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The characteristics of recent consumer behavior in Japan.
The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

Yoshio Kajiwara

By the oil crisis in the fall, 1973, consumers hurried to buy some essential goods, and companies made a corner, holding goods for future sale. Thus lack of goods became a serious social problem. Through the very prosperous economy we had already noticed the fact that the consumers had been hurried to buy more goods by the policy of product differentiation and much advertisement by business firms, although they had had enough goods, and consequently it had caused the goods famine.

In facing a rapid rise in prices, Japanese consumers began to have their own consuming activities without being controlled by the business firms. Then they do not buy too much and as a natural course of event the fundamental structure of the consumer behavior will be changed.

About the consumer reaction under the inflation we had already prepared the theory of consumer behavior.

"The consumers, by watching a price cutting in the process of the distribution such as discount stores and by receiving small income decreased by the inflation, have less interest in product differentiation, in much advertisement and in store differentiation. Then they become more sensitive to goods themselves, to their prices and
to what stores will do for them, and begin to move among brands and stores."

Unfortunately with the oil crisis a turning point, Japan became a great experimental market to make sure of our theory of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

In January, 1974, we began to make many questionnaires and held many inquiries for trial. In July, 1974, we finally succeeded to make a pertinent questionnaire, and in August and September we distributed the questionnaires to the consumers in Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Fukuoka, Nagasaki, and Sendai, asking them to answer by return of post. In several days we heard 1093 effective answers.

On December 19, 1974, at Aoi Kaikan, Aoi-cho, Akasaka, Tokyo we presented the result of the inquiry in the presence of people from administrative organs, business firms, investigation research agencies, universities, etc.

The result of the inquiry showed the quite distinct tendency of the consumers to move among brands and stores. The consumers became more sensitive to prices, showing less reaction to product differentiation and more reaction to the substance of goods, and began to stop sticking to specific or famous brands. They stopped sticking to specific stores and began to move from stores to stores even if they were in the distance store loyalty has eroded. In purchasing goods, they prepared enough time and had their own shopping plans. This shows that they began to emerge from being controlled by the business firms.

We planned to continue this kind of inquiries for three years, adding some new items. In August and September, 1975, we distributed the questionnaires to the consumers in Tokyo, Chiba, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kobe, Akashimaiko, Fukuoka, Kitakyushu,
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Nagasaki, etc. Then we got 1330 effective answers.

Through the inquiry made in 1975 we got almost the same result as we got in 1974, except some different facts.

Fewer consumers stick to famous brands in buying apparels and foods and more consumers do in buying electric appliances. The consumers make less effort to look for better stores in buying foods and fundamental apparel, but still they try to find their own favorite stores without being controlled by anyone. They have much interest in preferring substance to appearance as they did in 1974.

In the research in 1975 we also notice that product differentiation and advertisement are becoming less effective than ever.

The following is the summary of the result of the researches made in 1974 and in 1975

I The summary of the research in 1974

As the consumers know their income was decreased or being decreased by the inflation, they have much interest in prices and try to have their own plans to purchase more carefully than ever. By having their own plans for purchasing, they show less interest in product differentiation, mass advertisement and store differentiation, and on the contrary they show much interest in prices, substantial goods, and product assortment of stores. According to prices and substance of goods, the consumers begin to move among brands and stores, and emerge from arbitrary control by the business firms. The research in August, 1974 was made to justify the above hypothesis.

For the research we chose 3100 housewives, as the associate members, who live in Tokyo, Oraka, Nagoya, Fukuoka, Kitakyushu,
Nagasaki and Sendai. Between August 1 and September 14, 1974 we put the questionnaires with their addresses into their private mailboxes of every four or five houses by ourselves, asking them to answer by return of post not later than October 26. Then we got 1093 effective answers.

The items of which we made the researches are imperishable foods (refrigerated foods, curry roux, food oil), fundamental apparels (underwears, stockings, cutter shirts), fashionable apparels (one-piece dresses, blouses, shirts), small electric appliances (toasters, mixers, hair driers) and large electric appliances (television, cleaners, washing machines).

The result of the research

1. The changes of the consumer reaction to the prices.

(1.1) Have the consumers become more sensitive to the low price advertisement? (Ques. 1)

The consumers have come to watch, more carefully than ever, the low price advertisement of imperishable foods, fundamental apparels and fashionable apparels. Conversely they have come to watch, less carefully, the advertisement of small electric home appliances, and large ones. It can be said that more people are coming to be sensitive to the price advertisement of imperishable foods and apparels and that fewer people are coming to be sensitive to the advertisement of electric appliances. 83.5% of the consumers are sensitive or have become more sensitive to the low price advertisement of imperishable foods. 77.2% of the consumers are or have become more sensitive to that of fundamental apparels and
72.0% of the consumers watch that of fashionable apparels more carefully than ever.

(1.2) Do the consumers choose brands according to the low prices? (Ques. 2)

More consumers have come to choose brands according to the prices firstly in buying fundamental apparels, secondly in getting imperishable foods, and thirdly in purchasing fashionable apparels. 79.0% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, 77.2% of the consumers of fundamental apparels, 72.3% of the consumers of imperishable foods, 61.4% of the consumers of small appliances and 53.3% of the consumers of large appliances have come to change their way of selecting brands or never stick to any specific brands.

