

DBA THESIS (2011)

**Diffusion of Self-Gift Consumer
Behavior in Interdependent Cultures:
The Case of Self-Reward Consumption
Practice in Japan**



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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Overview and Motivation

Recently in Japan, the phenomenon of self-reward can be noticed. The recent surveys indicate that this practice has penetrated among Japanese consumers. In 2009, the internet survey¹ among 1,118 working men and women has shown that 91.1% conducts the self-reward consumption². 33.2% of men answer that they self-reward when receiving the financial bonus, and 49.4% of women say that they do so to relieve stress³. Also, the phrase '*jibun e no gohoubi*' [self-reward] can be noticed in various places such as magazines, television, shops, and transportation stations. These evidences suggest that the self-reward behavior may be widespread in Japan.

This self-reward phenomenon is attracting the attention of many industries in Japan because the self-reward segment is increasing its significance. In fact, the

¹ Survey was conducted by ANA Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts in May, 2009. The questionnaire was distributed among the working men and women aged between twenties and forties registered on the Yahoo! Research monitor panel. The data was collected during May 14 to 18, and the valid responses were 1,118 (567 men and 551 women).

² The question was asked in six level Likert scale: "compared to a year ago, the frequency of self-rewarding changed..." in 1-to-6 response scale of increased a lot, increased a little, did not change, decreased a little, decreased a lot, and do not purchase. All of the answers besides 'do not purchase' was considered to be conducting the self-reward consumption.

³ The question was asked in multiple choices: "I self-reward when..." in 11 choices. Multiple answers were allowed.

self-reward segment is one of the few growing segments in many of the stagnated or shrinking industries such as jewelry, hotel, department stores, and beer. For example, in the beer industry, during 2001 and 2008, the sales volume for the total beer industry has continuously decreased (see Figure 1). On the contrary, the share of premium beer segment has continuously increased, especially since 2006 when consumers have began drinking the premium beer as a self-reward. Hence, many industries consider the self-reward segment to be important for their future growth and observe the phenomenon with keen interest.

This self-reward phenomenon, however, is peculiar in Japan since Japanese culture traditionally has emphasized the interdependence with others than the independence of self (Hamaguchi, 1985; Kondo, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In Japan, individualism is not general, but rather, collectivism⁴ is strong (Triandis, 1989). Focus on the self and egocentricity have been traditionally criticized (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999), and the society has suppressed its people's egocentric behaviors including self-rewards (Clammer, 1997). In addition, literatures on self-gifts (e.g., Mick & DeMoss, 1990) have suggested that the self-gifting behavior including

⁴ Different scholars have discussed the differences in self-concepts across the cultures. Interdependent self, collective, and group-centered view of self, all refer to the similar idea that the person is not separate from the social context and is connected with others. Similarly, independent self, individual, self-contained, egocentric, and individually-centered view of self, all refer to the similar idea that the self is an autonomous, independent person (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

self-rewarding may depend on an individually-centered view of self, and questioned the existence of such behavior in cultures dominant with a group-centered view of self.

Despite the significance of self-reward consumption in Japan, as well as its contradiction to the existing literatures, it has never been systematically analyzed. Hence, this dissertation takes the endeavor and investigates how the self-reward consumption has become to be accepted and penetrated within the Japanese society. To explore the question, I will empirically examine the history of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, as well as the communications of firms and media that promoted the self-reward consumption.

This dissertation makes theoretical contribution in the self-gift literature and provides managers with strategic insights for creating and sustaining new consumption practices in any culture. As for the theoretical contribution, it fills the gap that exists in the self-gift research in consumer behavior literature by clarifying the formation process of self-gift consumer behavior in interdependent cultures⁵. As already mentioned, the researchers studying self-gifts have questioned the existence of such behavior in interdependent cultures. This question has largely remained unconfirmed as the majority of self-gift researches have been conducted in North America, an independent culture

⁵ Interdependent cultures refer to cultures endorsing the interdependent self-construal.

(e.g., Mick & De Moss, 1990a, 1990b, 1992; Mick, De Moss, & Faber, 1992; Mick & Faure, 1992). Recently, two studies have been conducted in interdependent cultures: Hong Kong (Joy, Hui, Chan, & Cui, 2006) and China (Tynan, Heath, Ennew, Wang, & Sun, 2010). While these studies confirm the existence of self-gifts in interdependent cultures and show differences in the self-gift consumer behavior across cultures, they do not show how the behavior emerged in interdependent cultures. Hence, this dissertation aims to fill the gap that exists in self-gift researches by focusing on the process of self-gift consumer behavior diffusion in interdependent cultures. It also introduces new approaches to the self-gift research by taking (1) a longitudinal approach that accounts for changes in the self-gift consumer behavior over a period of time, and (2) a sociological approach that accounts for the influence of multiple actors in diffusing the self-reward consumption, whereas the conventional self-gift researches focuses only on consumers and their behaviors at snapshot. In fact, this dissertation is the first research to examine the process of self-gift consumption practice formation.

As for managerial contribution, this dissertation provides strategic insights for creating and sustaining new consumption practices in any culture. First, the findings show that the managers can influence the consumption practice development by using rhetoric strategically, although the creation of consumption practice is often assumed to

be complex. Second, the dissertation calls for the meso-level cooperation when diffusing new consumption practices. The findings suggest that the diffusion of new consumption practices, particularly the ones that face the cultural hindrance, may require multiple negotiations until the society finally accepts the culturally disruptive practice. These negotiations may need to be conducted by the different actors, as this study shows. These two insights may aid managers not only in creating new consumption practices but also in managing other innovations that require change in the socio-cognitive schema.

Research Framework

In this section, I explain the approaches that are used to assess how the self-reward consumption has become to be accepted and penetrated within the Japanese society. I conduct three empirical studies. The first study has three objectives: (1) to confirm the existence of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, (2) to illustrate the growth of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, and (3) to identify actors that transmit the communications on self-reward consumption to consumers. Second and third studies focus on the communications that probably have changed consumers' attitudes. I will explain the latter two studies more in detail.

The second and third studies base their research foundation on the communications theory in marketing (see Solomon, 2004). Marketing and consumer researchers have shown that the communications can change consumers' attitudes and are effective in diffusing new ideas and practices (e.g., Bass, 1969). Hence, I assume that the communications have been effective in changing consumers' attitudes towards self-rewards; therefore have contributed to the acceptance and penetration of the self-reward consumption practice in the Japanese society.

To begin, I have constructed a conceptual model (Figure 2) which is adapted from the traditional communications model in marketing (Solomon, 2004) and the research on media discourse and public opinion in sociology (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The communications model is used by marketing researchers and practitioners to understand how marketing messages can change consumers' attitudes. It specifies elements that are necessary for communication to be achieved, such as organization that originates the communication (e.g., firms and media), message, and medium which transmit the message (e.g., magazines).

The conceptual model includes multiple 'systems' that create and transmit the communications. This idea is adapted from Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) research where they treat media discourse and public opinion as two parallel systems of

constructing meaning. In their research, they do not argue that changes in media discourse cause changes in public opinion. Rather, they see each system as interacting with the other: “media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists and other cultural entrepreneurs develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse” (p. 2). Similarly, I consider that there are multiple systems that create and transmit the communications to change consumers’ attitudes.

In the second and third studies, I focus on showing how the changing communication messages involve consumers in conducting the self-reward consumption. In particular, I analyze the rhetorical tactics used by the communication senders in order to make the self-reward consumption compelling for Japanese consumers. I also explore the symbolic meanings, cultural ideals, and ideological inducements that are encoded in popular culture texts (i.e., magazine articles). This approach, in fact, follows ‘consumer culture theory’ (CCT) tradition (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) in the consumer research.

CCT refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings. Consumer culture theorists study in consumption contexts to generate new constructs

and theoretical insights, and to extend existing theoretical formulations. Following CCT tradition, in the three empirical studies, I will not only describe the findings, but also aim to generate new constructs to extend existing theories in consumer and marketing researches as a secondary agenda.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, including the overview and motivation of research, the research framework, and the organization of dissertation. Chapter Two is a review of literatures on self-gifts and culture and self. It has two objectives: first to identify the gap in the self-gift literature, and second to understand why the self-reward consumption has been incompatible with the Japanese society. As for the first objective, the review of self-gift literatures illuminates that not much research has been conducted for the self-gift consumer behavior in interdependent cultures. Also, in the self-gift research, not much study has been conducted from the sociological perspective that accounts for the influence of multiple actors in diffusing the behavior. As for the second objective, the review of self-gift literatures provides the understanding of self-reward characteristics and the literatures on culture and self provide the explanation for why self-rewards are

incompatible with interdependent cultures (the Japanese society). To summarize very briefly, in Japanese culture, the self-directed behavior, such as self-rewards, is not compatible because the society sees ‘appropriate’ person as the one who fits in with others and restrain oneself (Heine et al., 1999). Acting in accord with personal opinions is regarded as childish (Hamaguchi, 1985) and self-assertion is viewed as being immature (Markus & Kitayama, 1991); hence, the self-reward behavior is seen as selfish and immature.

Chapters Three to Five are findings from the three empirical studies conducted to explore the research question, how the self-reward consumption has become to be accepted and penetrated within the Japanese society. Chapter Three provides the historical analysis (Golder, 2000) of the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. The findings confirm the existence of self-reward consumption practice in Japan and illustrate how it has developed. The findings also identify actors that transmit the communications on self-reward consumption to consumers. Among those actors have been the firms and the media. Hence, their communications are further explored in the following chapters.

Chapter Four examines the firms’ use of rhetoric in the communications to involve Japanese consumers with the self-reward consumption. In particular, the study explores

the firms' rhetorical tactics in the 284 print advertisements and press releases during 1994 to 2009 that promoted the self-reward consumption. To assess the firms' rhetorical tactics, qualitative content analysis, interpretive analysis, and quantitative content analyses are adopted. The qualitative content analysis has yielded six themes for which further interpretive analysis (Hirschman, 1990; Mick & DeMoss, 1990) is conducted to determine their meanings. In the interpretive analyses of the six themes, two literature streams are applied: framing strategy (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2000; Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Weber, Heinze, & Desoucey, 2008) and diffusion of innovations (e.g., Bass, 1969; Rogers, 1962). The quantitative content analysis is conducted to confirm the temporal sequence for these frame alignment processes in diffusing the self-reward consumption among the Japanese society. There are three major findings. First, the firms have developed and deployed six themes which synchronize the four frame alignment processes (Snow et al., 1986). Second, the different industries have employed the different frame alignment processes. Third, the four frame alignment processes have been employed at different timings of the practice development. In the end, the findings' implications for understanding the self-reward consumption diffusion in Japan are discussed.

Chapter Five analyzes how the media shapes consumer understandings of the

self-reward consumption and involve them to conducting the act. The media discourse of the 515 female magazine articles during 1987 to 2009 that promoted the self-reward consumption is assessed, focusing on the symbolic meanings of the self-reward consumption. As a result, the binary oppositions (Jakobson & Halle, 1956; Saussure, 1959) of sacred and profane are identified as structuring the self-reward concept. From the 515 female magazine articles, two pools of 30 articles are selected for the structuralist interpretive analysis (Hirschman, 1990; Zhao & Belk, 2008). The structuralist interpretive analysis identifies the six sacralization processes and four secularization processes of the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. The female magazines have employed these processes to attach the symbolic meanings of sacred or profane to the self-reward consumption; hence providing the context for consumers to become involved in conducting the self-reward consumption. Then, the quantitative content analysis is conducted using the data of 515 female magazine articles to confirm the temporal sequence with the use of sacralization and secularization processes. The findings show that there has been a change in the structural emphasis of the two symbolisms, sacred and profane, over the 20-year period studied. The sacralization processes are used more frequently during the early stage of self-reward consumption practice development. After 2001, the use of sacralization processes decrease, which

suggests the shift in the structural emphasis. In the end, the implications of sacralization and secularization to diffusing the self-reward consumption in Japan are discussed.

Finally, Chapter Six summarizes the research findings and discusses the theoretical and managerial implications. Then, the limitations of this research are identified, followed by the directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2:

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I briefly review the literatures on self-gifts to provide a general understanding concerning the self-reward behavior and to identify a gap in the self-gift literature. Then in the second section, I review the literatures that examine the effects of culture on self. This review allows me to explore the ways self-rewards are linked to independent and interdependent views of self. It also allows me to assess why the self-reward consumption has been incompatible with interdependent cultures.

Self-Rewards and Self-Gifts:

Characteristics of Self-Reward Consumer Behavior and Gap in the Self-Gift

Literature

Consuming goods or services for oneself as a reward has been recognized as a common consumer behavior in the Western culture and is noted by several researchers in social science and consumer research. As early as 1961, Tournier gives an account of self-rewarding in his book on gift-giving:

Before giving myself the pleasure of undertaking a new work, I have wanted to finish up other works I have promised. This task is a kind of present which I've given myself and which I enjoy as a reward for finishing off other duties... There are gifts not only for others; there are also those we give ourselves, generous or parsimonious, according to the formation we have had (p. 6).

This behavior of self-rewarding has attracted the attention of consumer behavior researchers studying gift-giving. Levy (1982) is the first consumer researcher to pick up the significance of the self-rewarding behavior by connecting it to the issues in gift-giving research:

The complexities of gift giving and the meanings of [gifts] might both be further explicated by considering personal use as a form of gift giving to the self – “I owe it to myself.” I as subject reward me as object (p. 542).

Since Levy's comment, various consumer researchers have examined self-reward behavior under the topic of “self-gifts.” Mick and DeMoss are the forerunners in

self-gift research and have built its theoretical foundation. Hence, I review their initial researches (1990a, 1990b, 1992) in depth.

Mick and DeMoss (1990b) first examine self-gifts through a convenience sample of 54 undergraduate business students at a large American university (the ratio of males to females was 23:31, with ages ranging from 19 to 24). They pay particular attention to the circumstances and motivations of self-gifts, using open-ended and semi-structured questions. The results confirm that the dominant circumstances related to self-gifts are times of personal accomplishment (63%⁶), when feeling down (52%), when a holiday arrives (35%), when feeling stressed (33%), when there is extra money to spend (33%), and when the item may be especially needed (33%). The most frequent motivations are to reward (63%⁷), to be nice to oneself (52%), to cheer up (48%), to fulfill a need (31%), to celebrate (26%), and to relieve stress (15%). They conclude in their later studies that the two predominant self-gift contexts are reward (self-gifts acquired as a reward for having accomplished a personal goal) and therapy (self-gifts acquired to cheer up because you were feeling down) (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1992). Hence, self-gift and self-reward seem to be closely related as suggested in early researches (Levy, 1982; Tournier, 1961/1966)

⁶ The figures are a percentage of subjects mentioning the circumstance.

⁷ The figures are a percentage of subjects mentioning the motivation.

Mick and DeMoss' (1990b) first exploratory study provides four additional findings concerning self-gifts. First, the results suggest that self-gift behavior may be widespread, at least in the U.S. Second, the study determines that self-gifts can be “products, services, or experiences and that they are partly differentiated from other personal acquisitions by their situational and motivational contexts” (p. 6). Third, self-gifts are distinguished from other personal acquisitions partly on their potential to possess sacred properties. Fourth, the relationship between self and self-gifts may be among the strongest of relationships involving the self and personal acquisitions.

Building on their exploratory study, Mick and DeMoss (1990a) further explore self-gifts among 287 Americans (the ratio of undergraduates to nonstudent adults was 164:123, and of males to females was 140:147, with ages ranging from 19 to 82). The results⁸ yield six themes in related with self-gifts: self-esteem, identity, deserving, perfect thing, escape, and discovery. Based on results from this study, Mick and DeMoss (1990a) conceptualize self-gifts as “personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be premeditated and highly context bound” (p. 328). They argue that although virtually every personal acquisition can be self-gifts, authentic self-gifts thrive on the dimension of symbolic self-communication.

⁸ Respondents were asked to recall and describe in detail of their self-gift experiences in two of four possible contexts (reward, therapy, birthday, and extra money). The thematic content analysis yielded six themes.

The above two researches have been both qualitative inquiries. Hence, Mick and DeMoss (1992) further examine self-gifts using quantitative approach. They conduct two surveys to provide further knowledge about self-gifts. The first study conducted on 287 Americans (same as 1990a study) show that some product classes are more prevalent as self-gifts in certain contexts and self-gift qualities are differentially associated with self-gift contexts. The results show that when consumers are rewarding themselves, they are more likely to involve clothing, non-fast-food restaurants, travel, and recreational products, and less likely to involve fast-food/grocery food, personal care services, music products, and entertainment outside the home. Mick and DeMoss (1992) argue that in reward contexts, consumers favor self-gifts involving travel or pleasant full-service restaurants because they are more likely to feel they deserve something special due to an achievement (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). The results also show that reward self-gifts are likely to be selected for their ability to inspire the individual, perhaps toward further achievement behavior (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). They are also likely to be selected for their memorable and lasting qualities, probably to serve as a reminder of the past accomplishment or victory (Mick, 1991). On contrary, they are not likely to be selected for their unusual and silly qualities.

The second study conducted on 398 Americans (the ratio of males to females was

158:240, with ages ranging from 19 to 88) show that propensities to engage in self-gift behaviors are correlated with socioeconomic variables such as age, current financial condition, and gender. Older respondents report lower propensities to engage in self-gift behaviors. The results also show that those with better financial conditions are more likely to engage in self-gift behaviors. Living alone seems to predispose consumers to a higher propensity for reward self-gift. Women reported higher propensities to engage in nice-to-self and therapeutic self-gifts. Men reported higher propensity to use self-gifts as an incentive to reach a personal goal.

Mick and DeMoss' three researches on self-gifts provide the foundational knowledge about self-gifts, including self-rewards, in the U.S. Their results suggest that self-gift behavior may be widespread, at least in the U.S., although it had been unexplored in consumer research. Their findings also suggest the following characteristics of self-rewards. First, self-rewards can be any products, services, or experiences; however, more likely to involve clothing, non-fast-food restaurants, travel, and recreational products, and less likely to involve fast-food/grocery food, personal care services, music products, and entertainment outside the home. Second, self-rewards constitute a form of indulgence (the consumer is seeking to consummate a desire that goes beyond intrinsic human needs). Third, the relationship between self and

self-rewards may be strong; self-rewards have a modicum of personally symbolic self-communication. Fourth, self-rewards are probably distinguished from other personal acquisitions partly on their potential to possess sacred properties. Fifth, self-reward products are likely to be selected for their ability to inspire the individual toward further achievement behavior. They are also likely to be selected for their memorable and lasting qualities to serve as a reminder of the past accomplishment or victory. On contrary, they are not likely to be selected for their unusual and silly qualities. Sixth, those with better financial conditions are more likely to engage in self-reward behaviors, whereas seniors may be less likely. Also, living alone predispose consumers to a higher propensity for self-rewards. Finally, men may be more likely to engage in self-reward and use them as an incentive to reach a personal goal; although Mick and DeMoss (1992) comment that the difference among men and women may dissipate as women increasingly enter male-dominated arenas such as career.

Although Mick and DeMoss' researches are informative concerning self-reward behavior, there is a limitation to their findings. Their sample is limited to Americans; hence, their findings may not be applicable to the non-American consumers.

As demonstrated in its name and characteristics, one of the predominant aspects of self-gifts is the focus on self. Hence, Mick and DeMoss (1990a) suggest that self-gifting

behavior may depend on an individually-centered view of self, and question its existence in cultures dominant with a group-centered view of self. The investigation of self-gifts in non-American cultures thus has become to be one of the research agendas in self-gift research.

Although other researchers have followed Mick and DeMoss to empirically examine self-gifts (e.g., Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999; McKeage, 1992; McKeage, Richins, & Debevec, 1993; Mick, DeMoss, & Faber, 1992; Mick & Faure, 1998), they continued to investigate self-gifts in Western cultures, all in the U.S. except for one in Finland (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999). Only very recently, the initiatives in exploring the self-gift consumer behavior in the Eastern cultures have begun. Two studies are conducted in Eastern cultures: Hong Kong (Joy et al., 2006) and China (Tynan et al., 2010). These two studies are reviewed in detail.

Joy et al. (2006) initiate the study by asking whether self-giving practice exists in an interdependent society like Hong Kong. Through observations and interviews from a sample of 24 students from two universities (the ratio of males to females was 1:1, with ages ranging from 19 to 24) and 16 entry- to mid-level managers from financial and management consulting firms (the ratio of males to females was 9:7, with ages ranging from 25 to 50), they confirm the existence of self-gifts in Hong Kong. Among the four

self-gift contexts investigated by Mick and DeMoss (1990a, 1992), in Hong Kong, reward context is most prevalent, whereas therapy and extra money are rare. Holiday self-gifts including birthdays also exist.

