

ORIGINAL RESEARCH: The role of the Internet in the revival of Japanese *kimono*

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the Internet in the present revival of wearing Japanese *kimono*. *Kimono* has continually changed through its history according to the sociopolitical situation and with developing technology. The present revival of *kimono* could be considered to be driven by developing technology. Technology driven developments of *kimono* in the 20th century include mass-production in the 1920s, developments in dyeing that enabled the production of cheap silk *meisen kimono*, and the use of chemical dyes which led to brighter and also fast colors. However, today's revival of *kimono* wearing is not generated by new technology in production; instead, changes in *kimono* wearing today are driven by the Internet technology which has enabled new developments in the way that *kimono*, *kimono* discourse, and information is appropriated. *Kimono* discourse is now 'out there' rather than being locked into the world of the *kimono* schools and businesses. This has resulted in a great challenge to the regular channels for the appropriation and education of *kimono*. This paper outlines the many ways in which *kimono* wearers are using the Internet to bypass established channels in favor of a casual and democratic exchange of information. This has resulted in an ongoing change in the metaknowledge that surrounds *kimono*, and the rejection of an iconic image of a formal and doll-like Japanese woman, in favor of a fashionable and expressive garment that may be used in the street every day.

Keywords: Fashion, Internet, Japan, Japanese women, Kimono, Metaknowledge.

Introduction

“Clothing is part of material culture and has a double face. It is at one and the same time public and private, material and symbolic, always caught between the lived experience and providing an incredible tool with which to study culture and history” (Paulicelli, E. and H. Clark 2009:3).

Doing my PhD research “Revisiting Fashion and Tradition through the Kimono”, I discovered that Western fashion theories commonly do not account for fashion in non-European nations. Traditional explanations for fashion, such as those by Flugel, Laver, Simmel, Veblen and others, locate fashion as developing from a European center, assuming that only Western Europe had the economic, social and political systems necessary for a fashion system to occur. However, historical research on *kimono* reveals that the *kimono* dressing system has always demonstrated the dynamics and change associated with a fashion system, in both its material and formal qualities and also in its social role. The research continues by examining contemporary *kimono* from multiple angles, to reveal the garment in both global and personal, material and symbolic dimensions, as a fashion with depth, as a consumer product in the market place, as a catalyst for group making activities, and as a casual garment worn by fashion conscious Japanese.

It became clear through this multi-methodological research that the Internet was playing a key role in all these phenomena. This paper examines how the present revival of *kimono*, as a street fashion or a casual garment, has been driven by the motor of cyberspace. Fashion is becoming increasingly central to discussions of culture (Lipovetsy 1994). My purpose was to identify whether *kimono* should be considered traditional - and therefore oppositional to fashion, or whether it could be considered fashionable, which

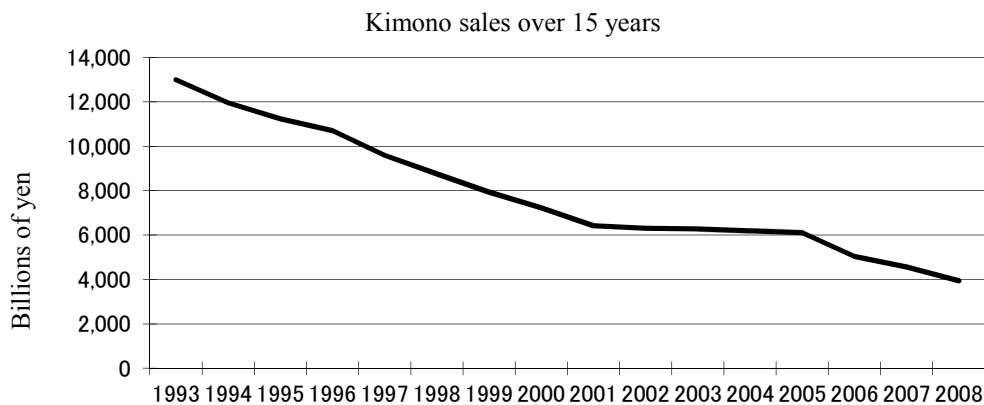
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would indicate a more complex and non-oppositional relationship between tradition and fashion.

