

Mofusand Product Commercialization and Consumer Culture in Japanese Popular Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the commercialization of Mofusand products within contemporary Japanese popular culture. Created by the Japanese illustrator Juno, Mofusand initially gained popularity through social media and LINE stickers before expanding into merchandise and cross-industry collaborations. This research aims to analyze how Mofusand develops through commercialization strategies, kawaii culture, and consumer culture in Japan. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a cultural studies approach. The data were collected from official websites, digital media, collaboration campaigns, and related literature. The analysis applies John Storey's popular culture theory, supported by concepts of kawaii culture, emotional consumption, and media mix. The findings show that Mofusand has developed into a commercial cultural commodity distributed across various industries, including fashion, household products, cosmetics, and food and beverage sectors. The commercialization of Mofusand demonstrates how kawaii aesthetics and emotional attachment contribute to consumer engagement and the globalization of Japanese popular culture. Therefore, Mofusand functions not only as an entertainment character but also as part of contemporary consumer culture and commercial strategies within global markets.

Keywords:

Mofusand; product; collaborative; kawaii; Japanese

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese popular culture has developed rapidly and has become a global phenomenon encompassing various aspects of life, such as anime, manga, and illustrated characters that are commercialized into diverse product forms. Popular culture refers to cultural forms that are mass-produced and widely consumed, and it is closely related to the cultural industry and patterns of consumer practices in society (Storey, 2022). In a global context, Japanese popular culture also serves as a form of soft power, influencing international audiences through various cultural products (Heng, 2014). One of the most prominent concepts within Japanese popular culture is kawaii, an aesthetic of cuteness that carries both emotional appeal and economic value (Lieber-Milo, 2021). Characters based on the concept of kawaii do not merely serve as entertainment but have also become commodities produced and marketed across various industrial sectors.

The concept of *kawaii* in Japanese culture does not simply mean "cute" in a visual sense, but rather represents a cultural phenomenon with

social roots related to youth expression and cultural identity. In her well-known study in *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan* (1995), Kinsella explains that kawaii initially emerged as a form of expression among Japanese youth, particularly reflected in decorative handwriting styles characterized by rounded letters, small symbols, and playful embellishments that were considered informal or even "childlike." Although this style was initially viewed as deviating from the formal and disciplined aesthetic norms of Japanese society, it gradually evolved into a popular form of self-expression among young people due to its freedom, personal nature, and emotional resonance.

Kinsella further emphasizes that the development of kawaii did not remain at the level of individual expression, but was later adopted by the media, the entertainment industry, and the commercial sector in Japan. As a result, kawaii underwent a shift in meaning—from a youth subcultural expression to an institutionalized component of popular culture. Cute characters in manga, anime, and even corporate mascots illustrate how the kawaii aesthetic is utilized within the industry to create emotional appeal and

foster closeness with consumers. In other words, kawaii functions not only as a visual aesthetic but also as an effective cultural and economic strategy within modern Japanese society.

One of the characters that has gained popularity within kawaii culture is Mofusand. This character is known through illustrations of cats depicted in various unique costumes with adorable expressions, and it began to gain popularity through social media around 2017–2018 (Animate Times, 2023). As its popularity increased, Mofusand expanded into various commercial products, including merchandise, clothing, and collaborations with different brands in Japan.

The appeal of Mofusand lies in its simple yet distinctive visual design, such as its relatively large head, small body, and easily recognizable facial expressions. In addition, the use of various animal-themed costumes, such as sharks and octopuses, provides visual diversity and strengthens the character's identity. These visual characteristics indicate that character design plays a significant role in attracting audience attention.

Mofusand's development does not stop at digital illustrations but continues into commercial products across various categories. In its early stages, Mofusand appeared in simple merchandise such as stickers and keychains. As its popularity grew, the products expanded into multiple categories, including clothing, accessories, stationery, and household goods. Furthermore, the character has also been utilized in collaborations with various brands, including food and beverage products.

The development of Mofusand is also reflected in its distribution strategies, such as product sales across multiple platforms and the presence of temporary retail spaces (pop-up stores) that offer exclusive items. Collaborations with various brands and other popular characters, such as Sanrio, indicate that Mofusand possesses high commercial value and the ability to reach a broader market.