Joy et al. (2006) identify two characteristics of self-gift behavior in Hong Kong. First, the findings suggest self-gift on special occasions is acceptable in Hong Kong if others are considered in addition to oneself. One could self-gift if “(1) relevant others were given gifts prior to or simultaneously with one’s own purchase and (2) the money spent did not come out of the family coffer” (p. 123). Second, their findings also suggest that the Hong Kong consumers are comfortable with self-gifts when they can be justified. Reward self-gift can be easily justified. For example, the students buy themselves reward gifts for doing well in school and the executives see self-gifts as ways of encouraging and rewarding themselves for their professional accomplishments. The high-income executives even say that expensive reward gifts such as luxury car enhance their family stature. As for birthday self-gift, the Hong Kong consumers comment that the opinions and approval of either a family member or close friend help to justify the purchase.

Tynan et al. (2010) also investigate self-gift behavior in an interdependent culture. Using interviews with consumers (14 in-depth interviews and 102 personal interviews

in the U.K. and 12 in-depth interviews and 54 personal interviews in China), Tynan et al. confirm the existence of self-gifts in the U.K. and also in China. They also compare motivations and emotions towards self-gifts in positive context across the two countries.

As for motivations for self-gifts, most of them are common in the two countries: to reward the work-related achievements, when receiving money (work salary or bonus), and on holiday or away from home. However, there also is a difference concerning self-gift motivations in the two countries. In China, the importance of others affects motivations and attitudes of self-gifts. For example, in addition to the above mentioned motivations, for self-gifts in China, others-oriented circumstances such as group-related achievement and reunions (e.g., gatherings of family and friends) are apparent. Furthermore, the Chinese consumers consider others in addition to themselves when self-gifting, whereas the British consumers are more self-oriented and indulgent focus. Self-gift products reported by the Chinese consumers are often other-oriented. The Chinese consumers use them as a means of celebrating the achievement or positive event with others, whilst showing appreciation for others' support. Also, when the Chinese consumers buy the self-gift after receiving money from work salary or bonus, they also buy a gift for their family. Finally, the Chinese consumers say that bringing self-gifts from a holiday is a way of sharing their experience with others.

As for emotions towards self-gifts, there is a difference in the two countries. First, the post-purchase negative emotions are relatively more frequent amongst the Chinese consumers than the British consumers. These negative emotions are associated with the fear of having been too self-indulgent and the shame that could induce with disapproval of the gift from others. Second, for the Chinese consumers, the satisfaction with self-gifts are dependent on the approval of others. In contrast, for the British consumers, others' comments do not affect their satisfaction with self-gifts. Hence, for the Chinese consumers, the others play a vital role in self-gift emotions for Chinese as with the self-gift motivations.

Tynan et al.'s (2010) findings also confirm most of the self-gift characteristics (Mick & DeMoss 1990a, 1990b, 1992) among the Chinese consumers. First, self-gifts can be any products, services, or experiences. Second, they are distinguished from other personal acquisitions partly on their potential to possess sacred properties. Third, self-gifts have a modicum of personally symbolic self-communication.

To conclude, the two self-gift studies in Eastern cultures show that self-gift behavior exists in non-Western contexts. They also identify that reward is most prevalent self-gift context in Eastern cultures; therefore affirming the strong relationship between self-gift and self-reward in non-Western contexts as well. The findings also

show that while many of self-gift characteristics are common across cultures, self-gift behavior is different. In Eastern cultures, self-gift behavior is affected by others.

While these two studies confirm the existence of self-gifts in interdependent cultures and provide the details on self-gift consumer behavior in those cultures, they do not show how the behavior emerged and penetrated in those cultures. Hence, this dissertation aims to provide this lacking knowledge in self-gift research. But before delving into this research agenda, I discuss why self-rewards have been considered as incompatible with interdependent cultures. I briefly review the discussions of culture and its effect on self; then explore the ways self-rewards are linked to independent and interdependent views of self.

Culture and Self:

Incompatibility of Self-Reward Behavior in Interdependent Cultures

As demonstrated in its name and characteristics, one of the predominant aspects of self-reward is its focus on self. Mick and DeMoss (1990a) emphasize that authentic self-gifts thrive on the dimension of symbolic self-communication. This self-reward behavior's focus on self questions the compatibility of such behavior in interdependent cultures such as Japan. To examine why self-reward behavior may be incompatible with

interdependent cultures, I review the concept of independent and interdependent selfways (Markus, Mullaly, & Kitayama, 1997).

Selfways are “communities’ ideas about being a person and the social practices, situations, and institutions of everyday life that represent and foster these ideas” (Heine et al., 1999, p. 768). They include core cultural ideas and values, and a sense of how to be a “good,” “moral,” or “appropriate” person. These ideas about of what a person is include practices, habits, and customs that appear as “natural” ways of acting and interacting with others. Heine et al. (1999) call selfways as “culture-specific ways of being” (p. 768).

Researchers have identified two types of selfways: independent and interdependent. Independent selfways is represented by North American culture and interdependent selfways is represented by Japanese culture (Heine et al., 1999). I explain each to provide understanding on the view of “appropriate” person in each culture and how those views are reflected in and fostered by institutions and cultural practices. This understanding of selfways allows us to understand why self-reward may be appropriate in independent culture and not in interdependent culture.

North American culture views the self as autonomous and independent. For people living in this culture, the normative imperative is to become independent from

others and to discover and express one's unique attributes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This view of self is reflected in and fostered by key institutions such as schools, courts, and media; and is enacted in cultural practices such as child care (Heine et al., 1999). For example, North American children are encouraged to be independent, autonomous, and self-determining (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998). North American schoolchildren are encouraged to feel special, and are praised, encouraged, and complimented. In many preschools and schools, each child gets to be a star, individual birthdays are celebrated, and children are honored. Children are encouraged to think about themselves positively as stars, as winners, as above average, and as the repositories of special qualities (Markus et al., 1997). Also, advertising, television, and films repeatedly reinforce and elaborate the importance of individual rights and positive uniqueness (Kim & Markus, 1999). Hence, North American culture motivates people to regard the self positively, to discover and identify positively valued internal attributes of the self, and express them in public (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, Shweder et al., 1998).

North American cultural ideas and values, and its view of "appropriate" person have a good fit with self-reward consumer behavior. Self-rewards have a modicum of

personally symbolic self-communication. This self-communication concerns affective self-regard and self-concepts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). Self-rewards can be elevating to self-esteem, and they can also develop and sustain self-concepts. Such focus on self is compatible with North American culture which fosters to discover and express one's unique attributes.

In contrast to North American view of self, Japanese culture views the self as interdependent with others. For people living in this culture, the normative imperative is to maintain this interdependence among individuals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The self becomes most meaningful and complete when it is cast in the appropriate social relationship (Lebra, 1976). People are motivated to find a way to fit in with others. Furthermore, in Japanese culture, acting in accord with personal opinions is regarded as childish (Hamaguchi, 1985). Self-assertion is not viewed as being authentic, but instead as being immature (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Japanese culture instead emphasizes self-discipline (Heine et al., 1999) and places importance on restraining the internal attributes that could potentially interfere with the cohesion of the group (Hamaguchi, 1985).

Japanese culture also reflects and fosters its view of self through institutions such as education. Many Japanese parents and educators consider endurance as a primary

means for the development of children. They believe that personal hardships remove self-centeredness so that a deeper awareness for the group can be cultivated (Kondo, 1992; White & Levine, 1986). Japanese moral education (*'dotoku'*) also stresses the importance of endurance. Hence, Japanese culture motivates people to fit in with others, to promote others' goals, to adjust, and to restrain self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In Japanese culture, self-directed behavior such as self-reward may not be compatible because people's primary interest is to fit in with others and they are trained to restrain themselves. As acting in accord with personal opinions is regarded as childish (Hamaguchi, 1985) and self-assertion is viewed as being immature (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), self-reward behavior would be seen as selfish and immature.

The above literature review suggests that self-reward consumer behavior is not appropriate in Japanese culture. The evidence from newspaper article supports the above proposition. In 1990, *Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, a newspaper with largest circulation in Japan⁹, has given a criticizing comment towards self-reward consumer behavior: "I don't like this word [i.e., self-reward] because there's a sense of untruthfulness in it. [...] Isn't a 'reward' something we should be receiving from

⁹ The average circulations during the period of July to December, 2010 were as follows: *Yomiuri* morning, 10,020,584; *Yomiuri* evening, 3,516,692; *Asahi* morning, 7,903,473; *Asahi* evening, 3,084,581; *Mainichi* morning, 3,509,021; *Mainichi* evening, 1,108,125; *Nikkei* morning, 3,015,485; *Nikkei* evening, 1,605,443; *Sankei* morning, 1,615,212; *Sankei* evening, 536,352. (Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations, retrieved from <http://adv.yomiuri.co.jp/yomiuri/n-busu/abc.html>).

‘others’?’” (my translation; same for the rest of dissertation) (evening edition, November 21, 1990). However, by 2011, self-reward consumer behavior is widespread in the Japanese society. The question then becomes how the self-reward behavior became accepted in the Japanese society. The rest of dissertation focuses on this research question.

CHAPTER 3:
THE HISTORY OF ‘JIBUN E NO GOHOUBI’ [SELF-REWARD]
CONSUMPTION PRACTICE IN JAPAN

Introduction

This chapter provides the descriptions of the self-reward phenomenon in Japan. The purpose of this chapter is to (1) confirm the existence of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, (2) illustrate the growth of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, and (3) identify actors that transmit the communications on self-reward consumption to consumers. I first provide methodology used for this study and the study’s data. Then, the historical analysis (Golder, 2000) of the self-reward consumption in Japan is provided. Finally, the summary concludes the chapter.

Data and Method

This study adopts historical method (Golder, 2000) in understanding the development of self-reward consumption practice in Japan. Historical method is defined as “the process of collecting, verifying, interpreting, and presenting evidence from the past” (Golder, 2000, p. 157). Smith and Lux (1993) argue that historical research is

useful for explaining changes in consumer behavior over time.

Following Golder's (2000) five stages, I collected, critically evaluated, and interpreted evidence on the development of self-reward consumption in Japan. To collect the 'authentic' documents that meet the criteria for historical analysis of competence, objectivity, and reliability (Gottchalk, 1969), I focused on documents written for making a public record such as newspapers and magazines. Using the electronic database, Nikkei Telecom 21¹⁰, the articles with the phrase '*jibun e no gohoubi*' [self-reward] in the headline, content, or keywords were searched. Total of 2,094 articles were identified for years 1988 to 2009.

To achieve the objectives this study, the analysis and interpretation of evidence were conducted. Descriptions of the self-reward phenomena in Japan are presented next.

Findings

Existence of the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

In 1988, the first newspaper article that mentions the self-reward consumption appears. Since then, the number of articles that feature the self-reward consumption

¹⁰ Nikkei Telecom 21 is an electronic database provided by Nikkei Digital Media, Inc.

grows. The growth shows S-curve; few articles feature the self-rewarding consumption in the beginning and then more articles feature the consumption at an accelerated rate (Figure 3). This growth pattern follows Bass (1969) model which shows diffusion of innovations such as new ideas, new practices, and new products.

In a media-saturated society such as Japan, the contents of general audience media can be used as the important indicator of the general cultural issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Hence, the growths of articles on the self-reward consumption suggest the society's increased concern towards the consumption. It also suggests the diffusion of the self-reward consumption practice in the Japanese society. In addition, I recognized that the Japanese people had high interests towards the self-reward consumption in my observation of the Japanese society during the years 2009 to 2011¹¹. These evidences confirm the existence of the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. S-curve growth of articles also indicates that the practice more likely has widely penetrated in the society. The next section describes the history of self-reward consumption practice, particularly focusing on how various firms have gradually entered to spread the practice to different consumer segments.

¹¹ The author lived in Tokyo while collecting and analyzing data for this research. Particularly in 2010, the self-reward consumption was frequently recognized. For example, the television program featured the self-reward phenomenon and various firms from transportation to convenient stores used the phrase '*jibun e no gohoubi*' to promote their goods and services. Furthermore, the author had a discussion with the Japanese marketing and consumer researchers who also considered that the self-reward consumption is a new consumer culture in Japan.

Growth of the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

In 1988, self-reward appeared in the newspaper article for the first time. The *Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun's* morning edition mentioned the self-reward consumption in their serial column on people and work (December 26, 1988). Here, self-reward was not the article's main topic. The article was about Reiko Hirota, a jewelry designer who was trendy at the time. Self-reward was mentioned in the text as the background information for Hirota's popularity. The article explained that self-rewarding was increasing among the working women: "More working women are choosing [the item] as a self-reward for working hard." This article used the phrase 'self-reward' for the first time in the public¹².

By the early 1990s, the marketing specialists recognized the self-reward consumption as the trendy phenomenon. On October 24, 1991, the *Nikkei Marketing Journal*¹³ featured the self-reward consumption in their serial column, *imadoki yougo jiten* [trendy dictionary]. The article explained the working women were shopping to treat themselves for their hard work. It mentioned three reasons for the emergence of

¹² Magazines adopted the phrase 'self-reward' later. The first magazine article using the phrase was identified in 1990.

¹³ *Nikkei* is Japan's leading financial paper. *Nikkei Marketing Journal* is a specialized newspaper on marketing issues from the *Nikkei*.

this self-reward consumer behavior among women. First, the men's gift-giving had declined after the burst of bubble economy and women now had to fulfill their materialism themselves. Second, women desired to possess goods that suited their tastes (gifted goods often did not suit their tastes). Third, women needed motivation to continue working as they faced the hardships of work. As illustrated in these three reasons, women were becoming independent as they advanced into society following the enactment of Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986. They also had high disposable income as they earned equal salary as men but lived with their parents. Hence, working women began to acquire luxury goods and services such as jewelry, luxury brand goods, beauty spas, stay at luxury hotels, and traveling for themselves.

Firms picked up this phenomenon and began to address self-rewards in order to promote their goods and services. As firms adopted the self-reward concept in their offerings and communications, more women were involved to conduct the self-reward consumption. Two examples are provided: self-reward jewelry and Ladies' Plan at hotel.

The jewelry industry used the self-reward concept to involve women to buy jewelry themselves. The earliest significant promotion that increased the sales among women was De Beers Diamond Jewellers Limited's (hereafter De Beers) 'Ms. Diamond' campaign in 1994. Ms. Diamond campaign promoted buying diamond jewelry as a

reward to women aged between 20 and 34 (*Nikkei*, morning edition, April 28, 1994).

The campaign turned out to be a huge success. The diamond sales among the unmarried women in their twenties increased by 40% compared to the one in the same period of previous year (period of October to December; comparison of 1994 versus 1993) (*Nikkei Industrial Journal*, May 16, 1995).

Following the success of De Beers' campaign, women's purchase of self-reward jewelry became more visible. By 1998, the sales increased for both luxury and value-price jewelers with more women purchasing jewelry (*Tokyo Sankei Shimbun*, evening edition, February 23, 1999). In the luxury segment, Cartier and Tiffany grew their sales by 10% versus 1997. At Tiffany, working women in their thirties purchasing few hundred-thousand yen ring was apparent. The sales attendant commented: "They [working women] purchase [expensive ring] as a self-reward on their birthday or when they succeeded in work" (*Tokyo Sankei Shimbun*, evening edition, February 23, 1999). The sales of other luxury jewelers such as Mauboussin, Boucheron, Bvlgari, and Piaget also showed a double digit growth by targeting working women (*Asahi Shimbun*, evening edition, August 25, 2000). In the value-price segment, Tsutsumi Jewelry Co. Ltd., whose main customers were the young women in teens and twenties, grew the market share from 0.9% in 1991 to 3% in 1998 (*Tokyo Sankei Shimbun*, evening edition,

February 23, 1999). As the figures show, more women were buying jewelry, mainly as self-rewards.

Similar movements were apparent in the hotel industry. The hotel industry also used the self-reward concept to involve women to buy stay at hotel with their friends. In 1993, Imperial Hotel, Ltd. (hereafter Imperial Hotel) launched 'Ladies' Friday,' the first discounted package plan exclusive for women¹⁴. Although many criticisms arose towards the plan (*Ryuutsuu Saabisu Shimbun*, June 18, 1996), it became a huge success. Imperial Hotel sold 1,800 plans during November, 1993 and March, 1994 versus their forecast of 1,000 plans (*Nikkei Select Products*, April 11, 1994). Soon after, other hotels imitated the 'Ladies' Friday.' By 1996, 28 hotels in the Tokyo metropolitan area had adopted the ladies' plan. The OLs and housewives supported the plan, staying at hotel as a self-reward (*Asahi Shimbun*, morning edition, August 23, 1997).

As the above evidences show, the self-reward consumption was gradually beginning to spread among women. In the early 1990s, however, its impact was still limited (see Figure 3). Then in 1996, an important event occurred, which spearheaded the development of self-reward consumption practice (*Nikkei Advantage*, January 1, 2004). That year, the Summer Olympics of Atlanta took place and Yuko Arimori, a

¹⁴ To note, Imperial Hotel apparently did not create the institutional advertising for Ladies Plan. The advertisements were not identified in Study 2. Still, the plan acquired much publicity in the media.

marathon runner, won the bronze medal. In the post-race interview, Arimori commented “I want to praise myself.” This interview moved many Japanese and the phrase became very popular. It was even selected as the *Ryuukougo Taishou* [Grand Prix, Trendy Words] of the year. Business leaders and marketers later commented that Arimori’s comment had a great impact on the development of self-reward consumption practice (*Nikkei Advantage*, January 1, 2004). Seeing Arimori’s self-recognition in the media, many women more likely have felt that they were now allowed to give self-appraisal.

By 2001, the self-reward consumption became a consumer boom among the unmarried women. In November 13, 2001, *Osaka Sankei Shimbun*’s evening edition featured this self-reward boom. The article’s title read, “The trend report: Self-reward—trendy among the unmarried women.” The article reported that the unmarried working women self-rewarded with expensive gifts. Jewelry was their popular gift. The self-reward boom continued into the following year. Hence, the number of women conducting the self-reward consumption grew.

This self-reward phenomenon was amplified by the department stores that promoted the self-reward consumption (*Mainichi Shimbun*, morning edition, December 20, 2002). In September 2002, for the first time, Seibu created a catalogue titled ‘Gift for Myself’ targeting their female customers. The catalogue featured Christmas’ limited

edition accessories and watches. Seibu also held the ‘Gift to Myself’ fair at the floors of ladies’ clothing, cosmetics, and ladies’ goods in all stores. The party dresses and shoes, handbags, hats, scarves, and belts were offered as rewarding goods to the hard working women (*Nissen*, November 20, 2002). Other department stores also promoted the self-reward consumption during the Christmas season. Sogo Kobe created a pamphlet titled “A reward to me who worked hard” that featured accessories (*Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, morning edition, December 23, 2002). Hankyu addressed self-reward in the first page of their Christmas gift catalogue for the first time in 2002. They used the catch phrase ‘for me’ (*Osaka Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, December 24, 2002). Ginza Mitsukoshi held a promotion titled ‘GIFT FOR ME & ...’ in 2003, where the luxury products were promoted under the theme of self-reward (*Tokyo Sankei Shimbun*, morning edition, December 12, 2003). In fact, in 2002, it was trendy among the unmarried women to self-gift on Christmas to self-reward their hard work (*Mainichi Shimbun*, morning edition, December 20, 2002).

The emergence of consumer boom and entrance of department stores synchronizes the dramatic growth of articles featuring the self-reward consumption in 2002 (see Figure 3). The two events more likely played significant roles in developing the self-reward consumption practice in Japan.

The department stores continued to actively promote the self-reward consumption as it became an important income source for their December sales (*Nikkei Business*, December 2006). They now had two peaks in their December sales: from 20th to 24th, a period for gift-shopping for families and lovers; and from 10th to 20th, a period for self-gift/self-reward shopping. The 'self-reward' Christmas sales became so important for the department stores that they began to place a great effort each year. Hence, the self-reward consumption now became annual events.

Finally, the department stores also played an important role in involving wider segments of consumers besides unmarried working women to the self-reward consumption practice. Through the direct mails and special magazines, they promoted the end-of-the-year self-rewarding not only to the OLs but also to the affluent. The self-reward consumption practice was now beginning to spread among the wider consumers.

After the consumer boom in 2001, the penetration of the self-reward consumption practice into the Japanese society accelerated (see Figure 3). The numbers of both consumers and goods/service providers (including retailers) involved in the self-reward consumption increased. Before the boom, the self-rewarding consumption was mainly once a year activity conducted by the working women, and the self-reward objects

focused on the expensive goods and services. On the contrary, after the boom, the involved consumer segments widened; the frequency of self-reward consumption increased; and the scope of self-reward objects widened, which all contributed to the growth of self-reward consumption practice. This is further explained in detail.

