A Comparative Analysis on Retail Buyer Behaviour between UK, Australia and Japan
— A Developing Trust Model in Japanese Context —

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Introduction

Generally speaking, the Japanese management style is different from the Western management style. This will also be the case in trade between retailers and suppliers. Another factor is the different organisational structure of the distribution system in Japan. The most notable characteristic of the Japanese distribution system is its multi-layered structure. This also influences buying activities and the relationships between retailers and suppliers. Differences in the criteria used by the buyer between Japanese retail business and British retail business can be expected to come from the degree of the strength of these relationships. The purpose of this paper is to research the criteria of retail buyers in the UK by analysing Japanese retail buyers in London, and to develop a trust model on retail buyer behaviour by comparing retail buying in Japan with that in Australia and the UK, using a similar research strategy to those in previous studies. This research was supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education (Grant No. 09630103).

Theory of Retail Buyer Behaviour

The growing power of the retail buyer has developed due to the concentration of the retail sector and the centralisation of the buying functions (Farris et al, 1992, Swindley, 1992). The power of retail buyers in Britain has been growing as well as their influence over the distribution system. In Japan, the law restraining the opening of large-scale retailers was relaxed in 1992, but the degree of concentration of the retail sector is still low (Kuwahara, 1997). The power of the retail buyer in Japan has not been strong. However, an increase in the buyer's power can be expected due to the changes in legislation (G. Davies and H. Itoh, 1997).

Relationships between buyers and sellers can be purely transactional or they can develop via a number of stages into true relationships (Hogarth-Scott, S. and S.T.Parkinson, 1993). In the early stages of a buyer seller interaction, there are only "Transactions" and "Repeated Transactions" basic economic transactions based on price, specification and availability. There is little in the way of a relationship. In the "Long-term Relationships" stage, the relationship is still adversarial and depends heavily on market control. In the next stage, "Partnership", "Mutual trust" and "Dependence" emerge. This includes a sharing of information, frequent face-to-face meeting, and a sharing of risks and rewards. In such a "Strategic alliance", both parties commit their different type of resources to the alliance what includes the use of transaction specific investment, dependency and shared goals (Anderson and Weitz, 1989, Ganesan, 1994,).

Establishing partnerships needs time and therefore the lenght of any relationship can be a significant measure of the proximity of both parties (Anderson and Weitz, 1989). In communication between the two parties, the frequency of exchanges of information will facilitate joint operation (Ellram,

1995). One concern is the number of suppliers a buyer deals with. The larger the number is, the less likely a meaningful relationship becomes, (Davies and Treadgold, 1997).

According to Davies, there are a number of factors that can be assessed to judge the degree to which a relationship is seen to be a partnership in the quality of the intended business relationship, whether it involves shared risk and reward and whether dependency is mutual (Davies, 1994a). In both sides trust each other and whether the business relationship has a social dimension is important (Metcalf et al., 1992). A number of factors will then affect the relationship between buyer and supplier as follows: Data sharing, Frequency of contact, Shared risk, Mutual dependency, Trust and Social relationships.

The traditional buyer model that was developed for industrial buying behaviour by Sheth consists of 6 parts as follows, "Information Source", "Experience", "DMU Expectation", "Buying Process", "Product Specific" and "Company Specific" (Sheth, 1973). Sheth's model was modified for retail
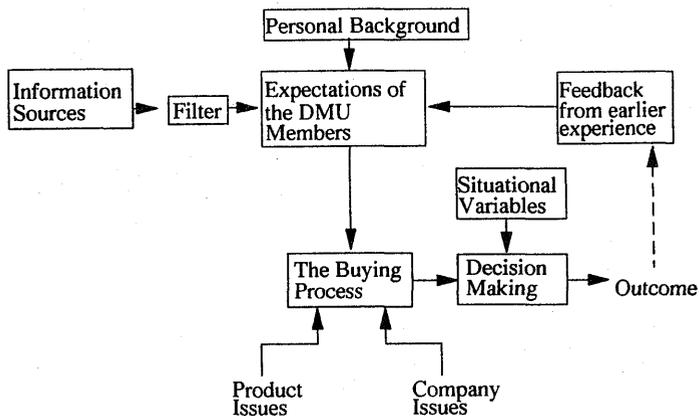

Figure 1 Sheth/Davies Model

buying behaviour (G. Davies, 1993). In this study I will analyse some direct routes between "Buying Process" and "Product Specific", "Company Specific", and "DMU Expectation". Furthermore, the indirect route between "Buyer Process" and "Experience" will be studied.