The 20th century was one of turmoil for *kimono*; in the early 20th century great developments in *kimono* making technology led to the mass-production of cheap and easily available silk, *meisen kimono*, which were the height of fashion in the 1930s (Kon:1937). Production fell off in the 1940s, and by 1950 half of Japanese women were wearing Western dress, which they considered as practical and modern. Even if women wore *kimono*, the school uniforms were Western styled; so a generation of children grew up in Western clothing.

The post-war generation was the first one to grow up without learning to dress themselves in their native dress. The result of this was a severe shrinking of the *kimono* market. In the 1960s, the *kimono* shops, wanting to increase their customer base, opened the first *kimono* schools (Dalby:1991). These schools turned the natural dressing process into a system and promoted a formal and inexpressive style of *kimono* dressing. *Kimono* lessons were for the upper middle class, and for housewives with time to spare. They were a way of buying into cultural superiority. Shops ceased selling cheap everyday *kimono*, and it became relegated to a formal dress. The devastating effect on the *kimono* industry is shown on the chart in figure 1.

Figure 1. Falls of sales in *kimono* over 15 years



Source: Yano Research Institute

Yano Research Institute surveyed women from the ages of 20 to 50 in the Kanto and Kansai regions to find out their attitudes to *kimono*. They asked women why they did not wear *kimono* and got the following results:

I cannot wear it by myself	72.1%
I have nowhere to wear it	58.8%
It is too expensive	48.5%

In other words, women did not dislike *kimono*, but they perceived it as difficult to wear, expensive and only for formal occasions. These perceptions were probably created by the industry itself. However, since the 1990s there has been evidence of micro-trends in the world of *kimono*, and a world-wide boom in Asian chic around 2000 led to the re-evaluation of *yukata* as a fashionable option for summer wear. The *yukata* is a casual cotton summer *kimono*; originally a bath-robe, it has become a popular and cheap garment for

going out, in the hot summer months. The *yukata* boom has led to a re-evaluation of the *kimono* itself. However, people are avoiding the traditional routes for the appropriation of *kimono*.

The significance of the Internet is that it enables people to by-pass the *kimono* shops (which commonly are not trusted; see below) and the similarly unpopular *kimono* schools. To think of the Internet as one technology is rather misleading, as there are several different platforms with various ways of usage. Internet shopping allows people to purchase *kimono* outside the traditional *kimono* shops which according to research by Yano Research Institute for Kansai Ministry of Trade and Industry (white paper 2009), have lost the trust of *kimono* customers. The Internet, is far more than a giant 24/7 *kimono* shopping mall where 135,000 *kimono* are on sale on Yahoo and 163,265 *kimono* are on sale on Rakuten websites daily; it is also being used as an educational tool. For example, the YouTube acts as a facility for uploading movies and a convenient way of teaching how to dress in *kimono*. In addition, the Internet is being used as a social networking tool, with people sharing their experiences and information regarding *kimono* through personal blogs as well as social networking sites, including Facebook and Mixi (a Japanese site similar to Facebook).

Kimono wearers are increasingly getting together in *kimono* wearing groups. The first one, 'Kimono de Ginza', emerged in 1999. Since then numerous groups have emerged, 'Kimono Biyori', 'Kimono Jack', 'Kimono Project', 'Nihonbashi Kimono Club', 'Kawagoe Sanpo' and others. 'Kimono de Ginza' has been described by Assman (2008) as a post-modern group, in that it is relatively unstructured and non-hierarchical, unlike the *kimono* school system. Most of these groups rely on the Internet for posting their event news. Twitter, Facebook and Mixi are the preferred ways. Mixi has many forums which are built around interest in *kimono*. Many *kimono* wearers meet in these forums and then after discussions eventually meet in real life. Thus online activity cannot really be separated from the activities of the physical groups.

