Successful Social Activism and Unintended Market Emergence
The Fight Over Foot Health and Fashion in Japan
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Preface

This book considers the relationship between social movements targeting companies and the emergence of new markets. Social movement organizations (SMOs) seek to change corporate behavior as their immediate goal, and thereby change society in the direction they want as a superordinate goal. Existing research has demonstrated that the activities of SMOs can change corporate behavior, and the change, in turn, leads to new market categories. The transformation in corporate behavior elicited by SMOs represents the direct effect of activism, while the emergence of new market categories because of such changes comprises the indirect effect of activism. This book addresses two key questions related to the findings of existing research on the direct and indirect effects of activism:

- **Direct effect of activism**: How can SMOs positioned on the periphery of an industry change corporate behavior?
- **Indirect effect of activism**: Are the markets that emerge owing to the activities of SMOs always intended, and thus aligned with the superordinate goals of the SMOs? When the market emergence is unintended by SMOs, specifically one that is inconsistent with the superordinate goals of SMOs, how does this emergence occur?

With regard to the question of the direct effect of activism, previous research has assumed that SMOs, positioned on the periphery of an industry as secondary stakeholders in companies, lack familiarity with the affairs of the industry. The question then arises: How do these SMOs influence corporate behavior? This book will examine this issue.

Regarding the question of the indirect effect of activism, existing research has considered cases where changes in corporate behavior lead to the emergence of markets that are intended, and thus consistent with the superordinate goals of SMOs. However, this book suggests that markets unintended by SMOs may also emerge. This book demonstrates this phenomenon and clarify how such markets emerge.

In considering these two questions, the book analyzes Japan’s post-war footwear industry. In the 1960s, a small private organization, Japan Institute of Footwear (JIF), began efforts to emphasize the importance of foot health, and by the 1980s, it had
succeeded in changing corporate behavior. JIF started training shoe fitters, experts in selecting shoes that fit customers’ feet, and succeeded in having this practice adopted by shoe retailers. In clarifying how this transformation was achieved, this book will consider the first question regarding how SMOs located on the periphery of an industry can influence changes in the behavior of companies within that industry.

Within the footwear industry, the ripple effects of the activities of JIF led to the emergence of various new market categories: the comfort shoe market, the European comfort shoe market, and the fashion-oriented transparent insole market. The comfort shoe market was JIF’s intended market that emerged as a result of the popularization of shoe fitters. The European comfort shoe market was even more dedicated to foot health than the comfort shoe market. Although not its intention, the market was consistent with the superordinate goal of JIF in terms of protecting foot health. The fashion-oriented transparent insole market was inconsistent with JIF’s superordinate goal as it focused on “cute” insoles that made high-heeled trendy shoes comfortable, which raised questions regarding their impact on foot health. By clarifying how these markets emerged, the second question, regarding the unintended emergence of markets and the mechanisms behind them will be examined.

Existing research fails to answer these two questions adequately. However, the case of JIF’s initiatives in promoting foot health and their consequences provide pertinent context for addressing these questions. By comparing historical accounts of the Japanese footwear industry with the findings of existing research on social movements that target companies, this book aims to clarify the implicit assumptions of existing research, contributing to the field of research on social movements targeting companies.

This book addresses questions regarding how SMOs, located on the periphery of an industry but envisioning to change it, can influence companies, and the corresponding ripple effects of their success. I sincerely hope that this book offers an opportunity for researchers and practitioners interested in social movements targeting companies and market emergence to broaden and deepen their analysis and discussions.

All the chapters of this book are interrelated, collectively exploring the relationship between social movements, companies, and markets. However, readers may also focus on specific sections of interest. For those interested in the first question of how SMOs located on the periphery of an industry can influence corporate behavior, Part II is particularly relevant. For those interested in the second issue, which focuses on unintended market emergence resulting from SMOs’ activities and the mechanisms behind its emergence, Part III is recommended.

Those interested in understanding the survival strategies adopted by small and medium-sized enterprises should read Chaps. 2, 4, 5, and 7–10, which provide a historical description of the footwear industry. Conversely, Chaps. 1, 3, 6, and 11 can be skipped, as they mainly offer theoretical discussions on social movements targeting companies. The long-term single case study of the footwear industry presented in this book can be viewed as the case of survival strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises. Considering that many companies in the Japanese footwear industry, including manufacturers and retailers, are small in scale, this book
elucidates the strategic actions they adopted for survival and the complex interactions among them.

Moreover, the case examined in this book should be valuable to individuals who are interested in the Japanese footwear industry and its history. Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7–10 provide historical insights into the footwear industry. In 2019, Japan witnessed the emergence of the #KuToo movement (a term coined by combining kutsū (pain), kutsu (shoes), and #MeToo), which subsequently became very prominent. This movement contends that forcing women to wear high heels in the workplace is discriminatory. Simultaneously, it highlights the irrationality of forcing the use of shoes that cause physical strain (Ishikawa, 2019). The case study of the footwear industry in this book provides a partial contextual backdrop to this movement. Please note that this book does not directly address discrimination against women in Japan. However, the cases explored provide explanation into how Japanese people adopted Western-style footwear, including high heels, and coped with the related challenges.