Decision making in any buying situation is context specific. It is important, therefore, when researching retail buying to define the context. Previous works have identified a large number of criteria and influences on the retail buyer, however, not all of them will be relevant to each situation (Nillson and Host, 1991). The context of my research will be the delisting or 'unbuying' of products and the delisting of suppliers. Delisting is defined as a decision to get out a particular item from the master file. By delisting, it is understood that the product is still on sale in other retailers, so that the decision to delist it is a major one for the buyer. Sometimes this will lead to the delisting of all the supplier's products.

Previous research using a similar approach has been done in a British context. The criteria used by buyers varied with their age and experience, younger or more qualified buyers using more objective criteria (Davies, 1994b). Whether the relationship ended was also associated with the nature of the (social) relationships between buyer and supplier (Davies, 1994a). In a similar research in Australia, Davies and Treadgold have found that the ending of the relationship is affected by the buyer's attitude to the supplier and that this in turn is affected by the buyer's age, the length of the relationship, and the frequency of buyer/seller contact (Davies and Treadgold, 1997).

In this research, I basically intend to repeat the same methodology of Davies and Treadgold to determine if their models can be applied in the different context of Japanese retail. I also developed their methodology by adding questions concerning 'trust', reflecting recent interest in the litera-

ture (Doney and Cannon, 1997). In Japan, historically, the power of the manufacturer has been strong. Trust of the manufacturer's brand might have fostered trust in the salesperson. Traditionally the ability of the salesperson has not been regarded as very significant. However, the importance of this ability has gradually grown.

Pilot Research : Japanese Buyer in London

Research Design

In the main research, 20 delistings were collected in questionnaire research and personal interviews with buyers in Japanese retailers in London. Personal interviews were also performed at the same time because of the additional qualitative information that can be gathered, the benefits of high response rate, and the ability to explain the questionnaire process. Retailers were selected from a variety of types. Additional questions assessed the size of the supplier and its importance to the retailer, a weakness in earlier research.

Questionnaire Design

This questionnaire consisted of two parts. The former is to research on the retail buyer's criteria, evaluation system to buying activity, and their profile, age, career and educational backgrounds (buyer sheet). The later is to research on the decision making by retail buyer that has already delisted some products (product sheet). As the main point, I have focused on the relationship between the retail buyer and supplier.

Four Japanese department stores are branch or subsidiary companies in London. The names of these retailers are as follow: Sogo, Isetan, Mitsukoshi and ANA-Takashimaya. These shops are located in Central London.

However, one supermarket store, Yaohan (a global retailing company) is located in the suburban area of central London. These department stores have mainly assorted luxurious goods.

It is important to understand the crucial factors of delisting, in order to develop the adequate relationships with the buyer and the manufactures. This questionnaire was conducted to buyers to rate each of the pre-specified criterias that were important in their decision to delist on the concern of the specific products, by using the five-point Likert scale from 'unimportant' to ' very important'.

