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“How Information Technology is Altering the Structure of Society”

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1. Commonly held beliefs about information technology

It has been said that with the establishment of the Internet, a dramatic change in the economy is being effected, or alternatively, that a dramatic change in the economy must be effected. However, the development of information technology has taken place with breath-taking speed, and some of the theories have already been shown to be faulty, even at this early stage.

The following predictions have been made regarding the economic dimension of the IT revolution.¹

1. Macro economics—The theory of the “new economy.” Information technology will increase productivity inexorably; in the extreme, the business cycle could even be erased.
2. Industry—As the IT industry takes center stage, the industrial world will see a shift from the old to the new. IT-related venture businesses will proliferate while traditional businesses decline.
3. Business organization—Business structure will be revolutionized as a new form of management (which makes practical use of information technology) becomes predominant and the connection between businesses and the market deepens. Within companies as well, management and individual offices will use e-mail to communicate directly—the primary consequence being that middle-management will be rendered unnecessary.
4. Consumers—The voice of the consumer will come to drive the market. In addition, since many products used in the home will be computer-controlled, people’s lifestyles will change radically and be much more convenient.
5. E-commerce—The Internet will revolutionize distribution, and essentially render traditional distribution channels unnecessary. Manufacturers will sell directly to the consumer, and relationships between businesses that are based on long-term transactions will decline in importance. Increasingly, orders will be made directly by consumers.

What all these predictions have in common is that information technology will inevitably change the existing macro economy and industrial structure, business

organizations, and the distribution industry, and achieve market domination. Inefficiencies that were present in traditional economic markets (and in their structures and practices) will be circumvented by the introduction of information technology. These assertions all share the neoclassical economic view of markets. According to the neoclassicists, if a state of perfect market competition exists, the basic principles of welfare economics is achieved—in short, the market is in the most efficient state. Among the required conditions for perfect competition are: (1) a large number of participants, (2) homogenous quality of goods, (3) perfect information regarding price and quality of goods, (4) unrestricted entry to and exit from industries, and (5) negligible transaction costs. If these conditions are satisfied, and if a market exists in which all the industries involved are free of technological externalities and are not public goods, the basic proposition of welfare economics is fulfilled, and an economically desirable distribution of resources (or so-called “Pareto efficiency”) will be achieved through free competition in the market.

However, in real-world economics the conditions for perfect competition have not come close to being satisfied. Accordingly, the theories of monopoly and oligopoly, the theories of monopolistic competition and public enterprise, and the theory of market failure have been pursued, and only in those cases has government intervention in the market been justified. In addition, the New Institutional Economics founded by R. Course explains business organization in terms of various transaction costs that cannot be ignored, such as those associated with searching and negotiating, contracts, oversight, information disclosure, and dispute resolution. It could be said that the Japanese business practices of long-term employment and long-standing relationships between companies constitute a system that overcomes market failure.

However, information technology has the striking ability to spread information, to enable transactions to be carried out irrespective of place and time, and to gradually reduce transaction costs. These factors supplement real-world markets, and the belief is growing that perfect competition is actually achievable—not simply a theoretical ideal.

More specifically, the following has been posited. Originally, the evolution to an information technology society was expected to come about through the connection of individual computers through the Internet acting as a digital, bi-directional medium. In addition, an open network like the Internet will create competition between telecommunications providers, and as a result, the costs of communications and transactions were expected to come down. With this, distribution will not be limited to domestic distribution but will be greatly improved and extend overseas. In short, economic transactions will become borderless. Moreover, since communication speeds

are expected to increase drastically, transactions will be conducted between parties irrespective of time and location. This will also prevent identical goods from having different prices because of the transportation costs occasioned by physical distance.

Since distribution networks will expand and become international, thus making it easy to circumvent the regulations of the various countries concerned, the barriers to entry will come down. Formerly, consumers simply received product information passively from the mass media. With two-way communications, however, the consumer could adopt a more active role and transmit and retrieve information as well. This will allow information on price and product quality to be perfectly disseminated. In particular, BBS forums of all types will evaluate product quality and reinforce this trend. Since this will make it more difficult for manufacturers to use advertising and publicity effectively to tout superficial differences between products of equal quality, consumers will be in the position of being able to reject such differentiation.