First, the working women's self-reward consumption became more active after the boom. Their scope of self-reward objects widened and the self-reward frequency increased. The 2003 articles reported that the women self-rewarded not only the jewelry (*Osaka Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, December 17, 2003; *Osaka Yomiuri Shimbun*, morning edition, December 24, 2003), watch (*Asahi Shimbun*, evening edition, December 5, 2003; *Osaka Yomiuri Shimbun*, morning edition, December 24, 2003), luxury brand goods (*Nikkei Marketing Journal*, January 16, 2003; *Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, January 23, 2003; *Nikkei Marketing Journal*, February 11, 2003; *Asahi Shimbun*, morning edition, February 14, 2003; *Nikkei*, morning edition, August 21, 2003; *Mainichi Shimbun*, morning edition, October 1, 2003), stay at hotel (*Weekly Toyo Keizai*, April 26, 2003), travel (*Tokyo Sankei Shimbun*, morning edition, May 20, 2003), and beauty spa (*Nikkei Plus One*, July 19, 2003), but also the premium ice cream (*Nikkei Marketing Journal*, February 1, 2003; *Nikkei Plus One*, July 19, 2003; *Nikkei Marketing Journal*, September 6, 2003; *AERA*, November 17, 2003), chocolates

(*Asahi Shimbun*, morning edition, February 8, 2003; *Nisshoku*, February 25, 2003), and canned cocktails (*Nikkei Marketing Journal*, September 6, 2003; *AERA*, November 3, 2003). The working women's self-reward consumption frequency also increased, as they purchased premium ice cream and canned cocktails on the way home from work at the convenience store. Hence, the self-reward consumption was no longer a special consumption conducted once a year at the department stores.

Second, the goods and service providers that promoted the self-reward consumption primarily to the unmarried, working women now increased their target consumers. In particular, the unmarried men (*'dokushin kizoku'* [unmarried affluent people]) and *'dankai'* generation [baby-boomers born during 1947 and 1949] seniors were highlighted. The unmarried men had high disposable income and were willing to spend money for themselves (*Nikkei Trendy*, December 1, 2003). Hence, various industries such as jewelry (*Nissen*, March 22, 2004), hotel (*Nikkei Marketing Journal*, April 13, 2005), and traveling (*Nikkei*, August 18, 2005) promoted the self-reward consumption to the unmarried men. The *'dankai'* generation also became an attractive target for marketers as well, as their retirement was expected in 2007 to 2009 on which they will be receiving the retirement allowance. Hence, the department stores promoted various hobby goods such as antique radio (*Nikkei Marketing Journal*, June, 8, 2005)

and premium golf clubs (*Nikkei*, evening edition, November 9, 2006) to ‘*dankai*’ seniors.

Third, the mass-market manufacturers started to promote the self-reward consumption after the boom. Since around 2003, the mass-market manufacturers developed new products that used the self-reward concept. The self-reward product category became important for the following products: ice creams, chocolates, desserts, canned cocktails, beers, and coffee beverages. Here, the beer category is highlighted to provide an illustrative example.

The beer manufacturers used the self-reward concept to promote their premium beers. For example, in 2004, Kirin Brewery Company, Limited (hereafter Kirin) developed the product concept of “self-reward beer on a little nice day” for their new product, *Hojoyun*. This beer was positioned at premium category and priced at 238 yen for 330mL (*West Mainichi Shimbun*, morning edition, June 9, 2004). By 2005, the premium beer became popular among consumers. The consumers bought the cheap, low-malt beers on normal days; however, when nice things happened, they bought the premium beer as a self-reward. All of the major beer manufacturers had the premium beer brand: Suntory Holdings Limited’s The Premium Malts; Sapporo Breweries Limited’s Ebisu Beer; and Asahi Breweries, Limited’s *Jyukusen*. Although it was not

clear from the articles whether or not other manufacturers besides Kirin used the self-reward concept, consumers associated self-rewards with the total premium beer segment. The beer manufacturers continued to activate the premium segment by launching the new products and/or limited editions. This segment steadily grew while the total category sales stagnated. In 2008, its sales size became twice the one in 2005 (*Mainichi Shimbun*, morning edition, March 18, 2009). To summarize, (1) consumers associated the premium segment as the self-rewarding objects; (2) main players of the industry promoted the self-reward consumption by launching new products; and (3) the premium segment sales grew while the total category sales stagnated. All of these characteristics were apparent in other products that leveraged the self-reward concept (i.e., ice creams, chocolates, desserts, canned cocktails, and coffee beverages).

The mass-market manufacturers contributed to the growth of self-reward consumption practice by involving general public to conduct the self-reward consumption. These manufacturers promoted their products to the masses. In consequence, the self-reward consumption practice diffused among the masses. This diffusion synchronizes the growth of article numbers that grew in S-curve shape (see Figure 3). S-curve pattern showed the diffusion of innovations adopted first by the innovators and later by the masses (Bass, 1969).

Fourth, the range of retailers that promoted the self-reward consumption also increased after the boom. Not only the department stores, but also the general merchandising stores (GMS) (*Nisshoku*, December 12, 2004; *Nisshoku*, December 9, 2006), convenient stores (CVS) (*FujiSankei Business i.*, September 1, 2005; *Nikkei Sokuhou News*, November 6, 2007; *Sankei Shimbun*, morning edition, November 23, 2007; *Nikkei Sokuhou News*, December 19, 2008), online retailers (*Tsuhun Shimbun*, November 25, 2004), and shops-in-transportation sites such as railway stations (*Chuunichi Shimbun*, morning edition, April 4, 2007; *Asahi Shimbun*, morning edition, October 3, 2007; *Nikkei Sokuhou News*, May 7, 2009) and airports (*Nikkei Sokuhou News*, November 26, 2008; *Nikkei Sokuhou News*, May 28, 2009; *Nikkei Sokuhou News*, November 26, 2009) now offered the self-reward goods and services. The GMS and CVS not only sold the mass-market manufacturers' goods that promoted the self-reward consumption, but also developed the private brand (PB) products that used the self-reward concept. The exemplar of such movement was Circle K Sunkus Co., Ltd. and its PB desserts, 'Cherie Dolce,' which was launched in 2007 (*Nikkei Sokuhou News*, November 6, 2007). The online retailers and transportation facilities both promoted the self-reward consumption by offering the premium desserts. For example, Oisix Inc., an online grocery store, offered the premium desserts as self-rewards during the winter

gifting season (*Tsuhun Shimbun*, November 25, 2004). The railway stations and airports both opened the dessert specialty store, such as ‘Dessert Terrace’ at JR Osaka station in 2007 (*Chuunichi Shimbun*, morning edition, April 4, 2007) and ‘Haneda Star Sweets’ at Haneda airport in 2008 (*Nikkei Sokuhou News*, November 26, 2008).

The mass-retailers contributed to the growth of self-reward consumption practice by increasing the accessibility of self-reward products. The involvement of mass-retailers was significant to the development of self-reward consumption practice in two points. First, they increased consumers’ frequency of self-reward consumption. For example, with the involvement of CVS, the self-reward products now became available anytime. Second, the mass-retailers allowed the entrants of late majority (Rogers, 1962) to conduct the self-reward consumption. The late majority included housewives who were unable to go to the department stores so often and men who were embarrassed to purchase desserts.

In summary, the self-reward consumption was first adopted by the innovators, both in the consumer and provider sides, and then penetrated among the masses just as the Bass (1969) theory showed. As for the consumer side, the self-reward consumption was first adopted by the working women, and then later adopted by other segments such as men, seniors, and housewives (Figure 4). As for the provider side, the self-reward

consumption was first adopted by the luxury goods and service providers (including department stores), and the later adopted by the mass-target manufacturers and retailers. As a consequence, the self-reward consumption practice grew in the Japanese society. The important dates in relation to the development of the self-reward consumption practice are summarized in the Figure 5.

Actors that Transmit Communications on Self-Reward Consumption to Consumers

I now discuss the actors that transmitted the communications concerning self-reward consumption to consumers. Obviously, the firms of the industries that were involved in promoting the self-reward consumption (identified in the previous section) were one of those actors. The firms communicated to consumers through their product advertisements. In addition, the newspaper articles suggested two other actors who transmitted the communications on self-reward consumptions to consumers: female magazines and cultural entrepreneurs. I discuss each in turn.

The newspaper articles suggested that the female magazines introduced self-rewards to the working women, the innovator of self-reward consumption practice. Consider, for example, the following two newspaper articles. The first example is from

a commentary on the women's self-reward consumption behavior in *Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun's* evening edition issued in November 21, 1990. The journalist assumed that the female magazines created the discourses on self-rewarding:

There's a phrase, "*jibun e no gohoubi*" [self-reward]. As a matter of fact, this phrase is used by my colleagues like a joke: "Look, look. I bought this Comme des Garçons' skirt. The self-reward..." ***Probably, the female magazines are the source of this message [self-reward].*** It [self-reward] means buying extravagant goods with one's own money when one is busy from work or living, or when one has worked hard. (italics and emphasis by the author)

The second example is from a conversation on consumer psychology featured in *Asahi Shimbun's* morning edition issued in October 15, 1998. Professor Hiroshi Kato and a novelist Usagi Nakamura discussed when and why people want to buy. Nakamura noted that she often saw the phrase 'self-reward' in the female magazines: "In the female magazines, I often recognize the phrases 'search for myself' and 'self-reward'." As addressed in these two newspaper articles, the general public had an impression that the female magazines were driving women's self-reward consumer behavior.

The newspaper articles also suggested that the cultural entrepreneurs (DiMaggio, 1982) may have played an important role in popularizing the self-reward consumption practice. The cultural entrepreneurs popularize the practice through performances, appearances, and media. 25% of the identified articles for this study featured person who made comments on self-rewards. The share of such articles was especially high during the early years (see Figure 6). Hence, these people may have had an influencing power towards consumers and convinced them to conduct the self-reward consumption.

The findings show that the cultural entrepreneurs for self-reward consumption practice were comprised by the three groups of people. First was the celebrity group which included actors/actresses, singers, artists, announcers, and athletes. These celebrities often conducted the self-reward consumption after completing a huge project or winning the game. For example, Shizuko Toudou, a famous novel writer, commented in the article featured in *Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun* that she has bought a music box doll as a self-reward for winning Naoki Prize¹⁵ (morning edition, August 8, 1989). The second group was the successful working women who bought the self-rewarding goods and services to acknowledge their hard work. Finally, the third group was the ordinary people who acted as the opinion leaders for the general public. These people made

¹⁵ One of the leading prizes for literatures in Japan. It is considered as a gateway to success for writers.

comments in the opinion pages as a representative of the readers.

In summary, following actors transmitted the communications concerning self-reward consumption to consumers: firms, media (i.e., female magazines), and cultural entrepreneurs.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to (1) confirm the existence of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, (2) illustrate the growth of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, and (3) identify actors that transmit the communications on self-reward consumption to consumers. First, the findings confirm that the self-reward consumption practice exists in Japan since late 1980s. The practice is still noticeable today among Japanese consumers. Second, the self-reward consumption practice has grown in Japan following the S-curve pattern (Bass, 1969). As the Bass theory shows, the practice has been first adopted by the innovators and later by the masses. There are innovators and late majority both in the consumer and provider sides. As for the consumer side, the self-reward consumption has been first adopted by the working women, and then later adopted by other segments such as men, seniors, and housewives. As for the provider side, the self-reward consumption has been first adopted by the

luxury industry and the department stores, and later adopted by the mass-target manufacturers and retailers. Third, the findings identify following actors as transmitting the communications concerning self-reward consumption to consumers: firms, media (i.e., female magazines), and cultural entrepreneurs.

The historical analysis (Golder, 2000) of the self-reward consumption shows the overall flow of its development in Japan, which I have summarized in Figure 7. The findings suggest that the self-reward consumption practice had four stages of development. The newspaper and magazine articles suggest that in Stage 1, the media (i.e., the female magazines) introduced the self-reward consumer behavior to the innovators (i.e., the working women) who adopted the behavior early in its development. Around the same time, the cultural entrepreneurs popularized the behavior through the media (newspapers and magazines). In Stage 2, the ‘innovator’ firms (e.g., De Beers) adopted the behavior in their new products (e.g., Ms. Diamond products). Following the success of the innovator firms, the competitor firms imitated and also adopted the behavior. In Stage 3, the self-reward consumption became a consumer boom among the innovators. Also, the high-end retailers (i.e., department stores) began to heavily promote the self-reward consumption. Finally in Stage 4, the self-reward consumer behavior diffused among the masses. The behavior was also adopted by the mass-target

manufacturers and retailers, which further accelerated the penetration into the masses.

To conclude, this study has shown the existence and development of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, and identified the actors that were involved in its development. However, it did not clarify how the anti-cultural behavior has succeeded to penetrate in the Japanese society. To understand how the socio-cognitive schema that shape the way people think of and about self-rewards has changed, further investigation is necessary. A close examination of involved actors and their activities may be helpful. Hence, in the following chapters, the communications of firms and media are assessed respectively.

CHAPTER 4:
FIRMS' USE OF RHETORIC IN DIFFUSING 'JIBUN E NO GOHOUBI'
[SELF-REWARD] CONSUMPTION PRACTICE IN JAPAN

Introduction

The history of self-reward consumption practice in Japan (Chapter 3) has illuminated that multiple actors were involved in its development. This chapter focuses on one of those actors, the firms, and how their communications have affected the development of self-reward consumption practice in Japan.

As already mentioned in the Chapter 1, the next two studies (i.e., Chapters 4 and 5) base their research foundation on the communication theory in marketing (see Solomon, 2004). Marketing and consumer researchers have shown that the communications can change consumers' attitudes and are effective in diffusing new ideas and practices (e.g., Bass, 1969). Hence, I assume that the communications have been effective in changing consumers' attitudes towards self-rewards; therefore have contributed to the acceptance and penetration of the self-reward consumption practice in the Japanese society.

In understanding how the communications have diffused the self-reward

consumption, I focus on the firms' rhetorical tactics, borrowing the idea from sociology works. Prior research in sociology has demonstrated that social movements or new industries can be created through the rhetorical tactics, such as framing, to reposition the meanings (Benford & Snow, 2000; Lounsbury, et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1986; Weber et al., 2008). Benford and Snow (2000) argue that in case of social movements, social movement organizations (SMOs) can strategically develop and deploy frames to achieve a specific purpose such as recruiting new members, mobilizing adherents, and acquiring resources. Similarly, I hypothesize that the firms can strategically develop and deploy frames to involve consumers to conduct the consumption. Hence, in this study, I examine the firms' development and deployment of frames to involve consumers with the self-reward consumption. In particular, I assess rhetoric in the firms' advertisements.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: I introduce the data and the methods used to assess the firms' rhetorical tactics. An analysis follows, to show the effect of the firms' rhetoric in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice. Finally, I conclude by summarizing the findings and discussing their implications for understanding the self-reward consumption diffusion in Japan.

Data and Method

To study the firms' rhetorical tactics in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice in Japan, I collected and evaluated the print advertisements and press releases during 1994 to 2009 that promoted the self-reward consumption. Because the advertisements and press releases reflect the communication a firm wants to convey to the general public, these documents can be used as indicators of the firms' strategic intent. The year 1994 was chosen as the starting point because the historical analysis (Chapter 3) had shown that the first institutional advertisement that promoted the self-reward consumption¹⁶ began its insertion in that year. I collected data manually from the original source such as magazines since no online database for advertisements was available. In sum, 284 data sources were collected for analysis. Their details are further explained.

To collect the data, I first focused on the print advertisements inserted in the female magazines targeting working women. There were two reasons for choosing female magazines as a source. First, the historical analysis had shown that the self-reward consumption first became popular among the unmarried working women. Many of those women read magazines as an information source for lifestyles and values. Second, the historical analysis also had illuminated that the luxury goods and services

¹⁶ De Beers Diamond Jewellers Limited's 'Ms. Diamond' campaign advertisement.

providers were actively involved in the early years of the self-reward consumption practice development. These luxury providers focused on the selective female magazines as their communication vehicles. Hence, I identified female magazines with the two largest circulations and a readership across Japan: *MORE* and *with*. I skimmed through every issue from 1994 to 2009 and copied the advertisements (including advertorials) which featured the word ‘*gohoubi*’ [reward]¹⁷ and promoted the self-reward consumption. Total of 85 advertisements were identified; however, 10 advertisements were removed since they were duplications.

I also collected the data for department stores’ advertisements since the historical analysis indicated that the department stores heavily promoted the self-reward consumption as well. The data for department stores was not included in the first set of data collected from female magazines because the department stores advertised mainly through newspapers and in-store posters. To collect the data for department stores’ advertisements, I used *Newspaper advertising No. 2* (Y-Beams), a monthly magazine that collects posters, direct mails, and newspaper insertions of major department stores in Kanto region and five major cities. I skimmed through every issue from 1994 to 2009

¹⁷ The collected print advertisements were strictly restricted to those featuring the word ‘*gohoubi*’ [reward]. Those advertisements featuring similar concepts such as self-gifts were not included to avoid subjective judgments.

and copied the advertisements which featured the word ‘*gohoubi*’ [reward]¹⁸ and promoted the self-reward consumption. Total of 124 advertisements were identified.

Finally, to include the data of those firms who did not insert their advertisements in magazines (e.g., mass-targeted manufacturers), the press releases were collected. Using the Nikkei Telecom 21 database, I identified all press releases that included ‘*jibun e no gohoubi,*’ ‘*jibun ni gohoubi,*’ or ‘*jibun e gohoubi*’ (all meaning ‘self-reward’ in English) in the headline, content, or keywords. 100 press releases were identified for years 2003 to 2009; however, 15 press releases were removed since they featured research results instead of goods or services.

The firms’ rhetorical tactics was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative content analyses following the procedures that are consistent with previous research (e.g., Humphreys, 2010a). First, the data was qualitatively analyzed to explore the actual rhetoric that has made the self-reward consumption compelling for Japanese consumers. The qualitative content analysis yielded six themes: efforts and perseverance, achievement, Christmas gift, healing, easy, and ordinary. These six themes were retained for further interpretive analysis (Hirschman, 1990; Mick & DeMoss, 1990).

¹⁸ Similarly to the first set of data collected from female magazines, the collected print advertisements were strictly restricted to those featuring the word ‘*gohoubi*’ [reward]. Those advertisements featuring similar concepts such as self-gifts were not included to avoid subjective judgments.

Interpretive methods are based on the close, critical inspection of a text for the purpose of determining the text's meanings, usually in light of prior research deemed relevant to the study's topical focus.

Two literature streams were applied in the interpretive analyses of firms' rhetorical tactics in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice: framing strategy (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2000; Lounsbury et al., 2003; Snow et al., 1986; Weber et al., 2008) and diffusion of innovations (e.g., Bass, 1969; Rogers, 1962). The framing strategy literature has been important because prior research has demonstrated that social movements or new industries can be created through framing; therefore suggesting that consumption practices can also be created through framing.

As the interpretations shifted back and forth among the specific advertisement texts, six themes, and literatures on framing strategy, the six themes were acknowledged as the frames shaping the self-reward consumption practice and were categorized under the four frame alignment processes (Snow et al., 1986): frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. These four frame alignment processes empower further interpretive analysis of other new practice diffusion (creation) accounts (see Table 1).

In the same iterative manner, prior research on the diffusion of innovations (e.g.,

Rogers, 1962) was used to interpret rhetoric in advertisements in terms of the self-reward consumption practice development process and the relation between firms' communications and adopters (i.e., consumers). Since the diffusion of innovations is implicated in the new practice development, insights from literature on diffusion of innovations also cohered with the four frame alignment processes.

Second, the data was quantitatively analyzed to assess if there is a temporal sequence for the frame alignment processes. To conduct the quantitative content analysis, a custom dictionary was constructed (Humphreys, 2010a; Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2007) for the identified six frames and frame alignment processes. For each frame, a list of words was generated. Then, each frame and its words were categorized under respective frame alignment processes identified in the qualitative content analysis. Table 2 gives information on the created custom dictionary. Using this dictionary, data was quantitatively analyzed by performing word counts on a computer. First, the author transcribed data into text files. Then, the quantitative analysis was done at two levels: at the word level and at the advertisement level¹⁹. For the quantitative analysis at the word level, the words in the custom dictionary were counted for all texts. Then, for the advertisement level analysis, the advertisements were coded by the frame alignment

¹⁹ Obviously, the two-level analysis was performed for all materials including the press-releases.

processes using the word level counts. If the advertisement contained at least one word pertaining to the specific alignment process, it was coded as being about a particular alignment process. On contrary, even if the advertisement contained more than one word pertaining to the specific alignment process, it was coded only once as being about a particular alignment process. To note, one advertisement can use multiple frame alignment processes.