(1.3) Did they sticking to some famous brands according to the low prices? (Ques. 3)

Only in buying fundamental apparels more consumers stopped sticking to some famous brands according to the low prices. But 74.1% of the consumers of fundamental apparels, 73.6% of the consumers of fashionable apparels and 63.6% of the consumers of imperishable foods stopped sticking to famous brands or never stick to them. On the contrary 60.4% of the consumers of large appliances and 49.6% of the consumers of small appliances stick to the famous brands.

(1.4) Do they choose private brands according to the low prices? (Ques. 4)

Only 7.5% of the consumers of fundamental apparel buys private
brands of goods as they did before. But 32.4% of the consumers of imperishable foods and 29.5% of the consumers of fundamental apparels have come to buy more private brands of goods than ever. We admit that this shows a tendency for the consumers to choose more private brands than ever. But in general we should admit 88.7% of the consumers of large appliances, 84.3% of the consumers of small appliances and 74.7% of the consumers of fashionable apparels still ignore the private brands. These percentages are great. 61.8% of the consumers of fundamental apparels and 59.3% of the consumers of imperishable apparels also ignore them. These percentages are also rather large.

2. The changes in the consumer behavior in selecting stores.

(2.1) Do they visit more stores to watch goods as carefully as possible? (Ques. 5)

In buying every article the consumers have come to look around more carefully than before. 70.4% of the consumers of imperishable foods, 70.2% of the consumers of fundamental apparels, 68.9% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, 51.2% of the consumers of small appliances, and 47.9% of the consumers of large appliances look around the stores as carefully as or more carefully than before. But it is remarkable that 32.8% of the consumers of large appliances, 28.7% of the consumers of small appliances and 23.8% of the consumers of imperishable foods still visit their own favorite stores.

(2.2) Did they choose stores according to the low prices?

(Ques. 6)

69.1% of the consumers of imperishable foods, 64.7% of the
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Consumers of fundamental apparels, 58.9% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, 47.3% of the consumers of small appliances, 40.8% of the consumers of large appliances changed the stores according to the prices. Including the consumers who never have or never had their favorite stores, 82.9% of the consumers of imperishable foods, 81.9% of the consumers of fundamental apparels, 79.7% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, 63.4% of the consumers of small appliances and 55.6% of the consumers of large appliances move among the stores in accordance with the prices. But there are many who never change their favorite stores of electric home appliances. 41.5% of the consumers of large appliances and 33.5% of the consumers of small appliances have never changed their favorite stores.

3. The changes of time in selecting goods

(3.1) Do they spend more time in selecting goods? (Ques. 7)

The consumers spend more time in selecting any articles. Only 5 or 6% of them spend less time in selecting goods. 74.5% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, 74.4% of the consumers of large appliances, 71.6% of the consumers of fundamental apparels, 71.0% of the consumers of small appliances and 69.2% of the consumers of imperishable foods spend more time or as much time as before.

4. The changes in the reaction to product differentiation.

(4.1) Do they have more interest in the substance of goods? (Ques. 8)

As to imperishable foods 52.2% of the consumers have come to watch, more carefully, the substance, the date of production, the
annexes, the contents. As to apparel the percentage of the consumers (36.1% as to fundamental apparel and 22.0% as to fashionable apparel) who have come to watch, more carefully, the substance, the quality, the texture, the way of sewing...is second to that of those who have not changed the way of selecting goods. As to electric appliances the same thing can be said. Both small and large appliances show 31.8%. The consumers don’t show any new reactions to product differentiation...vessels for imperishable foods, designs in fundamental apparels or electric home appliances, brands of fundamental apparels or fashionable apparels.

(4.2) Do they show desirable reaction to highly differentiated products? (Ques. 9)

The highest percentage, 54.4%, of the consumers wish to buy new articles when theirs become useless and they are considered comparatively independent in the way of thinking. The next higher percentage, 32.8%, of the consumers don’t wish to buy goods or wish to buy ones according to their basic function. It can be considered that they offer the strongest restance to product differentiation. Only 3.5% of the consumers wish to buy after gaining a better income and it is expected that they show desirable reactions to highly differentiated products.

5. The changes in the reaction to product advertising.

(5.1) Do they have more interest in advertisements. (Ques. 10)

It is assured for every article that those who have paid attention to advertising is larger in number than those who have not. It is also assured that those who have come to have more interest than
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before, is larger in number than those who have less interest. This shows that the consumers in increasing numbers have come to have more interest in advertisements. But we must notice those who pay attention to advertisements are not always satisfied with the present advertisements.

The consumers have a tendency not to stick to any specific brands or any famous brands, being sensitive to prices with less interest in product differentiation and more interest in the substance of goods. Moreover the consumers, without sticking to specific stores, begin to move among stores even if they are in the distance. We also notice that the consumers have more time to think and have their own plan for purchasing without being controlled by any business firms.

The simple tabulation of the research in 1974

The period: between August and September, 1974
The associate members: 3100 housewives in Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Fukuoka, etc.
The number of the effective answers: 1093
Research Items: Imperishable food, Fundamental apparel, Fashionable apparel, Small electric appliance, Large electric appliance.

