

Downshifting And Sustainability in Japan

A Comparative Study of Living With Less

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of the *Living with Less* study that was conducted in Japan in the second half of 2012 as a follow-up of a similar study in the Netherlands. Practices, experiences and attitudes of voluntary and involuntary downshiftingers are discussed and new prospects for sustainability are explored. Results show that downshifting is closely connected with eco-friendliness and immaterial quality of life. Overall, findings are congruent with European and USA studies of downshifting. Different results for specific experiences and practices touch upon social-cultural-economic differences that could be a promising, valuable line for of further research.

Keywords: sustainable lifestyle, spending reduction, household consumption, personal finances.

Introduction

Living with less is generally considered an inconvenient option to increase sustainability. The current viewpoint is that the hedonistic and materialistic mentality of people would be too serious an obstacle for change. This paper however contests this vision, elaborating on results of previous studies of downshifting in North America and Europe. Given the similar development of consumerism in Japan to that of North America and Europe, we may assume that also in Japan innovative consumption movements such as downshifting do exist. If so, what are their characteristics? Do Japanese downshiftingers differ from their European and North American counterparts? This study investigates these issues with specific attention to options that downshifting could provide for a more sustainable society.

This paper comprises the following sections. After the general framing of the research question in this introduction, the paper discusses the main topics of the study, related research questions and hypotheses. Then the results of the study are presented and discussed within an international comparable perspective. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research.

Downshifting as Social-Cultural Innovation

The need to consume is not new. People have used resources in order to survive since early mankind. However, in the twentieth century, the commercialisation of consumption has brought about radical changes in both the volume and the cultural significance of consumption (Assadourian 2009; Levine 2006; Worldwatch 2004; De Geus 2003; Maniates 2001; Miller 1995; Schor 1998;). Discretionary consumption has become a mass phenomenon and not merely a privilege of the rich and middle class (Schor 1998: 217). As a result consumerism and the consumerist lifestyle have become dominant cultural features in the Western world and are rapidly spreading to other parts of the world. Over 2 billion people practice a consumerist lifestyle and this number is expected to increase exponentially due to the economic boom in Asia (Assadourian 2009). A lifestyle and culture that became common in Europe, North America and Japan in the twentieth century are going global in the twenty-first.

Obviously, increased consumption has improved living conditions on a large scale; yet there is also a downside. The costs that come with consumerism and the consumerist lifestyle are rising substantially for society in general, but also for individual consumers. The twentieth century's unprecedented growth of consumption undoubtedly puts a strain on environmental resources and may aggravate social and economic inequalities. Concurrently, risks are increasing: in personal life because of prohibitive debts, stress, illnesses or impoverishment (Assadourian 2009; Schor 2003). Also environmental disasters are increasing and are resulting in very high costs. As a response to the negative effects of overconsumption two important innovation movements have emerged in particular in Europe and North America, since the 1980s: the environmental movement and the downshifting movement.

In 1994 Gerard Celente, director of the New York based Trends Research Institute, introduced the concept downshifting to describe a growing trend in European and North American consumer societies. He predicted that later generations would follow the path of the boomers by seeking deeper life meaning outside of materialism. His prediction appears to have been validated by a number of surveys. A nationwide survey conducted by Juliet Schor (1998) in the USA revealed that 19% of American adults had voluntarily reduced their income and spending in the five years prior to the study. In Australia, a nationwide survey showed that 23% of adults aged 30-59 had downshifted over the ten years prior (Hamilton & Mail 2003). Likewise, in Britain, a study demonstrated that 25% of British adults aged 30-59 had downshifted over the ten years prior to the study (Hamilton 2003).

Other socio-cultural studies also point at more people changing towards a less consumerist way of life in the USA and Europe (Schreurs 2010; Assadourian 2009; Gandolfi & Cherrier 2009; Datamonitor 2003; Ray & Anderson 2000; Etzioni 1998; Schor 1998). The number of people dissatisfied with their lives and longing for a simpler, less stressful existence is even higher according to Datamonitor (2003). For instance, the results of the second annual National Geographic/GlobeScan 'Consumer Greendex' (2010) showed that, over the past year, consumers had adopted more environmentally friendly behaviour which had led to a general increase in Greendex scores. Because the Greendex measures the behavioural practices of citizens in 17 developed and developing countries, the results indicate that growing numbers of citizens are not only convinced that measures should be taken to preserve the planet but that they are also willing to adjust their behaviour toward a more sustainable lifestyle.

These results led researchers to conclude that downshifting, in particular in North America and Europe, is no longer an act of personal deviancy but rather an indication of a more fundamental change in consumer mentality and behaviour signalling immaterialism and a growing commitment to the planet.

Downshifting in Japan

In line with trends elsewhere, several studies show changing attitudes among Japanese consumers. A related 'slow movement' exists, which promotes a less materialistic, more eco-friendly way of life. In a 2009 survey, 57 percent of the Japanese people indicated that they were more environmentally conscious and 84 percent preferred to buy environmentally friendly everyday consumer products (McKinsey 2010). Over one third of the Japanese consumers had cut their expenses, while 53 percent affirmed that they preferred to 'spend time to save money' than to 'spend money to save time.' In addition, the Japanese consumers have been economising in the years before the survey. Shopping traffic in department stores decreased rapidly as did the sales of luxury goods (a one year decline before the survey of 10 to 30 percent). The downfall of this market, especially, is probably indicative of a downshifting trend, since one third of the customers who reduced expenses for luxury goods reported that they would 'never again spend the same way on luxury items as they used to do.'

Recent studies among younger Japanese also affirm a rather profound consumer mentality change. Okano (2009) points at the increasing *frīta* mentality, meaning that many young people prefer free time above the long working hours their parents were used to having. Matsuda (2010) argues in his extensive marketing study that the new generation is averse to corporate life, anti-materialistic, and far too frugal to spend. What he calls the 'consumption-haters' appear to show significant resemblance to downshifters.

The Fukushima disaster in 2011 probably has strengthened downshifting trends. According to the survey on post-disaster consumer awareness conducted in December 2011 by Dentsu Inc., 78 percent of 1,200 respondents aged 20 to 70 said they wanted to rethink their priorities and make better use of their money and time. JFS chief executive

Junko Eda Hiro argues that an increasing number of young people supports new values and lifestyles that are different from their elders: “They value connecting with others and nature and finding peace and happiness in doing so, rather than buying and owing stuff” (Eda Hiro 2011b: 1). Summarising, I think that also in Japan people are rethinking lifestyles characterised by money and consumption and opt for less materialistic, more eco-friendly lifestyles. This means that downshifting indeed is a widespread transformation process in postmodern societies, which is closely connected with sustainability. Studying Japanese people who actually try to reduce consumption could be very informative, because knowledge regarding experiences with downshifting and lifestyle changes might reveal new perspectives of sustainable lifestyles. Relevant questions therefore are: How do Japanese downshifters reduce expenses? What does this actually mean for them? What do consumers see as positive and negative aspects of their experiences? And how does living with less money relate to sustainability? Answers to these questions are important not only to get a better understanding of today’s social-cultural development, but will also be also indispensable if sustainable development is to be successful. Moreover studying Japanese downshifters could give a necessary contribution to international comparative studies of consumer behaviour.

This study, therefore, addresses the following topics, questions and hypotheses:

1. The first main topic is downshifting, which is simply defined as reducing expenses, regardless the intention, voluntarily or involuntarily. Downshifting is conceived as a multidimensional life changing process that affects many aspects of people’s life. In this study downshifting is operationalised as concrete behavioural practices. Since previous studies demonstrated that the voluntary or involuntary nature of downshifting could significantly influence results, the Japan study included both voluntary and involuntary downshifters.
2. The second topic explored is the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of downshifters. Contrary to the popular belief that voluntary downshifting is predominantly an upper middle class phenomenon, empirical data have revealed this not to be the case. In Britain (Hamilton 2003) and in Australia (Breakspear & Hamilton 2004; Hamilton & Mail 2003), voluntary downshifters appear to be spread relatively evenly across all socio-economic classes (2003: 15). Blue-collar and white-collar workers are equally represented (Schor 1998), while high income groups did have fewer numbers of downshifters. Diversity is another aspect mentioned by anthropologist Richard Wilk, who described downshifters as a very heterogeneous group consisting of “neo-primitivists, romantic ‘back-to-the-land-localists,’ people looking for ways to downshift to less stressful jobs, environmental activists and retirees” (2001: 257). Research conducted in the USA (Schor 1998) and in Australia (Breakspear & Hamilton 2004) found that men and women were evenly represented, while British research has shown greater numbers of women. Finally, all studies reported that people in their thirties are more likely to downshift than those in their forties and fifties. These considerations led to the following research question:

Q 1: What are the characteristics of downshifters in Japan? Are there important differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifters?

