to this study to forecast the trend that they would like to transfer in one region. When there are more concrete researches on kawaii elements in the different products and in different regions, there is a possibility to know more detail in its trend transition structure. Then, a study can be done to verify this trend transition structure in future.

Reference