

Purchasing Behavior- 'Having Material Possessions' or 'Having Communication'

Jun Fujimoto, The University of Tokyo, Dean Poland, Waseda University International, Japan

The purpose of this study is to examine more concretely consumer behavior in one of the most 'networked' societies in the world: Japan. Particularly, we focus on the possibility of moving from a 'having' attitude towards consumption, to one that is more 'experiential' in nature. A number of studies have shown that moving away from material purchases to more 'experiential' purchases can have a positive impact on people's well-being as well as levels of consumption. To explore this further we carried out a case study in Japan, and conducted surveys which examined purchasing behavior and lifestyle attitudes of Japanese people, especially focusing on 'generational' differences. We discovered that young Japanese are already moving away from material purchases such as cars, to a more experiential and communicative lifestyle. Furthermore, data suggests this change has been fuelled by an increase in Information Communication Technology (ICT) diffusion. However, although Japanese young people may be moving in the right direction with regard to their consumer behavior, we suggest that this new ICT lifestyle may simply lead to another form of 'having'. For example, 'having material possessions' may simply be substituted for 'having communication'. Although the ubiquitous nature of ICT and its ability to create new modes of communication has had an impact on consumption patterns, the attitude towards daily living has remained the same. We find that this may be because ICT innovations are being utilized with a 'technological' attitude which sees the world as 'stock' to be consumed. This attitude when combined with a culture of having, transforms the experience of communication into a mode of having rather than a mode of experience, thus giving rise to the same unsustainable mechanisms as before.