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ques. 1</td>
<td>1. I watch more than ever.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. I watch as much as before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I watch less than before.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I have never watched.</td>
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<td>Question</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
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| Ques. 2 Do you buy goods by the manufacturers which are not your favorite if they are cheaper? | 1. Yes.  
2. No.  
3. I have never had any interest in specific manufacturers. |
| Ques. 3 Do you buy cheaper goods, even if they are not first-class?      | 1. Yes.  
2. No.  
3. I have never had any interest in first-class goods. |
| Ques. 4 Do you buy more original goods by supermarkets than goods by famous makers? | 1. Yes.  
2. No.  
3. I have been buying more original goods by supermarkets. |
| Ques. 5 Do you visit more stores to watch goods?                        | 1. I visit more stores.  
2. I visit as many stores as before.  
3. I visit fewer stores than ever.  
4. I have never been to any stores except favorite ones. |
| Ques. 6 If the goods are cheaper, do you buy them at the stores which are not your favorite? | 1. Yes.  
2. No.  
3. I try not to buy goods only at any specific stores as I did not buy before. |
| Ques. 7 Do you spend more time in comparing goods with other ones?       | 1. I spend more time than before.  
2. I spend as much time as before.  
3. I spend less time than before.  
4. I spend no time as I didn’t before. |
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ques. 8 In comparing goods, to what point, except prices, do you pay attention?</td>
<td>1. the shape of the vessel.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. the name of the manufacturer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. the date of production, the annexes, the volumes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. I never change the way of selecting goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As to imperishable foods.</td>
<td>1. the quality, the texture, the way of sewing of the clothes</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. the design.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3. the name of the manufacturer.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. I never change the way of selecting goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As to fundamental and fashionable apparels.</td>
<td>1. the structure, the function, the electricity consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. the design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. the name of the manufacturer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I never change the way of selecting goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As to small and large electric appliances.</td>
<td>1. No, I will select ones according to the basic function.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I wish to buy ones after getting more income.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I wish to buy ones when ours become useless.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I can’t answer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ques. 10 Do you have more interest in advertisement on television or in newspapers and magazines, except the low price advertisement?</td>
<td>1. I have more interest than ever.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. I have had much interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I have less interest than ever.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. I have never had any interest.</td>
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II The summary of the research in 1975

In the first research in 1974 we tried to find the changes of the consumer reaction, asking them about prices, goods, advertisements and stores. In the second nation-wide research in 1975 we asked the same kind of questions in the different way in order to understand more about the present situation. We added the new questions about their reactions to products and advertisements, such as the questions to find their expecting reactions to products asking what they think about product improvement, the questions to know their buying motives moved by advertisements or product differentiation, the questions to ask their opinions about advertisements. We also added the questions to ask how they judge their own buying behavior, which will be considered one of the conditions to preserve the characteristics of the consumer behavior as it was proved by the research in 1974. Lastly we added the new question to ask how they have changed their buying behavior in accordance with the pand the econoolluted environmentmy of natural resourses.

We chose 4100 housewives or housekeepers as the associate members of this time, who live in the residential areas in Chiba, Tokyo, Yokohama, Kawasaki, Nagoya, Kobe, Kitakyushu, Fukuoka, and Nagasaki. Between August 1, 1975 and September 25, 1974, we put the questionnaires with their addresses into their private mailboxes of every four or five houses by ourselves, asking them to answer by return of post not later than October 5.

The items on which we made researches aer imperishable foods (curry roux, soy, half cooked foods), fundamental apparels (under-wears, stockings, cutter shirts), fashionable apparels (one-piece
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dresses, blouses, shirts), small electric appliances (toasters, mixers,
hair driers), large electric appliances (television sets, refrigeraters,
air conditioners) and washing materials (synthetic washing materials,
shampoo, tooth paste),

The result of the research

1. Reactons to prices

(1.1) The reaction to low price advertisement. (Ques. 1)

59.2% of the consumers often watch the low price advertisement
for imperishable foods and 52.1% for synthetic washing materials.
The smaller percentage of the consumers of apparel watch it. 45.5
% of them sometimes watch it for fundamental apparel and 45.6% for
fashionable apparel. As for electric appliances the percentage
of those who sometimes watch is higher that of those who often
watch. As for small electric appliances 55.0% of the consumers
and as for large electric appliances 47.3%, both of them are the
greatest percentage, hardly watch the low price advertisement,
88.7% of the consumers of imperishable foods, 82.0% of the con-
sumers of synthetic washing materials, 77.4% of the consumers of
fundamental apparels, 75.6% of the consumers of fashionable appa-
rels, 52.1% of the consumers of large appliances and 44.2% of the
consumers of small appliances often or sometimes watch the low
price advertisement.

The smaller number of the consumers pay attention to the low
price advertisement of electric appliances, comparing with other
items. The reason can be considered to be that they don't have
so many chances to buy the appliances and that it is too difficult to
select the appliances of low price without any buying risk.

In the research in 1974 we asked whether or not they come to watch, more carefully, the price advertisement of a bargain sale and a special discount. The alternatives were: (1) I have come to watch more carefully. (2) I have been watching carefully. (3) I have come to watch less carefully than ever. (4) I have never watched.