3. Living with less money affects important life domains because of the reduction of specific expenditures (Schreurs 2010). We collected empirical data on changes in consumption expenditures so that we could explore how consumers prioritised expenses. In the questionnaire that we applied in our study (see Appendix 1) an apparently counterintuitive question is included regarding increases in expenditures so as to gain more insight regarding the prevalent notion that (voluntary) downshifters are mainly driven by the desire to increase their quality of life (Schreurs 2010; Breakspear & Hamilton 2004; Elgin 1981; Etzioni 1998; Huneke 2005; Schor 1998).

Q 2: How do Japanese downshifters adjust their consumption expenditures, and are there differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifters?

Q 3: For which goods and services did voluntary and involuntary downshifters increase expenditures?

H 1: Japanese downshifters tend to adjust their consumption expenditures in similar manners as downshifters in Europe or the USA.

4. The fourth topic explored experiences of downshifting in the context of postmodern consumer society. The reported individual experiences of voluntary downshifters have been discussed in several studies (Schreurs 2010;

Breakspear & Hamilton 2004; Hamilton 2003). Downshifter reported feelings of relief or a sense of personal freedom. Other positive experiences reported include feelings of being in control of one's life, reduced stress and the acquisition of a more fulfilling life. Downshifter also reported of developing a more critical attitude towards society and higher levels of active social engagement. Also, they reported investing more time in personal growth and, in particular, in creative or musical pursuits (Schreurs 2010; Breakspear & Hamilton 2004). Greater emphasis on caring for health has also been noted (Drake 2000). Lastly, Hamilton (2003) concluded that downshifting is a change process in which money and material possessions play a minor role.

Downshifter also reported negative experiences, for instance increased anxiety over finances. In particular, concerns regarding the ability to provide for personal retirement were common, as were concerns for fewer opportunities for 'luxury' or 'splurge' spending (Schreurs 2010; Breakspear & Hamilton 2004). Disciplined financial planning and careful spending have thus been perceived as negative aspects of downshifting (Schreurs 2010; Drake 2000). Critical reactions from friends and family have also been reported as negative (Schreurs 2010; Breakspear & Hamilton 2004). These findings directed the following questions and hypotheses:

Q 4: What are the main positive experiences of living with less money of Japanese voluntary and involuntary downshifter?

Q 5: What are the main negative experiences of living with less money of Japanese voluntary and involuntary downshifter?

The Netherlands study Living with Less (Schreurs 2010) found that voluntary downshifter were confronted with reproach and critique from their peer group, and this appears to be confirmed by Breakspear and Hamilton (2004) who also reported that the downshifter in their study received negative reactions from their social environment. These findings further encouraged us to test the following hypotheses:

H 2: Involuntary downshifter have higher scores on the negative experiences than voluntary downshifter.

H 3: Voluntary downshifter experience more social critics than involuntary downshifter.

5. Since downshifter do not live in a social vacuum but interact with their social-cultural context, a major objective of this study was to examine this interplay, in particular with regard to the attitudes: Frugality and autonomy. Social-cultural consumption theories in the tradition of Veblen (1948), Bourdieu (1984) and the anthropologist, Douglas (1996), form the academic frame of reference for our study of downshifting (De Geus 2003; Holt 1997; 1998; Schor 1991; 1998). In particular, Schor's theory on postmodern consumption acceleration, known as the principle of "keeping up with the Joneses," guided our analyses. We assumed that downshifting as a consumption phenomenon is entangled with postmodern tendencies of hyper-consumption. Theories of post-materialism (Inglehart 1977; 1997) and characteristics of new consumer groups (Etzioni 1998; Ray & Anderson 2000; De Geus 2003) inspired us to hypothesise downshifter's aspirations of autonomy and self-determination. In the Netherlands (Schreurs 2012) we showed negative reactions and critiques from the social environment. Lastovicka's frugality scale is used to measure the dominant attitudes that direct frugal behaviour. Since all propositions in this scale address practices and not values, this measure appeared to be congruent with the general research focus on concrete consumer behaviour, and two propositions (9 and 10) measure feelings of autonomy and independence. Based on these deliberations the following research question and hypotheses were included:

Q 6: What are the scores of Japanese downshifter on the frugality scale, and are there differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifter?

H 4: Japanese downshifter are very disciplined in spending money and less receptive to inter-personal or commercial influences than other people.

H 5: Japanese downshifter have strong feelings of autonomy and self-determination, and a strong tendency to organise their life according to their own system of standards and values.

6. The sixth topic in this study is sustainability. Due to recent discussions on energy shortage and climate change, the call to moderate consumption has become increasingly more compelling. Although technical solutions remain the primary focus of attention, seeking to change consumer behaviour is receiving increasing support. This attention is not limited to reducing the use of fossil fuels. It also includes generally lowering CO₂ emissions, limiting waste, and moderating the use of resources. These steps are perceived as not only necessary but also inevitable if we are to increase sustainability (Jackson 2009; Assadourian 2009).

This study goes beyond the common definition of sustainable consumption as consuming green products as it explores opportunities for sustainable living or a sustainable lifestyle. In line with Callenbach's (2002) green triangle and analogously to the triple bottom line of corporate social responsibility, I also argue that a sustainable lifestyle should integrate environmental impact with (personal) finances and quality of life. This view is formulated in the Dutch triple pillars or triple Gs of a sustainable lifestyle *geld* (money), *groen* (eco-friendliness) and *gezondheid/welzijn* (health/wellbeing). This view holds that a sustainable lifestyle results from putting the right balance between the three pillars. The basic assumption is the concurrency between the pillars and their mutual interdependence: changes in one influence the outcome of the other two. Therefore this study collected data on eco-friendly consumer behaviour such as reduced energy consumption and transportation, but also on personal expenses, health and wellbeing, each of them as positive or negative experiences. In sum, the purpose of this important element of the study was to explore the connection between sustainability and living with less and to examine the triple pillar balance, as exemplified in the following research question:

Q 7: How does downshifting contribute to sustainability and do voluntary and involuntary downshifters differ in this respect?

Methods

Procedure

The original questionnaire, which was used in the Netherlands and partly also in North America, was pretested twice and adjusted to the Japanese situation. Pre-tests of this questionnaire showed that two parts did not fit well with the Japanese situation. The extended list of 31 consumption activities regarding purchasing, food, leisure, environment, do-it-yourself and mobility (question 45 in the original version) did not parallel with activities of Japanese consumers. The list of activities could easily lead to misunderstandings, but it would take much extra time and study to adjust the list to the Japanese situation. Therefore, I decided to omit this part. The second adjustment concerned the two open questions of the positive and negative experiences. These questions were replaced by closed questions reflecting the categorisation of positive and negative experiences which resulted from these questions in the original study in the Netherlands. The adjusted questionnaire then was translated in Japanese and pre-tested several times by CIAS colleagues before being finalised.

Questionnaires were distributed by staff members of Kyoto University amongst a group of volunteers of the waste awareness program of the Do You Kyoto campaign. Further staff members of the Kyoto International House cooperated, as well as staff of the Miyako Ecology Center. Participants were also recruited via the JARFO Art Centre and in various other contacts with Japanese. Completed surveys were accepted from July 2012 until December 31, 2012. We received 50 responses, which we subjected to descriptive analyses during February and March 2013. Since the sample was small, no correlative analyses could be done. The data however indicate possible trends that need warrant further study.

Sample

Our sample of 50 participants comprised three groups: voluntary downshifters (N=26), involuntary downshifters (N=14) and non-downshifters (N=10). The selection criteria for these groups and our assumptions are briefly discussed below.