Questionnaire research

Listing Criteria - by Buyer Sheet

First point is what the factor of decision making is, when buyer adapts the product. The data collected by Q. 10 was weighted as follow. First ordered criteria was added seven points, second ordered criteria was added six points and the last ordered seventh criteria was added one point. The result by summing up their score is indicated in Figure 2.
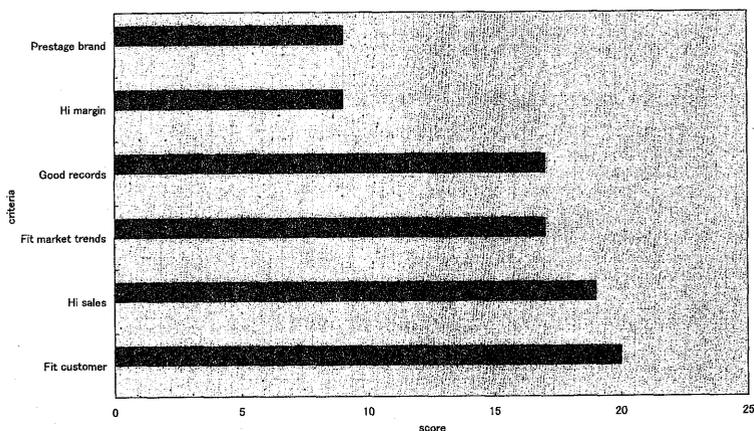

Figure 2 Listing Criteria

Title	Terms

"Fit customer" : "the product which fits the customer of your company"

"Hi sales" : "the product which is anticipated by high sales"

"Fit market trend": "the product which fits the market trend."

"Good records" : "the manufacture whose products have excellent records in the past."

"Hi margin" : "the product which has high margin".

"Prestige Brand" : "the product was made by the manufacture which has a prestige brand."

Delisting Criteria- by Product Sheet

Thirteen samples were given from four retail buyers in London. These product samples were Mans Wear (1), Ladies Wear (5), Bag (2), Shoes (1), China (2), Leather (1) and Food (1). The number in parenthesis showed the number of the items. Table 1 indicates the delisting criteria by Japanese retail buyer in London and Australia, (Davies and Treadgold, 1997).

Table 1. Delisting Criteria

Japanese retail buyer in London	Australian retail buyer
1. Buyer opinion of potential sales	1. Sales volume too low
2. Gross margin too low	2. Gross margin too low
3. Sales volume too low	3. Net profit margin too low
4. Poor Quality	4. Poor delivery
5. Price was too hight for you	5. Wrong price point
6. Poor delivery	6. Buyer opinion of potential sales
7. Wrong price point	7. Price too high
8. Price rise too high	8. Price rise too high
9. Net profit margin too low	9. Change of retailer strategy

First of all, a similar result was found in the terms, 'Gross margin too low', 'Sales volume low' held in high rank in both data. Secondly, some terms

were in the different rank in both data. As Japanese retail buyer in London, 'Buyer opinion of potential sales' held top rank in this criteria table. On the other hand, in the research in Australia, this term was in sixth in low rank. As other cases 'Poor quality' was in high rank of Japanese retail buyer. In Japan, they usually seldom analyse the value of the 'net profit margin'. Therefore, Japanese retail buyer in London does not estimate 'Net profit margin, It held low rank.

Table 2 indicats the relationship with the supplier by using the first 10 terms of Question 16 in a five-point Likert scale, (from 'not at all' to 'perfectly').

Table 2　Relationship Descriptors

Japanese retail buyer in London	Australian retail buyer
1.　Businesslike	1.　Businesslike
2.　Friendly	2.　Co-operative
3.　Co-operative	3.　Social
4.　Full of trust	4.　Full of conflict
5.　Open	5.　Open
6.　Mutual dependency	6.　Close
7.　Risk sharing	7.　A partnership
8.　Close	8.　Friendly
9.　Full of conflict	9.　Mutual dependency
10.　Social	10.　Full of trust

Table 2 showed that the top rank, 'Businesslike' is the same in both data. In Japanese data, however, 'Friendly', 'Full of trust' and 'Mutual dependency' held higher rank than that of Australia data. These terms can be regarded as the interactive factors. In Japanese retail buyer activity, Reflection on some of those will make clear that the interactive factors tend to become strong in Japan.