Those who sometimes or hardly watch may have choiced the third answer. And those who often watch or sometimes watch may have choiced the first or the second answer. We know it is too difficult to compare the result of the research in 1974 with the research in 1975. But the small number of the consumers, 4.1% as for imperishable foods and 7.0% as for fundamental apparels choiced the item “I have come to watch less.” Then we can compare the total percentage of those who choiced the items “I have come to watch more carefully,” (83.5% as for imperishable foods and 71.3% as for fundamental apparels) in 1974 with the total percentage of those who choiced the items “I often watch,” and “I sometimes watch,” (88.7% as for imperishable foods and 77.4% as for fundamental apparels) in 1974. We can also establish a comparison between the percentage of those who choiced “I have never watched,” (11.3% as for imperishable foods and 20.0% as for fundamental apparels) in 1974 and the percentage of those who choiced “I hardly watch,” (10.6% as for imperishable foods and 21.8% as for fundamental apparels) in 1975. As far as the above comparison shows, it can be said that the consumer reaction to the low price advertisement in 1975 is as strong as that in 1974, although it has not become stronger.
(1.2) Emergence from famous brands. (Ques. 2)

Only 31.3% of the consumers of fundamental apparels, only 28.4% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, and only 22.0% of the consumers of synthetic cleaning materials prefer the low price goods to famous brands of goods without any hesitation. If there is not so much difference between two brands of the goods, 50.2% of the consumers of imperishable foods, 50.4% of fundamental apparels, 48.9% of fashionable apparels and 43.3% of synthetic washing materials prefer the low price goods. The total percentages of those who don’t always stick to famous brands, are 81.7% as for fundamental apparel, 77.3% as for fashionable apparel, 66.7% as for imperishable foods and 65.3% as for synthetic washing materials.

On the other hand, 74.4% of the consumers of large electric appliances and 57.8% of small ones still stick to the famous brands. Most of them think that they cannot buy electric appliances without any risk because they can’t examine their complicated structure sufficiently. At the same time we must not miss the fact that 0.1% of the consumers of small appliances and 16.8% of large ones prefer the low price ones if there is not so much difference between the goods.

In the research in 1974 we asked the question, “Have you come to buy cheaper goods even if they are not first-class?” The alternatives were: “(1) Yes. (2) No, (3) I have never had any interest in the first-class goods.” In answering this question, those who buy cheaper goods, if there is not much difference between the goods, may have choiced the second answer. But we admit that almost all of them were supposed to choice the first answer in that
case. Then we can establish a direct comparison between the percentages of those who stick to the famous brands, the percentage of those who answered "No." in 1974 and those who answered "No." in 1975. The number of those who stick to the famous brands shows a slight decrease as follows. As for fundamental apparels 24.4% of the consumers in 1974 and 16.4% of them in 1975 stick to the famous brands. As for fashionable apparels 24.3% in 1974 and 19.9% in 1975. As for imperishable foods 35.0% in 1974 and 30.5% in 1975. Conversely as for small electric appliances and large ones, the percentages of the number show a slight increase. The former is 49.6% in 1974 and 57.8% in 1975, and the latter is 60.4% in 1974 and 74.4% in 1975. As for foods and apparels which they can examine to some extent, about half of them buy the cheaper goods, even if they are not first-class, in case they don't find much difference between the contents of the goods. Judging from this fact, the buying behavior of the consumers is becoming more independent and at the same time we understand that the consumers have begun to reconsider before they prefer the cheaper goods to famous brands of goods, with some apprehension for the contents of the goods because they can't examine sufficiently. And this tendency has been advancing with the slowing down of the inflation.

(1.3) Selection of private brands. (Ques. 3)

23.6% of the consumers of synthetic washing materials and 23.1% of fundamental apparel prefer private brands to famous makers brands without any hesitation. When there is not much difference between famous manufacturer's brands of goods and private brands of goods, 33.8% of the consumers of fundamental
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apparel, 31.8% of imperishable foods and 30.2% of synthetic washing materials prefer the latter. This shows that the higher percentages of the consumers (56.9% as for fundamental apparels, 53.8% as for synthetic washing materials and 51.5% as for imperishable foods) don’t always prefer the famous manufacturer’s brands. 85.9% of the consumers of large appliances, 73.4% of small ones and 57.7% of fashionable apparels stick to famous national brands. Only 8.1% of the consumers of large appliances and only 18.0% of the consumers of small ones, both of which they can’t examine well, prefer the private brands only when they don’t find much difference between the contents of the goods. But 25.1% of the consumers of fashionable apparels, which they can examine well, prefer the private brands.

In the research in 1974, we asked the question, “As you may know, supermakets recently sell their own private brands of goods as their original ones. Do you recently buy more original ones by the supermarkets than the goods by famous manufactarers” The alternatives were: “(1) Yes. (2) No. (3) I have been buying more original ones by the supermarkets.” As we did in the section “Emergence fsom famous brands”, we can also establish a comparison between the percentages of those who answered “No,” in 1974 and in 1975 sticking to famous brands. The percentages of those who prefer famous manufacturer’s brands to supermarket’s brands decreased from 61.8% in 1974 to 42.1% in 1975 as for fundamental apparels, from 74.7% to 57.7% as for fashionable apparels, and from 59.3% to 47.5% as for imperishable foods. As for small appliances the percentage slightly decreased from 84.3% to 73.4%, but as for big ones the percentages are almost the same, 88.7% in 1974 and 85.9% in 1975.
2. Consumer movement among stores

(2.1) The geographical extent of the stores for consumers to visit.

