

The Influence of Digital Literacy and Product Innovation on the Competitive Advantage of Modern Beverage Businesses

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to examine the integration of *Kisetsu-kan* (seasonal awareness) in Japanese brand marketing. Although the seasonal aesthetic is a strong cultural element in advertising, consumer response to it in modern brand management has still not been studied enough. This is a qualitative- descriptive study supported by quantitative data collected through a survey administered to 32 respondents who are interested in Japanese brands, using purposive sampling to achieve data significance. Findings show that the *Kisetsu-kan* strategy converts natural values to economic values, as 84.4% of respondents bought seasonal.jp products, even though most had not been to Japan. From a visual design perspective, 93.8% of respondents were able to identify the four seasons in the product design. Psychologically, 65.6% of respondents claimed that they felt a connection to Japanese culture and gained brand affinity through the seasonal story, while 56.3% stated that the limited quantity of products created a sense of urgency to buy. The study showed that the culturally authentic and systematic integration of *Kisetsu-kan* could enhance brand loyalty and equity, differentiate brands in the global marketplace, and optimally retain consumers.

Keywords: *Kisetsu-kan, Branding Strategy, Consumer Loyalty, Japanese Aesthetics, Seasonal Products*

INTRODUCTION

Culture showcases a nation's identity and philosophy of life. The Japanese culture has numerous seasonal festivities referred to as *Kisetsu*. Japan has core philosophies related to *Kisetsu*. Sunarni & Hudayat (2021) explain that Japan's seasons span and influences the choices of attire (korogae) and the cooking elements of nature. The idea of *Kisetsu-kan* aesthetically appreciates the balance of nature and human elements as experienced in the visual and taste presentation (Christianawati, 2018). Seasonal elements epitomize the background in the phenomenon that reflects the social identity of the people being modernized.

The traditional culture of *Kisetsu* values modernity in the competitive business landscape of today. For example, Instead of managing a business by designing a logo, branding should also cover Kimono and other *Kisetsu* elements, which in turn improves the business brand's perception and customer loyalty. Kato (2022) argues that Starbucks brand loyalty in Japan lies in building brand value based on the loyalty of the consumers, a brand concept that has more influence on the consumers than the product or the store that the brand has created. It is well known to the people that a positive encounter with the brand is the driving force that creates strong customer trust and, in turn, a strong brand image (Sovianti, 2024). It is, therefore, right to conclude that *Kimono*, *Kisetsu* values, and branding create that needed avenue to sustain and attract consumers to the brand. The core elements of *Kisetsu* values, however, traditionally live culture, which in modern times creates a modern cosmopolitan.

Though Japanese identity is strong, the country of origin factor is not always the main one in consumer repurchase intention (Felix & Tan, 2023). This shows the importance for businesses to enhance other elements such as emotional involvement (Luckyardi et al., 2023). As Norris & Sari (2025) state, the importance of these studies is all the more pressing as brands in fast changing sectors need to foster emotional bonds. *Kisetsu* argues that in the absence of cultural authenticity, a brand can easily lose its competitive advantage in a crowded market.

Branding phenomena and how consumers act has been studied from many different angles. Digital marketing was found by Santoso & Lestari (2022) to be extremely important to ensuring customers are satisfied and loyal. Branding strategy research for traditional batik products has been done by Syaokani & Sumarlan (2026). Brand equity models help to sustain relevance. Consumer purchasing intentions are primarily influenced by brand equity. This means there is a clear expectation that modern marketing is effective in almost any industry. This said, utilizing the philosophical value of *Kisetsu*, and marketing it as a core branding value, is a key consideration for further research (Juwito & Bisri, 2026).

Branding and brand equity research is extensive. Most research is done in the area of price, or digital promotion, which tend to be the more traditional marketing values. Little research has been done in regard to how the branding concept of *Kisetsu* is integrated as a genuine empirical marketing tactic, and that influences a target market's perception in a systematic way. Seasonal aesthetics are mostly seen in greater marketing literature as purely cultural, and not aligned to modern brand management frameworks. This research aims to analyze how a descriptive qualitative with consumer survey data will construct a competitive advantage based on the natural rhythms of seasons in order to fill this gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kisetsu-kan is key in explaining the way Japanese traditional aesthetics and values integrate with modern business techniques. Japan is rich in seasonal changes, and philosophy is aligned with the changes in nature. The transitions lead to culturally expressive brand offerings. As Sunarni and Hudayat (2021) explain, the closeness of nature and everyday life gives rise to some traditions like korogae or the seasonal changes in the outfit and the selection of the seasonal food ingredients to keep in tune with nature. This seasonal sensitivity is reflected in product presentation. Autumn Makizushi is an example, which integrates the principles of unity, harmony, balance, and visual contrast, which reflects quality and reflects the atmosphere of the season (Christianawati, 2018). The transition from cultural values to economic values occurs through the mechanism of branding strategy, where *Kisetsu* identity is integrated to build a strong brand image in the minds of consumers. Branding strategy in this context is no longer just a visual identity, but a way to provide a memorable experience so as to form a sustainable positive perception (Sovianti, 2024). The strength of branding rooted in a mature concept has proven to be a crucial factor for the success of major brands