In the next section, the findings of firms' rhetorical tactics that are used to make the self-reward consumption compelling for Japanese consumers and the analysis to show the effect of firms' rhetoric in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice are presented.

Findings

Overall, there were three major findings from the qualitative content analysis, interpretive analysis, and quantitative content analysis. First, the qualitative content analysis and interpretive analysis identified six themes which synchronized the four alignment processes (Table 1). The analyses also identified that the different industries employed different frame alignment processes. Finally, the quantitative content analysis showed that the four frame alignment processes were employed at different timings of

the practice development (Figure 8).

I first present the findings of qualitative content analysis and interpretive analysis to specifically illustrate the firms' rhetoric tactics. The findings also show the specific industry that developed frames for each frame alignment processes.

Luxury Industry's Use of Frame Amplification in Diffusing the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

Frame amplification involves “the idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 624). Frame amplification was used by firms in the luxury industry. In promoting the self-reward consumption, these luxury firms highlighted the aspects of rewarding that are congruent with the accepted cultural values in Japan. They emphasized ‘*efforts and perseverance*’ and ‘*achievement*’ themes to generate consumers’ affirmation towards self-rewarding. Words such as *doryoku* (effort), *gambari* (perseverance), and *gaman* (endurance) confer remarkably positive connotations among Japanese (Heine et al., 1999), as Japanese culture places strong emphasis on self-discipline. Furthermore, in Japan, achievement is attributed more to effort than to abilities (Kitayama, Takagi, & Matsumoto, 1995). Hence, frame amplification contributed in weakening or removing the negative image of

self-rewarding as an egocentric act.

The first institutional advertisement that promoted the self-reward consumption, De Beers' Ms. Diamond campaign (1994~1996), used frame amplification. The Ms. Diamond campaign advertisement portrayed ordinary Japanese women who were praiseworthy for their efforts, and suggested that these women deserved self-rewards. Following is an example of their advertising copy:

Reward is a precious diamond.

“*Ei!*” (A shout one gives when putting one's power in doing something.)

Ms. DIAMOND.

I've succeeded in diet although I couldn't keep my resolutions longer than a day or two. Here, I praise my strong intention and effort. *Ei*, [I'm going to buy] a precious diamond. (Retrieved from *MORE*, 1994, July issue.)

Frame amplification was successful in involving the working women to conduct the self-reward consumption. The Ms. Diamond campaign which used frame amplification turned out to be a huge success – the diamond sales among the unmarried women in their twenties increased by 40% (period of October to December; comparison

of 1994 versus 1993) (Ogiso, 1995).

De Beers' original frame shaping the self-reward consumption gained support from the working women partially because it justified the self-reward act. As the literature review of self-gifts (Chapter 2) had shown, the consumers in interdependent cultures are comfortable with self-gifts when they can be justified. Hence, when De Beers justified the self-reward consumption, the working women perhaps felt comfortable to conduct the act.

Following the success of De Beers, the 'imitators' – those who imitated to promote the self-reward consumption using frame amplification – emerged. These imitators were mainly the foreign luxury brands such as Cartier and Fendi, as well as Platinum Guild International, the direct competitor of De Beers. They not only repeated the positive aspects of self-rewards that were illuminated by De Beers, but also emphasized them. Hence, following the success of entrepreneurial firm, the total industry began to use frame amplification to promote a new consumption practice.

High-End Retailers' Use of Frame Extension in Diffusing the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

Frame extension entails “extending [frame(s)] beyond its primary interests to

include issues and concerns that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 625). Through frame extension, the firms extended the original frame beyond its initial boundaries so that they can involve more consumers, and also expand the self-reward objects besides luxury. The analysis showed that frame extension was mainly used by the high-end retailers, particularly the department stores. They enlarged the initial self-reward frame – a special consumption glorifying the achievement and effort – to a *Christmas gift* frame. They promoted the self-reward consumption during the Christmas season and linked it with gift-giving. Here are some examples of the department stores’ Christmas promotion slogans featuring self-reward:

[Buy gift] as a present for dearest; as a reward for me. Everyone is Santa Claus on Christmas (Takashimaya Shinjuku, 1997).

Have a Happy Christmas. [Select gift] to buy as self-reward or to ask boyfriend. GIFT for My Heart (Mitsukoshi Nihonbashi, 2000).

Christmas with Angel. Angel’s presents. [Why not] give gift to me. Why not acquire my favorites as a reward for this year’s [efforts]. A proposal to you from

Odakyu (Odakyu Shinjuku, 2000).

The new frame of self-reward consumption as a Christmas gift involved more consumers besides the working women. Since the Christmas gift-shopping was conducted by the wide consumer segments including fathers, mothers, seniors and young, the recognition of self-reward concept increased. Furthermore, the department store promoted the self-reward consumption using the frame of Christmas gift directly not only to the working women but also to the affluent using the direct mails. Hence, through frame extension, more consumers were involved to the self-reward consumption.

The frame of Christmas gift also allowed the increase in frequency of the self-reward consumption. The department stores promoted the self-reward consumption every Christmas season and hence turned it into an annual act. Consumers were invited to conduct the self-reward consumption every year. Also, by positioning self-rewarding as the continuum of gift-giving, it became possible to relate self-rewarding to other gift-giving circumstances such as Valentine's Day, White Day (corresponding day to Valentine's Day), *ochugen* (summer gifts), and *oseibo* (winter gifts). The opportunities to conduct the self-reward consumption for each consumer increased; therefore

contributing to the growth of self-reward consumption practice.

Finally, frame extension also allowed expanding the self-reward objects beyond jewelry. Any product or service that was appropriate for gifts now came into scope of the self-reward consumption. For example, the department stores promoted dresses, handbags, shoes, stationary, and interior goods as the self-reward objects. The expansion of the self-reward objects also allowed more product/service providers besides luxury industry to promote the self-reward consumption.

To summarize, frame extension contributed to the development of self-reward consumption practice by involving more consumers besides the working women, providing more opportunities to conduct the self-reward consumption and hence increasing the frequency of the act, and offering wider self-reward objects besides the jewelry. It also involved more product/service providers to promote the self-reward consumption.

Mass-Target Manufacturers' Use of Frame Bridging in Diffusing the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

Frame bridging refers to “the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (Benford &

Snow, 2000, p. 624). It was used mainly by the mass-target manufacturers, particularly those in the food and beverage industry. These firms used frame bridging to promote the self-reward consumption to the masses.

The mass-target manufacturers linked two themes of self-rewards and *healing*. Since the late 1990s, the healing boom prevailed in the Japanese society (Matsui, 2009). The consumer demand for healing products had been high. Hence, the connection with healing attracted higher attention to the self-reward consumption from the general public.

Although the two themes of self-rewarding and healing may seem disparate, they were ideologically congruent under the concept of self-gifts. The two themes were both motivations of self-gifts. Mick and DeMoss (1990) had identified rewarding and stress-relieving as the motivations of self-gifting. In Japan, healing connoted “creating psychological security” in addition to curing somebody’s disease or injury (Matsui, 2009, p. 581) and the word was often used in the context of relieving stress. Hence, it was appropriate that these two themes were used together in promoting self-indulgence²⁰.

The two themes adapted well to each other and the major mass-target

²⁰ Remember that the definition of self-gifts is “personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences” (Mick & DeMoss, 1990).

manufacturers began to promote the self-reward consumption on a large-scale by using frame bridging. For example, in 2009, Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Limited (hereafter Coca-Cola) launched a new product “Georgia *Gohoubi* Break” from their top-selling canned coffee brand, Georgia. Coca-Cola connected ‘reward’ and ‘break’ (signifying a temporal relief) in its product name. The product concept was “a reward for hard-working people,” providing a high-quality moment where one can relieve stress (Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Limited, 2009).

Frame bridging contributed to the growth of self-reward consumption practice by involving the masses to conduct the self-reward consumption. It successfully involved the masses because the firms connected the self-reward concept to the healing concept which had been popular among the masses. In addition, frame bridging allowed consumers to use stress-relieving as a justification for self-rewarding. As already discussed, the consumers in interdependent cultures are comfortable with self-rewards when they can be justified. As a result, the masses were involved to conduct the self-reward consumption.

Mass-Target Manufacturers’ Use of Frame Transformation in Diffusing the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

Finally, frame transformation refers to “changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 625). It was used also by the mass-target manufacturers who promoted the self-reward consumption to the masses. These firms generated the new frames of *easy* and *ordinary*, changing the original frame of the self-reward consumption which was ‘special’ and ‘once-a-year’ consumption to glorify the achievement and effort. Frame transformation allowed the self-reward consumption to be appropriate as a daily act.

By using frame transformation, the firms promoted the self-reward consumption in the ordinary settings. For example, Suntory Holdings Limited’s (hereafter Suntory) premium beer, “The Premium Malts,” promoted drinking premium beer as a self-reward on Fridays:

Reward, reward!

To me, for working hard.

Friday is the day of ‘*pure molu*’ (Japanese abbreviation for Premium Malts).

(<http://www.suntory.co.jp/beer/premium/cm/index.html>)

Frame transformation contributed to the development of self-reward consumption

practice in Japan by repositioning it as casual, daily act. Using frame transformation, the firms persuaded consumers to self-reward more often²¹. Consequently, the frequency of self-reward consumption increased at the mass level; therefore contributing to the growth of the self-reward consumption practice.

Temporal Sequence of Frame Alignment Processes in Diffusing the Self-Reward Consumption Practice in Japan

I also find that the four frame alignment processes were employed at different stages of the practice development. To assess if there is a temporal sequence for the frame alignment processes, the quantitative content analysis was conducted. The result is shown in Figure 8.

The firms' use of four frame alignment processes was tracked over time. From 1994 to 2000, only frame amplification and frame extension were present. In 1994 and 1995, 100% and 86%, respectively, of all advertisements and press releases included frame amplification to promote the self-reward consumption. Then frame extension appeared in 1997. With its introduction, the usage of frame amplification started to drop. In 1997, while 80% of all advertisements and press releases included frame extension,

²¹ Advertisements and press releases show the shift in self-rewarding frequency: once in a lifetime → few times in a lifetime → once a year → twice a year (at bonus season in summer and winter) → on special days → on ordinary days → once a week → every day.

only 40% had frame amplification. Thereafter, frame amplification's share continued to drop. After 2001, firms began to use frame bridging and frame transformation. Although the share of these two processes was moderate (an average figure for nine years since their introduction was 16% for frame bridging and 14% for frame transformation), a growth trend was apparent for both frames. More importantly, the usage of amplification and extension frames dropped following the introduction of additional two frames. In 2009, the share of each frame was as follows: 18% for the amplification frame, 24% for the extension frame, 26% for the bridging frame, and 28% for the transformation frame.

Hence, the result shows that the four frame alignment processes were employed at different stages of the practice development. Frame amplification was used mainly at the start-up of the practice development, and then frame extension was used mainly during the early stage of its development. Once the development passed the tipping point (i.e., consumer boom in 2001), frame bridging and frame transformation were used.

Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter has been to understand how the firms'

communications have affected the development of self-reward consumption practice in Japan. In particular, the study focuses on the effect of rhetoric, such as framing, in the communications. I hypothesize that the firms can strategically develop and deploy frames to involve consumers. Hence, in this study, I examine the firms' print advertisements and press releases to see if they did develop and deploy frames to involve consumers with the self-reward consumption.

The findings support my hypothesis. The firms have developed and deployed frames in their advertisements and press releases to involve consumers with the self-reward consumption, and contributing to the practice diffusion in the Japanese society. The qualitative content analysis exploring the actual rhetoric in the firms' print advertisements and press releases has identified six frames: efforts and perseverance, achievement, Christmas gift, healing, easy, and ordinary. These six themes synchronize with the four frame alignment processes identified in the mobilization of social movements (Snow et al., 1986): frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Hence, similarly to the SMOs' strategic use of framing to involve the movement participants, the firms have strategically used rhetoric to involve consumers with the self-reward consumption.

The findings also show that there is a temporal sequence for the firms' use of

frame alignment processes. Frame amplification has been used mainly at the start-up of the practice development, and then frame extension during the early stage of its development. Once the development has passed the tipping point (i.e., year 2001, see Figure 3), frame bridging and frame transformation are used.

Finally, the findings show that the different industries have employed the different frame alignment processes. The luxury industry has developed frames for frame amplification, the department stores have developed ones for frame extension, and the mass-target manufacturers have developed ones for frame bridging and frame transformation. This finding of different industries using different frame alignment processes arouses the following question: is there a fit between the industry and frame alignment processes to diffusing the self-reward consumption? This question is further explored.

The overall assessment of the adopter categories, temporal sequence of the frame alignment processes, and industries employing each frame alignment processes suggest answer to the question. The historical analysis (Chapter 3) has identified the following adopter categories for the self-reward consumption practice in Japan: working women (innovators); department store users (early adopters and early majority); and men, seniors, and housewives (late majority and laggards) (see Figure 4). Then, the temporal

sequence of the firms' use of frame alignment processes has shown the following order: frame alignment, frame extension, and frame bridging/transformation (see Figure 8). An assessment of the industry employing each frame alignment processes shows that it has an influential power over the respective adopter category. The power includes social networks, financial resources, and territorial structures that can be used to influence consumers. For example, the luxury industry has been appropriate in employing frame amplification to involve innovators, the working women, because in Japan, the luxury industry has a strong influence over the working women who have a high admiration towards the luxury brands. Similar relationships are identified for the other frame alignment processes. Figure 9 is the conceptual model of self-reward consumption practice diffusion that includes the adopter categories, frame alignment processes, and industries employing those processes.

This chapter has focused on the firms and their communications in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. In the next chapter, I shift the focus to another actor involved in the development of the self-reward consumption practice in Japan: the media.

CHAPTER 5:

MEDIA'S USE OF RHETORIC IN DIFFUSING '*JIBUN E NO GOHOUBI*'

[SELF-REWARD] CONSUMPTION PRACTICE IN JAPAN

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have examined how the firms' use of rhetoric has influenced the diffusion of self-reward consumption practice in Japan. Now, we turn to the media's use of rhetoric in diffusing the practice. The media's positioning in the communications with consumers is different from the one of the firms or advertisers. For journalists, the objectivity is more naturalized and their interests are more implicit, whereas the firms have clear objective to promote their products or services.

In general, the media creates contexts in which the consumers behave. The media shapes consumer understanding (Thompson & Haytko, 1997), especially the ones of new ideas, new practices, and/or new products. Particularly in Japan, the magazines have strong influence on consumer behavior. Each magazine, differentiated by the gender, age, and/or taste, shapes its target segments' ways of thinking and behaviors (Clammer, 1997). To recall, when the self-reward consumption has just emerged among the working women, the general public had impression that the female magazines were

initiating the movement (Chapter 3).

The objective of this chapter is to show how the media discourse on the self-reward consumption provides an essential context for consumers to become involved in conducting the self-reward consumption. To achieve this objective, I conduct the media discourse analysis focusing on the symbolic meanings of the self-reward consumption. I evaluate the female magazine articles during 1987 to 2009 that have promoted the self-reward consumption. I focus on the female magazines because the historical analysis (Chapter 3) has suggested that they were actively involved to make the self-reward consumption compelling for Japanese consumers.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: I introduce the data and the methods used to assess the media's use of rhetoric in its communications. An analysis follows, to show the effect of the media's (female magazines) rhetoric in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice. Finally, I conclude by summarizing the findings and discussing their implications for understanding the self-reward consumption diffusion in Japan.

Data and Method

To study the effect of the media's rhetoric in the diffusion of the self-reward

consumption practice in Japan, I evaluated the female magazine articles during 1987 to 2009 that promoted the self-reward consumption. To select the information for this study, multiple-steps procedure was adopted. First, the articles featuring the self-reward consumption were searched using the search engine, Web-OYA Bunko²². To identify those articles, I focused on the ones having the word ‘*gohoubi*’ [reward] in their headline or keywords. A total of 1,001 articles were found for years 1987 to 2009. I created a list which contained the information on article titles, magazine titles, publishing dates, pages, and keywords. Second, using the created list, the articles in the female magazines that featured self-reward consumption were identified (515 articles).

All 515 articles were read and examined by the author. The articles were manually retrieved from the original magazine stored in the National Diet Library, since there was no online database available for magazine articles in Japan. While reading the articles, I paid particular attention to the symbolisms used for the self-reward consumption. As a result, the binary oppositions (Jakobson & Halle, 1956; Saussure, 1959) of sacred and profane were identified as structuring the self-reward concept.

Finally, two pools of 30 articles for the structuralist interpretive analysis (Hirschman, 1990; Zhao & Belk, 2008) were selected based on how conceptually

²² A database of magazine article titles created by the magazine specialized library, Oya Soichi Library.

interesting and rich each article was (Mick, 1986; Zhao & Belk, 2008) in revealing how changing media discourse on the self-reward consumption provides an essential context for consumers to become involved in conducting the self-reward consumption. A pool of 30 articles was drawn for each of the two symbolisms shaping the self-reward consumption in Japan: sacred and profane. Table 3 is the list of 30 articles that represent the symbolism of sacred in the self-reward consumption. It provides the article titles and the featured self-reward objects, as well as the information on the article source. Table 4 provides the same information for the 30 articles that represent the symbolism of profane in the self-reward consumption.

The media discourse on the self-reward consumption was analyzed using structuralist interpretive analysis (Hirschman, 1990; Zhao & Belk, 2008) and quantitative content analyses. First, structuralist interpretive analysis was conducted to explore how the symbolisms of sacred and profane provided the context for consumers to become involved in conducting the self-reward consumption. Following the tradition of interpretive methods, the articles were read based on the close, critical inspection in light of prior research deemed relevant to the study's topical focus. The interpretation of articles drew on the works of sacred and profane in the consumption (e.g., Belk et al., 1989). As the interpretations shifted back and forth among the specific article texts,

symbolisms of sacred and profane, and literatures, processes of sacralization and secularization of the self-reward consumption were identified.

After the structuralist interpretive analysis, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to systematically trace the change in structural emphasis of the two symbolisms over time. To conduct the quantitative content analysis, a custom dictionary was constructed (Humphreys, 2010a; Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2007) for the selected sacralization processes of the self-reward consumption. The processes were selected based on the availability of data for quantitative content analysis. For this analysis, I used the created list of 515 female magazine articles. The list contained the information on article titles and keywords which were relevant to assess three of the identified six sacralization processes: feature of precious products, sacralization of time, and positioning as self-gifts²³. For each process, a list of words was generated (see Table 7). Using this dictionary, data was quantitatively analyzed by performing word counts on a computer to examine the change in structural emphasis of the two symbolisms in the media discourse.

Findings

²³ For the category 'precious products,' the word count was performed using the keywords. For the categories 'sacred time' and 'self-gifting,' the word count was performed using the article titles.

The structuralist interpretive analysis identified the six sacralization processes (Table 5) and four secularization processes (Table 6) of the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. The female magazines employed these processes to sacralize the self-reward consumption and secularize it, respectively.

Then, the quantitative content analysis showed that there was a change in the structural emphasis of the two symbolisms over time. The findings showed that the sacralization processes were used more frequently during the early stage of self-reward consumption practice development. The findings suggest that the sacralization of practice contributes in involving consumers with the practice that may be not appropriate in their cultural context. The findings also suggest that the secularization of practice, which appeared later in the practice development, contributes to diffusing the practice among the masses.

I first present the findings of structuralist interpretive analysis to show the media's use of rhetoric more specifically.

Media's Sacralization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption in Japan

The media sacralized the self-reward consumption by attaching the notion of sacredness to the featuring products, times, experiences, and people. Six ways through

which the media sacralized the self-reward consumption were identified: feature of precious products, attribution of mystique, singularization, sacralization of time, positioning as self-gifts, and endorsement by charismatic leaders.

Featuring precious products as the self-reward objects. The female magazine articles often featured jewelry, watch, luxury brand goods, and beauty spas as the self-reward objects, especially when they first introduced the act of self-rewarding (see Table 3). The self-reward objects were characterized as authentic, valuable, special, rare, high-quality, beautiful, prestigious, has a history, and expensive. For example, the magazine *ef*²⁴'s first special article²⁵ on the self-reward consumption featured ring and accessory (jewelry), watch, and luxury brand goods (December, 1996). Particularly, the special article focused on the jewelries of luxury brands such as Hermes, Tiffany's, Cartier, Bvlgari, and Baccarat, which were acknowledged as valuable, special, high-quality, beautiful, prestigious, has a history, and expensive by Japanese consumers.

²⁴ *ef* was a fashion magazine targeting working women, published by SHUFUNOTOMO Co.,Ltd. It was one of the top three female magazines that had most articles on the self-reward consumption: Rank 1 was *Hanako* with 273 articles (including *Hanako WEST*), rank 2 was *ef* with 37 articles, and rank 3 was *Jyoseijisin* with 21 articles.