8.5% of the consumers of synthetic washing materials and 5.6% of the consumers of fundamental apparel, having no shopping plan, make little effort to select and buy at the first store they visit. As far as the other foods are concerned, very few people do that. The larger number of the consumers (64.4% as for imperishable foods, 58.4% as for synthetic washing materials) have their own favorite stores making their plans for buying. As for electric appliances which need 'after service' 44.6% of the consumers of small ones and 49.1% of the consumers of large ones also have them. 76.6% of the consumers of fashionable apparels and 57.4% of the consumers of fundamental apparels have no special stores and try to look around from stores to stores and have the most intentional buying behavior by their own efforts. This kind of buying behavior is necessary for the consumers to select apparels (not always to prefer low price goods). About half of the consumers of electric appliances (50.9% as for small ones and 48.1% as for large ones) have the same kind of buying behavior. And we must not fail to notice that 31.1% of the consumers of imperishable foods and 32.1% of the consumers of synthetic washing materials, both of which they often buy, don't have their favorite stores and go from stores to stores in order to buy them. At the same time we must notice the following fact. When the consumers say that they have their own favorite stores to buy foods and washing materials, it also means that they have several favorite stores and go from stores to stores compare the goods.
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In the research in 1974 we asked the question, "Do you visit more stores to watch goods?" The alternatives were: "(1) I visit more stores than ever. (2) I visit as many stores as before. (3) I visit fewer stores than ever. (4) I have never been to any stores except favorite ones." In the research in 1974 we didn't have an equivalent for the alternative, "I usually buy at the first store," which we had in the research in 1975. And those who answered, "I buy at the favorite store," in 1975 may have answered, "I have never been to any stores except favorite ones," or "I visit fewer stores than ever," in 1974. So we can't establish any proper comparison between these questions.

However as far as imperishable foods and fundamental apparel are concerned, the percentage of those who answered, "I buy at the favorite store," in 1975 is greater than the total percentage of those who answered, "I visit fewer stores than ever," or "I have never been to any stores except favorite ones," in 1974. About small or large electric appliances the percentages in this respect are almost the same. So far as these goods are concerned we consider the consumers make less effort to visit many stores in 1975 than in 1974. Especially about imperishable foods in the research in 1974 28.1% of the consumers answered, "I visit fewer stores than ever," or "I have never been to any stores except favorite ones." On the contrary in the research in 1975 64.4% of the consumers answered, "I buy at the favorite store." As these percentages show, the consumer movement among stores, which had been expanded once, has been materially reduced for the last one year.
(2.2) Consumer walking in a shopping district without any purpose. (Ques. 5)

First we expected that few consumers would walk in the shopping district, but actually 35.6% of the consumers go there without any purpose of shopping or window-shopping and the larger number, 46.3%, of the consumers go if they have chance. The total number of these consumers reaches 81.9%. This means that almost all of the consumers walk in the shopping district without a specific purpose of shopping. We found in the research in 1974 that more consumers, contrary to our expectations, were interested in advertisement. We also notice that the consumers walk in the district to get some information on shopping by themselves. In other words they are trying to have the geographic expansion of the stores to make purchase.

3. Reaction to products

(3.1) Reaction to the substance of products and product differentiation. (Ques. 6)

A large number of the consumers pay attention to the substance of the products as follows. 53.3% of them cares about the ingredients of synthetic washing materials. 67.6% of them watch the date of production, the annexes, the volumes of imperishable foods. 61.6% of them watch the quality, the texture and the way of sewing of the clothes. 42.6% of them watches the structure, the function, the electricity consumption of electric appliances. On the contrary a small number of the consumers pay attention to the diversified characteristics of the products as follows. 1.9% of them care about the shape of the vessel and the way of packing of imperishable
foods. 1.8% of them care about the designs of electric appliances. As for apparel 16.5%, a little higher percentage than the above two but smaller than 61.6%, of them care about diversified designs. We must also notice that the designs of apparels usually mean the substantial differentiation for the consumers. We know that the consumers pay attention to the names of the manufacturers as the result of product differentiation and nation-wide advertising, but we must not forget that in selecting products the consumers sometimes depend on what business firms have been supplying for a long period. This tendency is strong especially about products which they can’t examine well. So we can’t think that only product differentiation and amplifying nation-wide advertising made them pay attention to the names of the manufacturers. 41.9%, the highest percentage of all, of them select the manufacturers of the products which they trust in.

About this Ques. 6 we expected them to give a simple answer, but some of them chose two answers. We think that they are consistent in answering the question as we wanted to know their relative reactions to the substance of products and product differentiation. The total percentage of those who selected the alternatives (1) and (3) are shown on the latter page for reference.

