

Influenced *Shōmikigen* on Japanese Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract. Food date labelling is an essential concern for Japanese society which results in a culture of homogeneous and homogeneous consumption behaviour in Japan. This culture of consumption behaviour is analysed using a food ethics approach, which is inseparable from the role of social actors and institutions in society, in this case, government. This article used qualitative methods with literature studies, showing that high literacy skills make it easier for Japanese people to have the same food ethics beliefs that You should leave 8 mm of space above the abstract and 10 mm after the eventually become entrenched. However, on the other hand, it creates another problem called food waste.

1 Introduction

The Japanese government is very concerned about the appropriateness of the food consumed by every citizen. The suitability of the food consumed includes nutrition, the quality of fresh products, and the production process. The Japanese government, which has a big hand in regulating people's consumption, influences food producers to produce products that meet government standards. Those who sell food also pay attention to the quality of the products so they remain fresh and do not exceed the expiry date. According to Japan Intercultural Consulting, this happens because in Japan, the customer is considered a god "*kyakusama wa kamisama.*" So, customer satisfaction becomes essential, and rejecting what the buyer wants is difficult. Every effort made for customer satisfaction; many Japanese suppliers are more concerned with customer satisfaction than business profit and loss. Japanese supermarkets tend to throw away food deemed unfit for consumption. Examples include fruit that has changed color, processed instant salads that are available in supermarkets, eggs and bread eggs, and bread that have exceeded the eligibility limit for consumption, even though the shape and color still look good, will be thrown away, and not be sold by the seller.

Food that is thrown away can cause food waste, affecting the high level of food waste in Japan (food waste). Food waste (including beverages) and other waste cannot separate from human life, such as factories, supermarkets selling food/groceries, places selling food, and households[1]. The main core of the food waste issue is policies and regulations such as quality standards, management regulations, bad environmental conditions, and consumer behavior. Examples of consumer behaviour contributing to high food waste in a country are excessive purchases, lack of planning, and misunderstanding between the expiration date and a suitable date for consuming a food product. The behaviour of consumers who choose products based on the date label of a product is the main topic of this article. Consumer behavior can be motivated by cultural considerations or technical reasons. Culture is dynamic, original and cannot directly be observed with the naked eye, but that does not mean we can search its background. This article aims to explain the role of culture in the behavior of Japanese consumers who are very concerned about food date labels. This article will also discuss factors behind the culture that influence the behaviour of Japanese consumers in choosing a product based on the date label using the concept of Food Ethics.

2 Result and Discussion

Culture is often understood as a system of values, norms, patterns of behaviour, which are spread by members of society so that culture has an effect on directing people's behavior. Culture is a product; of history, containing ideas, patterns, selected values, learned, based on symbols, and are abstractions from behaviour [2]. Apart from culture, consumer behaviour is also directed by state actors, in this case Japan. Japan builds narratives and products that influence people's consumption behaviour. Together with advances in technology, industry, and development, it affects mindsets and rationality in choosing a product that has an impact on people's consumption behaviour. Modernization and industrialization may sound clichéd, but these two things influence the culture of Japanese society's consumption behaviour socialized by state actors.

Japan's unique socio-cultural factors in terms of population, homogeneity, and community organization systems are external individual factors that influence the culture of Japanese society's consumption behaviour. Another Japanese uniqueness that has an impact on the culture of consumption behaviour in Japanese society is seen in every society that has the resources, education and access to technology and prioritizes beauty, quality, impression and mass of a product. Japan's economic miracle is at the heart of the development of a new culture of consumer behaviour because, at this time, the ability of Japanese people to buy a product is relatively high. The peak of societal affluence created, so in the 1960s and early 1970s, Japan's mass market increased rapidly. Japan's consumer society developed relatively recently, starting in the 1960s, and it is characterized by a shift from need to want.

Indeed, this transition is a fundamental shift in Japanese society; in general, Japanese people are categorized as consumers who are "literate" about a product. Values, customs, attitudes, opinions, motivations, and perceptions give rise to culture. Historically, the Confucian culture exerted its influence. Another thing that is synonymous with Japan is that it is a homogeneous country, having one language, cultural heritage, and the same ancestral myths. Likewise, with the culture of consumption behaviour, people tend to have similarities because they share the same values and beliefs about a product. Japanese consumers, who mostly come from middle-income groups, certainly influence their choices.

Individual social awareness tends to be relatively uniform. Conformance with group norms is an essential characteristic of collectivist cultures. Japan's conformity has been traced to historical factors such as strict laws imposed during the Tokugawa shogunate, militarism before WWII, and campaigns for frugal living after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on Nagasaki. *Nihonjinron* characterizes Japan as

a homogeneous nation built on a harmonious set of collectivist and social values, unlike any other culture [3].