Downshifters (N=40) were identified by their response to the question: "Did you within the last two years

deliberately reduce your expenses?” (Survey Question 14 in Appendix 1). Participants that met the criterion for downshifters (N=40) were further classified as either ‘voluntary’ or ‘involuntary’ downshifters. This was determined by the following questions: “How did the household income change when you deliberately reduced your expenditure pattern?” and “What was the reason for the change in net household income?” With respect to the latter, one of the response options was ‘voluntary choice’ thus determining whether the respondent was voluntary downshifters (survey questions 15 and 16 in Appendix 1). In total, 20 downshifters changed their expenditure patterns after a reduction of income while 14 opted to downshift despite experiencing no change in income.

An additional 6 respondents chose to downshift after an increase in income. Of those who experienced a reduction in income, this reduction was voluntary for 6 and involuntary for the remaining 14. In sum, assuming that downshifting despite increased or unchanged household income is voluntary, the group of voluntary downshifters (N= 26) comprised: 1) Participants with equal household income (N= 14); 2) Participants with higher household income (N=6) 3) Participants with a consciously chosen lower household income (N=14). The respondents who experienced a decrease in household income and did not choose the answer category of whether voluntary choice was the reason for the decrease were classified as involuntary downshifters (N=14). The numbers of voluntary and involuntary downshifters however were too small for further analyses.

Because the pre-test affirmed the assumption that spending less could take place without a reduction in income, we chose spending reduction as the selection criteria instead of income reduction, which is the prevailing criterion in studies of downshifters (Schor 1998; Huneke 2005; Schreurs 2010).

Table 0: The sample.

	N	%
Voluntary downshifters	26	65
Involuntary downshifters	14	35
Total downshifters	40	100
Non-downshifters	10	

Measures and approach to analysis

The Living with Less Survey (See Appendix 1) comprised four sections:

1. Background Information: Items measuring background information such as demographic and socio-economic characteristics.
2. Finances and lifestyle: Items measuring one’s financial situation, possible reduction, changes in expenditures.
3. Experiences with downshifting.
4. Attitudes regarding frugality and autonomy.

The answer options were ordinal or nominal and scored on 3-point or 5-point scales. Items addressed the following issues:

Demographic characteristics measured included age, gender, educational attainment and household composition. Socio-economic variables measured were personal net monthly income, total net household income, paid employment, hours per week of paid employment, unpaid activities and hours per week of unpaid employment.

The variable education was dichotomised into high level (undergraduate and graduate) and moderate to low level (junior and senior high school, vocational training and junior college).

With respect to religion, respondents were given two answer options by which they could indicate whether religion was actually important or unimportant to them. Respondents that indicated that religion was important, could choose how often they prayed.

Net monthly household income was initially scored as falling into one of six ranges of net household income (in Japanese Yen). Subsequently, the lowest category ‘less than ¥100,000’ and ‘between ¥100,000 and ¥200,000’ were

collapsed into one category, namely ‘between ¥100,000 and ¥200,000.’

The number of paid working hours per week was divided into four categories: no paid employment, part-time employment for less than 20 hours per week, employment between 20 and 40 hours, more than 40 working hours per week. Unpaid activities were divided into three categories: housekeeping, child care and elderly care. The number of hours comprised three categories: less than 20 hours per week, between 20 and 40 hours per week and more than 40 hours.

Changes in financial situation were classified under one of three categories: increase in income, decrease in income or unchanged income. Changes in expenditures were measured using a list of sixteen consumption items (e.g. ‘When you deliberately reduced your expenditure pattern, did you spend less, more or the same amount on the following items?’). Differences between the groups were determined using descriptive analyses.

Participants’ experiences with downshifting were measured with a list of 16 propositions based upon the categories of positive and negative experiences of downshifting resulting from the Living with Less study in the Netherlands (Schreurs 2010). In the questionnaire positive and negative experiences were mixed, but in this paper results for the two categories are presented separately in two tables.

Frugality was measured by Lastovicka et al.’s (1999) frugality scale which is a measure of frugal attitudes consisting of eight statements that each reflect a specific aspect of frugality (e.g. ‘If you take good care of your possessions you will definitely save money in the long run’). Answers were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ with an additional response option of ‘no answer.’ The higher the score, the more strongly the respondent agreed with the proposition and the more frugal the respondent. In order to test Hypotheses 4 and 5 that investigated the assumption that downshifters are less susceptible to interpersonal or commercial influences, two propositions addressing respondents’ autonomy were added.

Results

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Japanese downshifters

The results presented in Table 1, Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that downshifters in our sample tend to be fairly highly educated males and females. Most downshifters were under 45 years of age. The education level of both voluntary and involuntary downshifters was rather equal, although relatively more involuntary downshifters had senior education. Almost all downshifters received income from paid employment; half had a monthly personal net income between ¥100,000 and ¥300,000. Again the results were similar for the voluntary and involuntary downshifters. Considering the household net income, the largest portion of downshifters was in the top level of above ¥600,000. The number of involuntary downshifters was relatively greater than of the voluntary downshifters (50% versus 35%).

Over half of the downshifters lived in a major town.¹ A large portion of involuntary downshifters (79%) were couples with children. Voluntary downshifters were more likely to be single or single with children (54%).

A majority of downshifters (68%) had a weekly work load of more than 40 hours. 15% worked between 30 and 40 hours. The voluntary downshifters outnumbered the involuntary downshifters (81% versus 43%).² Regarding unpaid activities, over half of downshifters (60%) reported unpaid activities. The highest scores had the involuntary downshifters (64%). The average time spend on unpaid work was < 20 hours weekly. The majority of downshifters reported that religion is not important in their life; the portions of involuntary and voluntary downshifters were more or less equal.

Figure 1. Age distribution of respondents

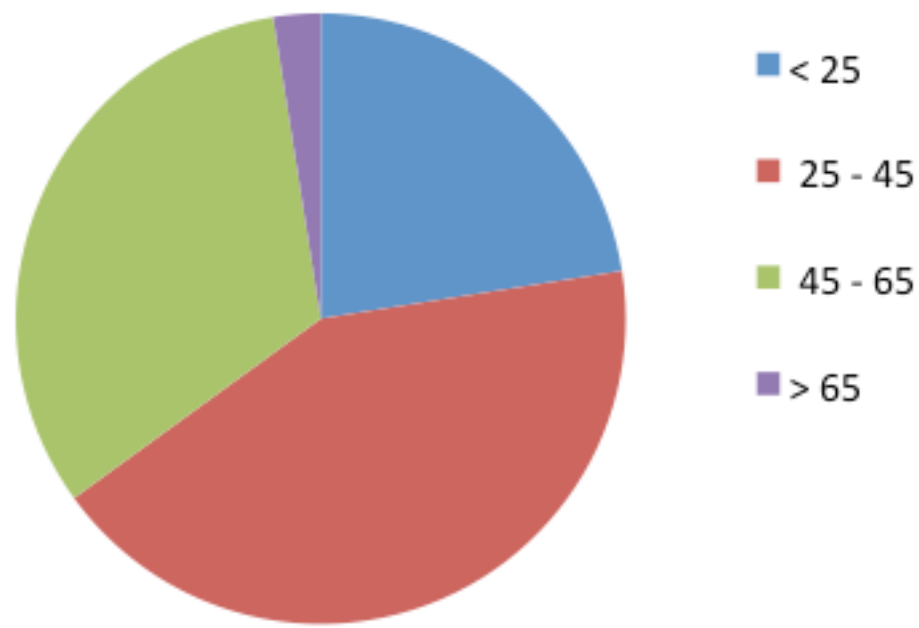


Figure 2. Monthly net household incomes (x 1000 ₺)

