

Long-Term History of Our Challenges

Challenges taken on by Isetan Mitsukoshi

Edo Period

Startup period of Mitsukoshi (Echigoya) as Kimono Fabric shop

We gained support from many customers by launching a range of unique services, which were innovative for services from a retailer in those days.



Large Perspective Picture of Echigoya Draper's Shop in Surugacho
Artist: Okumura Masanobu

1673 Echigoya is founded with the slogan "Cash payment in store, honest prices"

M

Launch of the world's first sales based on cash payment and honest, fixed prices indicated on labels. Echigoya launched in-store sales based on cash payment, which was revolutionary in those days when retailers mostly brought products to customers, such as feudal lords, samurai, and merchants, and sold them on credit. Echigoya sold products based on fixed prices indicated on labels, which enabled it to speed up its capital turnover and earn the trust of a wide range of customers, resulting in the expansion of its customer base.



The double-sided sign of Echigoya, which says "Cash payment, honest price."

"We sell pieces of cloth cut according to your needs."

While kimono shops in those days only sold cloth by the roll, Echigoya sold pieces of cloth by cutting them according to customer needs. This made the products accessible to common people as well as those from privileged classes such as samurai and merchants. It thus gained support from and was enormously well-received by many people.

Meiji Restoration

The Meiji Restoration changed society significantly, resulting in the end of the samurai society and the loss of the customer base. To survive in this environment, we transformed ourselves and created new business models.

1886 Foundation of Iseya Tanji Kimono Fabric Shop

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Suggesting highly unique kimono and obi. The conditions surrounding Iseya Tanji Kimono Fabric Shop, including its location, were not advantageous because it was a late-comer kimono shop. To gain customer support in these conditions, the store focused on obi and patterns as symbols of women and suggested highly unique products such as kimono with the Goshuden Pattern. It thus gained popularity, mainly among people with a high sense of fashion.



Iseya Tanji Kimono Fabric Shop

1888 Opening of Mitsukoshi Yofuku Ten (Western clothing store)

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Challenge of the Westernization of clothes. In 1886, when signs of the Westernization of clothes began to be seen, we decided to establish a Western clothing department ahead of others. We opened a Western clothing store in 1888 by inviting sewing workers from Europe. We later closed this store and reopened the Western clothing department in 1906 in response to the growing demand for such clothes. We thus began to offer tailor-made men's clothing in the latest British style.



Exterior view of Mitsukoshi Yofuku Ten

1895 Starting in-store display of products for sale

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Introduction of glass showcases. Previously, kimono shops would show products at the request of customers. Because this way of selling products, which was called zauri, was inefficient, we began to display products in glass cases, making customers free to see and choose them.



In-store display of products (2nd floor of the main store)

1899 Establishment of an out-of-store sales and mail order service department

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Expanding trade area by strengthening traveling sales in regional towns and cities and launch of mail-order service. In response to the development of telecommunication and transportation infrastructures, we commenced out-of-store sales in regional towns and cities on a full-scale basis and began publishing a PR magazine. We thus started to offer information about our products and accept orders by mail, improving the convenience of our customers all over Japan.



Mail order

Foundation of modern department stores

Mitsukoshi became Japan's first department store, an achievement enabled by its management reforms that resulted in its transformation from a kimono shop to a modern retailer. Isetan opened a modern department store in Shinjuku after the Great Kanto Earthquake in anticipation of changes in the market.

1904 The Department Store Declaration

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Birth of Japan's first department store. The Westernization of clothing had been in progress since the Meiji Restoration. Feeling a sense of crisis, the management team pushed through management reforms, aiming for transformation from a traditional kimono shop into a modern retailer, and declared the business transformation into a department store. We then began to expand the range of products we offered, from Western clothes to cosmetics, sundries, imported goods, and others. We announced this in newspapers nationwide in 1905.



An advertisement announcing our transformation into a department store, which was published in a national newspaper

1907 Opening of a department for foreigners

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We were the first to establish a department targeting foreign customers, offering Japanese silk products, kimono, clothing materials, fine arts and crafts, and other products. We started selling them by preparing an English brochure. Western clothes to cosmetics, sundries, imported goods, and others. We announced this in newspapers nationwide in 1905.



