

Japanese Consumer Buying-Behavior Analysis using Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) Model

Kishimoto, Yuichi* and Takashi Sumida**

INTRODUCTION

In the field of consumer behavior, studies of the consumer decision-making process have appeared in the literature (Simon 1965, 1977; Howard and Sheth 1969; Nicocia 1966; Engel, Kollat and Blackwell 1968). Other more recent studies of consumer decision-making styles have focused on understanding consumer behavior (Bettman 1979; Jacoby and Chestnut 1978; Maynes 1976; Miller 1981; Sproles 1977). The latter studies suggest approaches to develop consumer decision-making styles. In addition to the literature above, Yuichi Kishimoto (1982) has discussed consumer buying-behavior, especially, those decisions regarding cuisine style. Within this literature, this study seeks to clarify the characteristics of Japanese consumers' decision-making styles.

After considerable study of consumer decision-making styles, some new analytical instruments have further advanced our research in this

* Professor of Distribution and Marketing at Department of Business Administration, St. Andrew's University, Izumi, 594-1198, JAPAN.

** Temporary lecturer at St. Agnes' College, Takatsuki, 569-1092, JAPAN.

area. One of these instruments is the Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) model proposed by Sproles (1985) and developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986).

The studies presented by Sproles (1985) and Sproles and Kendall (1986) show that the CSI can summarize the orientation of consumer decision-making. The CSI describes consumer decision-making according to mental orientation. This mental orientation model includes eight conceptual factors. In our paper, the purpose is to measure Japanese CSI and make clear an aspect of Japanese consumers' buying-behavior, based on the CSI (Sproles 1985 and Sproles and Kendall 1986). Judging from the fact that the studies have already taken place and persuasive results have been obtained not only in the U.S. but also in South Korea and New Zealand, the generalizability and the applicability of the CSI has been validated. An investigative study, however, similar to these other studies has never been done in Japan. Therefore a study that makes clear the role that consumer decision-making styles relay in Japanese consumers' behavior is necessary. This will add an important new source of data to international research on this question.

A review of the most recent research on consumer decision-making styles, will set our study in context. Based on Sproles (1985) and Sproles and Kendall (1986), several researchers have studied consumer decision-making styles. Firstly, Sproles (1985) presented the CSI which included eight factors describing different consumer decision-making styles. Secondly, Durvasula, Lysonski and Andrews (1993), researchers of the CSI in New Zealand, have concluded that "extant research in this field has identified three approaches to characterize consumer styles." These three approaches are the Consumer Typology

Approach (Darden and Ashton 1974; Moschis 1976), the Psychographics /Lifestyle Approach (Lastovicka 1982; Wells 1974) and the Characteristics Approach (Sproles 1985; Sproles and Kendall 1986; Sproles and Sproles 1990). In the Characteristics Approach, particularly, Sproles (1985), Sproles and Kendall (1986) and Sproles and Sproles (1990) developed consumer decision-making styles focusing on young consumers' behavior. Thirdly, Hafstrom, Chae and Chung (1992), who applied the CSI in South Korea, concluded that "decision-making is more complex and even more important for consumers today than in the past." These studies commonly assert that global instruments to measure consumer decision-making styles are necessary for the successful study of consumer behavior.

The CSI has been examined in several countries; Sproles (1985) in the U.S.; Hafstrom, Chae and Chung (1992) in South Korea; Durvasula, Lysonski and Andrews (1993) in New Zealand. And although each culture's consumer might differ from each other, these explorations have also proved that consumer decision-making styles can be compared to each other. This is because each of these explorations indicate that the CSI demonstrates a high level of generalizability and reliability.

Comparisons of young consumers in the U.S. with those of South Korea and New Zealand have been effectively discussed in Hafstrom, Chae and Chung (1992) and Durvasula, Lysonski and Andrews (1993) respectively. In spite of the fact that the Japanese market has matured as much as the markets in the other three countries, examinations of the CSI have never been undertaken. In this respect, our paper explores a new area and thus will advance studies of consumer behavior.