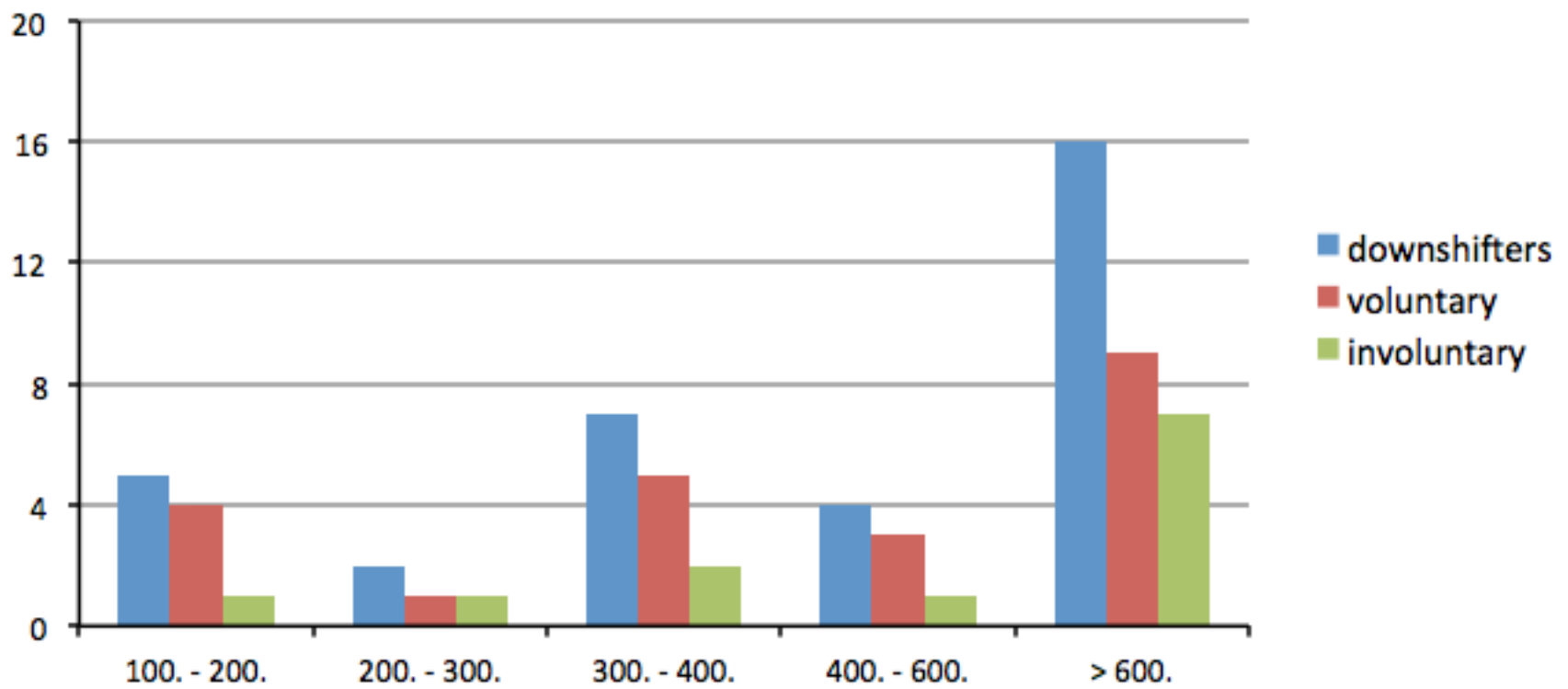


Table 1: Demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

		Downshifters					
		all		voluntary		involuntary	
		N (= 40)	%	N (= 26)		N (= 14)	
Sex	Male	21	53	16	59	5	36
	Female	19	47	10	37	9	64
Age	< 25	9	23	7	27	2	*
	25-45	17	43	12	46	5	36
	45-65	13	33	7	27	6	43
	> 65	1	*	0	*	1	*
Education	Low-intermediate	10	25	5	19	5	36
	High	29	73	20	84	9	64
	Others	1	*	1	*	0	*
Residence	Village	2	*	1	*	1	*
	Town	8	20	5	19	3	*
	Middle	5	13	1	*	4	29
	Major	23	58	17	65	6	43
	No answer	2	*	2	*	0	*

Household composition	Single	15	38	13	54	2	*
	Single with children	1	*	1	*	0	*
	Couple	5	13	2	*	3	*
	Couple with children	17	58	9	35	8	57
	Other	2	*	1	*	1	*
Personal monthly income #	< 100.	3	*	2	*	1	*
		13	33	8	31	5	36
		7	18	4	15	3	*
		6	15	4	15	2	*
		2	*	2	*	0	*
	> 500.	4	13	3	*	1	*
	Missing	5	13	3	*	2	*
Household monthly income #		5	13	4	15	1	*
		2	*	1	*	1	*
		7	18	5	19	2	*
		3	*	2	*	1	*
		1	*	1	*	0	*
	> 600	16	40	9	35	7	50
	Missing	6	15	4	15	2	*
Paid employment (hours)	None	2	*	1	*	1	*
	< 20 hours	3	*	1	*	2	*
	20–40 hrs	7	17	2	*	5	36
	> 40 hrs	27	68	21	81	6	43
	Missing	1	*	0	*	0	*
Unpaid work	Housekeeping	13	33	8	31	5	36
	Child care	4	10	2	*	2	*
	Elderly care	2	*	2	*	0	*
	Other	5	13	3	*	2	8
Hours unpaid work	<20	11	28	7	27	4	29
	20–40	5	13	3	*	2	*
	>40	1	*	0	*	1	*
	Missing	7	17	5	19	2	*
Religion importance	Yes	7	17	5	19	2	*
	No	27	68	18	69	9	64
	Missing	6	15	3	*	3	*

1000 yen

Changes in finances

Respondents were asked whether their net household income had changed when they decided to reduce their spending (see Figure 2 and Table 2). Consistent with our selection criteria, all involuntary downshifters had experienced a decrease in household income. Almost half of the downshifters decided to reduce spending while their income remained the same or higher. Around one fifth of the voluntary downshifters reported an increase in household income when they decided to reduce expenses. Around one quarter of the voluntary downshifters had experienced a decrease in household income.

Table 2: Changes in household income.

	Downshifters					
	all		voluntary		involuntary	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less income	20	50	6	26	14	100

More income	6	15	6	22	0	**
Equal income	14	35	14	52	0	**
Total	40	100	26		14	

If we consider the income situation for all downshiffters, we can conclude that half the sample (50%) had experienced a decrease in household income. The differences in the reasons for income decrease are also noteworthy (See Table 3). Twenty downshiffters had experienced a decrease in income when they decided to reduce spending. The reasons for income decrease as shown in Table 3 are often job related. Four participants reported dismissal and four participants noted wage cut or job change (in the answer category ‘other reasons’) as main reasons for decreased income. Others reported circumstantial reasons such as change in family situation or national recession and earthquake.

Table 3: Reasons for income decrease (multiple answers possible).

	Downshiffters					
	all		voluntary		involuntary	
	N		N	%	N	
Own choice	6	15	6	*	**	**
Dismissal	4	*	0	*	4	*
Retirement	0	*	0	*	0	*
Illness	1	*	0	*	1	*
End social welfare	0	*	0	*	0	*
End child allowance	1	*	0	*	1	*
Savings exhausted	0	*	0	*	0	*
Reduced benefit	0	*	0	*	0	*
Divorce	0	*	0	*	0	*
Dept repayment	0	*	0	*	0	*
Other*	8	*	1		7	

As shown in Table 4, most downshiffters (42%) reported a monthly spending reduction between ¥10,000 and ¥25,000 and one quarter reported a reduction between ¥25,000 and ¥50,000. While keeping in mind that the sample size is small, and it is not possible to calculate statistically significant correlations, the amount of spending reduction reported appears to be remarkably similar for both voluntary and involuntary downshiffters. Half of all downshiffters (50%) reported that they reduced expenses to increase savings (14 voluntary and 4 involuntary downshiffters). Two participants reported choosing to reduce spending to repay debts.

Table 4: Amount of spending reduction (¥).

	Downshiffters					
	all		voluntary		involuntary	
	N (= 40)	%	N (= 26)		N (= 14)	
< 10.000	6	15	4	15	2	*
	16	42	11	46	5	36
	9	23	6	*	3	*
	3	*	2	*	1	*
> 100.000	1	*	0	*	1	*
No answer	4	10	2	*	2	*
Total	40		26		14	

Changes in consumption expenditures

Q 2: How do Japanese downshiffters adjust their consumption expenditures? Do results point towards possible differences between voluntary and involuntary downshiffters of interest for further study?