In Question 16, buyers were asked to rate a number of descriptions of the supplier on the same scale. The result was described in Table 3. Table 3 indicates that 'Market Leaderships' held the top rank in Japanese retail

Table 3. Supplier Descriptions

Japanese retail buyer in London	Australian retail buyer
1 . A Market Leadership	1 . Responsive
2 . Responsive	2 . Helpful
3 . Ineffective	3 . Ineffective
4 . Helpful	4 . A Market Leadership

buyer in London. This result reflectes that the Japanese retail buying tends to be 'outer oriented'.

Personal Interviewing research

First of all, a unique trade practice in Japan, "unsold goods returning system" influenced the buyer behaviour. Most of the distributors in Japan still adopt these practices that are not any longer in use in Britain and Australia. If retailers purchase the product with returnable guarantee of unsold goods like as Japanese retailers do, they have less need to buy it. On the contrary, most of the retail buying in Britain and Australia does not permit to return unsold goods upwards to the manufacturer. Therefore, their need of selection of product will increase.

Secondly, most of retailers in Britain have used the central buying at their head quarters. On the other hands, some Japanese retailers in Japan have adopted this central buying at their head quarters. Other retailers used to take decentral buying by store manager at each stores. Japanese retailer has insisted on the importance of the local purchasing for meeting local consumer's needs. Additionally, Japanese buyers at the head quarter directly negotiates for listing up the main items with the suppliers that are leading manufactures. However, in the case of small lot dealing, the buyers at the head quarter negotiates not directly with small and medium manufactures, but with the wholesaler that trade with them. After they have listed up these items in the master file, the manager of the store branch used to de-

cide whether they buy the item or not. Therefore, even if the buyer listed some items in the master file, it would not always mean that these products have been bought and stocked by the retailer. The products were listed in the master file while stocked in wholesaler's whorehouse.

Thirdly, the number of buyers is different between Japan and Britain. For example, in the food department at the Japanese representative super-markets that sales is 5 billion and has 4th sales records in 1996. The number of Japanese retail buyer that engaged in this supermarket was nineteen. On the contrary, in Britain the same department and sales is 11,500 million, the number of the buyer was around 200. Therefore, Japanese buyers cannot afford to negotiate on each item, for they negotiate with wholesaler instead of with small and medium suppliers.

Result of Pilot Research

The results of this pilot project for Japanese research showed that their buying decision making depends on an assessment from outside, particularly from other buyer. Therefore, even Japanese buyers in London lack inde-pendence. Moreover, most of the retailers that responded in this project operated only one shop.

Developing Methodology for Japanese Context

In this project, I investigated Japanese retail buyers in London. Despite differences in culture and buying method, the questionnaire of Davies and Treadgold appeared to work well. However, some changes in content were needed. A number of insights into Japanese buying and how it differs from other methods were identified.

Most retailers in Japan have adopted the system of returning unsold goods. Even if the retail buyer fails to purchase a product that achieves high sales volume, the retailer can return unsold goods without great loss. The retailer in Britain is usually unable to return any unsold goods to the manufacturer and wholesaler. Therefore, they probably take greater care over which product should be purchased. Most of the Japanese buyers in London who have got used to this practice in Japan have also realised about the importance of assessing product value.

The Japanese buyer defines 'listing' as a decision to put a product onto a master file. Then store personnel select from the master file, while in Britain the buyer normally makes this decision. Japanese buyers appear to have large number of suppliers to deal with. They create a master file from which store managers select a practice, which has gone in the UK and Australia. Wholesalers are also more important in the Japanese market, there is less direct negotiation with manufactures. Finally, team buying is not a widely adopted idea in Japan.

In order to research in a Japanese context, other changes to the Davies and Treadgold questionnaire will be made by the pilot research in London. For instance, in Appendix 1, Problem of Questionnaire, the job mobility of Japanese buyer has been low and there is no finding a distinction between Q.2 "How many years have you been engaged as a buyer?" and Q. 4 "years of experience as a buyer in your current position?" In Q13, in the case of asking about the distribution system, respondents did not regard "Agent" as a common concept. In Q.15, assessing the frequency of contact, I added the option "More than once a month" to the original questionnaire for the reason that contact is often more frequent.