Information networks will enable direct transactions to be carried out, reduce the cost of transmitting information, and make it more difficult for large companies to successfully utilize advertising and publicity to manipulate information. As a result of these three factors, small businesses will be better able to enter specific industry markets. These alone will not be sufficient to overcome a monopoly based on economies of scale. However, the growth of mail order, which allows consumers to make purchases from attractive glossy catalogs, will enable more companies to enter the market.

In fact, EDI (Electronic Data Interchange), which was developed as a standard business interface to digitize transactions over industry and national boundaries, and CALS (Commerce at Light Speed: B2B e-commerce), which makes possible the paperless exchange of information, have been introduced and are being widely adopted by manufacturing organizations. At individual companies too, the introduction of resources such as voice-mail, e-mail, and fax is removing the necessity for information exchange via an organizational hierarchy. One particular result of this is that the middle-management stratum, whose productivity has been questioned, is being branded as unnecessary. Information for job-seekers will probably be increasingly available on the Internet, and this may well increase worker mobility and sound the death-knell for the life-time employment system. Middle management layoffs go hand-in-hand with the development of information technology. It is assumed that, in the labor market too, a state of perfect competition will be created.

For transactions, the traditional distribution industry has been limited in practice by factors such as the physical distance of shops (both domestic and overseas), business

hours, and account settlement requirements, and the traditional distribution industry has existed because of these restrictions. However, since information technology wipes out these limitations, the distribution industry was expected to be superseded by e-commerce. If the Internet is incorporated into neoclassicist market theory, perfect market competition is achievable and ideal economic conditions are created. Stated in reverse, since up to now, markets have certainly not enjoyed perfect competition, it is predicted that the traditional distribution industry will decline with the development of e-commerce, and the middle-management strata in business organizations will be cut out.

However, although in reality the distribution industry is being reorganized and middle-management is being reassessed, it is becoming clear that middle-management is not simply being removed. In this paper the reasons for this will be considered. However, it appears to be because the hypotheses of the neoclassicists regarding the distribution industry, middle-management, and the empowerment of consumers are at variance with reality. In the following sections the topics of consumption and distribution are elaborated upon.

2. The realities of information technology

Certain characteristics of information technology had never been implemented by earlier technology. This has had a number of significant effects.

First, due to the vast increases in data-processing power which have occurred, manufacturers and the distribution industry can now obtain concrete information on consumer trends. Seven-Eleven Japan introduced POS (point-of-sale) systems in 1977, and by 1982 had installed them in all their outlets. This came to serve as the prototype for the application of modern e-commerce, both for “business-to-business” (B2B) and “business-to-consumer” (B2C) operations.

On the surface, POS systems make the processing of operations at the cash register more efficient, accurate, and economical. In particular, the widespread adoption of product barcodes has simplified the input of product prices. Sales information for individual products at all stores is thus accumulated and tallied centrally, enabling restocking orders to be made automatically online as well. Dedicated lines have been laid between businesses, enabling point-to-point exchange of electronic data.

Although this is a B2B application of information technology, even more importantly, a POS system can accurately record information on consumer demands (a B2C application), thereby enabling more efficient distribution. POS data describing consumer characteristics (such as sex and age) and the nature, location, and time of a purchase is used not only for re-ordering products that are sold out but also for analyzing the demand cycle. In the past, attempting to anticipate required inventory was very much a hit-and-miss process. However, the ability to predict the demand cycle enables “just-in-time” stock control, whereby products are delivered to the store just before the demand arises. This avoids both the risks of overstocks and of missed sales opportunities. This is a major reason for the unique success of convenience stores in Japan—all the more so since the price of land in Japan has meant that over-stocking alone costs money. The idea of the convenience store was devised in response to the *Law for Regulation of Large Stores*, which was enacted in 1974. The aim was to conduct retail sales efficiently on small plots of land, and the POS system was a means to that end.

Today, systems like that of Amazon.com, whereby consumers can order products directly over the Internet, are touted as models of B2C e-commerce. However, this type of system has not yet taken off completely because consumers are not accustomed to typing their own orders directly into their PCs.² This is partly a problem of computer literacy. The vast population of consumers who buy products does not fully coincide with the PC-user population. However, sales data is being entered at the convenience store’s register, and data (such as sex and age-group) relating to the purchaser is also being collected. This data is transmitted electronically (together with the data describing the time and place of the sale) to a central point, where the demand cycle is analyzed. In this case, consumers are not passing their information to the company themselves, rather it is being entered by the clerk at the register. This is the original method of collecting this information, and though there is no personally identifiable information being collected, it is a very effective method of reducing inventory.

