

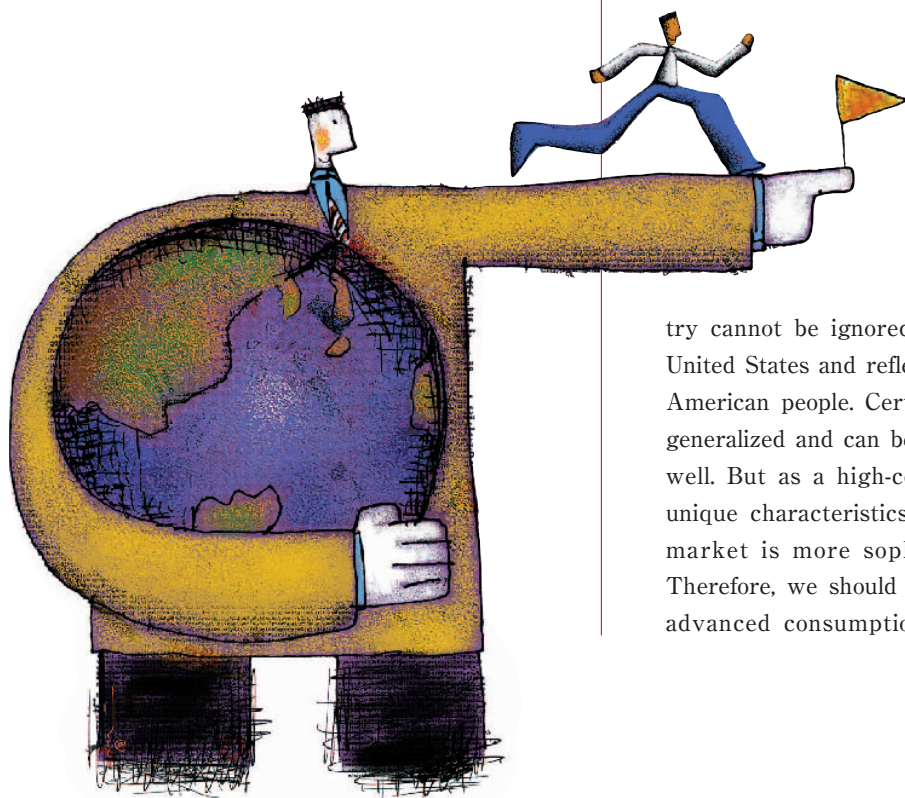
**I**CS: A professional school that links learning and career development with research aimed at producing globally applicable made-in-Japan theories.

## Learning about foreign cultures to produce made-in-Japan theories.

What we take for granted in Japan can appear to be very strange in the eyes of foreign students. For example, in Japan, beer and health drinks are sold under the same corporate brands: Asahi, Kirin, Sapporo, Suntory and others. Yes, beer and health drinks are produced by different divisions of these companies and, yes, there are some subtle differences in the logos that appear on the respective bottles. But the fact remains that the same corporate brand name takes center stage for both types of products. Having studied very rational theories of branding, foreign students are prone to make the following comments. “If you are trying to sell health, beer certainly does not project a good image. The use of the same brand for beer and health drinks is going to have a negative impact.” But in reality, the same brands are being used to support two very different products because the brand's positive image is not linked exclusively to beer. Instead, the brand provides a positive context for marketing health drinks as well. The context that is shared by companies and their customers reflects long years of gradual development in the Japanese market and has come to function as an “implicit understanding.” On the other hand, this context is unknown to the newly-arrived foreign student. Japan is frequently referred to as a typical “high-context culture” that contains many implicit understandings that are difficult for outsiders to decipher based on straightforward logic. By

contrast, the United States is a typical “low-context culture” that contains few implicit understandings and can be fairly easily explained using plain logic.

Economic principles are not the only force affecting our markets. The impact of human psychology and the cultural features of a country cannot be ignored. Marketing theory was born in the United States and reflects the culture and psychology of the American people. Certainly, much of these theories can be generalized and can be fully applied to Japanese markets as well. But as a high-context culture, Japan exhibits many unique characteristics. In a sense, the Japanese consumer market is more sophisticated than the American one. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find some highly advanced consumption-related phenomena in Japan that



stand ahead of the rest of the world. I believe the time has come for us to identify these elements and to work them into a theoretical framework so that we can develop and present made-in-Japan marketing theories with global applications.

Learning about foreign cultures can often provide us with an eye-opening picture of what is unique in our own cultures. Located at Kanda Hitotsubashi with a view of the Imperial Palace, ICS offers an English-language learning environment that is highly suited to this purpose. Students gather here from all over the world to engage in intercultural exchange and to study what makes Japan unique. Needless to say, the curriculum goes beyond marketing and highlights made-in-Japan theories that have been globally accepted in such areas as quality control, manufacturing and knowledge management. I believe one of the central missions of ICS is to take on the challenge of creating theories originating in Japan by learning about foreign cultures.

### **Internalizing knowledge and practice through meaningful give-and-take with the business community.**

It can be said that undergraduate study provides an “arena for human development” where the primary aim is to impart a liberal arts education coupled with some specialized knowledge. By comparison, graduate-level professional school studies, such as ICS, are geared toward absorbing deeper specialized knowledge and developing those capacities that will allow more mature individuals to rise to higher levels in their careers. With this mission in mind, ICS pays special attention to creating an environment conducive to professional studies. For example, ICS has career placement specialists to provide strong support to students seeking jobs. ICS has also worked hard to develop excellent internship programs offered to students during the fall of their second year. ICS works closely with participating companies to ensure an internship experience worthy of the wrap-up period of an MBA program. The program also enjoys the active support of the teaching staff. All ICS students have had previous work and career experiences. They are expected to use their graduate studies to create a systematic framework of knowledge that embodies these work experiences and provides a foundation for attaining higher levels of practical knowledge. Companies have much to gain from accepting the fruits of these highly motivated and highly committed students in their operations without need for compensation.

At ICS, we are constantly endeavoring to expand and improve our internship programs for the realization of mutually meaningful give-and-take with the business community.

### **Utilizing the traditional Hitotsubashi seminar to link learning and career development.**

ICS is located at the birthplace of Hitotsubashi University and prides itself on carrying forward many of the excellent traditions of the University. One example is our emphasis on small-size seminars. At ICS, seminars are assigned the special function of providing students with an opportunity to examine how their knowledge and experiences at ICS can be used in furthering their careers. In this way, ICS seminars are a place for fusing knowledge and experience and developing a solid vision for the future. Currently, there are four second year students in my seminar: two have a manufacturing background, one worked in transportation and the other in retailing. Three of these four students are focused on brand management, and the last one is specializing in the field of entrepreneurship. The students are free to design their own topics for study, and do so with the aim of maximizing their career potentials. In this way, ICS makes the greatest use of the spirit that has animated Hitotsubashi University's seminar tradition to encourage students to complement their expert knowledge with the “way of thinking” that underlies all social sciences and to express these in their research reports and business plans.

To effectively apply the knowledge gained at ICS to their future careers, students must take the initiative in developing a clear vision of their future careers at an early stage in their graduate studies. This means being able to say with some conviction, “This is the type of company I want to work for, and this is the position that I want to have.” Studying at the graduate level in the English language can be quite daunting at first. But persistence will certainly lead to good results. Most importantly, this experience will provide students with the self-confidence to take leadership roles in the global business arena after graduation. It is our hope that all who study at ICS will be assisted in this way to aspire to higher career goals, and it is our belief that the detailed guidance and instruction provided in the seminar setting will nurture the requisite independence and confidence for success. (Transcribed from interview)



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