Q 3: On what goods and services did expenditures increase? Do results point towards possible differences between

voluntary and involuntary downshiffters of interest for further study?

H 1: Japanese downshiffters tend to adjust their consumption expenditures in like manner as Dutch downshiffters.

Results (Figure 3 and Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7) show that a substantial majority of downshiffters reduced expenses on clothing, impulse buying and restaurants. Other frequently mentioned items were food, energy, hobby and savings. Expenses for holidays, housing and gifts were reduced by less than one fifth of the downshiffters. The least likely items on which expenditures were reduced were debt repay and charity.

With regard to unchanged expenses more than half of the participants listed spending on holidays, gifts and charity. Expenses for housing and theatre were also frequently reported as unchanged. The lowest scores for both voluntary and involuntary downshiffters were for clothing and impulse buying. As expected downshiffters overall showed low scores with regard to increased expenditures. No one spends more money on housing, books and CDs, charity, clothing and food. However for some items, expenses did increase. The most frequently reported items were saving (23%), hobbies (10%) and gifts (8%).

Do results point at different ways of spending reduction between voluntary and involuntary downshiffters? Although the numbers of the subsamples are low, some results might be meaningful for further research on trends in spending behaviour of voluntary and involuntary downshiffters. Overall, results for reduced expenses (Table 5) showed that both categories of downshiffters reported high percentages of reduction for most items. However some differences could be noted. Involuntary downshiffters more frequently reduced expenses for savings (50% versus 23%), holidays (36% versus 12%) impulse buying (86% versus 65%). Voluntary downshiffters on the other hand reduced their expenses more frequently for restaurant (80% versus 57%), food (58% versus 50%) and furniture (38% versus 21%). With regard to unchanged expenses as well results showed differences between the subsamples. Voluntary downshiffters more often kept expenses unchanged for saving (35% versus 29%), hobby (42% versus 29%) and housing (50% versus 43%). Involuntary downshiffters on the other hand more frequently did not change their expenses for restaurant (43% versus 0%) and food (57% versus 35%). Finally, voluntary downshiffters were more likely to report increased expenses, albeit a small portion of the sample. Over a quarter of voluntary downshiffters reported increased expenses on savings, hobbies and gifts.

Results for hypothesis 1

Do Japanese downshiffters tend to adjust their consumption expenditures in like manner as Dutch downshiffters?

The Japanese downshiffters in our sample demonstrated a differentiated pattern of spending changes comparable with the downshifting strategies of the Dutch in the *Living with Less* study (2010). Shifting spending preferences appears to be more likely than across the board cut backs. Favourite items for reduction in both groups were impulse buying, clothing and restaurant visits. On the other hand we found different results for debt repayment and saving. Dutch downshiffters were likely to increase their investment in savings (around 45%) and debt repayment (around 50%), whereas a considerably smaller portion of the Japanese respondents increased debt repayment (3%) and savings (23%). Striking differences were also noted for energy use and holidays. Whereas around 70% of Dutch downshiffters reduced energy expenses, less than 50% of the Japanese did. And much more Japanese downshiffters kept holiday expenses unchanged.

These results might indicate that Japanese downshiffters are likely to adjust expenses in an overall similar pattern of reduction as Dutch downshiffters do. The different outcomes for individual items of reduction—for instance energy use and debt repayment—can only be valued in further socio-cultural follow-up studies. Considering the fact that size and characteristics of the samples in the two studies are considerably different (1100 Dutch respondents versus 50 Japanese respondents), and more importantly, considering the profound differences in consumer culture, we should be very restrained in drawing conclusions from this comparison.

Figure 3. Changes in expenditures

Figure 3. Changes in expenditures

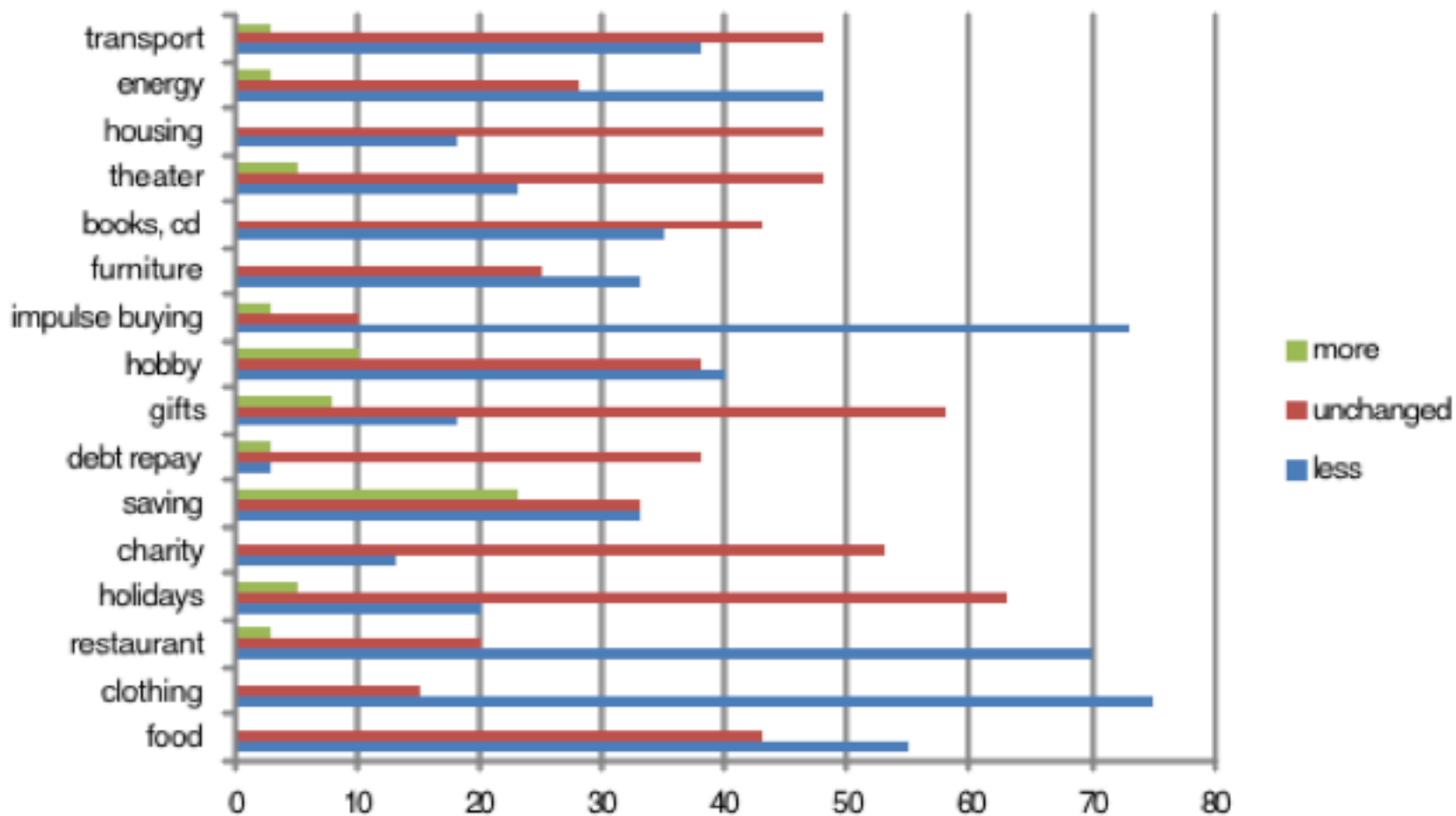


Table 5: Reduced expenditures.

	Downshifters						
	all		voluntary		involuntary		
	N (= 40)	%	N (= 26)	%	(N = 14)	%	N
Transport	15	38	8	31	7	50	8
Energy	19	48	12	46	7	50	9
Housing	7	18	4	15	3	*	14
Theatre	9	23	4	15	5	36	10
Books, CD	14	35	9	35	5	36	9
Furniture	13	33	10	38	3	21	17
Impulse buying	29	73	17	65	12	86	6
Hobby	16	40	9	35	7	50	5
Gifts	7	18	4	15	3	21	7
Debt repay	1	*	0	*	1	*	23
Saving	13	33	6	23	7	50	5
Charity	5	13	3	12	2	*	14
Holidays	8	20	3	12	5	36	5
Restaurant	28	70	20	80	8	57	3
Clothing	30	75	19	73	11	79	4
Food	22	55	15	58	7	50	1

Table 6: Unchanged expenses.