in Japan. For example, the strength of Starbucks in Japan was found not solely from its products or physical locations, but from their ability to communicate unique and deep brand concepts to customers (Kato, 2022). By inserting seasonal elements into the brand concept, companies can create strong associations so that the brand is considered part of the personal and cultural identity of consumers.

Managing a brand image based on cultural uniqueness will eventually form brand equity or added value in the eyes of the public. Based on brand equity dimensions, elements such as brand awareness become a main prerequisite before consumers take purchasing actions. Chen (2024) reinforces that a high level of public recognition of a brand will significantly increase consumer purchase intentions. However, in a competitive market, simply being known is not enough, a brand must have positive associations and a perception of high quality in order to survive. Syaukani and Sumarlan (2026) show that the use of traditional values, such as batik motifs in the Indonesian context, which are managed with the Aaker brand equity model, is able to maintain the relevance of a product in the midst of modern trends. This provides an illustration that the integration of local values, be it batik in Indonesia or *Kisetsu* in Japan, has a similar mechanism in strengthening a brand's position in the market.

Success in building brand equity through cultural values will then result in the creation of deep consumer loyalty. This loyalty often does not happen directly, but through a process of emotional involvement and consistent satisfaction. Research on the culinary industry shows that customer satisfaction plays a crucial role as a bridge between digital marketing strategies and purchase loyalty (Santoso & Lestari, 2022). Furthermore, this dimension of loyalty is strengthened by the factor of authenticity, where brands that are able to maintain their cultural roots will create stronger brand attachment. Norris and Sari (2025) emphasize that although authenticity does not always have a direct impact on loyalty, its role is very significant in building emotional attachment, which is the main key to consumer loyalty to brands that are considered sincere and characterized.

The dynamics between culture and branding are also seen in the phenomenon of globalization of other Japanese brands, such as Uniqlo. In international markets like Indonesia, brand image and perceived quality are the main drivers of repurchase intentions, although the country-of-origin identity remains a background that is considered by consumers (Felix & Tan, 2023). Acceptance of Japanese identity is further strengthened through collaboration with popular cultural elements such as manga and anime, which function as cultural globalization tools as well as increasing community attachment to the brand (Putri et al., 2025). In addition, the concept of city branding provides a broad perspective that the identity of a place or tradition can be managed professionally to create an attraction that transcends geographical boundaries (Kasapi & Cela, 2017). Through these various studies, it is clear that service quality, customer experience, and brand image collectively work to form loyalty through the mediation of deep satisfaction (Juwito & Bisri, 2026).

Collectively, this literatures show that there is a very strong correlation between brand associations rooted in cultural awareness and brand value in the eyes of young consumers (Hudiono, 2022). In addition, the creation of shared value between producers and consumers through digital platforms and technology also strengthens the brand image in the modern era (Luckyardi et al., 2023). There is a gap in literature with regards to the marketing variables of satisfaction and loyalty, which this study seeks to fill. Integratively, the above studies show that, in the case of Japan, *Kisetsu* is beyond just a seasonal aesthetic. It is, in fact, a purposeful brand design that culturally integrates design, connects with customer emotions, and modern brand management, where the net effect is an enduring brand equity in the competitive international marketplace.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to examine the *Kisetsu* cultural phenomenon and its impact on brand management using a descriptive-qualitative technique complemented by quantitative data collected through surveys. The objective of utilizing a mixed methodology is to achieve a deeper understanding of the Japanese seasonal aesthetics and philosophy, and to qualitatively analyze the data. In addition, the quantitative data aims to measure the effectiveness of the Japanese seasonal philosophy on consumer loyalty. This methodology is congruent with Kato (2022) and Felix & Tan (2023) in that they use surveys to collect data to determine factors that influence a brand's image and loyalty.

Using the descriptive approach, this study aims to accurately describe how natural rhythms are considered in strategic branding.

