Paper Title: Japanese fashion influences in Australia: Will Uniqlo and Australia make a fairy tale couple?

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Abstract
On the evening of 27 January 2013, Navak Djokovic stood in the Rod Laver Arena for the Australian Open final (that he won). As the world’s top tennis player, he was wearing a shirt with a logo; not Adidas, not Nike, not Reebok, but in white text in a red square there appeared to be the letters “UNI QLD” – the University of Queensland.

Over two million people nationally watched the live TV broadcast, and among those, two of my friends, Luke and Kookie, did not hide their wonder – why was he sponsored by an Australian university? In fact, Djokovic was not promoting an Australian university, but the Japanese apparel giant, Uniqlo or “UNI QLO” as written in their logo. This demonstrates how much Uniqlo is known to “ordinary Australians”.

On the other side of the Pacific in Japan, Uniqlo has dominated the Japanese apparel market for the last one and a half decades. It is seen as the national apparel company that everyone from infants to retirees and everybody in between owns and has at least a few items of each, if not more. In every Japanese town you visit, there seems to be a Uniqlo store.

The empire is run by Tadashi Yanai, who is the only Japanese ranked in the world’s top 100 richest people. It has over 850 stores in Japan and a further 350 international stores in eleven
countries including the UK, France, the US and Japan’s neighbouring countries in Asia. Furthermore, in late 2012, various Japanese print media reported that Uniqlo would open its first Australian store by the end of 2013.

Contemporary Japanese fashion is known as having “bottom up” trend streams, rather than the “top down” model predominant in the fashion designing in the rest of the world. Japanese fashion is not necessarily produced by formally trained designers but instead tends to be a product of “the street.” Much of it is then copied or adopted both domestically and internationally even by major apparel corporations, since these corporations need to survive in such a fast moving industry.

Australia could be an ideal place to adopt “Japanese street” fashion as Australian fashion is regarded as informal and casual, related to Australia’s colonial identity and modern swim/surf culture. Additionally, Australia’s modern multicultural society creates an environment where other cultures are accepted. It should also be noted that fashion is an urban culture that originates in cities. Australia is one of the most urbanised countries (after micro states) in terms of the distribution of population. Australia and Uniqlo seem a perfect couple.

However, reality does not always follow a fairy tale script. This natural fit may not work out as expected. This study will analyse the probability of the success of Uniqlo in Australia.

**Key words**

Australia and Japan, Fashion, Street fashion, Japanese fashion, Uniqlo