²⁵ In December, 1996, *ef* wrote, for the first time, a special article on the self-reward consumption using 10 pages. The article was one of the four special articles of the issue. Thereafter, *ef* continued to write the special articles on the self-reward consumption: January, 1998 (15 pages); July, 1998 (10 pages); December, 1998 (11 pages), January, 1999 (10 pages); July, 1999 (16 pages); January, 2000 (11 pages and 8 pages); July, 2000 (8 pages and 3 pages); July, 2001 (8 pages); July, 2002 (6 pages); December, 2002 (6 pages); July, 2003 (6 pages); October, 2003 (4 pages); January, 2004 (14 pages); March, 2004 (4 pages).

ef also reinforced the value and beauty of the luxury brand items: “Present for me: Accessory. A finest glitter around the neck; around the wrist,” “Present for me: Watch. Possess one that has value because it’s a must-have item for a working woman,” “Present for me: Goods. Beautiful and functional goods.”

Furthermore, *ef*’s first special article on the self-reward consumption emphasized the authenticity of self-reward objects. The article’s title read, “Present for me. The selected items for my self-rewards,” and the headline read, “It’s about time that we learn an excitement and emotional uplift of possessing the *authentic* things” (italics added). The copy read, “Wearing them [authentic things] exhilarates us. Putting them aside cheers us up. Want to enjoy an aura that only the *authentic* things can emit. Want to realize it [possessing the authentic things] this year... as a self-reward for working so hard” (italics added).

In addition, *ef*’s article vested special power to the self-reward objects. The article described that the self-reward objects gave energy to their possessors: “Present for me: Ring. The best amulet that gives me energy.” Also, the metaphor of amulet is used for the self-reward object. This attribution of special power is further explored in the next section.

The identified characteristics of self-reward objects such as authentic, valuable,

special, rare, high-quality, beautiful, prestigious, has a history, and expensive, separated them from the ordinary consumables. Furthermore, these characteristics synchronized the features of sacred objects (Belk, et al., 1989). Hence, by featuring the precious products as the self-reward objects, the female magazines attached the symbolic meaning of sacred to the self-reward consumption.

Attributing mystique to the self-reward objects. The female magazines also attributed mystique to the self-reward objects. An exemplar of this attribution of mystique is illustrated in *Hanako*'s first special issue on the self-reward consumption (November 28, 1996). The issue was dedicated to the topic of self-reward consumption in Christmas; its title read, "Once a year extravagant reward. Christmas 'wants' collection!" In this special issue, *Hanako* introduced numerous products as the self-reward objects, such as luxury brand goods, fashion goods, handbags, shoes, jewelry, watch, interior goods and gift items. *Hanako* described these self-reward objects as "lucky items." The issue's introductory copy read:

It's great if things we buy as rewards for 'we've worked hard this year' have a sense of beauty; are functional; make us happy; and make us feel that 1996 was a

good year. You will surely encounter such *lucky items* in this issue (italics added).

In the copy, *Hanako* explained that these lucky items, the self-reward objects, make their possessors happy. In addition, by calling the self-reward objects as lucky items, *Hanako* also suggested that the objects brought luck to their possessors.

Among the frequently featured self-reward objects, jewelry was especially emphasized of its mystique. Two textual excerpts exemplified the general tone of this description. The first example was from *LEE* (March, 1990):

Among various accessories, the item that attracts attention is a ring, after all.

When we look into the shop windows, our moves stop as if we were *casted a spell*.

Pink, blue, green... Jewelries emitting various glitters *charm us*. A ring can be a fashionable accessory that are easily worn, or *a medicine that changes our mood*.

There are rings that symbolize our memory. But, it seems that we have reached an age to acquire an authentic ring (italics added).

LEE, in the above example, characterized jewelry as having a special power. They personified jewelry as being able to “cast a spell” and “charm” the consumers. They

also used the metaphor of “medicine” to describe the jewelry, provoking that it may heal the psychological damages.

In addition, *LEE* described the jewelry also as a “guardian”:

Diamond, ruby, sapphire, topaz... There are many that we want, but first is a birthstone. All jewelries selected as birthstones are beautiful. We definitely want the birthstone ring also as our *guardian* gem (italics added).

This figurative expression of the jewelry as the guardian was frequently used in the female magazine articles. For example, *ef* wrote, “An existence like a *guardian*; is always near us and is watching over us with a pure glow” (January, 1999).

Hence, the female magazines attributed the self-reward objects as having special power to mystify, heal and/or guard their possessors. The articles also described the self-reward objects as lucky items. This linkage of the self-reward objects as a luck provider probably has provided justification for women to conduct the self-reward consumption²⁶.

Mystery was one of 12 properties of sacredness (Belk et al., 1989). Hence, by

²⁶ Although this view of linking luck with the self-reward consumption providing justification is not proven, in general, the Japanese women liked to purchase amulets. Traditionally, the Japanese people purchased amulets at shrines at New Year's.

attributing mystique, the symbolic meaning of sacred was attached to the self-reward consumption. In consequence, the self-reward objects were raised above the ordinary.

Singularizing the self-reward objects. To involve consumers with the self-reward consumption, the articles emphasized singularization. Three ways of singularization were identified. First, the articles suggested consumers to acquire self-rewards as a symbol for their effort. The first article to feature the self-reward consumption (*MORE*, January, 1990) used singularization to convey self-rewarding. Its title read, “A reward to me who worked hard. 80 valuable authentic items that we want to buy with the bonus” and the copy read:

Because it's the joyful, joyful bonus that we've looked forward, we want to use it very carefully and very effectively. For example, I give to myself *a gift that shapes this year's effort* and that cheers me up. If possible, it's better if an object is a precious item that allows me to *feel my career*. It's better if an object is an item with a certainty that can accompany me for years. Also, it's better if an object *symbolizes my step forward*. *MORE* has selected 80 items that fulfill such three conditions, with a feeling of giving a present to you (italics added).

Here, *MORE* suggested consumers to acquire the self-reward objects to symbolize their effort. The self-reward objects also served to symbolize the consumers' success.

Second, the articles told that the self-rewarding objects can express the possessors' characteristics, particularly their tastes. For example, the goods such as personal organizer, address book, wallet, card case, pen, and key holder, were described to "eloquently speak about their users" (*MORE*, January, 1990). Handbags were described as reflecting the "women's self" (*MORE*, January, 1990). Luxury brand goods were said to heighten the quality of women: "Although one starts using the [luxury brand] items by stretching oneself, through usage, one gradually becomes suited to them" (*Hanako*, November 26, 1997). Finally, jewelry and watch were also described as to symbolize their possessors:

When selecting jewelry and watch that will be used for your lifetime, you should consider what kind of woman you want to be. [You should do so] because it will be your symbol; and from now on, it will watch over you residing most nearby you, will encourage you, and sometimes will give you pride (*ef*, January, 2000).

The articles implied that a wonderful lady possessed these objects recommended as the self-reward objects; hence, recommended the women to acquire these self-reward objects to nurture themselves.

Third, the articles personified the self-rewarding objects and intimated the relationship between the objects and their possessors. For example, the watch was often described as women's partner. *with's* special article on a "reward watch" (December, 1999) characterized the watch as a "best partner":

Watch is with you always. It's like a best partner. Thus, we want to acquire a good watch. Let's find a dearest present and future partner, by examining the standard and new products of admirable four luxury brands.

Through one or more of these three identified ways of singularization, consumers singularized the self-reward objects – invested and divested meanings associated with their relationship with the objects. As a result, the objects are differentiated from the ordinary objects. At the same time, the consumers sacralized the objects by imposing one's identity (Belk et al., 1989).

The process of singularization may also have provided the justification for women

to conduct the self-reward consumption. In particular, the articles' suggestion that the self-reward objects would nurture their possessors to become the wonderful ladies probably has diminished a sense of guilt because this suggestion argued that the consumption was not a waste.

Sacralizing the self-reward time. In the beginning, the female magazines positioned the self-reward consumption as a special act that occurred only once a year. The article titles often emphasized that the self-rewarding consumption is once a year act (Table 3). Some of the examples include: "A reward to me who worked hard *this year!* Diamonds, colored stones, pearls, etc... The jewelry guide of 239 items that flatters me" (*MORE*, January, 1998); "Good work for *this year*. A reward to 'me' who is going to work hard again in the year 2000. To me who is tired! OL [office lady] relaxation news" (*JJ*, February, 2000); and "Self-gift *once a year*. Self-reward *once a year*, a pleasure of finest beauty spa" (*croissant*, December 10, 2000) (italics added). The female magazines initially proposed self-rewards to be consumed once a year and not on a normal basis.

The female magazines also separated the self-reward time from the ordinary time. Dining out and massaging were two examples that represented the separation of time.

Consider, for example, the following excerpt from *Nikkei Women's* special article on the self-reward restaurants and bars (October, 2000):

Dark, is the first impression. However, this darkness is surprisingly peaceful. The customers present in the bar are not exposed to the light, and thus each can immerse into oneself and concentrate on the conversation with a bartender. Furthermore, the spotlight lights only the filled seats; therefore each customer can become 'the star.' Akio Yokose, the owner of bar 'OLD TIME' says, "The goodness of bar is that one can spend a comfortable time in an *unordinary* space. There are *no things that remind reality* such as a clock" (italics added).

This article implied that when self-rewarding, consumers were separated from the reality. In an unordinary space, consumers spent special moments that were different from the ordinary times.

Other article featuring beauty spa as a self-reward (*CREA*, February, 1999) also separated the self-reward time from the ordinary time. *CREA* described a massage experience as "hedonic" which "promises happy moments." It continued, "Once stepped inside, the complicated daily life fades away." Again, the article implied that at

self-reward time, consumers were separated from the reality.

These excerpts illustrated that the self-reward time was unordinary and special. Hence, the media separated the self-reward time from the ordinary time. Belk et al. (1989) identified that time is one of the domains of sacred consumption. Hence, as the articles positioned self-reward time to be special, they sacralized the self-reward consumption.

Making self-rewarding into self-gifting. Also in the beginning, the female magazines positioned self-rewards as self-gifts. The article titles often used the words ‘present’ and ‘give gifts’ (Table 3). The examples include: “This valuable item. A reward that I *self-gift* to me who worked this year” (*ef*, January, 1998); “A self-reward that I want to *self-gift* as a proof of my effort – jewelry and watch” (*ef*, July, 1998); and “A ‘reward’ ring guide: if it’s ‘*giving gift* to me’ or ‘being given a gift,’ an authentic thing that one can wear one’s lifetime would be great” (non-no, December 20, 1999). Also, the articles, in the main text, often used the verb ‘to gift’ rather than the verb ‘to buy.’

As the female magazines positioned self-rewards as a continuum of gifts, the self-rewards became special acts. The self-rewards also became sacred since gifts were

sacred. Gifts were sacred because they indicated the value-expressive nature. In case of interpersonal gift-giving, a gift was usually an expression of connection between people. On the other hand, in case of self-gifting, a gift was a personal symbolic self-dialogue concerning affective self-regard and identity (Mick and DeMoss, 1990). A short story in *ef*'s article (January, 1998) recounted such value-expressive nature of self-rewards as self-gifts:

LOVE LETTER TO ME

Attaching memory to each jewelry

[...] First time I bought the proper accessory was when I joined the company. The shop existed at Aoyama's quiet and secluded place. It had a patio that reminded a small church in Europe. I liked the shop's original design. Since then, I bought accessories like pink gold and champagne diamond accessories at every bonus season.

Jewelry is like a time capsule that freezes my self-figure of the time. Since I realized that, I became to like giving gift to myself, with a message 'good work.'

In the above example, the self-rewarding act was a personal symbolic

self-dialogue. Consumer gave the message, “good work,” to herself and also affirmed her identity.

As gifts have special meaning, and selection of gifts is different from a commodity purchase, the self-reward consumption was also made special and sacred when linked with self-gifts.

Endorsement of self-rewarding by the charismatic leaders. The female magazines also featured numbers of opinion leaders who endorsed the self-reward consumption. Often, these opinion leaders were the popular figures of the time and were regarded as charismatic by the readers. The charismatic leaders are sacred and set apart from others (Belk et al., 1989). They also have the magical power over followers (Weber, 1968). Hence, when the charismatic leaders endorsed the self-reward consumption, the symbolic meaning of sacred was attached to the act.

The charismatic leaders affirmed and justified the self-reward consumption in Japan. Consider, for example, the following two excerpts. The first example is from *ef*'s serial article by Toko Furuuchi, a singer and a song-writer. In her serial titled “Toko Furuuchi: The essence of happiness,” she spoke about self-rewards:

Rewards I receive from others make me happy. It feels that I've received others' feelings. I feel that they've recognized me or that they've thought about me. On the other hand, self-rewards are something that fulfills my materialistic desire. It may look unnecessary to others, but **there's a meaning** in acquiring those items with one's own money. *I understand very much the feelings of OLs [office ladies] who desire Hermes' Kelly or Birkin handbags.* Men may think why spend several hundred-thousand yen for a handbag, but for women, it's a **self-satisfaction**. *Imagining the person saving money to acquire the handbag, she appears to be someone who has worked hard.* Women have *[shopping] objectives* and wish to **become someone who can wear those items**. Once she acquires the item, she feels as if her level went up. Self-reward can be a **result for doing something**, but I think that it can also be a **preparation item to raise one's level**. Because there's next objective, I give myself a reward. Then, I can **work hard again**. Is this going to continue forever? (August, 1999) (underlines, italics, and bolds added).

In the above excerpt, Furuuchi conducted three actions to affirm the self-reward consumption and involve consumers. First, she announced to the readers that she conducted self-reward consumption (underlined sections). Then, she sympathized with

those who conducted the self-reward consumption (*italic sections*). She even praised those self-rewarding women (“she appears to be someone who has worked hard”). Finally, Furuuchi provided reasons for conducting the self-reward consumption and justified the act (**bold sections**).

The second example is from *ef*'s special article on the self-reward watch (July, 1999). The article featured five opinion leaders and introduced their self-reward histories: Uno Kanda (TV star), Satsuki Ariga (TV announcer), Kimiko Jinnai (badminton player), Satoko Ito (newscaster), and Junko Izumi (first female *Noh* comedian). For example, Izumi shared her story of buying Hermes watch as a self-reward on one Christmas. In the article, she explained why she self-rewarded the watch: “I want to get old spending good time with the watch I like.”

Reading the charismatic leaders' self-reward consumer behavior, consumers probably were influenced and began to regard the self-reward consumption as a special consumption. Hence, it also became appropriate to conduct in the Japanese society.

Summary of media's sacralization processes of the self-reward consumption in Japan. In summary, the female magazines sacralized the self-reward consumption by adhering sacredness to various aspects of consumption. Six different processes were

identified: feature of precious products, attribution of mystique, singularization, sacralization of time, positioning as self-gifts, and endorsement by charismatic leaders.

The female magazines also secularized the self-reward consumption. This secularization processes are discussed next.

Media's Secularization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption in Japan

The media can secularize a consumption practice by attaching the notion of profane. Four ways through which the female magazines secularized the self-reward consumption were identified: feature of commodity products, emphasis on value price, recommendation of self-rewarding on the ordinary occasions, and removal of gifting concept.

Featuring commodity products as the self-reward objects. Following the consumer boom of the self-reward consumption among the females (2001 to 2003; see Chapter 3), the female magazines began to promote a wider range of products as the self-reward objects. They included the commodity products such as mug, snack foods, and cosmetics. Furthermore, *ramen* (Chinese-style soup noodle), and *yakiniku* (Korean-style barbecued beef), both the popular mass food among Japanese, were

featured as the self-reward objects (see Table 4).

When the female magazines featured commodity products as the self-reward objects, they were not characterized as authentic, valuable, special, rare, high-quality, beautiful, prestigious, has a history, and expensive. Instead, the self-reward objects were characterized as the opposite of above characteristics. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from magazine *chou chou* promoting *ramen* as a self-reward (October, 22, 2009):

Dear girls who are working hard every day, feeling stress from the work or housework. Let's sometimes give ourselves a reward saying 'you're doing a great job!' Our recommendation is a luxurious *ramen* shop. The dishes besides noodles are elaborated. Because it's a *ramen* which is a friend of common people, it's a good value for the price. Cheers to me who works hard, with a wonderful *ramen* (underlines added).

The *chou chou* article emphasized “common” (versus rare) and “good value for the price” (versus expensive). Furthermore, the self-reward object featured in *chou chou* highlighted the inauthenticity (versus authentic). The *chou chou* article featured the

luxurious *ramen*. Since *ramen* was the food for common people, it was decorated to be luxury; therefore, inauthentic as luxury.

Belk et al. (1989) argued that when a sacred object becomes a commodity, it appears ordinary and profane. Hence, the female magazines attached the symbolic meaning of profane by featuring the commodity products as the self-reward objects.

Emphasizing value price of the self-reward objects. When the female magazines began to feature commodity products as the self-reward objects, they also began to emphasize the value price (versus expensive). They highlighted self-reward objects' high economic value and even included the price information in the article titles (see Table 4). The examples include: "OZmall's '5,800 yen reward-relaxation' x *OZmagazine* collaboration project. My only holiday at the relaxation salon" (*OZmagazine*, May 8, 2006); "Summer reward-guide. Are you going to aim the admiring luxury brand? Are you going to search one at below one hundred-thousand yen? '98 favorite summer jewelry that upgrades fashion" (*MORE*, July, 2007); and "We can buy this much! How to enjoy 10,000 yen. Sometimes give your soul an extravagance as a self-reward" (*Yuuyuu*, March, 2008) (underlines added).

The articles further described the self-reward objects' economic value in their text.

For example, the *OZmagazine* article explained the 5,800 yen reward-relaxation in its copy:

The long-awaited project of relaxation salon experience at 5,800 yen for 60 minutes has started at the OZmall! Now, limited to the *OZmagazine* readers, the special plan of additional 15 minutes service is available with the same price! Let's give a present of a supreme rest to myself who is working hard every day!

This excerpt promoted the value price of beauty spa experience. The article featured the service priced at 5,800 yen for 75 minutes. In general, the price of beauty spa service was more than 10,000 yen. Hence, the price below 10,000 yen gave a great sense of economic value to consumers.

Other articles also emphasized the value price of the self-reward objects. In addition, by emphasizing the value price, the articles also described affordability of the self-rewarding objects. For example, the *MORE* article emphasized affordability of the self-reward jewelry: "A steady jewelry selected at below one hundred-thousand yen. Fine selection of affordable priced items. Check the favorite items best suited for everyday use!" The *Yuuyuu* article also highlighted the low hurdle of conducting the

self-reward consumption: “10,000 yen for *Yuuuyu* reader generation is relatively not expensive.”

The high prices were said to confirm the sacred value of products (Belk et al., 1989). On the contrary, the low prices navigated the self-reward consumption into the profane world. Hence, by emphasizing the value price, the female magazines attached the symbolic meaning of profane to the self-reward consumption.

Recommending self-rewarding on the ordinary occasions. The female magazines also began to recommend the self-reward consumption on the ordinary occasions (versus special occasions). For example, the female magazines recommended staying at the hotel on ordinary weekend with a friend. The title read, “Wonderful hotel plan for ladies. A reward-stay with a friend,” and the copy read:

We spend days filled with stress. There may be no time for traveling, but why not use a hotel plan on weekends and heal the daily tiredness? A special feature on the hotel plans – from newly opened hotels to admiring long-established hotels – that are nice to ladies! (*ef*, March, 2004)

Another article introduced the daily skincare cosmetics as the self-reward object (*an an*, March 10, 2004). Its title read, “Small luxury. Slightly expensive but the effect is large! Self-reward for beauty.” Followings are the examples of introduced cosmetic items:

Luxury cleansing. ‘Remove.’ ‘Wash.’ Careful daily basic steps are effective in nurturing a beautiful skin and relaxing state. If one uses carefully chosen cleansing or washing items, the washing procedure will be done with a care. As a consequence, the skin will become more radiant!

Bath paradise. A favorite bath salt makes the daily bath time luxurious. Let’s choose the one that helps to vitalize metabolism or to recover from tiredness, and relax. If one becomes fulfilled with the spa effect such as thalassotherapy or aroma at home, energy for tomorrow will emerge.

Both cleansing and bath were daily activities. Hence, the article recommended acquiring the self-reward objects for daily use.

As seen in the above examples, the female magazines promoted the self-reward

consumption in the ordinary times. By introducing the ordinariness, the female magazines secularized the self-reward consumption.

Removal of gifting concept from self-rewarding. Earlier, this study had identified that one of the ways in which the media sacralized the self-reward consumption was by making it into an act of self-gifting. Purchase of gifts was different from a commodity purchase. However, following the consumer boom of self-reward consumption, the concept of gifting gradually decreased. The gifting concept was replaced by the concept of shopping.