(3.2) Request for product improvement. (Ques. 7)

A large percentage of the consumers, 71.5%, make a quest for imperishable foods without annexes. In other words they make a request for substantial improvement of products. 11.1% of the consumers make a request for low price goods with simple packing. Only 2.3% of the consumers make a request for product differentia-
tion, asking for foods that will be easily cooked, that will be nice to look at and that will increase the pleasure of the table.

About apparels, fundamental or fashionable, a great percentage of the consumers, 73.7%, make a request for substantial improvement, asking for durable, functional and active ones. 14.2% of the consumers make a request for low price apparel of simple designs. Only 3.2% of them emphasize product differentiation, asking for fashionable apparels of peculiar designs.

We found in the Ques. 6 asked about their buying behavior about apparels that 16.5% of the consumers care about the designs. Comparing with this result, they show less reaction to product differentiation as far as product improvement is concerned. One of the reasons why they didn't show so much reaction to differentiation might be in the way of the expression of the alternatives, as we, instead of writing simply ‘designs’, wrote peculiar designs which suggest differentiation without substantial meaning.

About electric appliances, big or large, a large percentage of the consumers, 80.5%, make a request for substantial improvement of products, asking for durable ones with strong function and structure. 11.0% of the consumers asked for simple goods at low prices. A very small percentage of the consumers, 0.6%, emphasize product differentiation by asking for more convenient products with many additional functions and peculiar designs.

When we asked the Ques. 7, we expected the consumers to give a simple answer as we had expected in the Ques. 6, but one of them gave multiple answers. Their way of answering is consistent, as we wanted to know their relative reactions to the substance of products, differentiated characteristics and prices. The total percentages of those who selected the alternatives (1) and (2) are shown
4. Reaction to advertisement

(4.1) Buying motives. (Ques. 8)

Only 4.9% of the consumers who don't take their own buying behavior begin to purchase after watching advertisements, watching what their neighbors have, and watching actual goods at the stores. A small percentage of the consumers, 11.6%, who don't take so independent consumer behavior, begin to purchase by desiring a different way of life and different environment, being influenced by the business firm policy of product differentiation and amplifying image advertising. It is remarkable that a great percentage of the consumers, 80.1%, begin to purchase after feeling the inconveniences of living. These consumers are considered to have their own buying behavior. In the research made by Tokyo Price Bureau in 1974 they asked the single choice question, "In buying daily necessities do you select the articles by the manufacturers which you often find in T. V. commercials and newspaper advertisements?" They got 1347 effective answers that reached 74.8% of the questionnaires they had sent.

According to this research, 63.6% of the consumers buy daily necessaries without regard to the commercials and the advertisements. 18.0% of the consumers don't buy the articles by such manufacturers. This result is almost the same as ours.

Before the galloping inflation started from the oil crisis in October, 1973, advertising must have been more effective than now. In order to know this fact, we can show the following data published by the government in December, 1971.
Ques. A

Do you often, sometimes, or seldom (never) buy the articles being moved by advertisements to let you know about the quality and the prices and to motivate your buying behavior?

1. often
2. sometimes
3. seldom

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seldom</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
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Ques. B

Do you often, sometimes, or seldom (never) buy the articles being favourably impressed by beautiful newspaper advertisements, beautiful commercials, or beautiful catchphrases?

1. often
2. sometimes
3. seldom (never)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seldom (never)</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

The research date: November, 1971

Effective answers: 2642

The replying percentage: 88.1%

Prime Minister Secretariat “A Survey of Public Opinion on Consumer Behavior” (Sept., 1972)
The characteristics of recent consumer behavior in Japan. The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

Question A is about the advertisements of the quality and the prices, and Question B is about image advertisements. We can't make an direct comparison between this research of the government and ours, as the way of asking is different. But 56.0% of the consumers seldom show their reactions to the advertisements of the quality of the products and 70.0% of the consumers seldom or never show their reactions to image advertisements. We must notice that these percentages are smaller than the percentage, 80.0%, of those who take independent buying behavior in our research.

(4.2) Opinions on product advertising. (Ques. 9)

75.9% of the consumers are interested in advertisements, but this is the total percentage of the followings. 32.6% of the consumers are interested in them in order to compare the products and 43.3% of the consumers say that advertisements don't help them select the products. This shows that many consumers are not satisfied with advertisements, although they are interested in them. According to the research made by the National Life Center in the Prime Minister's Office in October, 1974, 30.4% of the consumers feel displeased with advertisements as we can see next.

Question:
Have you found any deceptive advertisements or wrong advertisements for the last one year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>total</th>
<th>2473</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>1710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No reply</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research date: October, 1974
The percentage of the effective answers: 82.4%

The National Life Center, The Investigation Result of the Trend of National Life (Feb., 1975)

We must not miss that 21.9% of the consumers criticize advertisements as absurd and nonsensical.

In the research in 1974 we asked the question, “Do you have more interest in advertisements except the low price advertisement?” The alternatives were: “(1) I have more interest than ever. (2) I have had much interest. (3) I have less interest than ever. (4) I have never had any interest.”