As a result of the applied criteria for research subjects, and in consideration of the data collection techniques, this study employed purposive sampling to determine criteria for respondents. This was done in order to ensure that the respondents were directly aligned with the study's goal, which was focused on consumers with an interest in Japanese culture and products, and, in particular, those who have purchased seasonal edition products. In using this technique, purposive sampling is in line with Hudiono (2022) and Sovianti (2024) in that the respondents were selected based on specific characteristics in order to enhance the validity of the information. These criteria show that the data collected is expected to depict a sense of the group of buyers who more or less familiar or have been heavily documented about the Japanese seasonal elements in their consumption practices, like the incorporation of sakura motifs or autumn color product packaging.

The main instrument in quantitative data collection was a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents online through digital platforms. This questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondent perceptions precisely. Each statement in the questionnaire was assessed using choice indicators which are divided into five levels, namely: Strongly Disagree (STS), Disagree (TS), Neutral (N), Agree (S), and Strongly Agree (SS) to measure various dimensions related to brand equity, ranging from perception of visual aesthetics, emotional connection, to the impact of product exclusivity on brand value, as in the model developed in the research of Syaokani and Sumarlan (2026). Each question was designed to capture how *Kisetsu-kan* elements affect purchase decisions and emotional attachment of consumers to brands such as Starbucks, KitKat, and McDonald's. This is in line with Chen's (2024) finding that the level of public recognition of brand identity determines purchase intentions, so that the questionnaire becomes an effective measurement tool to map the impact of the seasonal strategy in the field in a measurable way.

Furthermore, qualitative data were obtained through observation of promotional materials and product presentations that apply seasonal elements, and were strengthened by a literature study covering cultural aspects and management strategies. The data analysis process began with data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions based on the findings from the questionnaire results that have been collected. Qualitative analysis focused on the interpretation of aesthetic meaning in line with the principles of harmony and balance discussed by Christianawati (2018), while quantitative analysis employed data processing techniques to analyze the trend of consumer behavior. This study was supplemented with two types of data analysis to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the consumer behavior phenomenon in *Kisetsu's* branding strategy, as well as to assess the effectiveness of the branding strategy in establishing consumer loyalty in modern commerce.

The entire methodological framework was concluded with a data verification technique to check the consistency between the theory and field findings. The emphasis on customer experience and brand authenticity as cited by Norris and Sari (2025) and Juwito and Bisri (2026) became the primary considerations in assessing the effectiveness of *Kisetsu* brand strategy. The integration of service quality, brand image, and cultural values along with these research techniques is expected to result in a study that will enhance the socio-marketing discipline by explaining how the local Japanese culture integration strengthens brand equity in the global marketplace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of data collection from 32 respondents who are interested in Japanese culture, the *Kisetsu*-based branding strategy was determined to have a very strong and tangible impact in shaping consumer behavioral direction. The most fascinating discovery is that the impact of this strategy transcends across geographic borders. Data shows that despite only 43.8% of respondents having lived in or visited Japan, a notable 84.4% respondents have actually experienced purchasing limited edition or seasonal items from brands like Starbucks, KitKat, and McDonald's. This clearly indicates that *Kisetsu-kan* has been able to successfully transform from a local natural phenomenon to a global product identity, capturing the attention of many international consumers, including those who have never experienced Japan's four seasons.

Figure 1. Seasonal edition products (*Kisetsu-kan*)

As illustrated in Figure 2 down below, respondents are able to identify seasons based solely on product visual design. Visual effectiveness in the *Kisetsu-kan* strategy appears very dominant from the respondents' assessment of the aesthetic aspects of the packaging. As many as 50% of respondents stated they strongly agree that Japanese brands successfully use appropriate colors and motifs according to the season, such as the use of cherry blossoms for spring or momiji leaves for autumn. The success of this design is not just a matter of visual beauty, but a matter of harmony. As many as 56.3% of respondents agreed that seasonal edition products have aesthetics that are much more harmonious and beautiful than regular products. This confirms Christianawati's theory (2018) regarding the principles of harmony and balance in Japanese aesthetics. Sensitivity to this detail was recognized by 53.1% of respondents, who assessed that the packaging design showed high appreciation for nature and tradition. As a result, this visual communication becomes very instant, as 46.9% of respondents (each in the agree and strongly agree categories) stated they could easily identify a particular season only through the visual design of the product, without the need to read text descriptions. This proves that seasonal symbols have become a universal communication language that strengthens brand recognition.