Another important point is that, in reality, many consumers cannot make purchasing decisions solely on the basis of what they see on a PC screen. In contrast, someone who has received some sort of product information can drop into the neighborhood convenience store, reasonably sure that the products will be in stock, can see the products there, and buy them. This is now becoming a business model for overcoming people’s inability to make the leap to buying products that they cannot view in person.

Thus, while the convenience store represented the earliest form of the information technology business model, its unusual embrace of both electronic and real information made it a powerful one.

Second, due to the spread of the Internet, the cost of transmitting specialized information has been drastically reduced. Though perfect information would ensure minimum demand, the prohibitive costs of transmitting information via the mass media has prevented the establishment of some highly specialized product fields. The availability of low-cost information delivery thus gave rise to cases in which the supply side could ensure a profit. Due to this phenomenon, the possibility of establishing highly specialized markets increased.

However, concern over consumption resulted in a greater degree of specialization. Many of these markets were for products for which it had been difficult to establish a market using the mass media. For this reason even specialized shops try to maintain websites. The emergence of cheap-to-administer websites as an advertising medium enabled restaurants to announce seasonal changes to their menus, artists to publicize their day-by-day schedules of activities, and people working in small businesses or at home to publicize their individual capabilities.

The new-found ability of interested parties to obtain highly specialized product information via electronic networks has a profound influence on the image of the products themselves.

As noted by Baudrillard, attempts to differentiate products in the mass media widely seen by the general public, have resulted in items such as gadgets and worthless junk that impart strange and novel distinctions. However, on the Internet, where people with knowledge in specialized fields often lurk, differences in specialized, but not rare, products can be indicated. In Japan's domestic beer market, there was once competition to differentiate brands by the shape of the special spout packaged with the beer. These spouts, some of which made sounds or were shaped unusually, could be termed "gadgets." Indeed, this kind of symbolic distinction was probably the only way to enable even those consumers who did not have a particular liking for beer to differentiate between brands. By way of contrast, European-made beers (such as Belgian beer) and Japanese local beers—even if they were outstanding products—were only consumed by devotees and thus only enjoyed small markets. (In Japan until 1992, when the provisions of the *Liquor Tax Law* were relaxed, beer could only be

mass-produced.) However, information on this kind of minority-interest product is also available (via the Web sites of specialty shops), and due to information technology, beer fans can now easily access the information they seek. There are numerous specialist sites for products such as ramen, and these are flourishing. One way of using such a site would be for a shop owner who had temporarily closed his shop due to illness to post the announcement of the shop's re-opening on the website. In this way, the owner could send out the information the very day that the shop went back into business.

Third, it is easy to store and retrieve information. Essentially, mass media information is a flow, which has a short life-span. Accordingly, this information has to instantly attract mass interest. However, the Internet has a stock of information, and since in many cases the cost of maintaining information on the Internet is extremely low, information can remain accessible for a long time. Moreover, searching information, whether in stocks or flows, is the strength of the electronic network.

Even before the advent of information technology, this trend had surfaced with the establishment of the video rental business. In the past, unless a movie was particularly popular, it was impossible to see it again once it was no longer showing in cinemas. However, with the establishment of the video rental business, information on where to find rare videos and on where movies would next be screened was once again exchanged. Thus, works of all kinds and from all periods were now freely accessible. Thus, even long sought-after works for which there is little demand have renewed value. The same process is taking place on a larger scale over the Internet. Old works and texts are now stored *en masse* in electronic form, and thus can be retrieved easily. For some time it has been anticipated that it will be possible via the Internet to search the collections of the libraries of the entire world and to read books whose copyright has expired. More recently, with the advent of broadband, it is likely that it may also become possible to watch terrestrial TV broadcasts that were aired in the past.

In this way, how people gain experience, and how they communicate about it, will change. Previously, only a particular generation was familiar with all of the Kurosawa movies. Now, however, Kurosawa movies can easily be rented and appreciated by people of all ages. As a result, it is simply no longer possible to know what age group Kurosawa fans belong to. It is possible that even teenagers are now fully conversant with his works. Hence, due to anonymity in dialogue within virtual communities, more

weight is now placed on people's level of erudition than on their stated age or gender (which may be false).