	Downshifters						
	all		voluntary		involuntary		
	N (= 40)	%	N (= 26)		N		N
Transport	16	40	10	38	6	43	8
Energy	11	28	6	23	5	36	9
Housing	19	48	13	50	6	43	14
Theatre	19	48	12	46	7	50	10
Books, CD	17	43	10	38	7	50	9
Furniture	10	25	5	19	5	36	17

Impulse buying	4	10	2	*	2	*	6
Hobby	15	38	11	42	4	29	5
Gifts	23	58	15	58	8	57	7
Debt repay	15	38	10	38	5	36	23
Saving	13	33	9	35	4	29	5
Charity	21	53	14	54	7	50	14
Holidays	25	63	17	65	8	57	5
Restaurant	8	20	2	*	6	43	3
Clothing	6	15	3	*	3	21	4
Food	17	43	9	35	8	57	1

Table 7: Increased expenses.

	Downshifters						
	all		voluntary		involuntary		
	N (= 40)	%	N (= 26)	%	(N = 14)	%	N
Transport	1	*	1	*	0	*	8
Energy	1	*	1	*	0	*	9
Housing	0	*	0	*	0	*	14
Theatre	2	*	1	*	1	*	10
Books, CD	0	*	0	*	0	*	9
Furniture	0	*	0	*	0	*	17
Impulse buying	1	*	1	*	0	*	6
Hobby	4	10	2	*	2	*	5
Gifts	3	8	3	12	0	*	7
Debt repay	1	*	0	*	1	*	23
Saving	9	23	7	27	2	*	5
Charity	0	*	0	*	0	*	14
Holidays	2	*	2	*	0	*	5
Restaurant	1	*	1	*	0	*	3
Clothing	0	*	0	*	0	*	4
Food	0	*	0	*	0	*	1

Positive and negative experiences of downshifting

Q 4: What are the main positive experiences of living with less money of Japanese downshifters? Do results point towards possible differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifters of interest for further study?

Q 5: What are the main negative experiences of living with less money of Japanese downshifters? Do results point towards possible differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifters of interest for further study?

H 2: Involuntary downshifters have higher scores on the negative experiences than voluntary downshifters.

H 3: Voluntary downshifters experience more social critics than involuntary downshifter.

The results presented in Table 8 and Table 9 show that downshifting was associated with rather positive experiences. Over half of the downshifters agreed with five out of ten positive experiences and denied five out of six negative experiences. Strikingly, the positive experiences that had the highest scores were the sustainable sides of downshifting: ‘eco-friendliness’ (61%), growing ‘appreciation of the non-materialistic aspects of life’ (58%) and ‘waste reduction’ (55%). Also the financial aspects of downshifting were experienced in a rather positive way. Participants liked saving (55%) and they were proud that they succeeded in cutting expenses (55%). The lowest scores got the proposition: ‘downshifting improved social contacts’ (20%). Respondents did not feel that downshifting contributed to their social life (65%), nor to their quality of life (55%).

The results for the negative experiences in Table 9 are congruent with this. A large portion of participants denied the

three negative social experiences in our list: criticism from other people (85%), problems with partner or relatives (80%) and social isolation (75%). Apparently, living with less money hardly caused social problems for most downshifters. Stress (48%), problems related with poverty (40%) and deprivation (30%) got the highest scores. A larger portion of downshifters though denied the last two experiences (respectively 50% and 55%).

Results for hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3

Results point towards possible differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifters. Results in Table 8 show that voluntary downshifters are slightly more positive about their financial experiences and sustainable experiences. Involuntary downshifters more often chose life related positive experiences, such as ‘increased quality of life’ and ‘appreciation for the non-materialistic aspects of life.’ Results for the negative experiences showed differences between voluntary and involuntary differences. More involuntary downshifters felt socially isolated and agreed with the statement: “I had to forsake too much.” On the other hand, more involuntary than voluntary downshifters denied feeling poor or having problems with their partner or relatives.

Summarising, there are only weak indications for our hypotheses that involuntary downshifters have higher scores on the negative experiences than voluntary downshifters. None of the respondents affirmed the statement “I was criticised by other people.” The hypothesis that voluntary downshifters experience more social criticism than involuntary downshifters (Hypothesis 3) is thus rejected.

The high scores of sustainable living could possibly be caused by the large portion of the respondents being associated with environmental organisations. However, this finding could also be indicative for the more general trend of in postmodern consumer culture. Former downshifting studies (Schreurs 2010; Huneke 2005; Hamilton 2003; Schor 1998) showed already a growing practical commitment with the environment. It would be interesting to further explore this issue.

One of the main findings of the Dutch study (Schreurs 2010) was the negative social response to downshifting, in particular for voluntary downshifters. In this light the finding that none of the Japanese respondents (0%) experienced criticism from other people is remarkable indeed.

Table 8: Positive experiences of living with less money.

	Downshifters					
	all		voluntary		involuntary	
	N (= 40)	%	N (=26)	%	N (=14)	%
I liked budgeting						
yes — a little bit	19	48	14	54	5	36
no	17	42	8	31	9	64
no answer	4	10	3	*	1	*
I was proud that I succeeded in cutting expenses						
yes — a little bit	22	55	16	59	6	43
no	14	35	6	23	8	57
no answer	4	10	3	*	1	*
I liked saving						
yes — a little bit	22	55	16	59	6	43
no	15	38	7	27	8	57
no answer	3	*	2	*	1	*
I liked reducing debts						
yes — a little bit	11	28	7	27	4	29
no	20	50	12	46	8	57
no answer	9	23	7	27	2	*
I valued more the non-materialistic aspects of life						
yes — a little bit	23	58	14	54	9	64
no	12	30	8	31	4	29

no answer	5	13	3	*	2	*
It improved my social contacts						
yes — a little bit	8	20	5	19	3	*
no	26	65	15	58	11	79
no answer	6	15	5	19	1	*
It gave more quality of life						
yes — a little bit	12	30	6	23	6	43
no	22	55	15	58	7	50
no answer	6	15	4	15	2	*
I liked to waste less						
yes — a little bit	22	55	15	58	7	50
no	12	30	7	27	5	36
no answer	6	15	4	15	2	*
My life has become more eco-friendly						
yes — a little bit	24	61	16	62	8	57
no	10	25	6	22	4	29
no answer	6	15	4	15	2	*
I liked the challenge of making both ends meet						
yes — a little bit	12	30	10	38	2	*
no	22	35	12	46	10	71
no answer	6	15	4	15	2	*

Table 9: Negative experiences of living with less money.

	Downshifters					
	all		voluntary		involuntary	
	N (= 40)	%	N (=26)	%	N (=14)	%
I felt socially isolated						
yes — a little bit	7	17	3	*	4	31
no	30	75	20	78	10	69
no answer	3	8	2	*	1	*
There were problems with my partner or relatives						
yes — a little bit	4	10	3	*	1	*
no	32	80	18	70	14	100
no answer	4	10	3	*	1	*
I had stress and worries						
yes — a little bit	19	48	11	43	8	57
no	16	40	11	43	5	36
no answer	5	13	3	*	2	*
I was criticized by other people						
yes — a little bit	0	0	0	*	0	*
no	34	85	21	81	13	93
no answer	6	15	4	*	2	*
I had to forsake too much						
yes — a little bit	12	30	6	23	6	46
no	22	55	15	58	7	50
no answer	6	15	4	*	2	*
I felt poor						
yes — a little bit	16	40	12	44	4	31
no	20	50	11	41	9	64
no answer	4	10	3	*	1	*

Attitudes: frugality and autonomy

Q 6: What are the scores of Japanese downshifters on the frugality scale? Are there indications for possible differences between voluntary and involuntary downshifters?

H 4: Downshifters are more disciplined in spending money and less receptive to inter-personal or commercial influences than other people.

H 5: Downshifters have strong feelings of autonomy and self-determination, and a strong tendency to organise their life according to their own system of standards and values.