Research on characters in Japanese popular culture has been conducted by several scholars. One notable study by Yowanda (2016) examines the character Kumamon as part of yuru-kyara. The study explains that Kumamon is a mascot developed by the Kumamoto Prefectural Government as a regional promotion strategy and a medium for commercialization through various products such as merchandise, food, and collaborations with different parties. The findings

show that characters in popular culture function not only as symbols of identity but also as economic commodities capable of attracting public attention through effective distribution and marketing strategies.

Another study by Azizah (2020) discusses the application of kawaii bunka in the design of snack products in Japan. The results indicate that kawaii aesthetics play an important role in enhancing the visual appeal of products and influencing consumer purchasing interest. This suggests that kawaii is not only an aesthetic element but also an effective marketing strategy within the Japanese popular culture industry.

Despite the growing body of research on kawaii and character-based popular culture, studies specifically focusing on Mofusand remain limited. Previous research tends to emphasize aesthetic aspects and visual appeal, with little attention given to the role of characters as both original and collaborative products within the popular culture industry. This condition indicates a research gap in understanding how Mofusand develops as an intellectual property with both economic and cultural functions.

Based on this background, this study aims not only to describe Mofusand products and collaborations but also to analyze how Mofusand functions as a form of kawaii commodification within Japanese popular culture. The study examines how emotional attachment toward kawaii characters encourages consumer consumption practices and supports the expansion of Japanese popular culture through cross-industry collaborations and global distribution strategies.

Previous studies on Japanese popular culture have primarily focused on anime, manga, and globally recognized characters such as Hello Kitty and Pokémon. However, studies discussing the commercialization of newer digital characters such as Mofusand remain limited, particularly in relation to consumer culture, kawaii aesthetics, and product diversification within contemporary Japanese popular culture. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how Mofusand develops through commercialization strategies, cross-industry collaborations, and everyday consumption practices as part of Japanese popular culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature study method.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach used to understand and interpret social and cultural phenomena through textual and contextual analysis. This approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on the cultural development and commercialization process of Mofusand as part of Japanese popular culture. Through qualitative analysis, this study seeks to examine not only the forms of Mofusand products and collaborations, but also the cultural meanings and consumer practices surrounding the character.

The descriptive method is used to systematically explain the transformation of Mofusand from a digital illustration shared through social media into a commercial character distributed across multiple industrial sectors. This method is also applied to describe how Mofusand develops through processes of production, distribution, collaboration, and consumption within the Japanese creative industry. Furthermore, the study analyzes the relationship between kawaii culture, consumer behavior, and the expansion of character-based commodities in contemporary popular culture.

The data used in this study consist of secondary data obtained from various academic and non-academic sources related to Mofusand and Japanese popular culture. Academic sources include books, scholarly journals, and previous studies discussing kawaii culture, popular culture theory, Japanese consumer culture, character merchandising, and media commercialization. Meanwhile, non-academic sources such as official websites, company reports, online articles, and promotional media are used as supporting documentation to identify product collaborations, merchandise distribution, promotional campaigns, and industrial expansion related to Mofusand.

The data were selected based on several criteria. First, the sources had to contain information directly related to Mofusand products, collaborations, commercialization strategies, or media distribution. Second, the data had to be relevant to discussions of Japanese popular culture, kawaii aesthetics, and consumer culture. Third, the sources were limited to publications and documentation published between 2023–2026 in order to reflect the recent development of Mofusand within the global creative industry. Academic references were prioritized as the primary basis for theoretical and cultural analysis, while commercial and promotional sources were utilized only as

supporting documentation for product-related data.

In this study, the unit of analysis includes various forms of Mofusand-related products and media, such as digital stickers, merchandise, fashion collaborations, household products, food and beverage collaborations, promotional campaigns, retail distribution, and animation media. These units were selected because they represent the transformation of Mofusand from a digital illustration into a character commodity integrated into everyday consumer culture. The study also examines collaborations between Mofusand and various industries, including fashion brands, convenience stores, lifestyle products, and global retail companies, in order to analyze how the character expands across multiple sectors of consumption.