Methodology

The explorations conducted here were not designed to investigate the specific content of blogs or social networking activity, but to establish the extent of it, and whether or not it was growing. Fashion is a growing area of cultural interest. Longitudinal data was collected on blogging activity and blogging about *kimono* was tracked over time between October 2008 and May 2012 to find out whether it was increasing or decreasing. Increasing blogging on *kimono* would indicate that it is increasingly popular and relevant to fashion, whereas a decrease would suggest that it was not. To further investigate this phenomenon, a certain Japanese blogging host site, 'Blog Mura' (*mura* means village), was traced over time and the number of blogs recorded. On this site, the blogs were categorized according to content enabling data collection on many different *kimono* categories.

Another type of online forum is a Facebook fandom. The second investigation was to become a fan of a *kimono* fandom (of which there are many), and then post updates, and see what kind of a response, if any, was received. On September 5, 2009, I discovered the 'kimono fandom' page on Facebook; it had been started in February 2009 by a non-Japanese. When I discovered the page, there were 400 fans and none of the postings came from Japan. There was little information and few postings on it. I started to post regular updates from Japan on to the page, to determine how big it would grow, and what kind of response would emerge.

Lastly, using the Internet as a research tool, I conducted survey research outside Japan, using the Internet as a platform, to determine the importance of the Internet for *kimono* wearers located outside Japan.

The questions are found in Table 1.

Table 1. Questions used for the Internet ‘kimono wearer survey’

Q1.	How did you first become interested in kimono?
Q2.	What is your experience with Japan? Have you been there? Visited there? For how long?
Q3.	Where and how did you learn to wear kimono: from a teacher, in classes, in Japan, from video, from a book, etc.
Q4.	How long have you been wearing kimono and how often do you wear it?
Q5.	Describe your kimono wardrobe: How many do you have? What types are they?
Q6.	Describe your consumption habits: Where do you buy them? Price per kimono or outlay per month?
Q7.	Describe your kimono wearing habits: How often do you wear them, and where do you typically go?

Findings and Results

Doing a search using the Safari search engine with the Japanese term for ‘Kimono Blog’ (着物ブログ), data was collected on the number of blogs about *kimono*. The resulting data is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of hits for ‘kimono blog’ (in Japanese, using the Safari search engine)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of hits</i>
October 2008	2,820,000
December 2009	4,410,000
August 2010	4,750,000
May 2012	24,700,000

The data showed a great increase in the number of blogs about *kimono* over time. Even accounting for a gap of over a year and a half between the last two entries, the number of blogs increased tenfold as compared with the start of the study and fivefold between the last two dates. The number of *kimono* blogs was increasing at an increasing speed.

The research was then refined to one Japanese blogging host site, ‘Blog Mura’ (ブログ村). On this site it was possible to trace the rate of increase of total fashion blogs, as well as *kimono* blogs. The data in Table 3 shows the rate of increase in various categories of *kimono* blogs, as well as the increase in the total number of fashion blogs.

Over the period under study, the total number of fashion blogs increased more than 3 fold, from 7,209 to 24,088. During the same length of time blogging about *kimono* increased at a similar rate, around 4 fold, which implies a possible relationship between the two and that *kimono* could be considered as part of the growing interest in fashion. Notable is that in 2012 the increase in *kimono* blogging was important enough for the blogging host site to create several new categories of blogs that did not previously exist. Rates of increase in the various types of blogs are different. For example, increases of tenfold in the areas of dressing (*kitsuke*), men’s kimono, and Japanese *kimono* fashion (*wasou*) were recorded.

Also, everyday *kimono* blogs outnumber formal *kimono* (*furisode*) blogs by ten to one. This data implies that the people writing those blogs were interested in wearing *kimono* as everyday dress. Few people were interested in *kimono* as a form of social or cultural distinction, which would be demonstrated by a higher number of formal *kimono* blogs. This supports the hypothesis that Japanese people today are more

interested in casual *kimono* rather than formal *kimono*. The large increase in the dressing (*kitsuke*) category testifies a change from wanting metaknowledge to wanting practical knowledge about how to dress. A tenfold increase in blogs about men's *kimono* suggests that a growing number of men are interested in *kimono*.