The magazine articles described several instances of self-reward shopping. For example, *Hanako* connected the self-reward consumption with the shopping guide (November, 27, 2008). The article's title read, "Shinjuku shopping. Present for me. A reward-item to be shopped at Shinjuku," and the copy read, "Select shops filled with trendy items. Elegant and fashionable interior shops. Shinjuku is filled with the items that tickle women's hearts. It's a treasury of a reward to me who worked hard this year!" This eight-page article was the Shinjuku's shopping guide, introducing department stores such as Barneys New York and Lumine, and select shops in Shinjuku. Another article introduced the self-reward consumption in the serial titled "What I bought

recently.” In the article, the writer shared her story of finding the self-reward shoes during the shopping (*croissant premium*, October 11, 2008).

Both excerpts reinforced the self-reward consumption as shopping. Furthermore, the excerpts did not use the verb ‘to gift.’ Hence, the female magazines gradually removed the associating self-rewarding with gifting; therefore secularized the self-reward consumption.

Summary of media’s secularization processes of the self-reward consumption in Japan. Four ways in which the media de-sacralized the consumption practice were identified. These were feature of commodity products, emphasis on value price, recommendation of self-rewarding on the ordinary occasions, and removal of gifting concept.

Change in the Structural Emphasis of the Two Symbolisms over Time

I also find that there has been a change in the structural emphasis of the two symbolisms, sacred and profane, over the 20-year period studied. To assess the change, the quantitative content analysis for the selected sacralization processes is conducted. The result is shown in Figure 10.

The findings showed that the sacralization processes were used more frequently during the early stage of self-reward consumption practice development. Following 2001, a year when the self-reward consumption became a consumer boom among the working women in Japan (see Chapter 3), the structural emphasis shifted. Before 2001, rhetoric for the symbolism of sacred, such as precious products, sacralization of time, and self-gifting, dominated the discussion of self-reward consumption. From 1990 to 2000, 38% of the articles were featuring the precious products on average per year, whereas from 2001 to 2009, they made up 24% of the articles on average per year. Similarly, from 1990 to 2000, 11% of the articles on average per year sacralized the self-rewarding time by making it a special consumption period that occurs once a year, whereas from 2001 to 2009, they made up 8% of the articles on average per year. Finally, from 1990 to 2000, 17% of the articles positioned self-rewarding as self-gifting on average per year, whereas from 2001 to 2009, they made up 4% of the articles on average per year.

Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter has been to understand how the media's communications have affected the development of self-reward consumption practice in

Japan. In particular, the study focuses how the media discourse on the self-reward consumption provide an essential context for consumers to become involved in conducting the self-reward consumption. I assess the discourse of selected female magazine articles featuring the self-reward consumption during 1987 to 2009.

The findings show that the media's use of rhetoric, particularly the attachment of sacred and profane symbolisms, has contributed in changing the socio-cognitive schema that shape the way people think of and about self-rewards and in diffusing the self-reward consumption across the Japanese society. First, the findings show that the sacralization of self-reward consumption has contributed in involving the innovators (i.e., the working women) with the practice. During the early stage of self-reward consumption practice development, the female magazines have adopted the six sacralization processes (feature of precious products, attribution of mystique, singularization, sacralization of time, positioning as self-gifts, and endorsement by charismatic leaders) to attach the symbolic meaning of sacred to the self-reward consumption (see Figure 10). Then, the findings also show that the secularization of self-reward consumption has contributed to diffusing the practice among the masses in Japan. Following the self-reward consumer boom (the years 2001 to 2003; see Chapter 3), the female magazines have used the four secularization processes (feature of

commodity products, emphasis on value price, recommendation of self-rewarding on the ordinary occasions, and removal of gifting concept) to attach the symbolic meaning of profane to the self-reward consumption.

I also discuss the implication of sacralizing the self-reward consumption. In Japan, the self-reward consumption has been considered as culturally inappropriate. When certain acts are regarded negatively by a culture, its members must either avoid those acts, attempt to reconstruct the cultural meaning of those acts, or suffer social condemnation by embracing those acts considered to be bad or even evil. Hence, when conducting those acts offended by a culture, people try to account for their behaviors so that they appear ethical, moral, legal, consistent, and rational (Ger & Belk, 1999). The media's sacralization processes has provided various accounts for consumers to justify the self-rewarding consumption as decent. Furthermore, the attachment of symbolic sacred meaning has enhanced the self-reward consumption from evil to good.

Finally, I discuss the implication of secularizing the self-reward consumption. By replacing the symbolism of sacred with profane, the media has rationalized the self-reward consumption. The rationalization of the self-reward consumption allows the society to commercialize it and to increase its sales (Weber, 1905/1958). Hence, the secularization of self-reward consumption has contributed in inviting the mass-target

manufacturers to adopt the self-reward consumption practice, and involving the general masses.

This chapter has focused on the media, particularly the female magazines, and their communications in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. Now, in the final chapter, I summarize the findings from the theoretical study and three empirical studies on the self-reward (self-gift) consumption practice in Japan (interdependent cultures). I also discuss the findings' meanings and implications.

CHAPTER 6:

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Research

The objective of this dissertation has been to investigate how the self-reward consumption has become to be accepted and penetrated in the Japanese society despite the cultural hindrance. The findings illuminate that the self-reward consumption had been incompatible with the Japanese society because the self-reward behavior did not fit the Japanese society's view of 'appropriate' person. In changing consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards self-rewards, the firms and media's communications have been influential. Both the firms and media have strategically used rhetoric in diffusing the self-reward consumption in Japan. At the firm-system, various firms from various industries have developed and deployed the frames that have involved consumers with the self-reward consumption: efforts and perseverance, achievement, Christmas gift, healing, easy, and ordinary. These six themes have synchronized with the four frame alignment processes identified in the mobilization of social movements (Snow et al., 1986): frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. At the media-system, the female magazines have attached the sacred and profane

symbolisms to the self-reward consumption. Both the firms and media's communication have contributed in changing the socio-cognitive schema that shape the way people think of and about self-rewards and have diffused the self-reward consumption across the society.

Theoretical Implications

This dissertation provides several theoretical implications to the self-gift literature in consumer research. First, this dissertation has filled the gap that exists in the self-gift research in consumer behavior literature by assessing self-reward (a type of self-gifts) in Japan (interdependent cultures). Although the researchers studying self-gifts have questioned the existence of such behavior in interdependent cultures, this dissertation confirms its existence in Japan, in addition to Hong Kong (Joy et al., 2006) and China (Tynan et al., 2010). Clearly, the self-gift behavior is now a universal phenomenon.

Second, in the self-gift research, this dissertation is the first research that takes a longitudinal approach and a sociological approach. Prior researches on self-gifts focus on consumers and their behaviors towards self-gifts at a snapshot (e.g., Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a; Tynan et al., 2010). Instead, this dissertation has traced how the consumers' attitudes towards self-rewards have changed over a

period of time (longitudinal approach). It also accounted the influence of societal factors such as cultural values that surrounds the consumers and focused on the influence of multiple actors (i.e., firms and media) versus consumers in the process of self-reward consumer behavior diffusion (sociological approach). Hence, the findings of this dissertation provide new perspectives to the body of knowledge on self-gifts.

This dissertation demonstrates that the diffusion of self-gift consumer behavior in interdependent cultures occurs along the shifts in socio-cognitive schema that shapes consumers' understanding. These shifts are navigated by the strategic use of rhetoric by the multiple actors. To create the shifts in socio-cognitive schema, the actors negotiate with the existing socio-cognitive schema to shape the consumers' understandings about self-rewards. This process is illustrated in the model which I call 'rhetorical negotiation' (Figure 11). This model shows how actors attempt to change the socio-cognitive schema by strategically using rhetoric (e.g., creating new cognitive frame), which leads to the change in consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Where the socio-cognitive schema about self-rewards has conflicts with the actor's specific objective (e.g., involve more consumers), actor engages in strategic use of rhetoric in an attempt to make their rhetoric resonate with the socio-cognition and mobilize action (e.g., consumers conducting self-rewards) in their favor. These rhetorical plays more or less involve

negotiation with the existing socio-cognitive schema. The actors negotiate to create a new collective frame that decreases the existing conflict, but is not drastic as to arouse repulsion. If strategic use of rhetoric is successful, the socio-cognitive schema that shapes consumers' understandings is replaced or integrates the newly created frame. If the effort is not successful, the created frame simply disappears from the society's minds. Furthermore, this rhetorical negotiation can continue as a new actor enters with a different objective. In particular, if the level of consumers' attitude change and involvement is low, a new actor can enter with the motivation to increase the level.

I also touch upon the generalizability of this conceptual model. First, although this model is constructed based on the findings from the case of self-reward consumption practice in Japan, it is likely to be generalizable to self-gifts in general because self-reward is the most prevalent context for self-gifts, particularly in interdependent cultures (see Chapter 2 for the literature review on self-rewards and self-gifts). Second, the model is likely to be generalizable to other interdependent cultures because the influences of communications in changing consumers' attitudes and in diffusing new ideas and practices are identified in other cultures as well (see Solomon, 2004). Furthermore, the influence of society towards consumers is identified in other interdependent cultures as well (e.g., Triandis, 1989). Hence, I suggest that the

conceptual model is generalizable to other interdependent cultures besides Japan.

The findings also show the social dynamics of self-reward consumption practice diffusion in interdependent cultures; there has been a concurrence of actions by multiple systems (e.g., industry-system and media-system) in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice in Japan. The roles of firms and media, for example, in diffusing consumption practices are different. Whereas the firms have clear intentions of selling their offerings, journalists do not. Hence, journalists possess objectivity (McCracken, 1986). Still, the findings show the concurrence in the firms and media's rhetorical actions. When the firms have developed and deployed frames of efforts and perseverance, achievement, and Christmas gift in order to involve the innovators and early adopters, the media sacralized self-reward consumption which has contributed in involving the innovators with the practice. Once the diffusion passed the tipping point (the years 2001 to 2003), the firms develop new frames of healing, easy, and ordinary in order to involve the majority. At the same timing, the media secularized the self-reward consumption which has contributed to diffusing the practice among the masses in Japan. This finding suggests that for a culturally disruptive consumption practice to diffuse, the communications by multiple systems are more likely to be influential.

Particularly in Japan, the influence that the female magazines have towards the

readers cannot be neglected. The female magazines influence consumers' identity construction by presenting an ideal figure and showing a model case for a way of living. The readers are guided toward the female figure portrayed by the magazines. In fact, the sociologists studying Japan have regarded the female magazines as an ideological apparatus that establishes a gender order (Kimura, 2010). Hence, whenever the female magazines feature new practice such as the self-reward consumption, the readers are endorsed to conduct the act.

Although the above explains why the concurrence of actions by multiple systems has been significant in changing consumers' attitudes, it does not explain why the concurrence occurred. The exploration of the media's role sheds light to understanding this concurrence in actions. Often, journalists' role as a 'gatekeeper' is emphasized where they review and classify new information as either important or trivial (McCracken, 1986). While I agree with the prior researches' line of thought, I also find that journalists have another role as an 'endorser.' Journalists endorse not only readers but also advertisers. The female magazines endorse the firms' activity since a large percentage of their revenue source depends on the firm's advertising fees. On average, 21.6% of female magazine pages are advertisements (2011, MRS Advertising Research). In addition, because the numbers of female magazines are dense and the competition is

severe in Japan, the magazine editors are highly concerned about maintaining the firms' advertisement insertions. Consequently, journalists often take thought for the firms' actions when creating the editorial pages. This perhaps is one of the reasons for the concurrence in the magazines and firms' rhetorical actions.

This finding of concurrence in the magazines and firms' rhetorical actions calls for reassessment in the media's objectivity. The finding suggests that the firms may be influencing the media through their bargaining power. The media's objectivity may not be as naturalized as often stressed (McCracken, 1986; Humphreys, 2010b).

Managerial Implications

The creation of consumption practice is often assumed to be complex. However, this study suggests that the firms and media could influence the development of practices by using rhetoric strategically. In particular, this study has examined the process of self-reward consumption practice formation in culture where the practice has not fit. Hence, the findings provide strategic insights for managers to create and sustain new consumption practices in any culture (i.e., in both cultures where new practices fit or not fit).

The findings of this dissertation provide two strategic insights that may be useful

for managers when considering creating and sustaining a new consumption practice in any culture. First, the ‘rhetorical negotiation’ model shows managers to develop and deploy rhetoric that are effective in negotiating with the existing socio-cognitive schema in order to achieve a specific objective such as involving more consumers. Second, the finding calls for the meso-level cooperation when creating new consumption practices. Creation of new consumption practices is more likely unable to be realized by a single firm. The cooperation of other actors including the other industry players and media will become necessary.

These insights can aid managers not only creating new consumption practices but also managing other innovations that require change in the socio-cognitive schema. The examples include selling new products that require a new consumer behavior and selling existing products in different cultures.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Limitations

The major limitation of this dissertation is that although the dissertation clearly shows the consumers’ change at the attitude level, it does not clarify the occurrence of

change at the behavioral level. To strengthen the dissertation's arguments, it would be necessary to confirm the change at behavioral level. One way to confirm the behavioral change is to conduct the macroeconomic analysis of Japanese consumption pattern change over the past 20 years and assess the influence of self-reward consumer behavior.

Another limitation of this dissertation arises from its methodology. This dissertation is a single case study that has focused on one type of self-gifts and on one country. Hence, the usual limitations that are applied to the single case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984) are also applicable to this dissertation. Still, the advantages of the single case study method as a first step into theory development are striking. The data has provided deep insight into the phenomenon, as well as the contextual information that are necessary for deeper understanding. Given that our understanding of the self-gift consumer behavior in interdependent cultures has been still primitive, the selection and use of the single case study seems appropriate.

In addition to the limitation due to the research methodology (i.e., the single case study), there are limitations arising from the selection of data. First, this dissertation did not fully cover the actors that transmit the communications on self-reward consumption to consumers. The historical analysis (Chapter 3) has identified not only the firms and

media but also the cultural entrepreneurs. The understanding of cultural entrepreneurs' rhetoric use will provide more complete understanding of the self-reward consumption practice diffusion in Japan (see Figure 12). It may be also worthwhile to consider the influence of other 'systems' such as the consumers (i.e., word-to-mouth effect and online community sites) and advertising agencies, although their existences are not confirmed in the historical analysis. Second, at the firm-system, this dissertation did not cover all medium in transmitting the communications to consumers. This dissertation has only assessed the print advertisements and press releases; however, the television advertising is also influential in Japan. In addition, the new social media may need to be considered to understand the recent movements. Third, at the media-system, this dissertation did not cover all media. This dissertation has only assessed the female magazines, although the identified 1,001 articles have included the male and both gender magazines. Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to assess the use of rhetoric by the newspapers. Despite the lack in assessment of all possible data, this dissertation has provided a general understanding of the self-reward consumption practice diffusion process in Japan because (1) it has adopted a historical analysis to gain the overview of practice diffusion, and (2) the firms' print advertisements and female magazine articles have been influential in diffusing the self-reward consumption practice in Japan.

Future Research Directions

Obviously, one direction for the future research is to conduct the researches that will increase the robustness of this research's findings. There are two areas of research in this direction. First area is the studies to meet the limitations of this research (i.e., to conduct the studies using the data that are not covered in this research). Second area is the studies to test the constructed propositions (Figure 11) by introducing the quantitative method.

Second direction for the future research is to build on the hypotheses generated from this research. While there are many possible areas, here I discuss three areas. First is the research concerning the use of culture in introducing innovations. The findings of this dissertation have shown that the firms have leveraged the existing cultural values to introduce a new consumption practice. For example, De Beers has emphasized '*efforts and perseverance*' and '*achievement*,' highly appreciated values in Japanese culture, to introduce the self-reward consumption. Hence, the following hypothesis is generated: leveraging existing culture increases the likelihood of innovation adoption. To explore this hypothesis, the multiple case studies method may be suited not only to confirm the hypothesis but also to identify the conditions in which this hypothesis may or may not

work.

Second is the research on the cultural change and the influence of consumption. The findings of this dissertation suggest that the consumption practice may have changed the selfways (Markus et al., 1997). Japanese culture has appreciated interdependent selfways (Heine et al., 1999). However, this selfways may have changed following the penetration of self-reward consumer behavior. Hence, the following hypotheses are generated: (1) Japanese view of selfways has changed after the penetration of self-reward consumer behavior, and (2) the consumption practice can influence the change in selfways. To explore these hypotheses, the theoretical study in recent cross-cultural psychology literatures and also the empirical investigation among Japanese consumers are necessary.

Third is the research on diffusion of marketing strategy. The findings of this dissertation show that innovation diffuses not only among consumers but also among providers. In the case of self-reward consumption practice diffusion in Japan, the marketing strategy of luxury industry has diffused to the department stores, and finally to the mass-target manufacturers. Similar diffusion of marketing strategy has been suggested in the creation of healing boom in Japan (Matsui, 2004; 2009). Hence the following hypotheses is generated: (1) diffusion of innovations is also present among

the market players (similarly to consumers), and (2) diffusion of innovations among the market players also follows the Bass (1969) model. To explore these hypotheses, the comparative study on the cases of self-reward boom and healing boom in Japan is appropriate. This comparative case study will also allow to building the conceptual model for the diffusion of marketing strategy.

Last, but not least, third direction for the future research is to further explore the self-gift consumer behavior. This dissertation is only a first step in the very rich area of potential research. The self-gift consumer behavior is increasing in interdependent cultures as this dissertation has shown; hence suggesting the need for more researches to understand the behavior. Also, there may be other socio-economic variables such as the economic development that are significant towards the self-gift consumer behavior formation. If economic development is one of the influencing variables, then the self-gift consumer behavior may become significant in the bottom-of-the-pyramid countries, for example, in near future. It is my hope that this dissertation will open the important area of consumer research and advance theory development.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

Frame Alignment Processes in Mobilization of Social Movements, Creation of Consumption Practices, and Case of Self-Reward

Consumption Practice Diffusion in Japan

Frame Alignment Processes	Mobilization of Social Movements	Creation of Consumption Practices	Diffusion of Self-Reward Consumption in Japan
Frame Amplification	The idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs.	Creating the original frame that shape the consumption practice by adapting its concept to existing cultural values or beliefs and attract the attention of innovators.	Created the original frames: efforts and perseverance, and achievement.
Frame Extension	Depicting and SMO's interests and frame(s) as extending beyond its primary interests to include issues that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents.	Extending the original frame beyond its primary concept to involve wider consumer targets.	Extended the original frames: Christmas gift.
Frame Bridging	The linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem.	Linking two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding the consumption practice to involve wider consumer targets.	Linked two frames: self-rewards and healing.
Frame Transformation	Changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones.	Changing the original frame and generating new ones to involve the masses.	Created the new frames: easy and ordinary.

Note. Frame alignment processes in mobilization of social movements are from Benford and Snow (2000).