The process of data collection was conducted through documentation and literature review techniques. Relevant information from journals, books, websites, and online media was identified, collected, categorized, and interpreted according to the objectives of the study. After the data were collected, the researcher grouped the findings into several analytical categories, including character creation, digital distribution, merchandise transformation, industrial diversification, household consumption, food and beverage collaboration, and global market expansion. This categorization process was conducted to identify patterns and relationships between cultural production, commercialization, and consumer practices related to Mofusand.

The analysis in this research uses a descriptive analytical technique. The collected data are interpreted through the perspective of Japanese popular culture studies to understand how Mofusand functions not only as an entertainment character but also as a commercial and cultural commodity. This study applies John Storey's theory of popular culture, which explains that popular culture is closely related to processes of production, distribution, and consumption within modern society. Through this perspective, Mofusand can be understood as part of the cultural industry in which characters are continuously reproduced, commercialized, and consumed through various media and product forms.

In addition, this study also incorporates the concept of kawaii culture proposed by Sharon Kinsella to examine how cuteness aesthetics function as both a cultural and economic strategy in Japanese society. The concept is used to

analyze how Mofusand's visual characteristics create emotional attraction and encourage consumer attachment toward the character. Therefore, this research not only examines product diversification, but also analyzes how kawaii aesthetics, emotional consumption, and character commercialization contribute to the globalization of Japanese popular culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Creation of the Kawaii Character Mofusand.

Mofusand was created by a Japanese illustrator known as Juno (ぢゅの), who began sharing their works through social media around 2017 (Mofusand Store, 2024). Juno is known for maintaining anonymity, allowing the primary focus to remain on the character itself. The illustration style emphasizes rounded shapes, soft lines, and simple facial expressions, which create a sense of cuteness and comfort. The concept of mofu mofu, referring to a soft and fluffy texture, serves as the visual aesthetic foundation that strengthens the character's identity (SNKRDUNK, 2025). In this context, the creation of Mofusand can be understood as a process of cultural production influenced by audience responses on social media.

The early popularity of Mofusand developed through digital distribution, particularly via social media platforms and LINE stickers, which accelerated the dissemination of the character to a wider audience (Mofusand Online News, 2025). This indicates that digital media plays a crucial role as a primary channel for the production and distribution of popular culture in the modern era. From the perspective of John Storey (2018), popular culture is formed through the interaction between production and consumption within society. Therefore, the creation of the Mofusand character is not merely an individual creative process but also the result of audience engagement, which contributes to shaping its popularity.

In addition, the popularity of Mofusand can also be associated with the concept of iyashi culture in Japan. Iyashi refers to emotional healing and psychological comfort that became increasingly significant in Japanese society, particularly after periods of social stress and urban pressure (Matsui, 2013). Characters with soft visual aesthetics, calm expressions, and comforting appearances are often consumed not only as entertainment but also as emotional

support within everyday life. The fluffy and relaxed visual characteristics of Mofusand reflect this healing-oriented aesthetic, allowing consumers to experience emotional comfort and psychological attachment toward the character.

Furthermore, the development of Mofusand also reflects the phenomenon of kyara bunka (character culture) in Japan, in which fictional characters function as cultural symbols integrated into everyday consumption practices. According to Allison (2006), Japanese character culture allows consumers to develop emotional attachment toward characters through repeated interaction across media and merchandise. In this context, Mofusand is not merely consumed as an illustration, but also as part of consumers' emotional identity and daily lifestyle. Through merchandise, digital media, and collaborative products, the character becomes continuously reproduced within consumer culture.

From the perspective of Storey (2018), this phenomenon demonstrates how popular culture operates through processes of emotional engagement, reproduction, and continuous consumption. The success of Mofusand indicates that kawaii characters function not only as entertainment commodities but also as cultural commodities embedded within everyday life. Therefore, the creation of Mofusand can be understood not only as artistic production, but also as part of a broader cultural industry that transforms kawaii aesthetics into emotional and commercial commodities.