Table 3. Number of *kimono* blogs on 'Blog Mura'

Category	October 26, 2008	December 12, 2009	January 22, 2012	May 8, 2012
Total fashion blogs	7,209	13,465	22,721	24,088
Kimono, wasou	438	655	970	1,012
Kitsuke (dressing)	27	115	230	247
Antique, recycle	20	109	198	222
Remake (Western clothing from kimono)	5	37	113	121
Dansei (men's kimono)	5	28	51	56
Wasou fashion	5	66	108	113
Kimono businesses			47	56
Kimono dress			28	33
Everyday kimono			252	289
Furisode (long-sleeved kimono)			23	28
Wasou footwear			9	9
Wasou accessories			16	19
Total Kimono Blogs	500	1,010	2,045	2,205

Secondly, as a participant observer, I started posting news and photographs from my experiences at *kimono* events on a *kimono* Facebook fandom page. I discovered a *kimono* fandom in September 2009 that was not very active. There were about 400 fans, all of them outside Japan, with occasional posts of sad looking *kimono* on coat hangers, but no up to date information about events, or photographs of ordinary Japanese people wearing *kimono*. I began to post regularly on the page from that September. The fandom began to grow by about 50 likes per week, reaching 1,000 fans on November 5th, and 2,697 on May 14th 2010. The rate of increase was steady, and the administrator asked me to take over the administration of the page in May 2010. This came with editorial rights to the page and access to the demographic data of the fans who 'liked' the page. As it is also possible to 'unlike' a page on Facebook, it can provide good diachronic data and is a good record of whether interest in the page is rising or falling. However it will inevitably fall if interesting posts are not regularly updated, so it is important to keep posting on the page. Figure 2 shows the increase in the number of Facebook *kimono* fandom page fans, over time. In the period on the graph, the number of fans more than doubled, which demonstrates that there were more new 'likes' than 'unlikes' throughout the period.

Figure 3 shows the demography of *kimono* fans who liked the page. By stated gender 20% were men and 80% were women. The biggest difference in the genders is in the 13 to 17 year old age group. However, as the age increases the difference appears to lessen, until in the 45 to 54 age group, where the number of men is over half of the number of women. I assume that these men are probably Japanese and many of them may be *kimono* craftsmen or dealers. The age group of *kimono* fans on Facebook that are most interested in *kimono* is the 18-24 age group. Whether this is because this age group uses Facebook the most or because

there are more *kimono* fans in this age group is unknown. This age related peak is younger than the age peak in *kimono* wearing groups in Japan. This might indicate that an increasing number of non-Japanese *kimono* wearers are coming from a background of manga, animations and new culture, rather than traditional Japanese culture.

Figure 2. Increase in Facebook *kimono* page fans over time, by the number of ‘likes’