Trust Model and Research Hypotheses

In previous work, links were found between retail buying behaviour and other factors. Many of these factors can be thought of as developing trust either in the product, the supplier's organisation or the salesperson. In trust model the buyers' attitude, affective factor and cognitive factor are regarded as latent factors. Trust is regarded as the manifest factor affecting decision-making. This is a change to the model tested by Davies and Treadgold, Figure 2 (Davies and Treadgold, 1997).

Antecedents : There are a number of antecedents to create an attitude that will affect one or both of the two components. First of all, to form a Partnership needs time. Therefore, the length of relationships will be an important factor (Anderson and Weitz, 1989). The development of a buyer's affective feeling toward a supplier may take less time. On the contrary, the evolution of their cognitive beliefs will take longer. Secondly, frequently contact between the supplier and the buyer should induce the attitude to be stronger. A low contact frequency could induce a feeling and belief that a supplier is not committed as much as a supplier who visits more frequently. Thirdly, the number of suppliers affects the power of relationships between buyers and suppliers. The number of suppliers increases the time that the buyer needs to develop a relationship and decreases the opportunity to form a clear view about any one supplier. According to previous research, the seniority of the buyer would influence the number of supplier they are asked to deal with. (Davies, 1994) Finally, the dependency of the buyer on the supplier will affect their trust.

Attitude to the Relationship (Affective and Cognitive) : In general, it is be-

lieved that an attitude towards an object consists of two parts. These are the individual's cognitive belief about an object and the individual's affective feeling towards that object (Day, 1973). These components of attitude should be positively related with the retail buyer's behaviour. In the marketing channel literature, there are many constructs that can be thought of as components of attitude (Hunt et al., 1985, Lewis and Lambert, 1991, Emerson, 1962, Anderson and Narus, 1990, Dwyer et. al., 1987).

There is difference of view as to whether there could also be interrelationships between the cognitive and affective factors (Day, 1973). Davies and Treadgold included in their Affective factor, 'Close', 'Mutual dependency', 'Partnerships', and 'Social' elements. And for their Cognitive factor 'Cooperative', 'Full of conflict', 'Helpful' and 'Responsive' (Davies and Treadgold, 1997).

Trust : According to Anderson and Narus, trust is defined as "the firm's belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes for the firm, as well as not taking unexpected actions that would result in negative outcomes for the firm" (Anderson and Narus, 1990). According to Ganesan, the notion of trust is "One of the expectations formed by the partner's expertise, and reliability " (S. Ganesan, 1994). In recent literature on buyer-supplier relationships, trust was defined as two distinct components: creditability and benevolence. Creditability is based on the extension of the retailer's belief that the vendor has the required expertise to perform the job effectively and reliably. It includes the consistency, stability and control over the pattern of behaviour. Benevolence is based on the extension of the retailer's belief that the vendor has intentions and motives beneficial to the retailer when new conditions arise, conditions for which a commitment was not made. It focuses on the motives and intentions of the partners (Doney

and Cannon, 1997). Therefore, creditability can be expected to relate to cognitive factors. On the other hand, benevolence can be expected to relate to affective factor.

Most recent academic works on trust in relationships distinguishs between the trust of the supplier firm from that of the salesperson. Basically, the concept that was seen to influence the relationships in previous works is only the "trust of the supplier". Only one study has included both trust of the supplier firm and trust of salesperson (Doney and Cannon, 1997). In this research, trust will be measured by three elements. These are "trust in supplier", "trust in salesperson", and "trust in product". The first two concepts were included in the most recent research (Doney and Cannon, 1997).
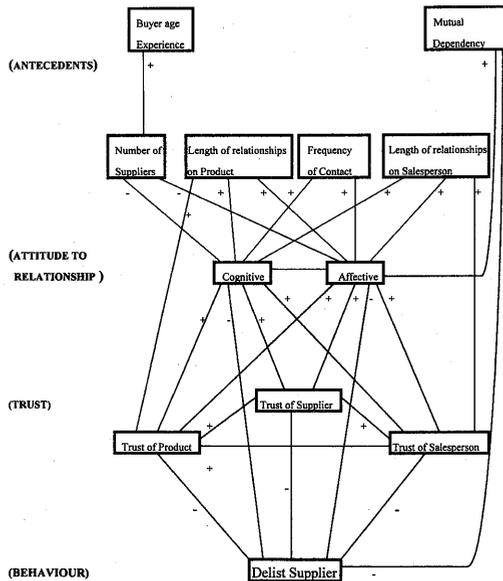