2. Transformation from Illustration to Merchandise.

As its popularity increased through social media, Mofusand transformed digital illustrations into various forms of products and consumer media. The initial stage of this transformation began with the distribution of digital stickers on the LINE application, which contributed to the character's growing recognition as it was directly used in users' daily conversations (Mofusand Online News, 2025). The use of these stickers not only expanded the character's visibility but also created emotional proximity, as the character became part of users' personal communication.

This interaction generated audience interest and engagement with the Mofusand character. Such interest gradually developed into a desire to own the character in physical form. In this sense,

LINE stickers can be understood as a starting point that bridges digital consumption and material consumption. The transition from virtual interaction to physical ownership reflects how emotional attachment can drive consumer behavior within popular culture.

The transformation of Mofusand from digital illustrations into physical merchandise reflects the commodification process within Japanese popular culture. In this process, the character is not only consumed as visual entertainment, but is also transformed into commercial commodities integrated into everyday consumer practices. The emotional attachment created through digital interactions, such as LINE stickers and social media engagement, encourages consumers to develop familiarity and personal connection toward the character.

This phenomenon can also be associated with affective or emotional consumption, in which consumers purchase products not only for functional purposes but also for emotional satisfaction and symbolic value (Allison, 2006). The kawaii aesthetic represented by Mofusand creates feelings of comfort, softness, and emotional healing that psychologically attract consumers. In this context, Mofusand functions not merely as a character illustration but as a cultural commodity carrying emotional meaning within contemporary Japanese consumer culture.

Furthermore, the transformation of Mofusand into merchandise demonstrates how Japanese character culture operates through continuous reproduction across multiple forms of media and consumption. According to Storey (2018), popular culture is closely related to processes of production, distribution, and mass consumption within modern society. Therefore, the commercialization of Mofusand illustrates how kawaii characters are reproduced and sustained through industrial strategies that continuously generate new forms of consumer engagement.

The transformation of Mofusand also reflects the development of media convergence within the Japanese creative industry. Steinberg (2012) explains that Japanese character culture frequently develops through media mix strategies, in which characters are continuously expanded across different forms of media and commercial products. In the case of Mofusand, the transition from digital stickers into merchandise, retail collaborations, and animation indicates how the character functions across

interconnected media platforms in order to maintain popularity and expand consumer markets.

As demand increased, Mofusand expanded into a wide range of merchandise, including plush toys, keychains, stationery, and various accessories marketed through official platforms and online stores (Shapes Inc., 2026; Blippo, 2024). Distribution was further extended through official stores and pop-up stores in major Japanese cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo, and Fukuoka (Marimo Craft, 2023). The presence of these retail spaces indicates that character consumption does not only occur in digital environments but also in physical spaces that provide direct consumer experiences.

In addition, pop-up stores function not only as commercial retail spaces but also as experiential spaces that strengthen emotional interaction between consumers and characters. Consumers are encouraged to experience the character directly through themed visual environments, exclusive products, and limited-edition merchandise. This strategy reflects how Japanese popular culture industries create immersive consumption experiences that reinforce emotional attachment and consumer loyalty toward character-based products.

The development of Mofusand does not stop at merchandise but extends into the broader media industry. The character has been adapted into short-form animations distributed in 2026 through digital platforms such as YouTube and streaming services (Japanese From Japan, 2026). This transformation reflects a shift from static illustrations to more complex audiovisual content capable of reaching wider audiences. Through animation, Mofusand expands beyond visual merchandise and enters a broader media ecosystem that continuously reproduces the character through digital consumption practices.

Analyzed through the perspective of Storey (2018), the transformation of Mofusand can be understood as part of popular culture that operates through processes of production, distribution, and consumption in modern society. Storey argues that popular culture is not merely a cultural product itself, but also a process in which products are continuously reproduced and circulated through various forms of media and industrial systems. In the case of Mofusand, the character evolves from digital stickers into merchandise, retail spaces, and animation, demonstrating how a single kawaii character can

be transformed into a sustainable cultural and commercial commodity within contemporary Japanese consumer culture.