According to Sproles and Sproles (1990), the CSI (Sproles and

Kendall 1986) consists of eight factors as follows; (1) Perfectionistic, High-Quality-Conscious Consumer, “a characteristic measuring the degree to which a consumer searches carefully and systematically for the best quality in products,” (2) Brand-Conscious, Price-Equals-Quality Consumer, “a characteristic measuring a consumer’s orientation toward buying the more expensive, well-known national brands,” (3) Novelty and Fashion-Conscious Consumer, “a characteristic identifying consumers who appear to like new and innovative products and gain excitement from seeking out new things,” (4) Recreational and Shopping-Conscious Consumer, “a characteristic measuring the extent to which a consumer finds shopping a pleasant activity and shops just for the fun of it,” (5) Price-Conscious, Value-for-Money Consumer, “a characteristic identifying a consumer with particularly high consciousness of sale prices and lower prices in general,” (6) Impulsive, Careless Consumer, “a trait identifying one who tends to buy at the spur of the moment and to appear unconcerned about how much he or she spends (or getting “best buys”),” (7) Confused by Overchoice Consumer, “a person perceiving too many brands and stores from which to choose and who likely experiences information overload in the market,” (8) Habitual, Brand-Loyal Consumer, “a characteristic indicating a consumer who repeatedly chooses the same favorite brands and stores.”

DATA AND METHOD

Previously, data has been collected in the U.S. (Sproles 1985), South Korea (Hafstrom, Chae and Chung 1992) and New Zealand (Durvasula, Lysonski and Craig 1993). Our Japanese data was collected from surveys answered by 361 university students in 1995. The Japanese

sample has the following characteristics: The mean of age is 19.9 years old with participants ranging from 18 to 22 years old. Some students have urban backgrounds, and others have rural backgrounds. The Japanese sample consists of 85 percent males and 15 percent females. Compared to the three samples from the U.S., South Korea and New Zealand, the Japanese sample is valuable because of its diverse characteristics.

The Japanese instrument contained 40 Likert-scaled items which ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) as Sproles (1985) and Sproles and Kendall (1986) instrument did. Consequently, a statistical analytical method to analyze Japanese data in our study includes the two steps which Sproles (1985) and Sproles and Kendall (1986) applied in their study. One is a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation, and the other is a computation of Cronbach alpha coefficient.

ANALYSIS

The first analysis applied in our paper is a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation to identify characteristics of consumer decision-making styles. The second analysis is a Cronbach alpha coefficient to deduce the scale reliability of the factors extracted from the first analysis.

To retain the same conditions of exploration (Sproles 1985) as much as possible, the authors translated 40 English items on the CSI (Sproles 1985) into 40 Japanese items without any changes in meaning. The South Korean exploration of the CSI adjusted several items in order to fit consumers' conditions in South Korea.

Factor solution of the Japanese sample explains 59 percent of the

variance. The Japanese sample generates more reasonable variance statistically than those in the other three countries, e.g. 46 percent of the variance on the U.S. sample, 47 percent of the variance on the South Korean sample and 56 percent of the variance on the New Zealand sample. All the eigenvalues on the Japanese sample are more than 1.0 and 5.20 is the highest of all the eigenvalues.

FINDINGS

As shown in Table 1. the Japanese sample includes eight factors, as did Sproles (1985) and Sproles and Kendall (1986). The eight factors of the CSI for Japanese young consumers' decision-making styles are summarized as follows.

Factor 1. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who seek the very best products and make an effort to make a good choice. Moreover, these Japanese young consumers are more careful than others to make a decision to buy. Once they decide, however, they purchase very quickly without any change of mind or hesitation.

Factor 2. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who tend to feel strongly that price equals quality. In addition, these Japanese young consumers are more interested in buying at nice department and specialty stores.

Factor 3. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who are very prompt to react to changes in fashion. These Japanese young consumers, however, don't diversify their choice in fashion. In another words, they are conformist, trying to be similar to others.

Factor 4. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who tend to enjoy shopping just for the fun of it. They tend to go shopping without the intention to make a particular purchase.