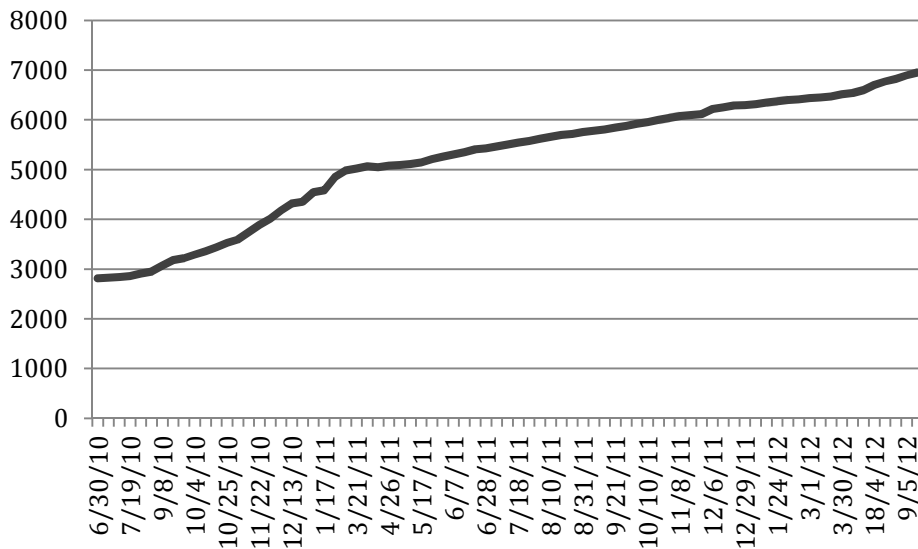
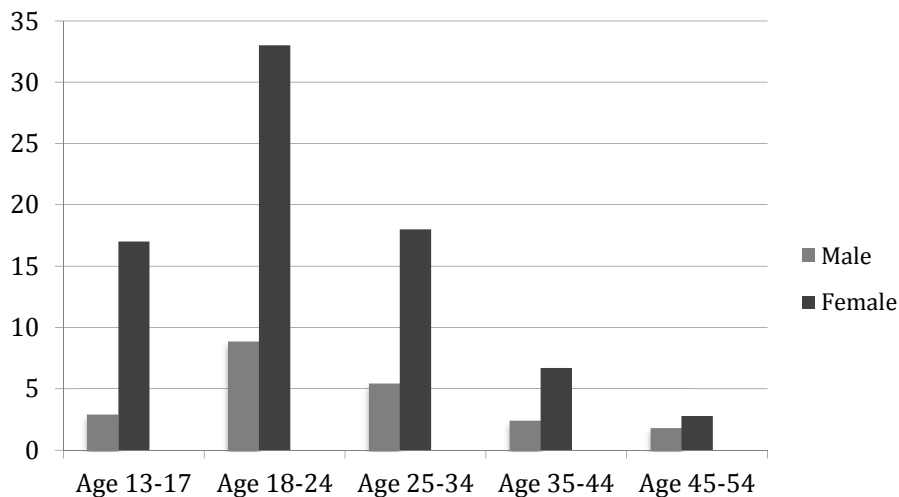
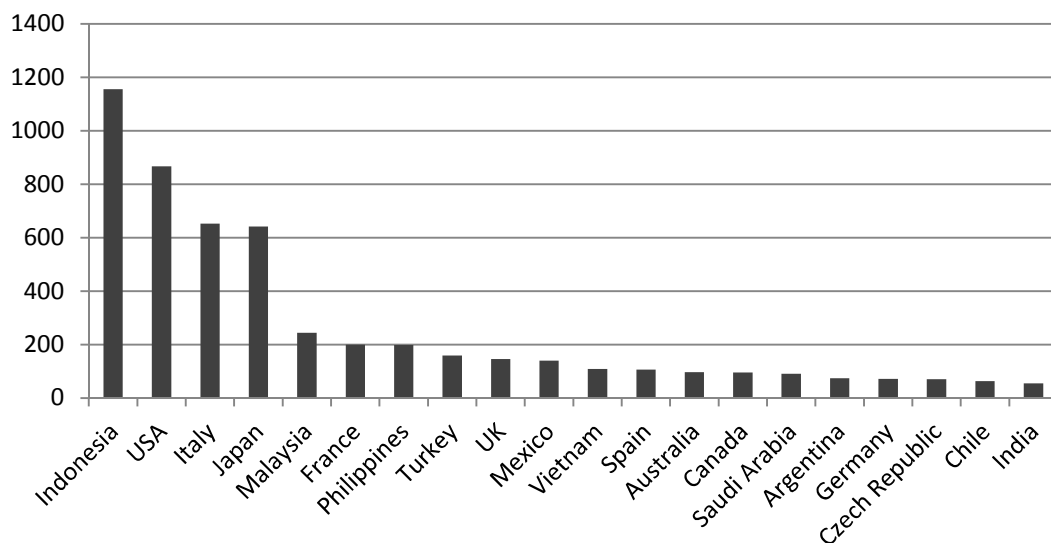


Figure 3. Demography of Facebook *kimono* page fans by age and stated gender



As people usually post comments in English, I had assumed the fans were mainly from the US and Europe, or were Japanese who could understand English. However, whilst they are not posting or commenting very much, there are a large number of people from other countries, who have liked and are looking at the page. Figure 4 is a graph showing the origins of fans by location. Indonesia has the largest number of fans, followed by the US, Italy and Japan.