3. Product Diversification Across Industries

The increasing popularity of Mofusand has encouraged the expansion of the character into various industrial sectors through collaborations with fashion brands, retail companies, lifestyle products, and food industries. This diversification demonstrates how Japanese popular culture operates through cross-industry commercialization strategies that continuously reproduce character-based commodities within everyday consumer life. Through collaborations with multiple brands, Mofusand is no longer positioned solely as a digital illustration character but also as a lifestyle commodity integrated into different forms of consumption.

One of the most prominent collaborations is with fashion and lifestyle brands such as Uniqlo, Fila, and Zoff. Through these collaborations, Mofusand was incorporated into products including clothing, footwear, accessories, and eyewear collections (Uniqlo, 2025; FILA, 2025; Zoff, 2025). These collaborations indicate that kawaii characters function not only as entertainment icons but also as commercial identities attached to lifestyle products. Consumers are encouraged to associate the emotional image of the character with their personal style and everyday appearance.

This phenomenon reflects what Allison (2006) describes as affective or emotional consumption, in which consumers purchase products not only for practical use but also for emotional satisfaction and symbolic attachment. In the case of Mofusand, the kawaii aesthetic characterized by fluffy cat illustrations, soft expressions, and humorous costumes creates feelings of comfort and emotional closeness among consumers. As a result, consumers are not merely purchasing fashion products, but also consuming emotional values associated with cuteness, healing, and self-expression within contemporary Japanese consumer culture.

The diversification of Mofusand across multiple industries also demonstrates the development of character capitalism within Japanese popular culture. According to Steinberg (2012), Japanese character culture often expands through media mix and commercial franchising strategies that continuously reproduce characters across

interconnected media and product industries. Through collaborations with fashion brands, retail stores, and lifestyle products, Mofusand becomes part of a broader industrial ecosystem designed to sustain consumer interest and expand market reach.

In addition to the fashion industry, Mofusand has also collaborated with retail and lifestyle companies such as Miniso and Sanrio, resulting in the production of stationery, household products, plush toys, and various collectible merchandise (Koubo, 2025; Charagoo, 2026). These collaborations demonstrate how character-based products are integrated into daily consumer activities, allowing consumers to continuously interact with the character in domestic and social environments. In this context, Mofusand functions not only as entertainment content but also as part of consumers' everyday routines and emotional experiences.

Furthermore, collaborations with food and beverage industries also contribute significantly to the expansion of Mofusand consumption culture. The character has appeared in cafés, convenience store products, snacks, and limited-edition promotional campaigns through collaborations with companies such as FamilyMart and Kura Sushi (FamilyMart, 2026; Kura Sushi, 2026). This reflects how kawaii culture in Japan is often embedded within ordinary aspects of daily life, transforming consumption activities into emotional and aesthetic experiences. The integration of characters into food products also strengthens emotional attachment because consumers repeatedly encounter the character within routine consumption behaviors.

The expansion of Mofusand into multiple industrial sectors also contributes to the globalization of Japanese popular culture. According to Yano (2013), kawaii characters function as part of Japan's cultural soft power, allowing Japanese popular culture to spread internationally through commercial products and global consumer markets. Through collaborations with internationally recognized brands and retail distribution systems, Mofusand reaches consumers beyond Japan and becomes part of transnational consumer culture. This phenomenon demonstrates that kawaii character culture functions not only as domestic entertainment but also as a globally circulated cultural commodity.

From the perspective of Storey (2018), the

diversification of Mofusand illustrates how popular culture is sustained through systems of continuous production, reproduction, and consumption. The character remains commercially relevant because it is constantly reproduced across different industries and media forms. Therefore, the expansion of Mofusand across fashion, retail, household, and food industries demonstrates how Japanese popular culture transforms kawaii characters into sustainable commercial and cultural commodities embedded within everyday life.

4. Global Collaboration as a Strategy for Expanding Japanese popular culture

The expansion of Mofusand through global collaborations demonstrates how Japanese popular culture is distributed internationally through commercial industries, digital media, and transnational consumer markets. In contemporary Japanese popular culture, character-based commodities are not limited to domestic consumption but are continuously expanded into global markets through collaborations, retail distribution, and online media circulation. The increasing international recognition of Mofusand indicates that kawaii characters function not only as entertainment products but also as cultural commodities capable of crossing national and cultural boundaries.

