

H-1 International Comparison for Public's Perception, Knowledge, Behavior and Communication towards the Environment

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Abstract:

Through international comparative social survey, we investigated people's attitudes and behaviors towards the environment in various aspects. One is people as citizens, whose backgrounds are in the various stages of economic and social development, and east and west. Another is consumer-firm relationships (communication), especially in developed countries.

1) We added Shanghai middle class results with our previous survey results- Japan, the Netherlands, Bangkok, Manila. We found that Asian environmental value has somewhat different structures from western one. We can observe in a lot of literatures that western environmentalism has a 'counter cultural aspects,' but Asian environmentalism is one of the 'traditional ways of thinking' in their society.

2)For consumer-business relationship analysis, we did business companies survey in Japan(second wave, the first wave was done in 1996). The significant percentage of whole business companies are now taking measures against the environmental damages arising from their business activities. But in some fields, such as insurance, banking, retail traders, many companies are still considering that the environmental issues are not in their businesses. And in many fields, even in heading companies are not enough considering their consumers. In another word, consumers are not still considered to be their "stakeholders."

Key Words: International Comparison, Social Survey, Attitudes Formation, Pro-Environmental Behavior, Consumer Behavior, Communication

1.Introduction

To build sustainable society, we need to change individuals' and businesses' awareness towards the environment. But few research has been attempting to tackle this. The basic unit

to change society is individuals and also its complex state of business, and other groups. Without knowing their ways of thinking and behavior, there would be no possibilities to

2. Research Objectives

change our society to be sustainable.

The goal of our project is, applying social survey technique (statistical, representative sampling), we try to draw individuals', businesses' values, attitudes and behavior towards the environment. To do so, we establish an international researchers' network of public opinion research on the environment, as the world becomes more and more internationally independent and many countermeasures have been introduced co-operatively. And also we make international comparison survey. Also, we analyze the relationships between consumers and businesses, from the communication perspective.

3. Research Method

Our project consists of three parts, but these three are connected each other. The first part is GOES-JAPAN: Global Environmental Survey, which is the network of researchers of social survey. The second is modified GOES- Asian version. Here, the target samples are new middle class people of large cities in Asia-Bangkok, Manila, and Shanghai. The third is the analysis of interrelationships between consumers and businesses in advanced industrial countries- Japan and Germany. Adding to above, there is one small research group – called eco-consciousness in Asian region.

(1) GOES-Japan

These themes of GOES are: environmental concern, environmental information, environmental attitudes, environmental values, environmental policies, and environmental behaviours. In the so-called *GOES Mass Public Survey* this whole range of crucial variables is tapped among representative samples of different publics in the countries participating in the GOES project. The *GOES Decision-Makers Module*, held among high-ranking experts in environmental decision-making and opinion-shaping in the various GOES countries, surveys (a selection of) the same variables, but furthermore focuses on expert estimates of public support for especially the environmental policies, thus providing unique possibilities to compare public and elite responses.

Almost all of these surveys were designed in advanced industrial societies and most of the field work was done in these societies. The GOES project has been designed with input from many societies in order to develop survey instrumentation that is effective in societies reflecting the full spectrum of economic, social and political variation. It provides special instrumentation for use with illiterate and less educated segments of the public. Previous surveys have been largely descriptive, containing few variables that might account for variation and change. The GOES survey has been shaped by theories of change, and

investigates factors that may give rise to change. Previous research has focused on attitudes, with little attention to behavior; a major component of the GOES measures actual and potential political behavior, and energy use behavior. Finally, much of the previous research elicited attitudes that are vulnerable to compliance effects, rather than deep rooted orientations. Today, almost everyone is willing to give lip service to environmental protection – until they consider the costs. The GOES instruments examine cost-benefit trade-offs and probes into underlying values; it then examines their impact on actual behavior. As we have seen, although most attitudes are only weakly related to behavior, certain values show surprisingly strong linkages to behavior.

Here are some results from the survey.

a) Support for policies

Japanese people are more likely to support “command and control” policy instruments than economic incentive, e.g. tax policy instruments. Table Q19 shows the results for “Saving energy” policy measures. Mean(Strongly in favour=1, in favour=2, neither nor=3, against=4, strongly against=5) of “Q19b - raise taxes on gasoline and other fuels each year for the next ten years to get people to use less energy” is the highest among the three. People often say that we have already been paying enough tax, we do not have to pay more.”, as almost half of the gasoline price is oil transaction tax in Japan. But people changed the answer when how collected money would be used. In Q20d, “introduce a new tax system according to the private car use and use the money to maintain public transportation system”, which this wording is not used in other GOES countries, mean score drops to 3.0, from 3.7 of Q20b “- increase gasoline taxes each year for the next ten years to get people to cut back on driving”, which does not suggest how the collected money would be used.