The frugality scale results (Table 10) show that, in general, all participants reported being fairly frugal. A majority of the downshifters appeared to agree with the 7 propositions of the Lastovicka’s frugality scale. Results for proposition 9, “Compared with others in my environment, I am disciplined with money and make less impulse purchases,” are rather mixed. One third of the downshifters agreed, while over 40 percent reported that they don’t consider themselves more disciplined with money than other people.

Considering the clusters of attitudes we noted that the majority of downshifters agreed that it is important to carefully handle possessions and resources (Lastovicka’s proposition 1,2, 3 and 5). When it comes to spending discipline however (Lastovicka’s propositions 6, 7 and 8) participants appeared to be less frugal. Although 78 percent of the downshifters agreed that it is important to be careful in how they spend their money, the scores regarding spending discipline were far less. While half of the downshifters try to get the most out of their money, around 40 percent are willing to postpone purchases to save money (Lastovicka’s propositions 7 and 8). This sensitivity for impulse buying was affirmed by the results for proposition 9. Only one third of the downshifters think they do less impulse purchases than other people in their environment.

Results for Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5

The expectation that downshifters are less susceptible to commercial or inter-personal influence (tested with proposition 9) is not affirmed; more downshifters disagree with than agree. However, the results for proposition 10 showed that three quarters of the downshifters affirmed the proposition. Thus it can be concluded that the Japanese downshifters in this study have strong feelings of independence and autonomy.

Table 10: The frugality scale.

	Downshifters					
	all		voluntary		involuntary	
	N (= 40)	%	N (=26)	%	N (=14)	%
If you take good care of your possessions, you will definitively save money in the long run						
agree	34	85	22	85	12	85
neutral	3	7	2	*	1	*
disagree	2	*	1	*	1	*
no answer	1	*	0	*	1	*
There are many things that are normally thrown away that are still quite useful						
agree	36	90	23	88	13	93
neutral	2	*	1	*	1	*
disagree	2	*	1	*	1	*
no answer	0	*	0	*	0	*
Making better use of my resources makes me feel good						
agree	35	88	22	85	13	93
neutral	4	10	4	*	0	*
disagree	1	*	0	*	1	*
no answer	0	*	0	*	0	*
If you can re-use an item you already have, there’s no sense in buying something new						

agree	20	50	12	46	8	57
neutral	13	32	8	31	5	36
disagree	7	17	5	*	2	*
no answer	0	*	0	*	0	*
I believe in being careful in how I spend my money						
agree	31	78	18	69	13	93
neutral	7	17	6	23	1	*
disagree	0	*	0	*	0	*
no answer	2	*	1	*	1	*
I discipline myself to get the most from my money						
agree	21	53	12	46	9	64
neutral	11	28	7	27	4	29
disagree	7	17	5	*	2	*
no answer	1	*	1	*	0	*
I am willing to wait on a purchase I want so that I can save some money						
agree	16	40	9	38	7	50
neutral	13	33	11	42	2	*
disagree	11	28	5	*	6	43
no answer	0	*	0	*	0	*
There are things I resist buying today so I can save for tomorrow						
agree	17	43	10	38	7	50
neutral	17	43	13	50	4	29
disagree	7	17	3	*	4	29
no answer	0	*	0	*	0	*
Compared with others in my environment, I am disciplined with money and make less impulse purchases						
agree	13	33	10	38	3	*
neutral	10	25	5	19	5	36
disagree	17	43	12	46	7	50
no answer	0	*	0	*	0	*
I try to live as my own life as much as possible and ignore other peoples' views						
agree	30	75	17	65	13	93
neutral	9	23	7	27	2	*
disagree	1	2	1	*	0	*
no answer	0	0	0	*	0	*

Discussion and Conclusions

The Japan study of living with less again shows the rather counterintuitive finding that downshifting often is a conscious lifestyle choice of people. Only a quarter of the voluntary downshifters had experienced a decrease in income when they began downshifting, meaning that living with less money does not automatically result from a lower income. This conclusion counters the prevailing image of the postmodern consumer as a materialistic big spender, driven by hedonistic motives. Quite different motives are demonstrated in this and other downshifting studies such as eco-friendliness, waste reduction, frugality and the desire for quality of life.

What other new findings and insights did this empirical study yield and how do these results compare to those of other studies of downshifting? These questions are dealt with below.

Although the sample size of this explorative study was too small to adjust the demographic and socio-economic data to represent the Japanese population, yet the sample was appropriate to explore downshifting practices in Japan. By close reading and interpreting of the data, indications for possible trends were sorted out and interesting hypotheses

for further study came up.

Experiences of downshifting

Contrary to popular belief, results of the Japan study again suggest that spending less is not only a negative experience, but coincides with positive experiences as well. This finding replicated the findings of previous studies on downshifters. Both voluntary and involuntary downshifters in the Netherlands (Schreurs 2010) reported that they were content with a lower level of spending. The Australian study (Breakspear and Hamilton 2004) showed that almost 90% of voluntary downshifters were happy with their lifestyle change and that 34% did not miss the higher income. Results of our study show that even involuntary downshifters experienced living with less money in many positive ways. Previous studies have found that voluntary downshifting increases quality of life (Schor 1998; Breakspear and Hamilton 2004; Huneke 2005; Etzioni 1998; Datamonitor 2003). The results for the negative experiences in Table 9 are congruent with this. A large portion of participants denied the three negative social experiences in our list.

Remarkably, in this study of Japanese downshifters living with less money hardly appeared to cause social problems; no respondents reported to have experienced criticism from other people. For Dutch voluntary downshifters on the other hand criticism and incomprehension scored the highest (17%) amongst the negative experiences. Also a smaller portion of Dutch downshifters affirmed that downshifting improved their social life (8.5% versus 21% of the Japanese downshifters). These results touch upon the social-cultural dimension of consumption and non-consumption and reflect specific values and norms and therefore need a nuanced explanation. The finding could simply mean that Japanese don't communicate personal financial matters with others—which could be a quite plausible explanation in view of the division between private and public in Japanese culture. Another explanation could be that downshifting is a socially acceptable strategy.

Since this social dimension differs to a significant extent from the results of downshifting studies in other countries, I would strongly recommend further socio-economic research, in which the particular cultural aspects are fully covered. An important topic will be the view that in particular voluntary downshifting is a kind of deviant behaviour, reflected in several studies in European countries (Schreurs 2010; Breakspear & Hamilton 2004; Jackson 2005), where politicians call to consume in order to solve the economic crisis. In this respect the fact that none of the downshifters in the Japanese study was criticised by other people is a striking result that raises questions such as 'Are Japanese downshifters more inclined to conceal private financial issues than their European counterparts?' and 'Which contextual and personal factors contribute to which specific positive and negative experiences?'

Frugality and autonomy

Although frugal behaviour is commonly practiced it is often in disrepute and considered taboo.

Empirical results of the living with less study in the Netherlands confirm the contested character of frugality, in accordance with the marginalising effects of living with less—thus practicing frugality—as described by Bauman (2005) and reported in the studies of low income consumer (Hamilton & Catterall 2005) and downshifters (Schor 1998). Therefore, the frugality scale contains propositions meant to test feelings of personal independency and autonomy, which are considered necessary qualities to resist commercial and social pressures.

The expectation that downshifters are less susceptible to interpersonal or commercial influence than other people in their environment (Lastovicka's proposition 9) was not affirmed, since more downshifters disagreed (42%) than agreed with the statement. However, the results for Lastovicka's proposition 10 showed that a large majority of the Japanese downshifters in this study organises their life according to their own system of standards and values than non-downshifters. These results are in line with the attitudes of the Dutch and North American downshifters (Schreurs 2010, Schor 1998), who also show greater feelings of independence and autonomy. Another striking similarity are the overall very high scores in the frugality scale results. Dutch and Japanese participants reported being fairly frugal.