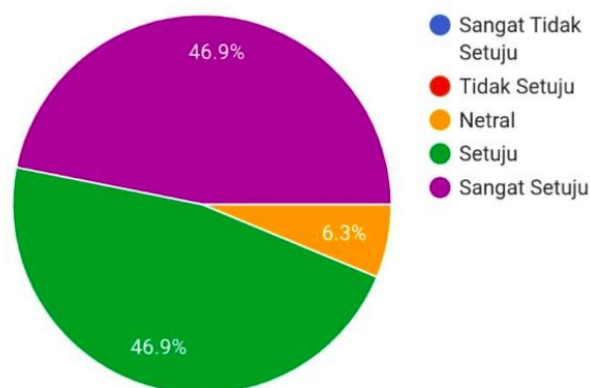


Figure 2. Results of Respondents Identifying Seasons by Looking at Product Visual Design

As depicted in Figure 3 below, respondents tend to experience a sense of emotional closeness toward products that implement *Kisetsu-kan*. This study found that seasonal branding strategies are able to touch the psychological and emotional aspects of consumers significantly. As many as 65.6% of respondents felt that advertising campaigns through social media and television succeeded in conveying the emotional atmosphere of the season raised very well. The narrative built by the brand is not just promoting items, but selling “experience” and “rhythm of life”. The fact that 65.6% of respondents felt connected to Japanese culture through these products shows that the brand has succeeded in being a medium of cultural exchange. As many as 62.5% of respondents even felt seasonal products felt more personal and meaningful than products available all year round. This “personal” feeling is what then builds an inner bond (brand attachment) for 62.5% of respondents.

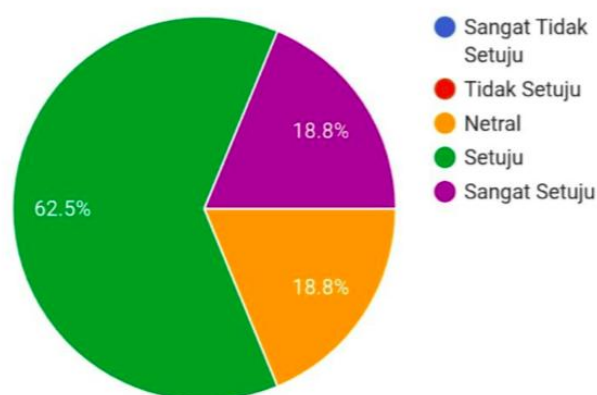


Figure 3. Results of Respondents Feeling Emotional Closeness with Products That Implement *Kisetsu-Kan*

As presented in Figure 4 below, respondents show a tendency to be driven to purchase products immediately. These findings are very much in line with the theory of Norris and Sari (2025) which states that emotional attachment is the main foundation that transforms ordinary consumers into loyal customers who have high loyalty. The aspect of scarcity inherent in the concept of *Kisetsu-kan* is proven to be a strong economic driver. About 59.4% of respondents agreed that the presence of products in a limited period creates an exclusive impression and automatically increases the perceived value of the brand in their eyes. This creates a purchase urgency phenomenon, as many as 56.3% of respondents admitted that they tend to accelerate purchase decisions because they realize the product will not be there again in the following season. The long-term impact of this strategy on brand equity is very positive, where 53.1% of respondents felt the seasonal strategy strengthened the unique identity of Japanese brands compared to competitors from other countries. This resulted in strong repurchase intentions (50% agree) and a desire to recommend products to their social circles (62.5% agree).

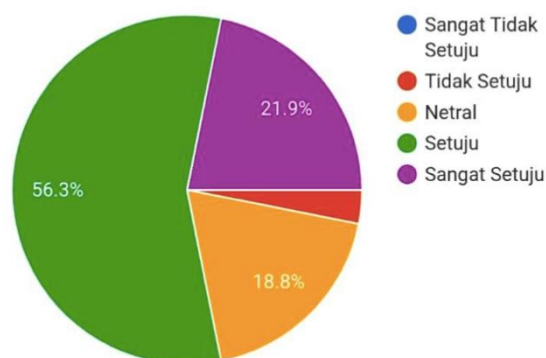


Figure 4. Results of Respondents Drive to Buy Products Immediately

Overall, this discussion proves that *Kisetsu-kan* systematically is able to change natural cycles into modern brand management strategies that not only increase financial benefits, but also build loyalty rooted in cultural authenticity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Kisetsu-kan branded Japanese brands visualize the changes in modern marketing instruments in terms of aesthetics. The concept of seasonal visual identity gives traditional design elements instant brand recognition and global appeal regardless of the geography. The use of research data establishes seasonal elements and exclusive time scarcity in creating emotional attachment and purchase urgency. In digital campaigns, industry players should emphasize the cultural authenticity narrative. Future researchers should angle their studies in diverse, contradicting cultures and test the magnitude of the seasonal strategy effectiveness. Japanese cultural literacy should always be factored.

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