b) Environmental Action and consumer behavior

Political aspects of environmental behaviours among Japanese are not so popular as those of Western people. For example, only 3.9% of respondents replied that they are joining environmental protection groups. But according to ISSP data(1993 module of the Environment), more than 20 % of people in the US or western Europe countries join these groups. There seems several reasons for this. According to McKean(Mckean 1981), Japanese environmental movement has its origin in protesting against authority, that includes national government, local government and Zaibatsu(large financial combines), as serious pollution disease issues damaged local residents' health. Because of this historical root, lay people hesitate to join these groups. Another reason is tax system. In the US and some of other countries, there is a tax exemption system for donating non-profit organizations. This system encourage people to donate their money to environmental organization. But in Japan, seldom environmental organizations are registered as tax exemptional organization. The third reason is that local government and also national government tend to account traditional and conventional neighbourhood association for hearing people's voice and telling governmental ideas and policies to

every household.

But recently, the NPO(Non profit Organization) law has passed in the Diet, and several non profit organizations are officially established, including environmental groups, they are going to tell what people are thinking to local and national government. Some groups are going to join the processes of making laws and other policy measures.

Related to this movement, more democratic way of expressing people's choice has emerged. One of these is "residents' direct vote= referendum" system. In this a few years, several local governments faced this, for example, Maki town in Niigata Prefecture (which located north of central Japan area), faced the referenda of whether to build nuclear power generation plant or not. Mitake town in Gifu Prefecture , which located south of central Japan area, faced the referenda of whether to build waste disposal facilities in which many industrial waste will be brought from outside town. (For further discussion in overall protest movement, see Nakazawa et., al. 1998, for referendum, see Yamanur0, 1998, Takubo, 1997, for attributes of people who join modern environment movement, see Aoyagi-Usui, 1995) .

According to our results, people still do not want to join protest movements – taking in a demonstration("would never do"=73.9%), joining in a boycott("would never do"=47.4%) and joining an environmental protection group("would never do"=47.8%). But people also want to do something for the environment- doing voluntary work ("have done+might do=93.2%), contributing money("have done+might do=78.0%),participating in meetings to discuss environmental problems("have done+might do=68.3%).

2)GOES Asia

Our GOES Asia surveys are carried out December 1997 in Bangkok, Thailand; and January 1999 in Metro Manila, Philippines, by the National Institute for Environmental Studies, JEA. In Thailand, respondents were 20- to 49-years old, sampled from residents of metropolitan Bangkok who had an annual income higher than the national average (20000 bahts). In the Philippines, respondents were 20- to 49- years old, sampled from those who live in Metro Manila and who had an annual household income higher than the national average (25000 pesos). The samples in Bangkok and Manila were of so-called 'upper and middle class' people. They were purposely chosen in order to compare their way of life with that in Japan and other more developed countries.

Japan and Thailand were compared because they are the only countries in Asia whose main religion is Buddhism, and which have not been colonized by western countries in the past, although Japan was occupied by the US after WWII for six years. Thailand is categorized as an NIES (Newly Industrialized Economic Society) country. There is still a big economic gap between the two, which we tried to reconcile by using a sample from the so-called new middle class in Thailand.

Manila is only country in Asia whose main religion is Catholic (82% of our

respondents). Its history has been complicated. It did not have any national king, was first colonized by Spain, then by the US, briefly by Japan in WWII, and again briefly by the US before independence. The country is very much influenced by American culture – people are educated in English in school and all our interviews were conducted in English.

We found that the structure of environmental values in Asian countries differs from those in western countries. An environmental way of thinking blends with traditional concepts of honoring parents and family security, while western people believe they are facing concepts that are against traditional values. These structural differences have been pointed out by White (1967) and Japanese researchers, e.g. Watanabe(1995), and are here confirmed and shown clearly through surveys.

We conclude:

- a) In the Netherlands and the US, environmental values are linked with altruistic values that are contrary to traditional values, while in Japan, Bangkok and Manila, environmental values are linked with both traditional and altruistic values.
- b) Environmental values are contrary to egoistic and progressive values in all survey countries.
- c) The factors encouraging environmental behavior are different among countries, and between types of environmental behavior.

We are now preparing for a further comparative study of China, India and the US on values and environmental policy making.

3) Interrelationships between consumers and businesses in advanced industrial countries

This part consists of three surveys: the first is German consumer survey in January 1998, the next is Japanese consumer survey in September 1998, and the third is Japanese business survey in September 1999. The samples of first two studies are nation-wide adults , and the sample of third survey is Japanese 6,000 companies, being chosen as representatives of Japanese companies.

- a) The awareness of Japanese consumers are as much high as the awareness of German consumers. But Japanese consumers' action levels are lower than German consumers.
- b) Japanese companies' environmental countermeasures are significantly advanced compared to our previous survey done in 1996. So as awareness is.
- c) The effort of businesses communication with communication is very low. Consumers are seldom considered to be stakeholders of industries.

5. Discussion

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backgrounds are in the various stages of economic and social development, and east and west. Another is consumer-firm relationships (communication), especially in developed countries.

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