Fourth, information about unique items is much more widely available. The ordinary consumer can now participate in auctions for unique items. This could be said to be an extension of the principle of Internet bulletin boards—that anyone can participate. In the case of the mass media, transmission of information is purely a one-way process. The telephone allows two-way communication; however, the information transmitted remains private. Thus, for example, it used to be that the only way to find people who possessed specific goods or information was through personal connections. However, with the advent of the bulletin board, a broad public appeal for someone possessing specific goods or information may now yield a response from just such a person. Net auctions are staged in venues such as the Rakuten mall and Yahoo, and here transactions are conducted vigorously in accordance with the principles of the bulletin board. These transactions are not confined to rare items; used cars, old books, and real estate are also especially sought-after products. If their respective features are listed in the form of a database, users can easily access information about them. These markets are also growing by the day. Markets that depend on subtle physical and symbolic differences have also been established.

Fifth, the bi-directional transmission of information has enabled specialized information to be evaluated. It has already been stated that the number of fields in which a person can reliably examine information using their accumulated knowledge about specialized and unique products, and make a purchase decision, is no more than two or three. Nevertheless, if a person requires medical care, for example, he must take life-or-death decisions regarding which hospital to go to and what treatment to undergo—even if he does not happen to possess any specialist knowledge. Despite the progress of the IT revolution, in numerous fields people remain novices.

However, with the advent of the Internet, it is not only objective product knowledge that has gained exposure to public scrutiny. The same is also true of the kind of grassroots consumer product assessment that used to travel only by word of mouth. A great number of websites have been set up that allow people to participate in the evaluation of products and shops in particular fields. In the evaluations of individual restaurants and ramen shops described previously, some people who have attended them even add a numerical score to the evaluation which they submit. No matter how many advertisements a shop puts out, consumers will not be swayed by them alone. Instead, other people's evaluations probably help them to gauge the accuracy of advertisements.

This is significant, since guidebooks and the like which purport to include evaluations cannot meet the cost of such a survey and are thus unable to conduct first-hand evaluations.³

In contrast, in the case of evaluations on the Internet, although the evaluation capabilities of the people concerned may vary, they have in fact personally tasted the wares. When people are consumers in fields in which they must rely substantially on the evaluations of others, this kind of information provides an effective means for reaching a decision. This enables people to become consumers in specialized fields. It could be said that it is precisely the spread of these kinds of evaluations that is causing consumers to diversify.

To reiterate, e-commerce is in fact progressing due to the following five attributes of information technology: (1) high-speed data-processing, for analyzing how the demands of consumers can vary according to location and time, even for identical products; (2) reduced cost of information relating to specialized fields; (3) ease of accumulation and search of information; (4) possibility of access to information on unique products; and (5) formulation of evaluations of specialist information.⁴

However, the characteristics given above are not enough to simply cut out middle management, as described in neoclassical explanations. A distribution sector that sifts products through competition with e-commerce may be possible, but it will probably be undergoing a thorough restructuring due to the influence of information technology. For example, Seven-Eleven is meticulous not only about product selection but also in how products are displayed. Though they are using past POS data in making this decision, they also emphasize repeatedly the need to use direct observation and judgement.⁵ This speaks directly to their policy of keeping abreast of the differences, changes, and shifts in consumer sensitivities based on time and place, even for the same product. Management instructors from around the country gather in Tokyo once a week to receive instruction directly from the president. Obviously, middle management, which these people are, cannot be cut out, and guidance via mail or the Internet would not be as effective for training purposes. Digital information, like e-mail, just does not achieve understanding as well as live information.

3. What is distribution?

So, why has information technology failed to live up to the predictions of the neoclassical economic theories? The role of distribution, according to the neoclassicists, is primarily to reduce the transaction costs associated with the time and space

restrictions of real-world economics. Assuming there are costs involved in finding business contacts, the distribution system sifts and selects the products and thereby reduces the costs born by the consumer. In the age of information technology, product sifting and selection are done on web pages, which removes the distribution function. Producers in the distribution system also reduce the costs of buying and selling by dealing with the aggregate demand of many consumers. Here as well, information technology is a big help as it greatly reduces the burden of producers processing direct consumer orders because it involves only handling copies of e-mails. In this sense, information technology has replaced large swaths of the distribution process.