Figure 3 Trust Model and Research Hypotheses

Conclusion

The type of research on retail buyer will contribute in three ways. First, there has been little published on Japanese retailing, particularly in buying. Second, the research will also develop existing theory on buying by testing idea in a Japanese context. In other words, one of the aims of this research is to see if existing models can be applied in the different context of Japanese retailing. Third, another research's aim is to improve existing theory and methodology by adding further questions on 'trust'.

In this project, I assumed the difference of retail buying between Western style management (UK and Australia) and the Eastern style management, Japan. By means of some interviewing researches on the Japanese retail buyer in London, I intended to find how Japanese retail buyer recognise these differences under British business circumstances. These interviews outstand that these differences arise from the unique trade practices and the tendency of the closer relationships, and conflict avoiding behaviours. The results of this pilot research were described by developing a trust model for research on Japanese context.

This pilot research on the Japanese retail buyers in London, showed a need for further research plans to analyse the Japanese buyer in Japan, and extend sample size to use some multi dimensional statistics methods. Furthermore, the questionnaire should be changed for the Japanese buyer. For instance, in appendix 1 "problem of questionnaire", first of all, by the reason that the job mobility of buyer has been low I can not find a distinction between Q 2 "How many years have been you engaged as a buyer?" and Q 4 "years of experience as a buyer in your current position?". In Q13, on the case of asking the distribution system respondent could not regard "Agent" as common concept. In Q. 15, asking the frequency of contacts, I added the

option "5 . More than a month" to the original questionnaire because they have too small scope.

Data of further research needs to be analysed by the type of respondent (Buyer in head quarter, Wholesaler buyer, Store manager), by the product type, and by the size of retailer. However, in this research only the retail buyer in store was focused. Comparisons should be made with previous British and Australian research using statistical tests to assess differences in, for example, the number of suppliers dealt with. The importance of criterias can be compared using "t tests". Other statistics may be compared in a similar way. Factor and Cluster analysis will be used to test the hypothesis that young or inexperienced buyers have different dimensions. They select the more objective criteria (Davies, 1994b). Secondly, correlation and LESREL/AMOS modelling will be used to test the various hypotheses implied in Figure 3. However, in this pilot research, the number of delisting case is thirteen, too small.

In this questionnaire that consists of two parts, the main focus is on the relationship between the retail buyer and supplier in Questionnaire B (Appendix 1). First, additional Questions on trust will be added in further research in Japan. Structural equation modelling can confirm the model as proposed. Second, it can compare a the trust model with alternative models that represent different structural relationships. Finally, the trust model can be improved and developed through modifications of structural measurement models.

Appendix 1   Questionnaire in English

Questionnaire A   Buyer Master Sheet

Please complete one of these only for each buyer interviewed.

Please complete one separate questionnaire for each delisted product.