One of the strategies contributing to the globalization of Mofusand is collaboration with internationally recognized brands and companies across various industries. Through collaborations with fashion brands, retail companies, food industries, and character franchises, Mofusand is introduced to broader consumer markets outside Japan. Collaborations with companies such as Uniqlo, Miniso, Sanrio, FamilyMart, and Kura Sushi demonstrate how Japanese character culture expands through transnational commercial networks and global consumer distribution systems (Uniqlo, 2025; Koubo, 2025; FamilyMart, 2026; Kura Sushi, 2026). These collaborations allow the character to become integrated into everyday consumption practices among international consumers.

The globalization of Mofusand also reflects the spread of kawaii culture as part of Japanese cultural soft power. According to Yano (2013), kawaii characters such as Hello Kitty function as cultural ambassadors that introduce Japanese aesthetics and consumer culture to international audiences. In this context, Mofusand similarly

represents the global circulation of Japanese kawaii culture through commercial products, merchandise, and collaborative campaigns. The character's visual simplicity, emotional appeal, and humorous aesthetic make it easily accepted by consumers from different cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, the success of Mofusand demonstrates how emotional attachment plays a significant role in global character consumption. Dale (2017) explains that cuteness aesthetics often produce emotional responses that encourage affection, attachment, and protective feelings among audiences. The fluffy cat illustrations, soft visual expressions, and humorous costume designs of Mofusand create feelings of comfort and emotional closeness that attract consumers psychologically. Therefore, consumers are not only attracted to the visual appearance of the character but also to the emotional meanings associated with kawaii culture and healing-oriented consumption practices.

The global popularity of Mofusand can also be understood through the concept of affective or emotional consumption. Allison (2006) argues that Japanese character culture often encourages consumers to develop emotional attachment toward fictional characters through repeated interaction across merchandise, media, and everyday consumption activities. In the case of Mofusand, consumers encounter the character through digital stickers, fashion products, food collaborations, social media content, and retail campaigns, allowing emotional familiarity to develop continuously across different forms of consumption.

In addition, the globalization process of Mofusand is strongly supported by digital media and online distribution systems. Social media platforms, online stores, digital stickers, and streaming media allow the character to circulate rapidly across international markets without relying solely on traditional distribution channels. According to Steinberg (2012), Japanese character culture develops through media mix strategies that continuously reproduce characters across interconnected media forms and commercial platforms. The expansion of Mofusand from digital illustrations into merchandise, collaborations, and animation demonstrates how media convergence functions as a major strategy for maintaining consumer engagement while simultaneously increasing global visibility.

Global collaborations also function as mechanisms for sustaining the relevance of Japanese popular culture within contemporary consumer society. By continuously appearing in new collaborations, campaigns, and product categories, Mofusand remains visible within rapidly changing global markets. This strategy reflects how Japanese popular culture industries maintain audience engagement through constant reproduction, diversification, and commercialization of character-based commodities.

From the perspective of Storey (2018), the globalization of Mofusand illustrates how popular culture operates through systems of production, circulation, and mass consumption that are closely connected to industrial and commercial structures. The character's expansion across multiple countries and industries demonstrates that popular culture is continuously reproduced through global media networks and consumer markets. Therefore, Mofusand can be understood not only as a Japanese kawaii character, but also as part of a transnational cultural commodity embedded within contemporary global consumer culture.

5. Household Products as a Strategy to Fulfill Consumer Needs.

The expansion of Mofusand into household products demonstrates how Japanese character culture is integrated into everyday consumer practices. In Japanese popular culture, kawaii characters are not limited to entertainment media but are frequently incorporated into daily household items such as kitchenware, stationery, storage products, bedding, and home accessories. This strategy allows consumers to continuously interact with characters within ordinary domestic environments, transforming routine activities into emotional and aesthetic experiences.

Mofusand household products include various items such as cups, plates, lunch boxes, pillows, blankets, storage containers, and decorative accessories distributed through official stores and collaboration campaigns (Shapes Inc., 2026; Charagoo, 2026). These products demonstrate that the commercialization of kawaii characters extends beyond entertainment consumption into practical household usage. Through this diversification, Mofusand becomes integrated into consumers' daily routines and domestic lifestyles.