Aesthetic values are highly emphasized in all aspects of Japanese socio-culture, seeking perfection in presentation, packaging, and other aspects of life. The product's aesthetic appearance is a critical point and a vital offer to get consumers' attention. Japanese consumers are more concerned with aesthetics for food and tools than consumers from China. [4] Jargon *mottainai* is a concept that expresses regret for throwing away a valuable item. Culture contributes to food waste, and food is a need closely connected with culture because there are habits, values, and routines. Culture, on the one hand, must be seen as a lens through which an individual views various phenomenon and, on the other hand, traces of human behaviour. [5]

Historically, consumption patterns can be traced to when Japan first started importing food goods. Japan became an industrialist and modern country in 1960 with the start of an economic miracle [6]. Food imports are why the Japanese government issued date labelling regulations to see the feasibility of consumption. There are two date labels in Japan, namely 賞味期限 (しょうみきげん) (*Shōmikigen*) and 消費期限 (しょうひきげん) (*Shōhikigen*). 賞味期限 (しょうみきげん) (*Shōmikigen*) is the best date for eating a product, emphasizing that the taste of the product will be the same as desired by *Shōmikigen* used for non-perishable and long-shelf-life products such as dashi, snacks, and frozen foods. 消費期限 (しょうひきげん) (*Shōhikigen*) or expiration date, the expiration date on the end date the product is safe for consumption. [7] The expiration date display was introduced in 1985 by Codex as the creator of the first international food standard to introduce "*Shōmikigen*" labelling. According to the Consumer Affairs Agency, food labelling is an action from the Food Sanitation Act.

The Japanese food industry has a "1/3" business practice, and ingredients that are two-thirds past their best date are removed from sales displays and thrown away. Supermarkets like Sevel have significant food waste due to oversupply, poor sales, and missed best-by-date products. Japanese consumers avoid food products past their best-by date consumption, such as cakes, bento, sandwiches, and bread. Another example is the culture of eating *Setsubun* in one night; if someone manages to eat *Setsubun* without saying anything, your dream will come true. The culture of eating *Setsubun* triggers supermarkets to sell lots of *Setsubun*, and eventually, they become oversupplied and pass the best date for consumption; of course, consumers will not be worth it to buy anymore.

The expiry date tells consumers the last day a product is safe to eat, while the best date tells that the food is no longer in perfect shape

since that date, but the food may have lost its freshness, taste, aroma, or nutrition. However, this change does not mean the food is no longer safe to eat at the consumer level. The 'best before date' food labeling causes enormous waste, coupled with careless consumer attitudes. Food production that is not consumed causes unnecessary CO₂ emissions and the loss of the economic value of the food produced.

Food production and distribution, however, are sometimes considered in the traditional sense. Nevertheless, the biological necessity of food for each individual and the cultural and symbolic role of food in society means that ethical issues are always close. The ethical issue regarding food includes the responsibilities of individuals and society in health and safety. [8]

The shifting global balance of power manifests in economic and cultural power, accompanied by changes in the production and circulation of knowledge. However, modernity generally involves cultural innovation in various fields of learned knowledge, such as science and technology, but also the development of a cultural realm of book-based literacy, innovation, and discussion of art [9]. Additionally, there was an emerging consumer culture in which new goods circulated, and taste hierarchies and classifications became necessary from the time of the Tokugawa. Tokugawa provides space for literacy improvement and book publishing, providing various manuals, manuals, and practical encyclopedias [10].

Culture contains the habit of submissive acts of society in obeying the rules that gradually shape the morals of society. Morals include practices or activities that distinguish what is considered better and worst or right and wrong. It is a science that explains the meaning of good and evil, what humans should do, and guides humans to the goals that must be achieved. What is emphasized in ethics is human behavior. It turns out that a person's eating pattern is formed from his cultural background [11], which is influenced by various socio-cultural changes, such as lifestyle and the introduction of ideology. Food is part of the culture. Because there are values, habits, and norms which are believed and continue to be carried out, ethics in food for Japanese people can be seen in how Japanese people can see the good and bad of a product. In this context, the consumption behavior of the Japanese people they are selective in choosing food based on the date label on the food product packaging. They choose good and bad for their health and safety. If Japanese consumers want to feel a product in a "good" state according to the manufacturer's intention, then the ethics that are believed to be good are *Shōmikigen*. Food ethics based on date labeling cannot be separated from the role of the government, which regulates consumer needs in such a way as to protect the benefit of the Japanese people. Date labeling becomes a regulation to convince Japanese consumers that food safety

standards are highly maintained. Government regulation was in line with industrial development and rebuilding the Japanese economy after the slump.

Ethics in food that chooses good and bad based on date labeling gives birth to morals practiced in everyday life; clear regulations that support Japanese society create entrenched consumer behavior in the country. Actors and social institutions can create, reduce, add to, and stabilize a culture in their country [12]. In contrast, the culture of Japanese society's consumption behavior is limited to its ability to support the production system based on the ethics and morals it wants to achieve. However, whatever has been regulated by state actors is then believed by the community and becomes a culture in society; of course, it has consequences that impact the environment. Meanwhile, it is not confident that Japanese society has the same ethics and morality when looking at the cultural impact of consumer behavior on the environment.

3 Conclusion

Shōmikigen and *Shōhikigen* are regulations on Japanese calendar labels by the Japanese government that direct the consumption culture of Japanese people to choose products with the best quality when consumed. The consumption culture of the Japanese people is seen as food ethics because they choose food based on good and bad for their bodies. High literacy skills make it easier for Japanese people to determine the ethics of the food they choose. As a homogeneous society, Japan tends to more easily believe in the same food ethics so that the cold morals are the same among the people. However, food date labeling leaves a new problem that still needs a solution, which is one of the triggers for food waste.

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