Date :   Retailer :   Buyer name:

Main Product:

Q. 1. Could you tell me your Age?

1. under 25,   2. 25-34,   3. 35-44,   4. more than 45

Q. 2. How many years have you been engaged as a buyer?

1. under 2 years,   2. 2 years to 4 years,   3. 5 years to 9 years,

4. more than 10,

Q. 3. Could you tell me what your education backgrounds are?

1. Bachelor,   2. Graduated from HSC,   3. Graduated from Collage,

4. Master,   5. None of these,

Q. 4. Could you tell me how many years of experience as a buyer in your current position?

(   ) years

Q. 5. Do you have more than one year of experience working in any retail outlet?

1. Yes,   2. No,

Q. 6. How much are your companies sales in this year?

£ (   )

Q. 7. Is there the norm of the margin to the buyer?

1. Yes,   2. No,

Q. 8. Is there the norm of the sales to the buyer?

1. Yes,   2. No,

Q. 9. Are there any evaluation systems on sales performance of the item
    that the buyer buys?

<div align="center">1. Yes, 2. No,</div>

Questionnaire B Delist Producing List

Please complete one for each delisted product.

Date : Retailer:

Buyer name: Main Product:

Please think of a product that you have delisted in the last few years.
By 'delisted' we mean you have stopped buying the product but other re-
tailers have continued to sell it (or something very similar).

Q. 10 What was the product?

<div align="center">(   )</div>

Q. 11. Was the product an own label/own brand/ exclusive brand?

<div align="center">1. Yes, 2. No,</div>

Q. 12. How many years have you sold the delisted product?

<div align="center">(   ) years</div>

Q. 13. Did you buy the product direct or via an agent or wholesaler?

  1. Direct, 2. Wholesaler, 3. Agent,

Q. 14 How important were the following factors in your decision to delist the
    product on a scales of one to five, one meaning unimportant and five
    meaning very important?

	unimportant				very important
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Sales volume too low.	├──┼──┼──┼──┤				
b) Gross margin too low.	├──┼──┼──┼──┤				
c) Net margin too low.	├──┼──┼──┼──┤				
d) Poor delivery.	├──┼──┼──┼──┤				

	1	2	3	4	5
e) Wrong price point.					
f) Poor quality					
g) Your opinion of potential sales					
h) Price was too high for you					
i) Price becomes too high					
j) Change in strategy					

k) Others

Q. 15 How frequently did you have any communication from / with the original supplier or the supplier's agent?

1. More than once a week, 2. Once a week, 3. Once a month,

4. less than once a month, 5. More than one month.

Q. 16 How well do the following words generally describe your relationship with the supplier (i.e. manufacture)?

	Not at all			Perfectly	
	1	2	3	4	5
Businesslike					
Friendly					
Cooperative					
Social					
Full of conflict					
Open					
Mutual dependency					

	1	2	3	4	5
Close					
Full of trust					
A partnership					
A sharing of risk and reward					
Responsive					
Helpful					
Inefficient					
A market leader					

Q. 17 Did you provide the supplier with the following for the product concerned?

Forecast of sales data　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Market trend　　　　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Regular sales data　　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Competitive data (other retailer)　1. Yes,　2. No,

Q. 18 Did you have electronic data interchange with your supplier?

1. Yes,　2. No,

Q. 19 Which of the following did the supplier offer/provide?

Advertising support　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Volume discounts　　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Return of unsold goods　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Training　　　　　　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Introductory incentive　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Periodical promotions　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Point of sales　　　　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Merchandising ideas　　　　　　1. Yes,　2. No,

Others(　　　　　　　　　　　　)

Q. 20 Do you still buy other products from the same supplier?

1. Yes,　2. No,

Q. 21 (additional Questions for Japanese research)

	Always			Never	
	1	2	3	4	5

"Could you rely on this supplier's products?"

"Did you think that this supplier's products
   are of good quality?"

"Are this supplier's products leading brand?"

"Was this supplier's products trustworthy?"

	Always			Never	
Trust in supplier	1	2	3	4	5

"Did this supplier keep promises?"

"Was this supplier honest with you?"

"Was this supplier concern with
   your business success?"

"Is this supplier trustworthy?"

	Always			Never	
Trust in Salesperson	1	2	3	4	5

"Has the salesperson dealt with you frankly?"

"Has the salesperson dealt with you openly?"

"Did you think the salesperson was
   concerned with your needs?"

"Is this salesperson trustworthy?"

"Is this salesman friendly?"

"Does this salesman share similar interests
   with you ?"

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