Tokyo, Japan

Sayako Miura
It was approximately 10 years ago that I became interested in the issue of foot health in the Japanese footwear industry and began my research journey. I had just completed my doctoral studies on technology strategies of large companies in the high-tech industries at Hitotsubashi University and was searching for a new research theme. At this point, I decided to investigate the footwear industry based on my experience with shoes. I have always loved shoes. However, I was getting shoe sores even though I thought I was choosing the right pairs for my feet at the store. Moreover, I was not the only one experiencing this problem, so I decided to embark on an investigation of the footwear industry. In the process, I learned of the existence of shoe fitters, a profession fostered by JIF, a small private organization. I was curious about how JIF was able to establish shoe fitters in the footwear industry. At the same time, although shoe fitters had become more prevalent, some people, including myself, suffered from shoe-related foot problems. Thus, in addition to examining the increase in the number of shoe fitters, I naturally became interested in the consequences of their proliferation. Alongside my research on the footwear industry, I became interested in social movements research. Social movement research focuses on how relatively socially marginalized people and organizations achieve their goals. Therefore, applying this research to analyze the process of a small private organization promoting shoe fitters in the footwear industry seemed appropriate. Fortunately at that time, organizational theorists were beginning to focus on social movements targeting companies and rapidly advancing their studies in this field.

Having started with little knowledge of the subject matter and the theoretical framework for analyzing it, I was able to compile my research into a book, thanks to the assistance of many people who supported me throughout the research process.

This book could not have been completed without those who cooperated in the survey. A list of those who agreed to be interviewed for the study is provided in Appendix 1. Everyone cooperated with my request to participate in the survey even though I was a complete stranger. What they shared with me from their perspectives was essential to this study, and all of them were very kind and inspiring.

In addition to the official interviews, various people engaged in the footwear industry showed me their work and shared their thoughts on shoes and the industry.
This assistance was essential for understanding shoes and the industry. I would like to thank Tomoko Ōya (footwear industry journalist), Saburō Endoh (former president of Valerian Shoes), Taiki Nishimura (owner of Shoe Fit Koubeya), the late Katsumi Shigeru, aka Moge (owner of Moge workshop), M. D. Toshihiko Uchida (Totsuka Kyoritsu Rehabilitation Hospital), Nobuko Hiroshima (owner of Mama to Kodomo no Ashi no Salon Nemunoki), Toru Nakamura (Grato), Chikashi Katashima (Asahi Shoes, Ltd.), Kentaro Nakayama (owner of Nakayama Shoe Shop Ltd.), Kazuko Ohi (President of Ohi Manufactureing), Miki Hayashi (Sogo & Seibu Co., Ltd.), Hiroshi Yoshino (President of Ortho Fits Co., Ltd.), Nahoko Nakamura (Chief Manager of Ortho Fits Co., Ltd.), Shinsuke Hamanaka (Moonstar Company), Kazuyuki Iwase (iing Co., Ltd.), Emmylou Suzuki-Johnson (shoe and footwear researcher), Kazufumi Inagawa (Leather Industry Museum), Natsumi Okamoto (Gyōda City Local Museum), and Kazufumi Suzuki (Saitama Prefectural Museum of History and Folklore), in no particular order.

I am indebted to Keiko Yamaki. She was my colleague at Shujitsu University and encouraged me to publish this study in English. Without her encouragement, this book would not have been published.

I received insightful ideas and comments on this study at academic conferences, workshops, and study groups. I apologize for being unable to list them all due to space limitations. I am indebted to and would like to thank, in no particular order, Nobuyuki Inamizu, Momoko Kawakami, Jaehyang Han, Makoto Fujita, Minoru Shimamoto, Ken Sakai, Takahiro Endo, Masaya Ōnuma, Hiroshi Watanabe, Koichiro Kodama, Ken Okura, Aoyama Mitsutaka, Hajime Oda, Suzunosuke Aizawa, Rie Sakuraki, Niitsu Yasuaki, Yasuyuki Sakai, Shu Watanabe, Kei Fujiyama, Takanori Kato, Hidetsuna Sasaki, Philip Debroux, David Chiavacci, Sébastien Lechevalier, Markus Heckel, Harald Conrad, Karen Shire, and Peter Scott.

During the course of this research, I worked at Shujitsu University, Teikyo University, and Showa Women’s University. I received valuable advice and support for my research from my colleagues. I would like to express special thanks, in no particular order, to Shinsaku Sugiyama, aka Sam, Kenji Taniguchi, Akenari Nomoto, Yasumasa Osaki, Shozo Saegusa, Toshikatsu Hayashi, Masatsugu Sanada, Xianghua Jiang, Kanae Teramoto, Arata Suzuki, Taiki Kagami, Yoshiki Enatsu, Akiko Imai, Akashi Hongo, and Akiko Komori. I also would like to thank Nobuko Tabata and Yuko Tsuchidate of the Institute of Modern Culture, Showa Women’s University.