Figure 4. Origins of Facebook *kimono* page fans by country, and the number of ‘likes’

The open forum on Facebook provides a space where people can post information, or their *kimono* photographs, ask questions about *kimono*, cloth, dressing or events. It also provides a way for *kimono* fans outside Japan to see what is going on within Tokyo. The number of Japanese fans is increasing, including dyers, *obi* makers and some *kimono* businesses. This shows that makers are becoming increasingly interested in this overseas group of fans, many of whom like to wear *kimono*. This page provides a space where *kimono* makers can show their works directly to *kimono* wearers. It is possible to post links to events or exhibitions in Tokyo, and find out about a *kimono* fashion show in Ohio, for example. People share their stories, blog links, and swap information about informative websites, so although it is an unstructured space, it does not mean that what happens there is insignificant.

I also followed the discussions about whether or not *kimono* is fashion on the Facebook *kimono* fandom. Some believed that *kimono* is in essence a fashion while others regarded *kimono* mostly within its deep cultural significance in Japan. Some believed that everything we wear is fashion, and any clothing is fashion. Others believed that the way *kimono* is constructed enforces you to choose a style. In such exchange *kimono* fans discuss whether or not *kimono* is fashion, and whether or not clothing by itself is all fashion or the same as fashion.

As there is huge interest in *kimono* outside Japan, and the number of people who are involved in wearing *kimono* is growing, I decided to investigate the non-Japanese wearers further, conducting a pilot study. This consisted of an online survey for comparison with a Japanese survey which had already been conducted at two *kimono* wearing groups in Tokyo. The online survey was conducted using the Survey Monkey platform. The Survey Monkey tool was used for data gathering, and even in the limited, free format, I could do the same survey as used at two Japanese *kimono* wearing groups. The questions were listed in Table 1.

The results of online survey of overseas *kimono* wearers showed that many first become interested in *kimono* through Japanese culture and language or watching anime, costumes and cosplay. The results demonstrated that the informants had a good knowledge of *kimono* types, accessories, etc., but had limited resources available for the purchase of *kimono* overseas. Many learned to wear *kimono* from the Internet

only. Most were wearing *kimono* for 2-3 years, but only occasionally and for special events. Some wore *kimono* to Japanese cultural events, while others wore it to go to a restaurant, museum, concert, theater or a costume party. Most purchased the *kimono* over the Internet. A few respondents had lived in or had visited Japan and a similar number wanted or were planning to go to Japan. Other respondents mentioned other kinds of connections such as studying Japanese or meeting Japanese people in the course of their work. Just under a third of people had actually been to Japan, so the majority had not actually seen *kimono* in Japan and were dependent on various kinds of visual images for their knowledge of Japan and of *kimono*.

There was a huge variety of ways that people got interested in *kimono*, almost as many different answers as participants, making it difficult to categorize results. Some people become interested in *kimono* through an interest in geisha culture, as there have been many books published in English recently on this area, as well as the release of the film, 'Memoirs of a Geisha'. This aspect of Japanese culture is particularly difficult to explain or understand, and continues to exert a powerful fascination over the Western mind. The largest two groups were people interested in Japanese culture, split evenly between those who mention relatively new cultural preoccupations, such as anime and cosplay, and those who mention more traditional culture, such as antiques and Japanese art.

The USA has had a large military presence in Japan since World War II, and several respondents commented that either they or their parents or grandparents had been stationed in Japan, and had Japanese items in their homes which had sparked an interest in Japan and in *kimono*. Several people mention that another Japan enthusiast had got them interested, and also a few, that a trip to Japan had sparked their interest. Only one participant attributed her interest to meeting with the Japanese immigrant community where she lives and only three participants were interested in *kimono* as the result of a previous interest in fashion or textiles.