Table 2

Dictionary Words for Firms' Frame Alignment Processes

Frame Alignment Process	Frame(s)	Words that Construct Frame	Examples of Words
Amplification	Efforts and Perseverance	10	<i>Gambatta</i> (Worked hard) <i>Doryoku</i> (Effort) <i>Otsukaresama</i> (Good job today)
	Achievement	7	<i>Tassei</i> (Achieved) <i>Seiko</i> (Succeed) <i>Katta</i> (Won)
Extension	Christmas	5	<i>Kurisumasu</i> (Christmas) <i>Seiya</i> (Christmas Eve) <i>Santa Kuroosu</i> (Santa Claus)
Bridging	Relaxation and Healing	14	<i>Iyashi</i> (Healing) <i>Lirakkusu</i> (Relax) <i>Sutoresu kaishou</i> (Relieve Stress)
Transformation	Easy	4	<i>Tegaru</i> (Easy) <i>Sasayakana</i> (Small) <i>Kigaru</i> (Casual)
	Ordinary	7	<i>Fudan</i> (Usual) <i>Itsudemo</i> (Whenever) <i>Hibi</i> (On a daily basis)

Table 3

Selected 30 Female Magazine Articles that Represent the Symbolism of Sacred in the Self-Reward Consumption

Magazine	Year	Month, Date	Title of the Article	Pages	Featured Self-Reward Objects
1 MORE	1990	Jan	A reward to me who worked hard. 80 valuable authentic items that we want to buy with the bonus.	75-87	Luxury Brand Goods, Jewelry, Watch
2 LEE	1990	Mar	Self-reward: A third ring.	177-181	Jewelry
3 non no	1993	Apr. 20	Memory of love. My only ring. A small diamond that I exchanged as a gift with Rie-chan is a reward to ourselves.	112	Jewelry
4 Hanako	1996	Nov. 28	Once a year extravagant reward. Christmas 'wants' collection!	8-43	Luxury Brand Goods, Handbags, Shoes, Jewelry, Watch, Furniture, Goods
5 ef	1996	Dec	Presents for me. The items selected for my self-rewards.	78-87	Jewelry, Watch, Luxury Brand Goods
6 Hanako	1997	Nov. 26	Because it's Christmas. Let's be honest to your desire and give yourself a reward. What do you want now!?	8-39	Luxury Brand Goods, Shoes, Handbags, Jewelry, Goods
7 MORE	1998	Jan	A reward to me who worked hard this year! Diamonds, colored stones, pearls, etc... The jewelry guide of 239 items that flatters me.	168-183	Jewelry
8 ef	1998	Jan	This valuable item. A reward that I self-gift to me who worked this year.	105-119	Jewelry, Watch
9 ef	1998	Jan	Stress relieves away. Twelve chapters that heal soul and body. Chapter nine: A reward, given to me who worked hard, encourages the tired soul. Ms. Aya Miyauchi.	84	-
10 ef	1998	Jul	Self-reward that I want to self-gift as a proof of effort – jewelry and watch.	68-77	Jewelry, Watch
11 Hanako	1998	Nov. 25	Things I desire overflow during the X'mas season. A reward to me who worked hard, this year as well!!	8-35, 124-135	Luxury Brand Goods, Watch, Fashion Goods, Jewelry, Goods, Restaurants
12 ef	1998	Dec	One acquires the favorite goods with a bonus and Christmas.	125-133	Jewelry, Watch
13 MORE	1999	Jan	A level-up shopping catalogue now① 130 items of 'reward-handbag' and 'reward-shoes.' Get the admiring luxury brand or trendy design with the bonus.	42-51	Handbags, Shoes
14 ef	1999	Jan	Self-gift as a reward for this year: Jewelry & watch.	104-113	Jewelry, Watch
15 CREA	1999	Feb	Soul and body. Hints for healing. ②Hedonic 'reward-salon' that promises happy moments.	98-102	Beauty Spa

Table 3 (con't)

Magazine	Year	Month, Date	Title of the Article	Pages	Featured Self-Reward Objects
16 ef	1999	Jul	99 summer. A watch special [collection] - 120 items.	101-116	Watch
17 ef	1999	Aug	Toko Furuuchi: The essence of happiness. Self-reward perhaps is an important preparation item to raise oneself to the next level.	45	-
18 with	1999	Dec	Check now! Latest catalogue of popular brands' jewelry & watch. Best buy guide. A 'reward-watch' to me who worked hard.	245-252	Watch
19 non no	1999	Dec. 20	The 'reward' ring guide: if it's 'giving gift to me' or 'being given a gift,' an authentic thing that one can wear one's lifetime would be great.	63-68	Jewelry
20 MORE	2000	Jan	From dearest him to me. From me who worked hard to me. The reward-jewelry guide.	162-179	Jewelry
21 ef	2000	Jan	We'll tell you what you really want! What are you going to buy as a reward for working hard this year?	113-120	Luxury Brand Goods, Jewelry, Watch, Fashion Goods
22 ef	2000	Jan	A reward that glitters at the best time.	147-153	Jewelry, Watch
23 JJ	2000	Feb	Good work for this year. A reward to 'me' who is going to work hard again in the year 2000. To me who is tired! OL [office lady] relaxation news.	239-241	Beauty Spa
24 ef	2000	Jul	For my reward: watch & jewelry.	126-133	Jewelry, Watch
25 ef	2000	Jul	This summer's rewarding goods are the 'white matrix.'	139-141	Jewelry
26 Nikkei Woman	2000	Oct	Found the place that a woman wants to go alone! Tokyo's innovative cafés. Restaurants & bars that we want to go as a self-reward.	154-159	Bar
27 COSMOPOLITAN	2000	Nov	Self-reward② Fragrance of the 21st century. One who is wearing it is the happiest. A joy of fragrance.	48-49	Perfume
28 COSMOPOLITAN	2000	Dec	Self-reward. I want the luxury brand agenda that shows my working look beautiful!	78-83	Luxury Brand Goods
29 with	2000	Dec	Check now! Latest catalogue 2000 of popular brands' watch & jewelry. We want it for 20th century commemoration! Self-reward: 'steady watch.'	223-230	Watch
30 croissant	2000	Dec. 10	Self-gift once a year. Self-reward once a year, a pleasure of finest beauty spa.	24-27	Beauty Spa

Table 4

Selected 30 Female Magazine Articles that Represent the Symbolism of Profane in the Self-Reward Consumption

Magazine	Year	Month, Date	Article Title	Pages	Featured Self-Reward Objects
1 ef	2004	Mar	Wonderful hotel plan for ladies. A reward-stay with a friend.	146-149	Hotel
2 an an	2004	Mar. 10	Small luxury. Slightly expensive but the effect is large! Self-reward for beauty.	96-99	Cosmetics, Beauty Spa
3 LEE	2005	Dec	Jewelry, leather goods, Christmas coffrets... Self-reward at the end of a year. A heart beats high with happiness! Luxury brand goods.	44-55, 57, 59	Jewelry, Luxury Brand Goods, Cosmetics
4 Hanako	2006	Feb. 23	Self-reward? Ask boyfriend! No.3 'Cute' animal ornaments for adults who graduated the stuffed animals.	91	Animal Ornament
5 Hanako	2006	Mar. 09	Self-reward? Ask boyfriend! No.4 Savory smell from morning to evening. Colorful espresso machine.	13	Espresso Machine
6 Hanako	2006	Apr. 27	Self-reward? Ask boyfriend! No.7 Have a break with 'my' mug, chosen according to the mood.	51	Mug
7 OZ magazine	2006	May. 08	OZmall '5,800 yen reward-relaxation' x OZmagazine collaboration project. My only holiday at healing salon.	83-93	Beauty Spa
8 an an	2006	May. 10	Loving body. Let's give a best self-reward! Beauty revolution with a gorgeous body care during GW (Golden Week).	46-47	Beauty Spa
9 with	2006	Jun	Self-reward. From dearest person. Girls' favorite thing is... Love diamond 2006.	240-245	Jewelry
10 OZ magazine	2006	Sept. 04	A reward-lunch on holiday.	22-61	Lunch
11 OZ magazine	2007	May. 21	Why not start a 'morning hour'? A morning environment. A reward to me who woke up is delicious morning café time. A morning dessert.	54	Dessert
12 OZ magazine	2007	Jun. 25	To the reborn Roppongi. Tokyo Midtown. A reward-café. Spend a time elegantly with the dessert and food that are available only here.	38-39	Café
13 MORE	2007	Jul	Summer reward guide. Are you going to aim the admiring luxury brand? Are you going to search one at below one hundred-thousand yen? '98 favorite summer jewelry that upgrades fashion.	260-269	Jewelry
14 JJ	2007	Oct	A secret of popularity is a 'celebrity feeling.' How about a 'reward-breakfast' at a hotel?	282-285	Breakfast
15 non no	2007	Dec. 05	I can become even more wonderful! Love at first sight jewelry book.	95-102, 111-118	-

Table 4 (con't)

Magazine	Year	Month, Date	Article Title	Pages	Featured Self-Reward Objects
16 Yuuyuu	2008	Mar	We can buy this much! How to enjoy '10,000 yen.' Sometimes give your soul an extravagance as a self-reward.	162-167	-
17 Hanako	2008	Apr. 24	A connoisseur would know 'reward-salon' at our Ebisu, Daikanyama, and Nakameguro.	70-73	Beauty Spa
18 MORE	2008	Jul	A reward-guide. From the aspirational luxury brand's latest designs to the trendy designs under 50,000 yen! Level-up the fashion! 138 summer finest jewelries.	264-273	Jewelry
19 marie claire	2008	Jul	Hiroshi Uehara. Having champaign outside with music as tidbits. This is self-reward.	180-181	Champagne
20 Hanako	2008	Jul. 10	Tokyo OL Society. No.60 Office snacks are selected according to the objectives.	112-113	Snack Food
21 croissant premium	2008	Oct	What I bought recently. No.1 Nagisa Osada. Shoes for night clubbing.	11	Shoes
22 Hanako	2008	Nov. 27	Shinjuku guide. Enjoy the powerful city! A reward-item purchased at Shinjuku. A present for me.	81-89	Shopping
23 an an	2009	Jan. 28	Self-reward when you're tired. Recommendation of small luxury to enhance a femininity.	73-80	Clothing, Fashion Goods, Stationary, Cosmetics
24 STORY	2009	Mar	Searching for the 'tastes in season.' A delicious pilgrimage. No.26 A finest reward to the soul and skin. <i>Yakiniku</i> for beautiful ladies.	189-193	<i>Yakiniku</i>
25 non no	2009	Jun. 20	Up! Summer new colors & limited 'reward-cosmetics.' I pray that I can be more pretty.	10-15	Cosmetics
26 JJ	2009	Oct	A mid-summer night's sheet mask. A quenching reward to the skin at the end of hot day.	163-166	Cosmetics
27 chou chou	2009	Oct. 22	Girls' <i>ramen</i> club. A <i>ramen</i> guide for girls by girls. No. 13 Deluxe! A reward- <i>ramen</i> .	97	<i>Ramen</i>
28 GRAZIA	2009	Nov	Koji Uematsu & Ayako Ono go! Beauty, beauty, beauty explorers. No.21 A major operation of 'forested reward' to the summer tiredness!	256-257	Beauty Salon
29 BI-STORY	2009	Dec	For a reward to me who worked hard this year. Christmas coffret that cannot be waited until the Eve.	132-135	Cosmetics
30 Nikkei Woman	2009	Dec	Chiharu Nagatomi's cosmetics lesson to brush up a femininity! No.38 Become beautiful with Christmas coffrets as a reward to me who worked hard.	96-97	Cosmetics

Table 5

Sacralization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption

Sacralization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption	Examples
Featuring precious products as the self-reward objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feature jewelry, watch, luxury brand goods, and beauty spas. - Characterize self-reward objects as authentic, valuable, special, rare, high-quality, beautiful, prestigious, has a history, and expensive.
Attributing mystique to the self-reward objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe the self-reward objects as lucky items. - Characterize the self-reward objects as having a special power. - Use the metaphor of "medicine" to describe the self-reward objects. - Use the metaphor of "guardian" to describe the self-reward objects.
Singularizing the self-reward objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggest consumers to acquire self-rewards as a symbol for their effort. - Suggest that the self-rewarding objects can express the possessors' characteristics. - Personify the self-rewarding objects as "partners" and imply the intimate relationship between the objects and their possessors.
Sacralizing the self-reward time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Position the self-reward consumption as a special act that occur only once a year. - Separate the self-reward time from the ordinary time.
Making self-rewarding into self-gifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use the words 'present' and 'give gifts.' - Recount a personal symbolic self-dialogue concerning affective self-regard and identity.
Endorsement of self-rewarding by the charismatic leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feature opinion leaders who endorse the self-reward consumption.

Table 6

Secularization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption

Secularization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption	Examples
Featuring commodity products as the self-reward objects	- Feature mug, snack foods, <i>ramen</i> , and <i>yakiniku</i> .
Emphasizing value price of the self-reward objects	- Highlight the high economic value of the self-reward objects. - Described affordability of the self-rewarding objects.
Recommending self-rewarding on the ordinary occasions	- Acquire the self-reward object at the ordinary times. - Acquire the self-reward object for the daily use.
Removal of gifting concept from self-rewarding	- Connect the self-reward consumption with shopping. - Do not use the verb 'to gift.' Instead, use the verb 'to buy.'

Table 7

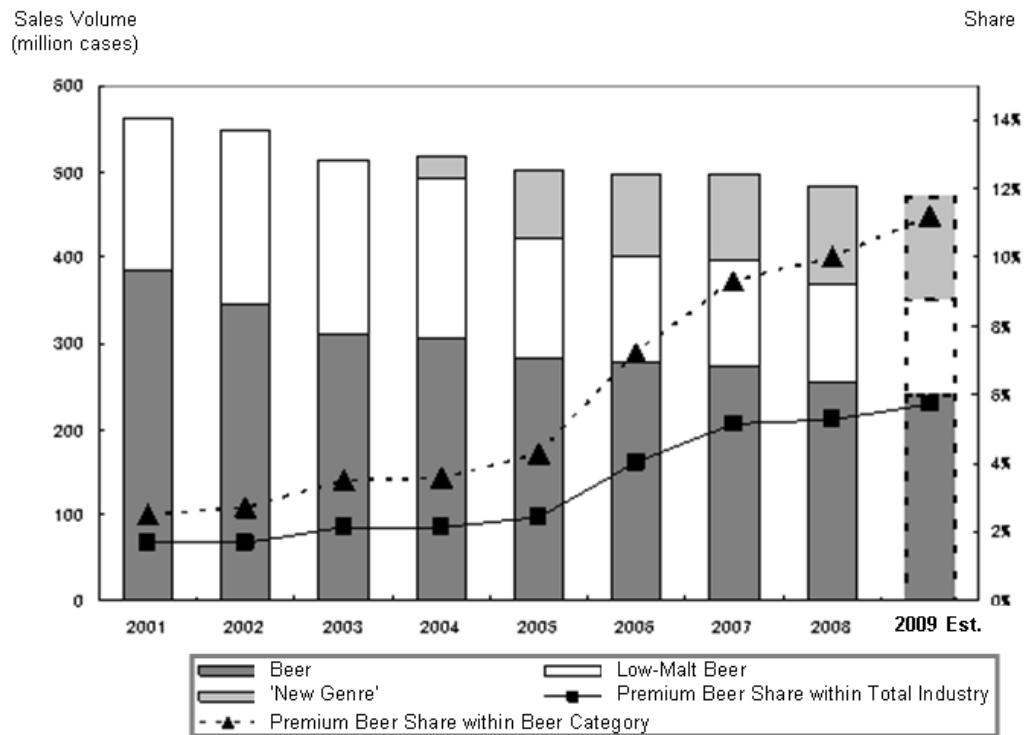
Dictionary Words for Selected Sacralization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption

Sacralization Processes of the Self-Reward Consumption	Category	Examples	Words in Category
Featuring precious products as the self-reward objects	Precious products	<i>Houseki</i> , <i>jyuerii</i> , <i>akusesarii</i> (Jewelry) <i>Tokei</i> , <i>udedokei</i> (Watch) <i>Burando</i> , <i>hakurai-hin</i> , <i>zeitaku-hin</i> (Luxury brand goods) <i>Esutettikku salon</i> , <i>biyoushitsu</i> , <i>biyouin</i> (Beauty spas)	11
Sacralizing the self-reward time	Sacred time	<i>Ichinen</i> (A year) <i>Nen ni ichido</i> (Once a year)	3
Making self-rewarding into self-gifting	Self-gifting	<i>Okuru</i> , <i>okuritai</i> , <i>okutta</i> , <i>okutte</i> (To gift) <i>Purezento</i> (Present)	5

Figure 1

Sales Trend of Total Beer Industry and Share Trend of Premium Beer Segment in Japan

(2001-2009 Est.)

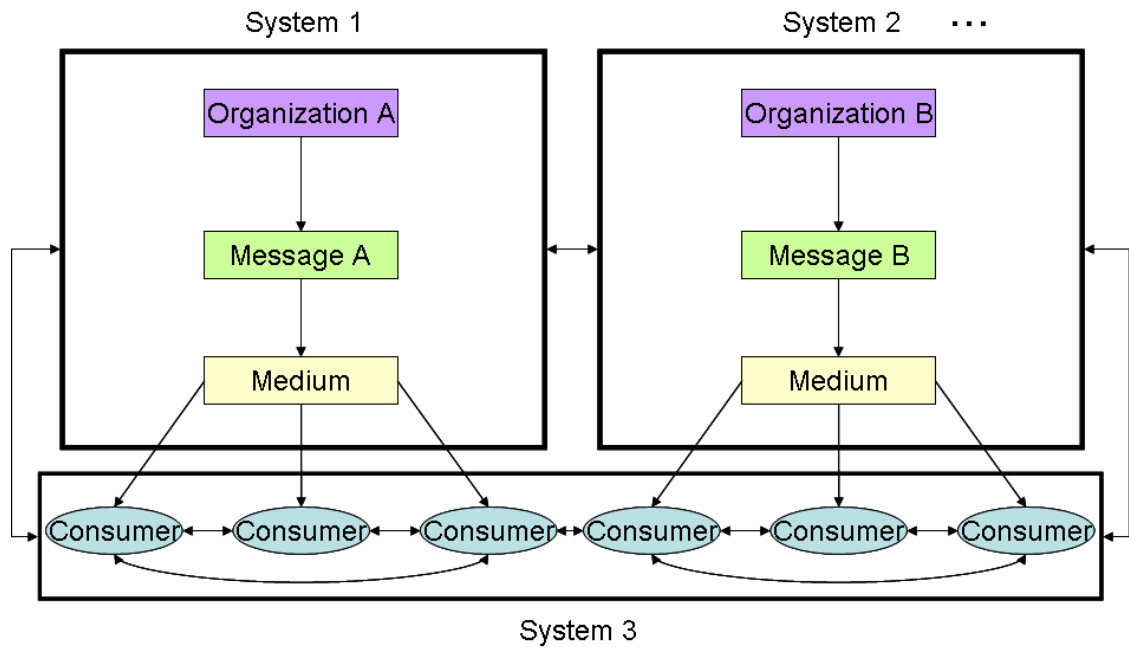


Source. Suntory (2009), retrieved

from <http://www.suntory.co.jp/news/2009/10392-2.html>

Figure 2

Conceptual Model of the Self-Reward Consumption Practice Diffusion in Japan



Note. Model adapted the traditional communications model (Solomon, 2004, p. 255).

Lines show the interaction between the systems, as well as the flow of communication.

There should be more lines connecting between consumers, as well as medium and consumer; however, they were eliminated here to clearly present the model. In addition, although this model includes only three systems, there could be more systems involved to diffuse consumption practices.

