

Analysis of the Decreasing Clothes Consumption in Japan - Some New Tendencies of Consumer Behavior in the Basis of Data of Psychology, Time-use and Expenditure

Prof. Ken Kazama

University of Mukogawa Women's, Japan

1. Introduction

In Japan, the department stores have decreased their sales since 1991(Fig.1). The sales of department stores are one of the important indexes of the business situation and the consumer spending. So, we are interesting in their sales.

In the department stores, about 50 percent and more of total sales are from clothes sales (Fig.1); moreover their profits from clothes are about 60 percent and more. In this figure, further, you can see that the sales of clothes have decreased since 1991. These percents of decrease in 1999 reached 15 %.

This is the reason why the decreasing of the sales in department stores continues for long time.

Therefore, increasing the consumption on clothes is the interesting thing for every field of business. The decrease of sales is not only in the clothes, but also in the total of fiber, textiles and clothes (Fig. 2).

Today I would like to provide a consideration about the decreasing clothes consumption in Japan. I should like to give this talk in four viewpoints. The first part deals with economics. The second part concerns Time use of household. The third part is from psychology, and last part relates to the interdisciplinary field between psychology and economics.

2. Expenditure of consumer on clothes (Economic Viewpoint)

Decrease of the expenditure ratio (%) on clothes in family finance is shown in Fig.3. For 40 years, % of decrease is almost half. The amount of expenditure on each clothes is shown in Fig.4. Its reason is as follows.

1. Consumers feel that clothes are expensive than other consumption goods. This feeling is proved by following two data. Table 1 shows the prices of many kinds

- of clothes in Japan are expensive than other countries. Under expensive feeling of consumers, some retailers (Uniclo, Shimamura) have expanded their business by low price sale since 1998. In 2000, many apparel makers started to reduce the regular price of their clothes. Some examples of these changes of price in this year are shown in Table 2. Apparel maker A reduces 50 to 60 % of list prices on their goods.
2. Consumers feel to be satisfied with almost all of the consumption goods. So, they tell us "there are no goods we want to buy". The survey of the reason for no goods consumers want to buy is shown in Table 3. This table tells us the consumers to have no goods they want to buy (the total of Yes and Nearly yes) hold majority. By this survey, we find many goods lost their charm for consumers. Clothes may be the same situation as other goods.
 3. Attitude toward housekeeping (Time use viewpoint) Time use for housekeeping is decreasing for 25 years (Fig.5). The first reason is in women hating the labor of housekeeping. The main reason, second, is in increase of women with job. Table 4 shows the job makes the difference of time use on housekeeping. Ratio of time use on washing of women with job to jobless is almost half. This result suggests that any complicate dealing in clothes may be one of the reasons for decrease of clothes purchase.
 4. New tendency in choice of goods on buying (psychological viewpoint 1) The recent consumers, particularly young women, don't buy the goods whose characters have even the slight discord with their requirement (Fig.6). The degree that a character of goods matches the consumer's specification to goods becomes higher at present than in the past. The recent consumer, therefore, don't tolerate any substitute. This tendency may introduce two results: The consumer may feel the difficulty in finding the goods he searches, so he will not probably obtain it. As there are many goods, which were not chosen by the recent consumer, unsold goods might increase. In the past, such goods might be almost sold.
 5. Person perception on clothes (psychological viewpoint 2) Person perception that a person makes someone (object) an impression is a psychological concept. In order to make his impression better, an object usually takes conformity to his group into consideration (Fig.7). However, the recent consumers don't care the assimilation or conformity to society or their group. The conscious about above conformity in youth, are shown in a survey (Table 6). The most efficient mean of conformity is the clothes, especially fashion. In the past, clothes are put on for forming the social interaction. Beside, the recent consumers hardly take the assessment from their group into consideration. This difference of behavior between past and recent consumers is shown in the choice of cloths. The former selects the clothes to be conscious of the social assessment. But the latter is not conscious of society or group in selecting the clothes. We find one of the influences of the recent consumers'

behavior on the intention to "brand", that is on not being interest in the major brands and being interest in theirs. Their brands are not broadly known. The result of our survey is shown in Fig. 8. Date of survey is in 1998, October, and respondents are 184 of female students (19 to 22 years old). Respondents were asked to list the brand name they were interested in. The total number they listed was 375. The results were widely dispersed and the small brands 1 to 3 of respondents listed occupied 75%. Contrary, the famous brands which 10 and more of correspondents listed were less than 10%. This result tells us that the young consumers hardly choice the major brands because they hate to assimilate to people, society and group they belong to.

6. Future of goods, specially clothes (Interdisciplinary viewpoint between economics and psychology) It is said that the ratio of expenditure in family have exchanged from goods to service. To demonstrate this tendency, I try to be shown in Fig. 9. However, this try went wrong. As you can see, the most growth is shown in durable goods. Y-axis of this Figure is percent of 1980 expenditure. Service shows the constant growth. But its speed is less than durable goods. Reason of low growth in service expenditure is considered both durable goods and service. For this purpose, each items in durable goods and service expenditure should be severally considered. The items of service expenditure are shown in table 7, and classified to three groups. It is shown in Table 8. Ratios of 1998 to 80 expenditure on each item and means of each group are added to Table 8. From this result, Type 1 and 2 of ratio of expenditure in 98/80 are less than Type 3. Even Type 1 has the high ratio: attendance on senior, but this is a new field of growing care business. The reason why Type 1 has the high ratio is that recent consumers have the intention to like their own activity. If consumers' income increases, they will show another behavior of expenditure. To know this behavior, we show Table 9 as income quintile group. The consumers in class purchase 9 times clothes than in class : Table 9(1). The clothes are the largest in all items: Table 9(2). As another peculiarity of clothes is shown in Table 10, however, price and quantity of clothes are not in hope of growing. For growing of clothes field, we should point out that clothes are not only materials (namely goods), but also something psychological and included in activity of consumers.