Downshifting and the sustainable lifestyle

Our definition of a sustainable lifestyle—the model of the Dutch triple Gs: *geld* (money), *groen* (green) and *gezondheid* (health/wellbeing)—assumes the concurrence between these three pillars and their mutual interdependence. Also this study indicates that downshifting practices could be directly related with eco-friendly practices. The positive experiences indeed with the highest scores appeared to be the sustainable sides of downshifting: eco-friendliness, waste reduction and the non-materialism. Also the frugality scale scores are in line with our model of sustainable lifestyle, since the three Lastovicka's propositions regarding careful handling of resources and possessions got very high scores (85% and more) from both voluntary and involuntary downshifters. Indications for the third pillar of the sustainable lifestyle model: health could be found in the scores for stress (48%) and poverty (40%). These scores suggest a negative correlation, although a majority of the downshifters affirmed the positive experiences. These mixed results need further empirical research, whereby—like in the Dutch and North American studies—an extended list of practices should be part of the questionnaire. Such list of behavioural practices should comprise selected items covering each of the three pillars of the sustainable lifestyle, obviously adjusted to the current Japanese social-cultural situation.

This research could be a valuable next step for theory development regarding sustainable lifestyles but results could also be useful to strengthen policy making towards sustainability.

Future research

Through this innovative approach of living with less money new insights could emerge, that raise questions that could be addressed in future research. For example, a valuable next step could be a representative social-economic study to identify the scope, size and characteristics of voluntary and involuntary downshifting in Japan. Such a study could yield not only very important insights useful for consumption-theory development, but also contribute to a better understanding of lifestyle transformation processes. More research on downshifting as a transformation process is needed to empirically test consumer behaviour change theories, the possible interconnectedness between reasons of living with less, identification of personal characteristics and social and economic conditions. Also the rather counterintuitive finding that living with less money, meaning adopting a more frugal lifestyle, can coincide with positive experiences could be a fascinating stepping stone to a historically based socio-cultural study.

Results of this and other international studies indicate that downshifting is closely connected with eco-friendliness and immaterial quality of life. Therefore, I would suggest more applied policy research on downshifting and sustainability to support today's urgent challenge to face the bad effects of the economic crisis and at the same time encourage a more sustainable lifestyles.

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Notes

[1] The sample are too small to make statistically significant conclusions, but suggest further research.

[2] The questionnaires were mainly distributed in Kyoto. This could explain the scores on the variable 'residence.'

Appendix 1: Questionnaire LIVING WITH LESS MONEY

Dear _____

This survey is part of an international academic study of how people react upon the economic and ecologic crisis. The questions are about how you manage your budget and possible changes in income or expenditures. We are aware that the information you give is highly personal. Yet be assured that we will strictly guard your privacy. Your data will be only used anonymously. Your contribution is very much appreciated. Thanks a lot.

Dr Jeanine Schreurs, Visiting Researcher, Kyoto University

For questions or comments, please contact: jschreurs@cias.kyoto-u.ac.jp

1. What is your age _____

2. What is your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. What is the size of your place of residence?

☐ Small town or village (population less than 50.000)

☐ Small city (population between 50,000 and 150. 000)

☐ Middle city (Population of 150.000 or more)

☐ Major city

4. What is your current or highest level of education? (Please choose one of the following answers).

☐ Primary school (6 years)

☐ Junior high school

☐ Senior high school

☐ Vocational training _____

☐ University undergraduate

☐ University graduate

☐ Other namely _____

☐ No answer

5. What is your profession? _____

6. What is the composition of your household?

☐ Single without children ☐ Single with ☐ (number) children ☐ Couple without children ☐ Couple with ☐ (number) children ☐ More than two-persons-household ☐ (number) children ☐ (number) adults

7. Do you have personal income? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: What is your personal monthly net income? (This means the amount remaining after tax deduction)

☐ Less than ¥ 100.000

☐ Between ¥ 100.000 and ¥ 200.000

☐ Between ¥ 200.000 and ¥ 300.000

☐ Between ¥ 300.000 and ¥ 400.000

☐ Between ¥ 400.000 and ¥ 500.000

☐ More than ¥ 500.000

If more persons in your household have income, would you please answer the following question:

8. What is the total net household income per month? (So the total income of all household members)

☐ Less than ¥ 100.000

☐ Between ¥ 100.000 and ¥ 200.000

☐ Between ¥ 200.000 and ¥ 300.000

☐ Between ¥ 300.000 and ¥ 400.000

☐ Between ¥ 400.000 and ¥ 500.000

☐ Between ¥ 500.000 and ¥ 600.000

☐ More than ¥ 600.000

9. Do you have a paid job?

☐ Yes (Please go to question 10) ☐ No, I do unpaid activities (Please go to question 12))

10. What kind of paid work are you doing?

11. How many hours per week do you work?

☐ Less than 10 hours

☐ Between 10 and 20 hours

☐ Between 20 and 30 hours

☐ Between 30 and 40 hours ☐ More than 40 hours

Please continue with question 14

12. What kind of unpaid work are you doing? (Please choose one or more of the following options)

☐ Housekeeping ☐ Child care ☐ Elderly care ☐ other unpaid work, namely.....

13. How many hours per week are you doing this unpaid work?

☐ Less than 10 hours a week

☐ Between 10 and 20 hours

☐ Between 20 and 30 hours

☐ Between 30 and 40 hours

☐ More than 40 hours

14. Is religion important for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: How many times do you pray? ☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐ Not applicable

15. Did you within the last two years deliberately reduce your expenses? ☐ Yes ☐ No (Please go to question 23)

16. What was the situation of your household income when you started reducing your expenses?

☐ There was more income ☐ There was less income ☐ The income was unchanged

The fact that you and your household received less income may have occurred because of resignation, retirement or divorce. However, it could have also been a choice, for example because you or a member of your household wanted another job with lower salary, started a study or a business. This is the theme of the next question.

17. What was the reason for the decrease in the average net monthly household income? Multiple answers possible

☐ Voluntary choice ☐ Dismissal (also part-time) ☐ (Early) retirement or pension ☐ Social welfare ☐ Reduction of benefits ☐ Illness ☐ Savings exhausted ☐ Termination of child allowance ☐ Divorce ☐ Debt repayment ☐ Other, namely ...

18. Did you reduce your expenses because you wanted to pay off debt? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Did you reduce your expenses because you wanted to save more? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. When you consciously reduced your expenses, by how much did you reduce expenses per month?

☐ Less than ¥ 10.000

☐ Between ¥ 10.000 and ¥ 25.000 ☐ Between ¥ 25.000 and ¥ 50.000

☐ Between ¥ 50.000 and ¥ 100.000

☐ Between ¥ 100.000 and ¥ 150.000

☐ More than ¥ 150.000 namely.....

☐ Don't know / no answer

21. When you consciously reduced your expenses, did you spend less, more or the same on the following items?

a. Food: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

b. Clothing: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

c. Restaurants/Cafes: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

d. Holidays: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

e. Charities: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

f. Saving: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

g. Debt repayment: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

h. Gifts: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

i. Hobbies: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

j. Impulse purchases: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

k. Furniture: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

l. Books, CDs: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

m. Theatre and concerts: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

n. Housing: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

o. Energy: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

p. Transportation: ☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

q. Other, namely

☐ Less ☐ More ☐ The same ☐ Not applicable ☐ No answer

22. How did you experience living with less money? Would you please indicate whether the following issues apply to you?

a. I liked budgeting. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

b. I was proud that I succeeded in cutting expenses. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

c. I felt socially isolated. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

d. I liked saving. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

e. There were problems with my partner or relatives ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

f. I liked reducing debts. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

g. I valued more the non-materialistic aspects of life. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

h. It improved my social contacts. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

i. I felt poor. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

j. It gave more quality of life. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

k. I liked to waste less. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

l. My life was more eco-friendly. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

m. I liked the challenge of making both ends meet. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

n. I had stress and worries. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

o. I was criticized by other people. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

p. I had to forsake too much. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ a little bit

23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. If you take good care of your possessions, you will definitively save money in the long run.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

2. There are many things that are normally thrown away that are still quite useful.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

3. Making better use of my resources makes me feel good.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

4. If you can re-use an item you already have, there's no sense in buying something new.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

5. I believe in being careful in how I spend my money.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

6. I discipline myself to get the most from my money.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

7. I am willing to wait on a purchase I want so that I can save some money.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

8. There are things I resist buying today so I can save for tomorrow.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

9. Compared with others in my environment, I am disciplined with money and make less impulse purchases.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

10. I try to live my own life as much as possible and ignore other peoples' views.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No answer

Many thanks

About the Author

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