

The Distribution System in Globalization

What we refer to as a nation's or an economic sphere's distribution system is the end result of a complex interaction between that nation or region's geographic conditions and natural features, its people's way of life and societal structure, the process of formulating trading capital in modern times, the variety of elements involved in the modernization of its industries, and its political system and policies—what might be called a historical outcome. This being the case, any given distribution system is in essence mutually distinct and unique. There is no standard style common to all nations. It is essential to adequately understand, research, and plan for market entry in order to succeed, not just for Japan, but for any country.

That a distribution system is a historical outcome then means that it is not uniform and unchanging, rather that it may change as the economic environment goes through transitions. In actuality, Japan's distribution system has undergone great changes in

recent years due to the rapid advance of the information society, comprehensive changes in its industrial structure, and shifting lifestyle and consumer attitudes. With radical changes in the global political and economic environments and the crisis caused by the collapse of the "bubble" economy in particular these changes are accelerating.

In the cover story for this issue, we would like to approach the problems related to what other nations have in the past seen as Japan's incomprehensibly opaque distribution system and the peculiar differences unique to Japan's market that, in the past, have been subjected to criticism in four sections: (1) changing trends; (2) shifting consumer attitudes; (3) coping with distribution regulations; and (4) the opinions and viewpoints of companies from other countries. We do not intend to seek reasons why the Japanese market is inaccessible, rather, we hope that these articles will offer clues to market entry.



Photo: Kyodo News Service