The integration of kawaii characters into household products can also be associated with the concept of emotional consumption. According to Allison (2006), Japanese consumer culture often encourages emotional attachment between consumers and character-based commodities through repeated interaction in everyday life. Household products containing Mofusand illustrations allow consumers to experience emotional familiarity and psychological comfort through continuous exposure to the character during routine domestic activities.

Furthermore, the popularity of household products reflects the influence of iyashi culture in contemporary Japanese society. Iyashi culture refers to emotional healing and psychological comfort obtained through calming and comforting experiences (Matsui, 2013). The soft visual aesthetics, fluffy cat illustrations, and relaxed expressions associated with Mofusand create a sense of comfort and emotional relaxation for consumers. Therefore, household products featuring Mofusand function not only as practical commodities but also as emotional objects associated with healing and comfort within everyday life.

In addition, the expansion into household products demonstrates how kawaii culture functions as part of lifestyle consumption within Japanese popular culture. According to Kinsella (1995), kawaii aesthetics are deeply embedded in Japanese consumer culture and are frequently applied to products beyond children's entertainment. In the case of Mofusand, kawaii visual elements are incorporated into domestic products used by various age groups, indicating that cuteness functions as a broader cultural and commercial strategy within modern Japanese society.

The diversification of household products also reflects the commercialization strategies of Japanese character industries. Through the continuous production of practical consumer goods, characters remain commercially relevant within everyday markets. Storey (2018) explains that popular culture operates through processes of production, circulation, and mass consumption. Therefore, the integration of Mofusand into household products demonstrates how Japanese popular culture industries sustain character popularity by embedding kawaii characters into consumers' daily lifestyles and consumption habits.

Moreover, household products contribute to

strengthening long-term consumer engagement because they are repeatedly used in everyday activities. Unlike temporary promotional campaigns, household commodities allow consumers to maintain constant interaction with the character over extended periods of time. This repeated exposure strengthens emotional attachment while simultaneously reinforcing the commercial sustainability of the character within contemporary consumer culture.

6. Food and Beverage Products as a Medium of Popular Culture Consumption.

Mofusand food and beverage products demonstrate that the character has expanded not only through illustrations and merchandise, but also through everyday consumption practices within the food and beverage industry. This integration indicates that popular culture can be embedded within one of the most fundamental human activities, namely food consumption, which is then transformed into visual and emotional experiences through character-based products. In this context, food products function not only as consumable goods but also as media for distributing and reproducing Japanese popular culture in daily life.

One of the major collaborations involving Mofusand is with FamilyMart through the “Neko no Hi” (Cat Day) campaign, which introduced various limited-edition food products featuring the character. The campaign included products such as paw-shaped tarts, sweet potato desserts, cat-shaped cookies, mochi dorayaki, caramel bread, snacks, and themed beverages (FamilyMart, 2026). The wide variety of products within a single campaign demonstrates diversification strategies that combine food consumption with visual character experiences. Consumers are encouraged not only to purchase food products but also to emotionally engage with the kawaii character aesthetic presented through packaging, shapes, and promotional visuals.

In addition to FamilyMart, Mofusand has also appeared in collaborations with 7-Eleven through promotional campaigns involving snacks, beverages, and stamp collection programs accompanied by limited-edition merchandise (Marketing Interactive, 2024). These collaborations indicate that convenience stores function not merely as commercial retail

spaces but also as cultural distribution spaces that shape themed consumption experiences. Through limited campaigns and collectible products, consumers are encouraged to repeatedly engage with the character as part of routine shopping activities.

Within the fast-food industry, Mofusand has also been associated with collaborations involving KFC, which released special meal packages accompanied by character merchandise such as keychains and plush toys (Kosaka, 2025). This strategy demonstrates how global fast-food industries utilize popular characters as visual marketing tools to increase consumer attraction and emotional engagement. Similarly, McDonald’s is widely recognized for incorporating Japanese popular characters into limited-edition campaigns and themed packaging as part of global promotional strategies (Heng, 2014). Although these campaigns are often temporary, they illustrate how fast-food industries integrate character culture into mass consumption practices.