About imperishable foods 35.2% of the consumers chose the answer (2) and 36.5% of the consumers (1). As for apparels 40.0% of the consumers chose (2) and 28.2% of the consumers chose (1). As for electric appliances 31.7% of the consumers chose (2) and 24.5% chose (1). These percentage showed that those who had interest in advertisements were increasing in number, but we couldn’t find what kind of opinions they had about advertisement. Then we tried to know it in the research in 1975 and we found that the larger number of the consumers were dissatisfied with advertisements.
The characteristics of recent consumer behavior in Japan. The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

5. **Evaluation of the buying behavior** (Ques. 10)

As we found in the research in 1974 the consumers, through the process of the galloping inflation, showed less reaction to product differentiation, never sticked to special brands, became sensitive to substantial goods and the prices, and began to visit a wide range of stores. In the research in 1975 when the inflation slowed down we found that the consumers were doing the same kind of the consumer behavior. But it is not obvious whether or not they will recover their former buying behavior when the industry becomes a little profitable, increasing employment and when they get more real income without being afraid of the crisis that the inflation should be accelerated again. We asked Ques. 10 in order to find something about this problem.

Before we made a formal research between August and September, 1975, we had had a preliminary research in June. We showed the result of the research in 1974 to the associated members in Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka and Nagasaki and asked them about the consumer behavior and about their opinions about it. To take a single example, we asked the following question about moving from famous brands to low price brands.

Question:

In buying foods and apparel many consumers buy cheaper ones even if they are not first-class. Which is applicable to you?

1. I buy and will buy cheaper articles just the same.
2 I now buy, but I want to stop buying cheaper articles if possible. I want to buy so-called first-class ones.

3 I seldom buy cheaper articles. I usually buy first-class ones.

We got 420 effective answers. According to the result, 30% of those who showed much reaction to the low prices wanted to stop buying the cheaper articles. 50% of those who preferred low price brands to famous brands wanted to buy first-class articles. 50% of those who preferred private brands to famous brands wanted to prefer famous brands.

But in the research in 1975 we didn’t ask the same kind of question, as the way of asking might be quite inductive and besides we had to ask every kind of questions to know the consumer behavior.

In accordance with the following reasons we decided to ask ten questions in the research in 1975.

The newer type of the consumer behavior originated from the inflation has been maintained by the special effort of the consumers, as selecting goods of quality is more difficult than selecting them by designs and images when they select brands. When they consider their purchasing not to be pleasant but to be an action that require a special effort, there is a very strong possibility that this kind of buying behavior will be maintained for a long period. We should remark the following result of the research.

As for imperishable foods 40.2% of the consumers, as for fundamental apparels 18.2% of the consumers and as for fashionable apparels 8.4% of the consumers think that they have to make some
The characteristics of recent consumer behavior in Japan.
The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.
special efforts in purchasing.

We don't have a proper data presented before the inflation were accelerated from the oil crisis in October, 1973, but we are ready to show the following data for reference.

Question:
In purchasing goods, which answer is applicable to you?

1. I wish to purchase better goods without sparing any efforts.

   37%

2. I prefer purchasing at any stores, even if they are not cheaper, to making an effort.

   27%

3. I can't absolutely say so.

   15%

4. I don't know.

   15%

Total 100%

The research period: between October and November, 1972
The effective answers: 2544
The replying percentage: 84.4%

Prime Minister Secretariat, "A Survey of Public Opinion on Consumer Behavior" (March, 1973)
Their attitude toward making special efforts in buying could be noticed when the inflation was slightly admitted before the oil crisis in 1973. We understand that the consumers easily changed their attitudes of their buying behavior in facing a big jump in prices started from the oil crisis. At the same time we also notice that they can't easily recover their former buying behavior even when the inflation slows down.

6. The polluted environment and the consumers (Ques. 11)

It is remarkable that 58.1% of the consumers wish to buy the articles which have been little polluted if they are not so expensive. 94.3% is the total percentage of these consumers and those who wish to buy such articles even if they are rather expensive in case they are serious social problems. Almost all of them are ready to change their buying behavior under the polluted environment.

7. An economy of natural resources and the consumers (Ques. 12)

22.9% of the consumers say that they should think about the curtailment of expenditure and 70.4% of the consumers say that they should think not only about the curtailment of expenditure but also about the economy of natural resources in general. As these percentages show, a greater number of the consumers are trying to change their buying behavior in consideration of the economy of natural resources. We easily understand this tendency when we read 'A Survey of Public Opinion on Social Consciousness' by Prime Minister Secretariat in February, 1975 and we find Japanese are much afraid of the present or future shortage of natural resources.
The characteristics of recent consumer behavior in Japan. The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

The Simple Tabulation of the Research in 1975

The research period: between August and September, 1975
The associated members: 4100 housewives in Chiba, Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kobe, Fukuoka, etc.
The number of the effective answers: 1330