This research was initiated after I completed my Ph.D. at Hitosubashi University. However, my case study experiences at the graduate school undoubtedly served as the foundation that propelled this research. I am immensely indebted to Tsuyoshi Numagami, my graduate school supervisor. His incisive comments on my graduate studies and the values he practices as a researcher always inspired me. Without his help and advice in graduate school, I would not be a researcher. I would also like to thank Kentaro Nobeoka, my secondary supervisor. He always provided me with precise comments on my graduate study. I am also greatly indebted to Takeo Kikkawa, Chuma Hiroyuki, Seiichiro Yonekura, Ikuya Sato, Christina Ahmadjian, Yuko Yamashita, Yaichi Aoshima, Kazuhiro Tanaka, Makoto Nakano, Toshihiko
Kato, Masaru Karube, and Hiroshi Shimizu for their guidance and support through classes and workshops.

I am greatly indebted to Isuke Koto, my supervisor at the undergraduate school of Waseda University. I decided to pursue a career in teaching and researching at a university because of my encounter with him. To this day, he has guided and encouraged me as a senior teacher and researcher.

I am deeply grateful for the contributions of the team at Springer. I would like to extend my gratitude to Yutaka Hirachi, Misao Taguchi, Vinothini Elango, and Gayathri Kumar, who have graciously supported me in the publication of this book.

Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to my family. Without the understanding and support of my family, this research would have been impossible. My daughter Yuzuko was born around the same time as this research commenced. Her presence has always been a source of strength for me. Soon after she was born, my husband was transferred to work in another country, and Yuzuko and I lived apart from him for four and a half years. Those who always came by to take care of my daughter and encouraged me during that time were my mother, Hideko Kimura; my father, Yasunori Kimura; my mother-in-law, Kyoko Miura; and my father-in-law, Kiyoshi Miura. I want to express my deep gratitude to my husband, Masashi. He always listened to me and encouraged me, even though he was in a foreign country. Since returning to Japan to live with us, he has taken on half or more of the housework and childcare. Although my grandfather, Hamao Kimura, passed away before the book was published, he was supportive of my pursuit of a career as a researcher. I also believe that my original interest in shoes was influenced by him. He loved to polish shoes.

This research project was funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (20K13596), Wesco Science Promotion Foundation, Shujitsu University Research Grant, Teikyo University Research Encouragement Grant, and Showa Women’s University Research Grant.
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About the Author

**Sayako Miura** a full-time lecturer at Showa Women’s University, obtained her Ph.D. in Commerce from Hitotsubashi University. She has published many papers on market emergence and strategies of SMEs and NPOs based on in-depth case studies of the Japanese shoe industry. These include “Adjustments of social activist strategies and new market creation: The interplay of an activist group, companies and their primary stakeholders in the shoe industry (in Japanese with English abstract),” *Organizational Science, 52*(3), 20–32, 2019; and “The developmental history of the insole market in Japan: Rising health consciousness and an unintended shift toward fashion (1984–2010),” *Japanese Research in Business History 38*, 43–61, 2021. She has also published “Component sharing across product categories leads to functional diversification: Evidence from the Japanese digital products market,” *Asiatische Studien—Études Asiatiques, 70*(1), 75–88, 2016.
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Part I

Two Issues Related to Research on Social Movements Targeting Companies

Part I serves as preparation for the case analysis in Parts II and III. Chapter 1 briefly examines existing research on social movements targeting companies, presents the two unsolved issues, and explains the methodology for examining these issues. These two issues are explored through a case analysis of the Japanese post-war footwear industry. Chapter 2 provides the necessary background knowledge to understand the case, offering an overview of the awareness of foot health in post-war Japan, the characteristics of shoes as a product, the history of Japanese footwear, and an overview of the post-war footwear industry.
Chapter 1
Introduction

How can social movement organizations (SMOs) positioned on the periphery of an industry change corporate behavior? Are the resulting changes in the market always intended, and thus aligned with the superordinate goals of the SMOs? These questions underlie this study. This chapter briefly examines existing research on social movements targeting companies, clarifying how it cannot address the two issues examined in this book owing to its implicit assumptions. Then, the chapter explains the methodology for examining these issues—a case analysis of the Japanese post-war footwear industry.

1.1 Theoretical Background: Direct and Indirect Effects of Social Movements

This book considers the relationship between social movements targeting companies and the emergence of new markets. SMOs attempt to change society by influencing corporate behavior as well as changing laws (de Bakker et al. 2017). In the context of corporate power expanding relative to the government and the increasing number of social movements that target companies, social movement studies expanded their focus from movements targeting the government to those targeting companies (Bartley and Child 2011; Fremeth et al. 2022; Jaffee 2012; King and Pearce 2010; Rao 2009; Soule 2009; Walker et al. 2008).

Existing research has addressed both the direct and indirect effects of social movements targeting companies. SMOs seek to change corporate behavior as their primary goal, and thereby change society in the direction they want as a superordinate goal (Snow and Soule 2010). The direct effect of activism is the change in corporate behavior brought about by SMOs, and the indirect effect of activism is the change in society because of the spillover effect from the direct effect of activism (Briscoe