In Japan, Lawson has also contributed to the development of character-themed food culture through seasonal campaigns involving bento, desserts, and snack products featuring popular characters on product packaging (Village House, 2021). The use of kawaii character designs on food packaging increases emotional appeal and visual attraction, allowing consumers to experience emotional familiarity during everyday consumption activities. According to Kinsella (1995), kawaii aesthetics are frequently integrated into commercial products in order to strengthen emotional attraction and consumer attachment. In the context of Mofusand food products, cute packaging and character-based visuals function as marketing strategies that reinforce emotional engagement during routine consumption practices.

Furthermore, Mofusand has expanded into snack collaborations such as Hi-Chew and Ninja Meshi Hagane, which introduced candies and gummy products using Mofusand-themed packaging (Azizah, n.d.). This expansion demonstrates that even small-scale snack products can function as media for character commercialization and cultural distribution. The presence of Mofusand within low-cost and easily accessible products also broadens the character’s reach among wider consumer groups, including younger audiences and casual consumers.

The integration of Mofusand into food and beverage products can also be associated with emotional consumption practices within Japanese popular culture. According to Allison (2006), consumers often develop emotional attachment toward characters through repeated interaction across media, commodities, and everyday activities. In the context of food consumption, repeated encounters with Mofusand through snacks, beverages, desserts, and convenience store campaigns strengthen emotional familiarity and consumer attachment toward the character. Therefore, consumers are not only purchasing food products for practical consumption but also consuming emotional experiences associated with kawaii aesthetics and character culture.

Moreover, the use of kawaii characters in food products reflects the influence of iyashi culture within contemporary Japanese society. Matsui (2013) explains that healing-oriented aesthetics and emotional comfort have become important aspects of modern Japanese consumer culture. The soft visual appearance, humorous expressions, and playful cat imagery associated with Mofusand create feelings of comfort and emotional relaxation for consumers. Consequently, food products featuring Mofusand function not only as edible commodities but also as emotional and aesthetic objects embedded within everyday consumption practices.

From the perspective of Storey (2018), this phenomenon demonstrates that popular culture is not consumed solely through media entertainment but also through ordinary daily activities such as eating and shopping. Storey explains that popular culture operates through systems of production, circulation, and mass consumption that continuously reproduce cultural commodities within everyday life. In the case of Mofusand, food and beverage products become effective media for expanding character visibility because they are directly connected to routine consumer behavior. Therefore, the integration of Mofusand into food and beverage industries demonstrates how Japanese popular culture transforms kawaii characters into sustainable commercial and cultural commodities embedded within contemporary consumer society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Mofusand has developed from a digital illustration character

created by the Japanese illustrator Juno into a widely commercialized cultural commodity within contemporary Japanese popular culture. Initially distributed through social media and LINE stickers, Mofusand gained popularity through digital audience engagement before expanding into various forms of merchandise and cross-industry collaborations. The findings of this study indicate that the commercialization of Mofusand products reflects broader characteristics of Japanese popular culture, particularly the integration of kawaii aesthetics, emotional consumption, and character-based consumer culture. Through collaborations involving fashion, household products, cosmetics, convenience stores, food and beverage industries, and global retail brands, Mofusand has become embedded within consumers' everyday lifestyles and consumption practices. These collaborations demonstrate that character-based commodities function not only as entertainment products but also as emotional and cultural objects associated with comfort, self-expression, and lifestyle identity.

Furthermore, the expansion of Mofusand across multiple industries demonstrates how Japanese popular culture operates through systems of media mix, commercialization, and global cultural distribution. The use of kawaii aesthetics and emotional attachment strategies allows Mofusand to maintain consumer engagement while simultaneously expanding its presence within international markets. In this context, Mofusand represents not only a commercial character product but also a cultural commodity that contributes to the globalization of Japanese popular culture and contemporary consumer culture. From the perspective of cultural studies, this study also shows that the commercialization of Mofusand products illustrates how popular culture is continuously reproduced through everyday consumption activities. Therefore, Mofusand can be understood as part of a broader phenomenon in which Japanese character culture functions simultaneously as entertainment media, emotional commodity, and commercial strategy within contemporary global consumer society.

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