Research Items:
Imperishable food
Fundamental apparel
Fashionable apparel
Small electric appliance
Large electric appliance
Synthetic washing materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Ques. 1: Do you watch a price advertisement such as a bargain sale or a special discount? | 1. I often watch.  
2. I sometimes watch.  
3. I seldom watch. |
| Ques. 2: Do you buy the cheaper goods even if they are not well-known first-class? | 1. Yes.  
2. No.  
3. I buy when we don’t see much difference in the quality. |
| Ques. 3: Do you buy more original goods by supermarkets than goods by famous manufacturers? | 1. Yes.  
2. No.  
3. I buy when we don’t see much difference in the quality. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ques. 4  | At the first store I visit.  
|          | At the favorite store.  
|          | I visit many stores without having any favorite ones. |
| Ques. 5  | Yes.  
|          | No.  
|          | I drop in the district on the way.  
|          | (This question was not asked by item.) |
| Ques. 6  | the date of production, the annexes, the volumes  
|          | the shape of the vessel, the way of packing  
|          | the name of the manufacturer  
|          | As to fundamental and fashionable apparel.  
|          | the quality, the texture, the way of sewing of the clothes  
|          | the design  
|          | the name of the manufacturer  
|          | As to small and large electric appliance.  
|          | the structure, the function, the electricity consumption  
|          | the design  
|          | the name of the manufacturer |
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The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

Question

Alternative

As to synthetic washing materials.

1. the ingredient
2. the color, spices, the shape of the vessel
3. the name of the manufacturer

Ques. 7
What do you especially request about each product?

As to imperishable food.

1. no annexes
2. foods easily cooked with fine appearance
3. low price foods with simple packing

As to fundamental and fashionable apparel.

1. durable stuff, apparel being practical and being suitable for action
2. apparel being fashionable with peculiar designs
3. low price apparel with simple design

As to small and large electric appliances.
Question

Ques. 8
On what occasion do you want to buy large appliances?

Alternative
1. the strong structure, the function, the durability
2. plenty of additional functions, a special design
3. simple product of low prices

a (We asked about small and large electric appliances.)
(Those who selected 1 and 3. — 5.9)

Ques. 9
What opinions do you have about advertisements in newspapers or on television?

1. After watching advertisements or actual goods.
2. When I begin to desire different environment.
3. When I feel the inconveniences of living.

(In this question we added that they might answer in case of buying furniture.)

1. They give us some suggestions for comparing goods.
2. I am interested in them, but they are of no use.
3. They are absurd and nonsensical.

(We didn't ask by item. We asked them to think except about a price advertisement such as a bargain sale or a special discount.)
The characteristics of recent consumer behavior in Japan.
The changes of the consumer behavior under the inflation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ques. 10</td>
<td>In purchasing do you make a special effort or do you enjoy it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. I need a special effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I enjoy it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I sometimes enjoy it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques. 11</td>
<td>Do you buy less polluted foods?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. I buy if they are not so expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I don't buy if they are a little expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I buy even if they are rather expensive when the polluted foods become a social problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(We didn't ask by item.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques. 12</td>
<td>Do you think that you should think about the economy of natural resources in general?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. We don't have to think so seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It is enough to think about the curtailment of expenditure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. We should think about the economy of natural resources in general,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research in 1975 shows that many consumers are sensitive to prices preferring substance to differentiated characteristics of products and they have been trying to visit stores in wide areas. So we can say that the same kind of consumer behavior under the inflation has been maintained as we found in the last research in 1974. But we find a slight difference between the results of the researches in 1974 and in 1975. All questions in these researches are not proper to compare, but about the questions which we can compare
we can say the following.

Those who stick to first-class brands of imperishable foods, fundamental and fashionable apparels have sightly decreased in number and on the contrary those who stick to first-class brands of electric appliances increased in number. As to famous or private brands the consumers of imperishable foods, fundamental and fashionable apparels don’t always stick to the famous brands and more of them choose the private brands. We also find this tendency as to small electric appliances, but as to large ones a large number of them stick to the famous brands. As far as the large electric appliances are concerned, we don’t find any tendency of the consumers to select more private brands.

About the stores to visit, few consumers visit more stores to buy imperishable foods and fundamental apparels. Especially to buy imperishable foods half of them visit more stores.

About the reaction to product differentiation that we could expect in the future we didn’t try to know in the same way as we did in research in 1974, but we must admit a strong possibility that the consumers will show much reaction to the substance of goods and show less reaction to product differentiation, and consequently business firm will have little chance to succeed in accepting product differentiation as a means of a demand creation.

At present the inflation has slowed down and the market has been looking up. But it is not obvious whether or not the consumers will recover their former buying behavior that they had before the oil crisis, when they get more real income and have no anxiety about employment.

Only the following we can say from the research. Many consumers are interested in product advertisements although they are not
satisfied with them and they often visit shopping districts without any purpose of shopping. This shows that they are still ready to accept the sales policies by business firms. Speaking of what they think about their present buying behavior, they say they have to make special efforts then they buy imperishable foods and fundamental apparels, but generally they enjoy their shopping. We think that they will more or less accept the sales policies by the business firms. However they offer considerable resistance to product differentiation and to unreasonable high prices. When the business firms employ this kind of product policy and price policy as their sales policies, the consumers will ignore them.

In order to increase the consumer demand the businesses must change their own behavior without waiting for consumers to recover the former behavior and without helping them never it. Actually big business are trying to employ the policy of intensive distribution channel policy such as discount stores by employing low price policy or by improving the substance of goods. Moreover with the changes of the characteristics of the consumer demand, the business firms have to reconsider the substance of goods, the prices and marketing channels, and then they can fulfill the conditions of marketing to carry forward only by controlling their monopolistic behavior.