For almost half the respondents, the computer was the only resource for learning to wear *kimono*. While some people responded 'online', others named YouTube and Facebook, as online resources, and by far the most widely used resource was the site 'Immortal Geisha'. This site was set up by one of the respondents, and aims to be a resource for information about *geisha*, and includes links to many *kimono* and dressing related sites. Only four people learnt from a book alone, and the book was named by them as 'The Book of Kimono' by Norio Yamanaka. Before the Internet made videos and online tuition possible, this was the well-known English language text from which to learn *kimono* dressing. The results show an overwhelming preference for using the computer. Numerous YouTube videos demonstrate the dressing process, and it is far easier to follow a video than a series of drawings or photographs. This shows that learning to wear *kimono* for a non-Japanese is a very different experience from that of a Japanese. The same questionnaire given to Japanese people showed that almost all of them learnt from another person, either a *kimono* school or a relative.

The majority of *kimono* wearers who responded have been wearing *kimono* for 2-3 years. There were sixteen respondents who had worn *kimono* for more than 4 years, and 4 who had worn *kimono* for more than 8 years. This may correspond with a rise in the number of Japanese cultural events, such as anime or cosplay events or it may also reflect the increasing availability of websites which show how to dress. The frequency of *kimono* wearing, for the majority, was low. Thirty five *kimono* wearers wear it once a month, or less. This would be considered occasional *kimono* wearing in Japan. There were few *kimono* wearers who are wearing it every week, or more than once a month. As frequency of use is a condition for developing good dressing skills, the non-Japanese will find it hard to develop their dressing skills.

Regarding *kimono* types, many people own *kimono* such as *uchikake*, wedding gowns or *hikizuri*, *maiko* dancing *kimono*, which cannot normally be worn out in society in Japan. The majority of *kimono* wearers appear to know the words for all the different types of *kimono*. This indicates that they have studied, either online or with books. This reveals a commitment to *kimono* wearing even though they may not wear the *kimono* often. There is very little interest in woven *kimono*, the group of *tsumugi*, *omeshi*, *kasuri*, different woven *kimono*, is very poorly represented in comparison with dyed *kimono*.

The vast majority of purchases of *kimono* are made online, with eBay being the most popular source; eight other sources cited were also online stores. Inevitably the number of people buying from stores in Japan is small, as few of the sample have been to Japan. Apart from the very few stores open in the US or Europe, people are limited to buying online, which is a very different kind of shopping experience from going to a shop. The limited supply of outlets means that these people are competing with each other in auctions to buy the same *kimono*. Whilst Yahoo Japan and Rakuten have a huge selection of *kimono* for sale, they are usually not in the appropriate price range for these consumers and many of the companies do not ship abroad. *Kimono* wearers outside Japan operate on very limited budgets. Two of the participants commented that they spent too much, or their spending was excessive, but none of these purchases appear excessive compared with what Japanese spend on *kimono*.

Kimono wearers outside Japan, for the most part, like to have some kind of special event at which to wear their *kimono*. An event related to Japanese culture was the most popular choice, followed by eating out, and other kinds of cultural events. Ten people wore *kimono* at home, possibly practicing to increase their wearing skills. There are a few people who wear *kimono* for casual events but the vast majority wanted a special event to wear it to.

Discussion

The Internet emerges as a key tool in the dissemination of information about *kimono*. It is an effective message board for posting news and announcements about *kimono* events. Mixi, Twitter, and increasingly Facebook, are the favored Japanese platforms for spreading news about ‘Kimono Jacks’, and other meetings. One could go as far as to say that the *kimono* wearing groups would not have developed without the power of the Internet. Through YouTube, blogs, forums, and also Mixi, the Internet provides a platform for education about all aspects of *kimono* including how to dress, and thus poses a challenge to the hegemonic *kitsuke gakuin*, *kimono* dressing school. One wearer described the benefit of being able to ask a question about dressing on Mixi and have numerous answers within a few hours.

Some people never go to events, but only communicate on the Internet. Bauman (2004) has characterized online post-modern relationships as superficial, to be ended at the click of a mouse, “hardly a substitute for the solid”, and he believes that commitment is something we fear. We “skate on thin ice” and so “speed is of the essence”. Bauman says of internet communities:

“Fun they may be, these virtual communities, but they create only an illusion of intimacy, a pretense of community” (Bauman 2004:25).