By the way, the concept of “product” has a special interpretation in the context of distribution. Products are specified by their physical characteristics. Physically, one umbrella may appear to be the same product at all times and in all places. However, if there is a sudden downpour, despite weather reports to the contrary, those umbrellas placed at the front of stores are different than those on a sunny day, at least in the eyes of the consumer. Even the neoclassicists differentiate products in specific time frames, however, their “differentiation” assumes an objective observer. Things are different in the real world, however, and the consumer is the one who determines if products are the same or different. The observer can only see what the consumer has decided after the fact, and many product suppliers never find out what the determination was. The person who finds out first and provides the right product receives the profits.

Even physically identical products can top the sales charts or hit the trash bin depending on “time and place.” “Dead products” are merchandise that cannot be sold no matter how low the price goes.⁶ The distribution system serves also to remove “dead products.” F. A. Hayek said that transaction conditions completely change with “time and place,” and the profit goes to the person who recognizes the difference in these conditions. He also said that use of specific knowledge that varies with “time and place” is one of the characteristics of markets. In terms of production, the lowest costs of producing a certain product is known only by one person in any given moment, and the level of demand cannot be known without competition. In other words, in any given time or place, only a small group of people know the lowest cost for producing a particular product and the size of the demand for that product. Both producers and distributors rely on their limited knowledge in running their business and obtaining profits. When someone acquires that profit, however, the knowledge of how it was done starts to spread. That knowledge is passed on through the market. This is the concept of the markets as a process of discovering and transmitting knowledge.

According to Hayek's view, even physically identical products have differences and similarities in an economic context. The very same product will have a different value at different times and in different places. In the umbrella example, a sudden downpour makes everyone want one, and on a clear day, they are useless things. Thus, umbrellas placed near the storefront on a rainy day will be profitable. However, an umbrella on a rainy day will probably sell better in Japan than in Europe, where people do not mind a little rain water. The value of the product changes with the location. Discovering at what time and in which place umbrellas will be the hot seller is the unique function of markets. The distribution industry is involved in providing the service of establishing the best conditions for selling the same product.

However, purchasing behavior will be affected by the differences in advertising slogans and sales locations, even for the same product.⁷ This shows that the meaning of consuming and purchasing behavior is not limited to the simple use of products as physical objects. Even though purchasing decisions change with changes in the significance of a product, this does not imply a change in the utility formula and the emergence of irrational behavior. It is the significance of the product itself that changes based on the current milieu, rather than the individual consumer.

This also suggests that the decision to consume is not based solely on product information. As many sociological explanations of consumption have pointed out, consumers consider information from many channels simultaneously when making a purchasing decision. They may look at product ads on television, touch the product in the store, listen to the explanations of the sales clerk, and listen to word-of-mouth. Therefore, it is unreasonable to think that a purchasing decision will be made immediately after just seeing some information on a computer screen. Rather than being irrational, this shows great care in decision making; we could say it is exceptionally rational decision making.

The difference between the rational consumer in the neoclassical sense and the real-world consumer is in their ability to make decisions about consumption independently. As shown in Hiroshi Akuto's research, people have only two fields in which they make knowledgeable, independent decisions about the veracity and quality of specific pieces of information.⁸ Put another way, a person can never be more than a follower in the vast majority of fields in which they are interested. The salient point here pertaining to information technology is that even though a great deal of specific information in specialized fields flows constantly over the Internet, the real-world consumer is not the neoclassical economic man who can make independent decisions about consumption of products in all fields—a real consumer can only make those kinds

of decisions in very few fields. In other fields, the consumer must be a follower. This is why discussion about standards for evaluating products on the Internet is so valuable to followers.

The distribution system possesses this quality; information technology, however, possesses the characteristics described in (1) through (5), and since these two systems overlap, it will create a broad shift in consumer behavior. In the first quadrant (I) of the graph, “bulk production/bulk consumption” has a central value to consumer behavior, and a balance between supply and demand can be struck by lowering prices and increasing demand while reducing supply. However, in the second quadrant (II), the response of demand to price becomes sluggish, which indicates a “dead product.” When this happens, the power to determine the value of a product shifts to the consumer, because consideration is given to the perception of value in addition to the price-sensitive volume of consumption. In the third quadrant (III), there is a change in consumer behavior driven by information technology characteristics (2) through (5). As a result, the development of information technology cannot be evaluated with the economic perceptions that assume consumer behavior as described in characteristic (1).