Figure 3

Number of Articles Featuring Self-Reward: 1988-2009

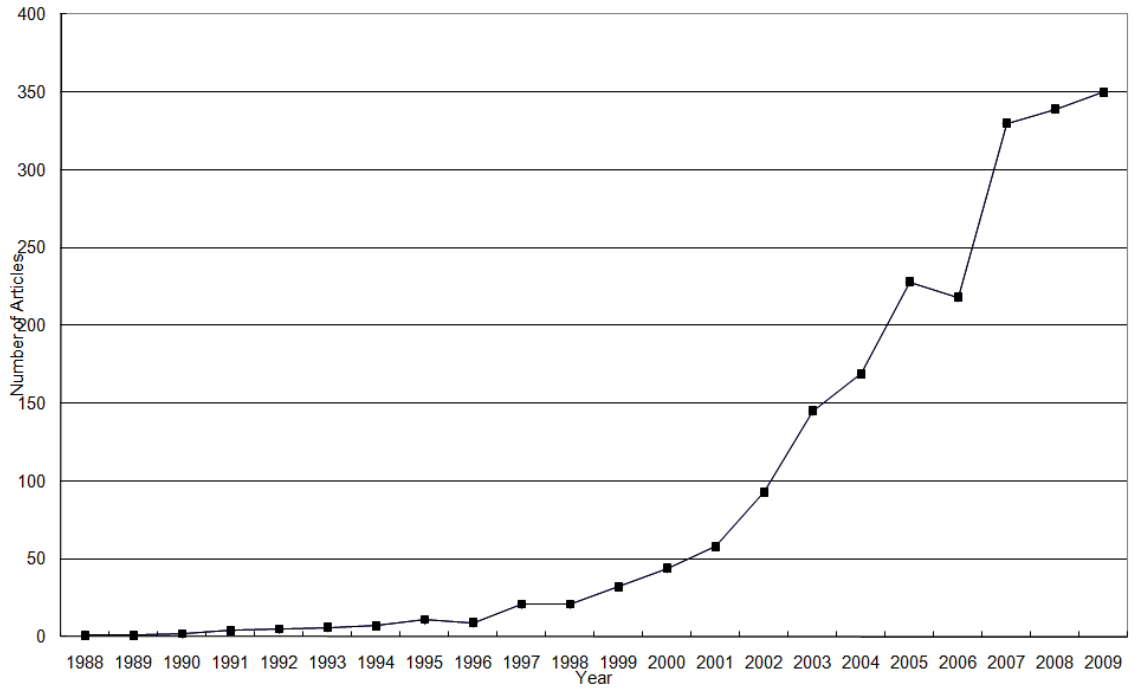
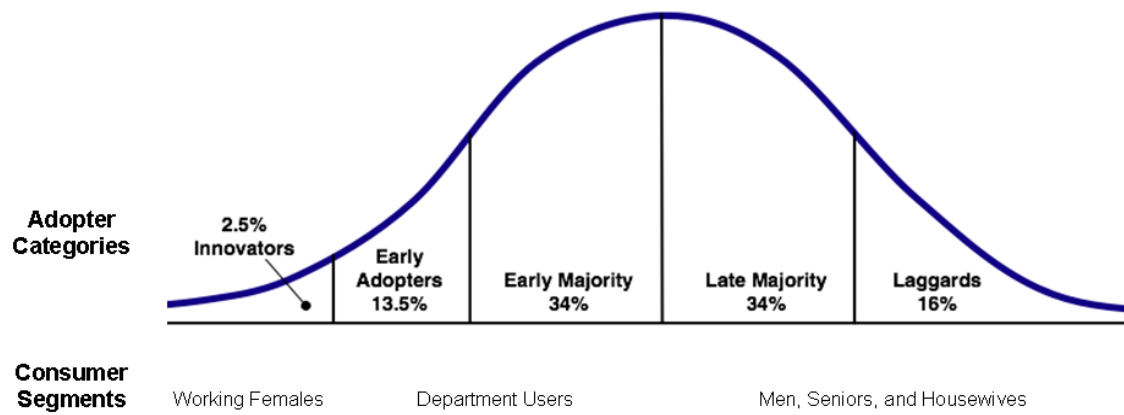


Figure 4

Consumer Segment for the Adopter Categories of Self-Reward Consumption Practice

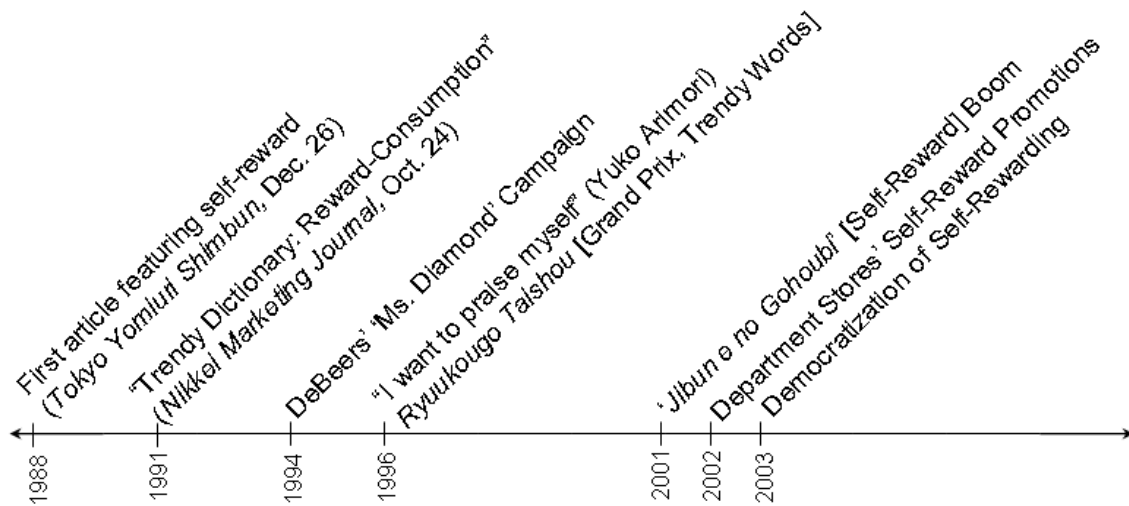
Development in Japan



Note. Adopter categories are adapted from Rogers (1962). Percentages are theoretical figures.

Figure 5

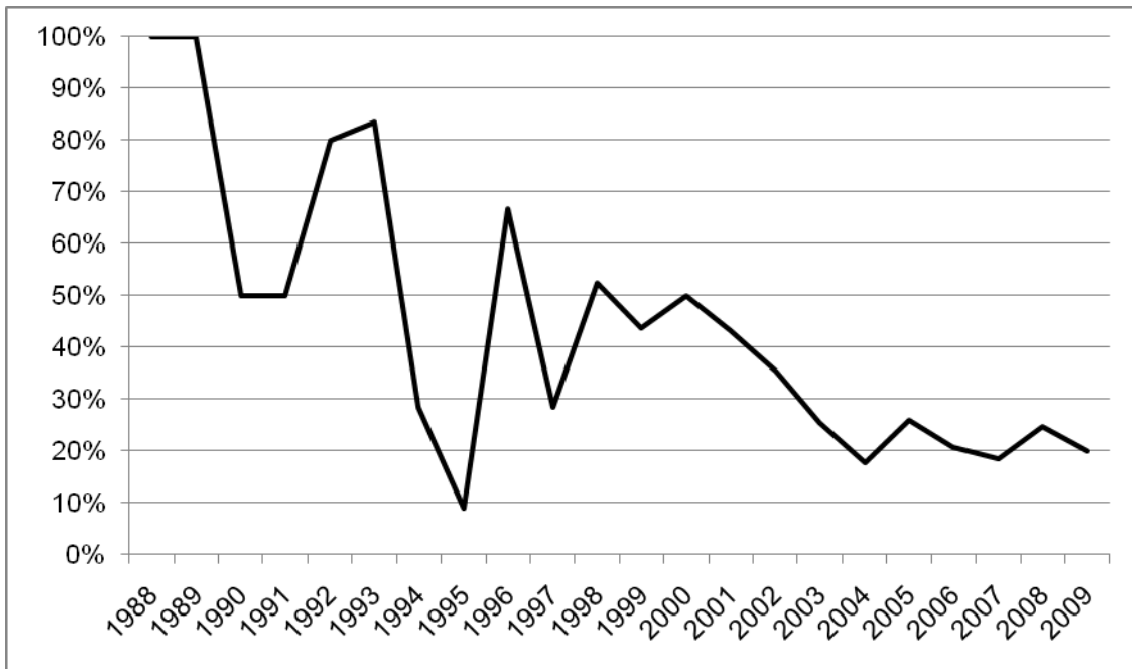
Time Line of the Self-Reward Consumption Practice Development in Japan



Note. 'Democratization of Self-Rewarding' indicates the beginning of diffusion of self-reward consumption practice to the masses, both on consumer and provider sides.

Figure 6

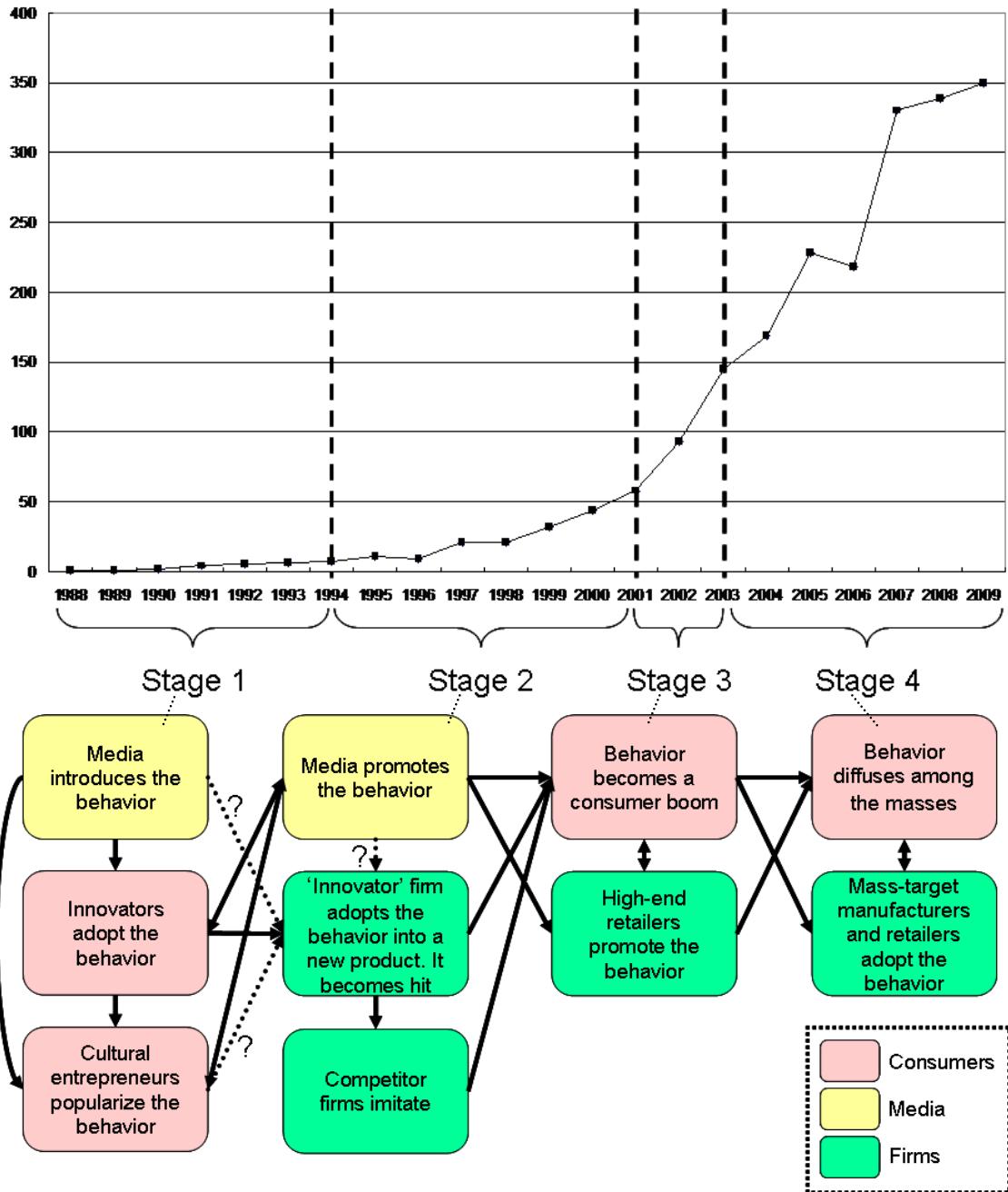
Share of Articles Featuring the Cultural Entrepreneurs over Time



Note. Number of articles about the specific person / number of articles in the year.

Figure 7

Overall Flow of the Self-Reward Consumption Practice Development in Japan

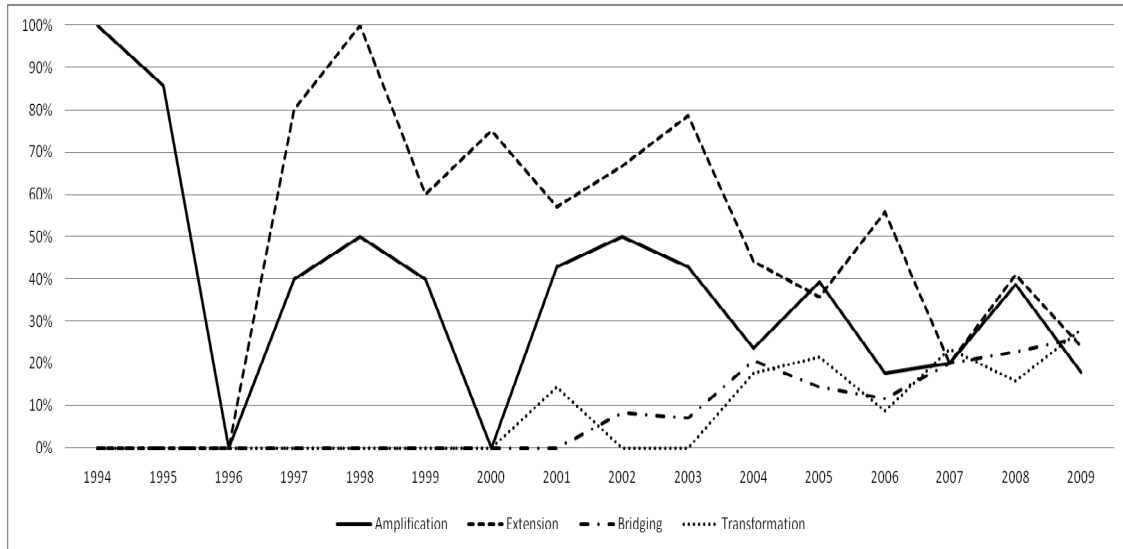


Note. Arrows show the interaction between the events as suggested in the data. The direction of arrows suggests the flow of influence; however, the causal relationship is

not determined. The dotted arrow with question-mark shows the interactions that are logically reasonable but are not confirmed in the data.

Figure 8

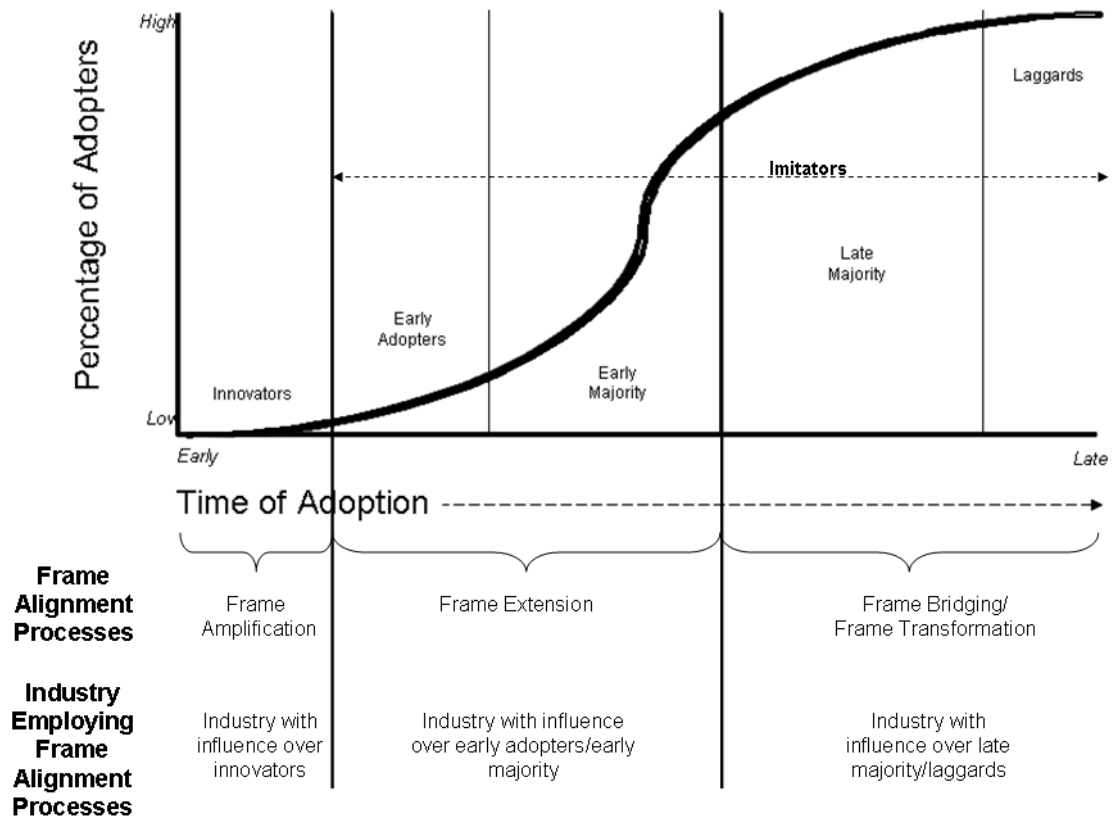
Changes in Firms' Use of Frame Alignment Processes over Time



Note. Number of advertisements and press releases using amplification, extension, bridging, or transformation / number of advertisements and press releases in the year.

Figure 9

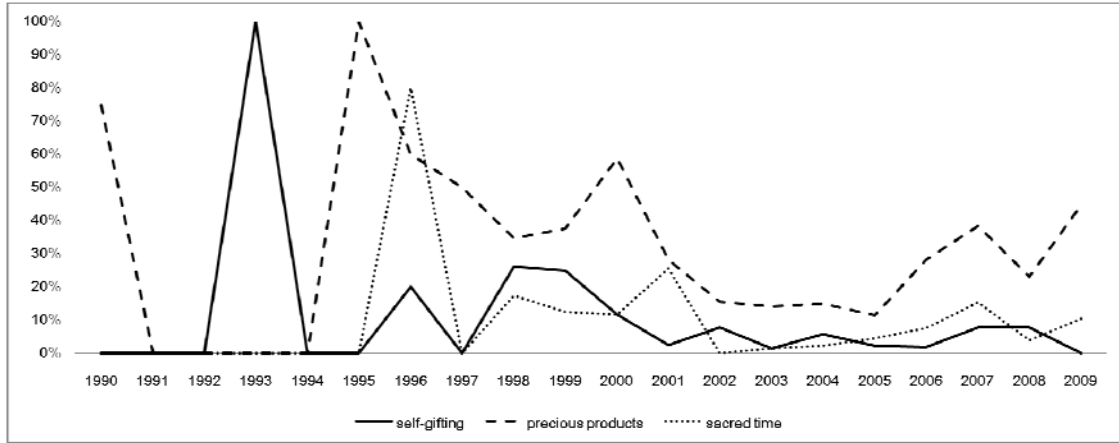
*Conceptual Model of Self-Reward Consumption Practice Diffusion and Firms' Use of
Frame Alignment Processes*



Note. Adapted from Bass (1969) and Rogers (1962) models.

Figure 10

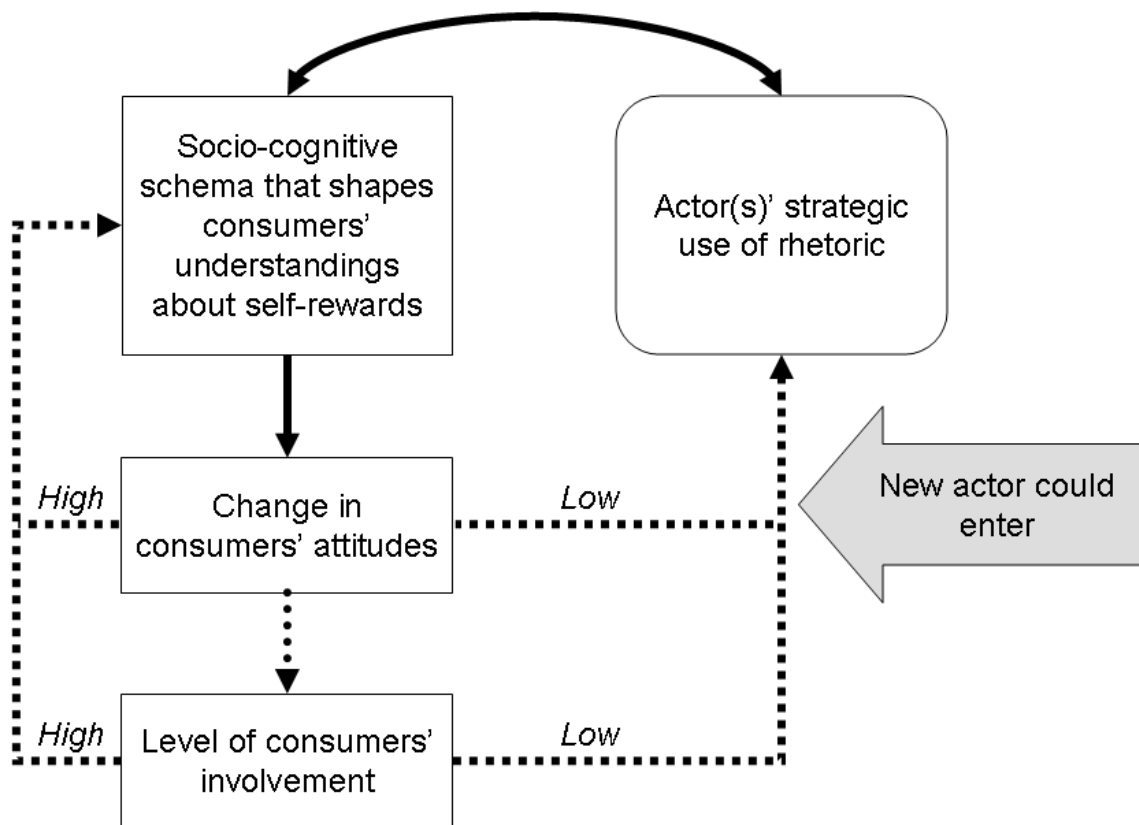
Media's Sacralization of Self-Reward Consumption (Selected) over Time



Note. Number of articles using 'precious products,' 'sacred time,' and 'self-gifting' sacralization processes / number of articles in the year.

Figure 11

*Conceptual Model of 'Rhetorical Negotiation' in Diffusing Self-Gift Consumer Behavior
among Japanese Society*



Note. Circle-dotted arrow from consumers' attitudes to behavior is suggested in the findings; however, not clearly identified.

Figure 12

Revised Conceptual Model of the Self-Reward Consumption Practice Diffusion in Japan