The online *kimono* community however, should not be dismissed as unreal or fake. Many a meaningful relationship has been forged through networking and the sharing of learning, advice, experiences and information. Often online activities lead to real life meetings, and friendships. People begin by commenting

on a blog or becoming a member of an online group. Then perhaps they arrange to meet or attend a group and gradually become friends. An informant described how he became better able to express himself in real relationships, through contacting people online, and getting used to conversing with them in cyberspace, first. Though *kimono* groups are not bound by a specific, small community location, by kinship bonds, or lesson fees, they are bound together by a strong desire to communicate and share about a specific interest. They are bound by choice. Computer expert Rheingold has a much more positive view of the internet than Bauman, and views it as a powerful tool.

Televisions, telephones, radios and computer networks are potent political tools because their function is not to manufacture or transport physical goods but to influence human beliefs and perceptions (Rheingold 1995:297).

For *kimono* wearers outside Japan, the Internet is even more important, and works as a *kimono* lifeline, providing for many, the only source of *kimono* and all information about *kimono*. It is also the preferred way to learn to dress, without a teacher. YouTube and the ‘Immortal Geisha’ forum are the two most frequently cited sources of information for those outside Japan. There are millions of *kimono* blogs in Japanese, and many in the English language too. The Internet is birthing a generation of non-Japanese *kimono* wearers, who are interested in, but unfettered by Japanese history and conventions. They perhaps feel that they have an artistic license to dress in interesting or experimental ways because they are outside a Japanese context. The key significance of this group is that all their *kimono* and their *kimono* knowledge comes from outside official channels, providing proof that *kimono* schools (*kitsuke gakuin*) are no longer a necessity. The Internet activity between these non-Japanese *kimono* wearers and Japanese *kimono* wearers is increasing, and some non-Japanese wearers are well-known in Japan for their dressing skills.

Until now technological developments have largely been in the production of the *kimono* itself, though the printing developments in the Edo period also led to new marketing techniques. There continue to be technological developments in the silk and textile industries, such as breeding silk worms with longer threads, developing colored cocoons and making softer and silkier polyester. However the present telecommunication revolution, with its impact on the dissemination of information, appears to have an even greater influence on the *kimono* world now, than do new technologies of production. It is through these channels that a resurgence of *kimono* wearing is being generated.

Conclusion

In spite of opposition from some traditionalist quarters, this grass-roots *kimono* wearing movement is growing at the time of writing. The number of new groups, their increasing membership and in particular, the increasingly young average age, would indicate that this is not just a temporary boom in *kimono*, but the start of a revival of *kimono* wearing on a vernacular, or street level. *Kimono* wearers are beginning to return *kimono* to the realm of the ordinary. Evidence from the Internet, not only of growing sales, but of increased blogging and posting about *kimono* events supports this hypothesis. It remains to be seen how the official channels for consumption and education of *kimono* will react to this movement. So far, it appears that they have largely chosen to ignore what is happening both in the street and in cyberspace. The internet has also enabled the spread of *kimono* beyond its traditional home, Japan, and into new territories in other countries around the world. In these countries *kimono* wearers are completely dependent on the internet for all sources of *kimono* and information pertaining to it.

Kimono today has become a glue or a bond between people not because it is a national costume or because it is formal or high status, but because it embodies a human level, a depth and an intimacy that is not found in our expendable Western clothing. This revival of a seemingly traditional garment has been possible because of the way in which the Internet can connect people and groups together. In the face of *kimono*, fast fashion (and Japanese fashion is perhaps faster than anywhere else) begins to look like a fad. *Kimono* is fashionable but it embodies so much more. *Kimono* is wrapped and tied. In our world of loose bonds and highly impersonal technology, there are people across all ages and professional statuses who are choosing to be wrapped and tied, to *kimono* and through *kimono* to others, both online and in the physical world. In doing so they are restoring intimacy and human connections to their busy lives.

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