Table 1 Consumer Style Characteristics : Eight Factor Model*^a

Items	Loadings			
	U.S. sample	South Korean sample	New Zealand sample	Japanese sample
Factor 1-Perfectionistic, High-Quality Conscious Consumer				
1. Getting very good quality is very important to me.	.68	—	.77	.54
2. When it comes to purchasing products. I try to get the very best or perfect choice.	.66	.61	.72	.71
3. In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality.	.62	—	.71	.64
4. I make special effort to choose the very best quality products.	.61	.79	.81	.76
5. I really don't give my purchases much thought or care.	-.54	—	-.14	-.61
6. My standards and expectations for products I buy are very high.	.54	.62	.66	.55
7. I shop quickly, buying the first product or brand I find that seems good enough.	-.41	—	-.34	.71
8. A product doesn't have to be perfect, or the best, to satisfy me.	-.41	—	-.57	-.50
Factor 2-Brand Conscious, "Price-Equals-Quality" Consumer				
9. The well-known national brands are best for me.	.63	.51	.39	.61
10. The more expensive brands are usually my choices.	.61	.60	.26	.61
11. The higher the prices of a product, the better its quality.	.59	.53	.52	.73
12. Nice department and specialty stores offer me the best products.	.57	.68	.22	.66
13. I prefer buying the best-selling brands.	.54	—	.65	.67
14. The most advertised brands are usually very good choices.	.48	.47	.71	.63
Factor 3-Novelty-Fashion Conscious Consumer				
15. I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style.	.75	—	.72	.73
16. I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashions.	.70	.51	.80	.74
17. Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me.	.64	—	.62	.78
18. To get variety, I shop different stores and choose different brands.	.50	—	.33	-.69
19. It's fun to buy something new and exciting.	.46	.51	.18	-.45

Factor 4-Recreational, Hedonistic Consumer				
20. Shopping is not a pleasant activity to me.	-.70	-	-.74	-.76
21. Going shopping is one of the enjoyable activities of my life.	.70	-	.82	.77
22. Shopping the stores wastes my time.	-.69	-.71	-.50	-.69
23. I enjoy shopping just for the fun of it.	.66	.40	.83	.48
24. I make my shopping trips fast.	-.64	-.70	-.73	-.58
Factor 5-Price Conscious, "Value for Money" Consumer				
25. I buy as much as possible at sale prices.	.66	.51	.71	.77
26. The lower price products are usually my choice.	.56	.47	.31	.79
27. I look carefully to find the best value for the money.	.54	.68	.56	.53
Factor 6-Impulsive, Careless Consumer				
28. I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do.	.55	.61	.61	.45
29. I am impulsive when purchasing.	.53	.55	.72	.63
30. Often I make careless purchases I later wish I had not.	.52	.55	.63	.43
31. I take the time to shop carefully for best buys.	-.51	-.51	-.48	-.60
32. I carefully watch how much I spend.	-.43	.55	-.54	.44
Factor 7-Confused by Overchoice Consumer				
33. There are so many brands to choose from that often I feel confused.	.68	.64	.74	.67
34. Sometimes it's hard to choose which stores to shop.	.61	.64	.55	.74
35. The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best.	.53	-	.58	.76
36. All the information I get on different products confuses me.	.44	.58	.77	.75
Factor 8-Habitual, Brand-Loyal Consumer				
37. I have favorite brands I buy over and over.	.70	.58	.56	.73
38. Once I find a product or brand I like, I stick with it.	.60	.43	.76	.77
39. I go to the same stores each time I shop.	.58	.50	.63	.66
40. I change brands I buy regularly.	-.48	-.73	-.41	.66

*a The eight factors for the U.S. sample explained a total of 46 percent of the variance. The eight factors for the Korean sample explained a total of 47 percent of the variance. The eight factors for the New Zealand sample explained a total of 56 percent of the variance. The eight factors for the Japanese sample explained a total of 59 percent of the variance. All the eigenvalues for every sample are greater than one.

Table 2 Reliability Coefficients for Consumer Style Characteristics

Characteristics	Cronbach Alpha for subscale of all items loading above 0.40			
	U. S. A.	South Korea	New Zealand	Japan
1. Perfectionistic	.74	.77	.75	.60
2. Brand Conscious	.75	.84	.59	.76
3. Novelty-Fashion Conscious	.74	—	.70	.73
4. Recreational Shopping Conscious	.76	.70	.82	.73
5. Price-Value Conscious	.48	.31	.50	.50
6. Impulsive	.48	.54	.71	.38
7. Confused by Overchoice	.55	.54	.66	.77
8. Habitual, Brand-Loyal	.53	.34	.58	.58

Factor 5. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who seek value-for-money in purchases, watching carefully the products they buy and the prices they pay.

Factor 6. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who are not impulsive and pay attention to how much money they spend.

Factor 7. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who are seriously confused because of the wide-range of brand choice. These Japanese young consumers are faced with excessive free choice which is the result of too many similar products and too many similar advertisements.

Factor 8. This factor characterizes the Japanese young consumers who tend to have strong brand loyalty or strong store loyalty when they shop.

Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for subscale of all items loading above 0.4 are listed in Table 2. Reliability coefficients of the Japanese sample are satisfactorily related to seven factors except Factor 6, although the reliability coefficients of impulsive characteristic is 0.38. The alpha coefficient for this factor might inform us that Factor 6 on the characteristics could not be a suitable factor to

Japanese young consumers. This might also suggest that there is a necessity for a seven factor model for young consumers in Japan.

CONCLUSIONS

This study addresses the generalizability of scaling instruments to Japanese young consumers. In fact, this study confirms that Japanese young consumers' decision-making styles can be measured by the CSI as in the U.S., South Korea and New Zealand. Findings from these other countries' research indicate the importance of the generality of consumer style characteristics. For example, the comparative study for young consumer decision-making styles between the U.S. and South Korea by Hafstrom, Chae and Chung (1992) evidences, firstly, that decision-making styles of young consumers in South Korea can be identified and, secondly, that there is an indication of the generality of consumer decision-making styles of both consumers. For another example, the exploratory study of young consumer decision-making styles in New Zealand by Durvasula, Lysonski and Andrews (1993) testifies to the cross-cultural generalizability of profiles of young consumers' decision-making styles. This study in New Zealand emphasizes the cross-cultural psychometric properties of measures.

Thus, the research on Japanese young consumers and those on the U.S., South Korean and New Zealand young consumers contribute much to the study of global and cross-cultural consumer behavior. Specifically, we can conclude that younger people in many countries behave differently from the older generation. Young consumers' behavior is regarded as one of main segments all over the world. It is said, "young people's leisure and lifestyle cover new ground in

examining the importance of leisure in the development of youth lifestyles. The findings quite clearly show the significance of leisure time, when different forms of self-expression emerge and, in particular, with the opportunity to socialize outside the family, self-identity begins to be defined in new ways” (Hendry, Shucksmith, Love and Glendinning 1993).

Many Japanese older consumers tend to conserve their consumption and have less purchasing power. This is the result of Japanese economic conditions today. Specifically; ① The collapse of bubble economy and the structural economic recession. ② Tremendously expensive prices of the residential real estate. Because of this, the average propensity to consume is much lower than other developed countries. ③ Restructuring of the firms or the corporations in Japan, mainly the labor force reduction.

On the other hand, it is obvious that Japanese young consumers, specifically junior high and high school girls (ranging from 12 or 13 through 17 or 18 years old), have considerable purchasing power. And a lot of firms in Japan are interested in identifying these girls' needs and wants. Actually, some products whose markets have expanded recently were propelled by purchases by junior high and high school girls in Japan. An example of a product which some of the eight factors of the CSI doubtlessly influence consumer behavior of the junior high and high school girls is the sale of socks like leg warmers called “loose socks.” Sales of them are booming. It is no exaggeration to say that it is difficult to find junior and senior high school girls without “loose socks.” Then, after graduating from high school, the girls never want to put them on again, even though they go to college or university. Therefore, we can recognize “loose socks” as not only

a boom, fad, popularity, vogue or fashion but also one part of the junior and senior high school girls' culture. Several similar cases to "loose socks" may be found in Japanese young consumers' behavior.

Today, many kinds of Japanese consumers occupy many segments, and each of these segments is important in markets in Japan. Thus, this study for Japanese young consumers' decision-making styles provides a possible indication of how the particular consumers behave, not only young consumers but also other categories of consumers.

In many countries, the more the understanding of young consumers' behavior becomes significant in the market, the more researchers will try to examine young consumers behavior. While the CSI is one of the recommended instruments because of its verified generalizability and reliability, researchers are continuously required to develop other measurements of consumer decision-making styles. It is because the CSI can be a fundamental measurement for consumer decision-making styles, and most probably, consumer trends will be entirely changing in terms of time series.

SUMMARY

The Japanese market is becoming globalized and Japanese consumers' needs are increasingly diversified. For these reasons, consumer decision-making in consumer behavior of Japan has become an important issue. Research has also taken place in many countries. One of the models of consumer decision-making styles which can be represented is the CSI. And some studies use this instrument as an effective model in each country. Therefore, a lot of literature on consumer decision-making indicate the importance of profiling consumer decision-making styles. Here, our paper presents the Japanese consumer deci-

sion-making styles using one model, the so-called Sproles-Kendall Method, whose global generalizability and reliability have been demonstrated.

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