4. IT and its effects on society: the problem of anonymity

In the real world, the consumer can make expert decisions in 2 or 3 fields, and as a follower, the consumer can make decisions in approximately 10 fields, and thus the role of distribution is to know the consumer-desired “time and place” and provide the appropriate selection of products. In its most basic meaning, distribution will not disappear, but the spread of information technology will most likely have a great impact on it.

When that happens, consumers will rely more on the opinions of others in place of being able to experience the actual product, and the issue will be how to tie into the evaluations and other information formed on the Internet. The problem is how to properly make evaluations of specialized information. A great deal of information became available on websites when Internet began to take root in Japan in 1995, and the public view of the Internet was optimistic for a while. As statements from many people collected on the web, the discussion would become be more free, egalitarian, and refined, which would create “citizens” that could resolve problems of great public significance. It was also believed that objective evaluations of specialist information would accumulate.

However these expectations were fulfilled only in the early days of the Internet, when it was supported by people skilled in navigating the loosely managed information space of computer communications. Then, when the great masses who were not initiated into the culture of PC-communications joined in, things took a turn for the worse. Anonymous, irresponsible statements began to circulate because emotionally charged and abusive people were circulating them in great numbers. The dark side of the Internet was growing. The validity of any evaluation of information was not guaranteed. The almost complete anonymity afforded by the Internet allowed irresponsible information, self-aggrandizement, and denigration of others to run rampant.

Large retail sites (like the Nihon Keizai Shimbun's "bk1") allowed independent book reviews and responses from readers to be posted to the site. They accepted contributions of book reviews, but even there, the anonymity created ethical problems. Underlying this problem is that the level of education in ethics was comparatively slower than the spread of the Internet and was not able to cope with the responsibility of anonymity. In addition, there is a problem with copyrights of the reviews given to newspapers and magazines (including academic and scientific magazines). If the copyright on reviews written by famous names is negated and the reviews become entirely available on the publisher's retail site because the review carries a certain public value, a different type of review may emerge in place of reviews with hidden agendas. However, the essential ingredient for such reviews does not exist, and so there is no stopping the slide of morals.

Thus, there will most likely not be one, simple deletion through the spread of information technology, as is commonly believed, and on the contrary, there seems no promise of establishing standards for evaluation of specialized information, as a result of anonymity. Information technology will reinforce some functions of distribution, while inducing an unstable restructuring of the whole.

Notes:

1. Masanori Moritani *IT Kakumei no Kyomou*, Bunshun Shinsho, q.v. Mr. Moritani said that another effect on society would be the opening of channels to public activity because the Internet would give individuals and small groups the ability to collect information and distribute statements.
2. The percentage of online orders for books is low in Japan. The industry's largest dealer, Kinokuniya, has not received more than 5% of sales from online orders. Shinichi Sano *Dare ga Hon wo Koroshita no ka*, Nikkei BP, 2001.
3. First-hand information is scarce in the guidebooks published by large travel agencies, and it is well known among those in the business that much of the information is borrowed from information submitted to other guidebooks.
4. More generally speaking, this advance is being facilitated by the development of personal media. This is the result of the disintegration of the purpose of personal media. Tatsuo Inamasu, *Pandora no Media*, Chikuma Shobo, 2003.
5. The instruction to "shed the experience of past successes," and "deal with the situation." *Hit Shouhin wo Tsukure—Kyodai Konbini no Senryaku.*, "NHK Close-up Gendai," broadcast: 7 October 2003.
6. This term was coined by Toshifumi Suzuki, president of Seven-Eleven Japan. Ryuichiro Matsubara, *Shohi shihonshugi no Yukue*, Chikuma Shinsho, 2000, q.v.
7. From his experience on the sales floor, Toshifumi Suzuki claims that sales of some products have taken off just by changing their location in the store. Toshifumi Suzuki, Ryuichiro Matsubara; "Interview," *IY Group Quarterly Report*, Spring 2001
8. Hiroshi Akuto, *Uresuji no Housoku*, Chikuma Shinsho, 1999.

● Distribution from the perspective of the media and the market (Japan)

