

SAVINGS AND SPENDING BEHAVIOR OF TEENAGERS IN OKINAWA, JAPAN

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Abstract

Teenagers in Okinawa prefecture represent a large but understudied population in Japan. This exploratory study increases the understanding of urban youth consumption by examining the savings and spending behavior of "Kōkōsei," high school students between the ages of 15 and 17, who live in Naha, capital of Okinawa. Selected demographic characteristics such as money management education sources and influence from parents, friends, high school courses, and the media, which are known to affect savings and spending rates, are examined. Implications of the findings for market researchers, educators, businesses and public policy makers are presented.

Keywords: teenagers, savings and spending behavior

Introduction

Japan is divided into five major islands and 47 prefectures, with their own capital cities. Okinawa prefecture, with its capital of Naha, is located at the southwestern tip of the Japanese archipelago and has a population of 1.31 million. Okinawa's rich cultural heritage and its close proximity to Taiwan and other Asian countries have allowed it, for generations, to

maintain trading and cultural relations throughout the East and Southeast Asian region. With the advent of militarization during the 1945-72 period, Okinawa was turned into a key military base for the U.S. chain of East Asian command (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

During the 1970s, Japan placed and Okinawans reluctantly accepted a set of policies and priorities for Okinawa to achieve 'parity with the mainland' by retaining U.S. military bases and introducing metropolitan and engineering practices around internationalism, environment, and leisure. Yet the poverty remains, Okinawa's economy remains flat, joblessness at about double the national average and per capita income half that of Tokyo (McCormack, 1998, 2007). Given the backdrop of Okinawan history and current situation, this research was conducted by studying teenagers in Naha, capital of Okinawa to highlight their consumption patterns to provide a more comprehensive picture of Japanese teenage consumption and to augment the few studies of Japanese youth surveyed in major cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto on mainland Japan.

Teenagers represent a large market segment worldwide because they religiously follow the latest trends and fashions and express themselves through their clothing