Product brochure for foreigners

1907 Establishment of the New Fine Art Department

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We established Japan's first New Fine Art Department for customers with a strong interest in culture and art. We collected works of Japanese art, Western art, and craft created by renowned artists and began special display sales of the works. Since then, we have continued to create opportunities for artists to publish their works and deliver excellent culture and art to our customers.



Establishment of New Fine Art Department (declaration)

1914 Completion of Mitsukoshi Main Store's new building

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Completion of a modern department store. Having started with a traditional timber and clay (kura-style) building, we built a wooden Western-style building as our makeshift store and then a five-story reinforced concrete building in the Renaissance style as a fully-fledged modern department store. This building had Japan's first escalator, as well as an elevator, restaurant, and restroom. In addition, we introduced the food department, bonito department, and tea department, which were the first among department stores in Japan. In this way, we completed the form of the modern department store.



New Main Store building at the time of its completion



Escalator

Times have been changing significantly since our foundation, and we have overcome several challenges by transforming ourselves and creating business models. While facing a tough environment, we anticipate changes in social and customer needs and continue to make new proposals by connecting people and bridging times. This policy is in our DNA at the Isetan Mitsukoshi Group.

M =History of Mitsukoshi **I** =History of Isetan

1923 The Great Kanto Earthquake

Both Iseya Tanji Kimono Fabric Shop and Mitsukoshi Main Store were seriously damaged in the earthquake. However, we committed ourselves to helping people with the reconstruction. Specifically, we took initiatives such as raising funds to return accounts receivable to our business partners by placing emphasis on credit and giving discounts to customers in credit sales. Mitsukoshi opened markets in Shinjuku and Ginza in succession and offered daily necessities, thereby contributing to stabilizing people's lives in the aftermath of the disaster.

1927 Opening of the Mitsukoshi Hall (now known as Mitsukoshi Theater)

We opened Mitsukoshi Hall, a hall with a double-height ceiling, on the 6th and 7th floors of the main building of the Main Store. In this hall, we hosted various theatrical performances, traditional performing arts shows, and other performances to help address the shortage of theaters in those days and contribute to the development of Japanese culture. It was the only theater in a department store. partners by placing emphasis on credit and giving discounts to customers in credit sales. Mitsukoshi opened markets in Shinjuku and Ginza in succession and offered daily necessities, thereby contributing to stabilizing people's lives in the aftermath of the disaster.



Mitsukoshi Hall

1933 Relocation of Isetan Main Store to Shinjuku

While the environment surrounding Kanda had changed drastically after the Great Kanto Earthquake, we relocated the main store to Shinjuku, which was a promising area where trade zone expansion was expected. With this move, we laid the foundations for the leap forward that we made later.



Panoramic view of the Shinjuku Main Store at the time of its opening

Post-war economic growth

The mass-consumption society arrived and consumer spending increased, with people pursuing affluent lives. In this trend, we took a range of initiatives by anticipating changes in the market.

1956 Teenagers' shop

In response to the growing interest in fashion associated with the economic growth, we collected fashion items for teenage girls as a new category and began selling them. This shop gained a foothold as a representative department.



Teenagers' shop

1960 The industry's first parking building (first in Japan)

Anticipating the coming motorization ahead of others, we built the industry's first parking building for the convenience of customers who come to the store by car.



Industry's first parking building

1960 Bank-affiliated credit card (first in Japan)

The era of consumer credit had arrived, and we began credit card sales based on credit guaranteed by a bank.



Japan's first bank-affiliated credit card

1963 Unification of size system of women's ready-to-wear clothing (first in Japan)

Amid the shift from haute couture to the expansion of ready-to-wear clothing, we diversified the sizes of those items of clothing to make them fit the Japanese physique, in conjunction with other department stores. The sizes later became unified sizes of clothing from department stores.



Unification of size system of women's ready-to-wear clothing

Maturation period

Living standards improved, resulting in the emergence of various categories of business and the diversification of values and patterns of consumer spending. In this trend, we took a range of unique measures.

1993 Birth of Only I, a selection of original products from Isetan

Only I, a selection of original products developed based on customer feedback, was born. It was renamed Only MI in 2011, after the integration, and has since been the pillar of Isetan Mitsukoshi's uniqueness.



Only I

1994 Opening of Kaiho-ku

On the 1st floor of the Main Store, we opened a department called Kaiho-ku (liberation area), a space for delivering information. This was our new initiative for incubating up-and-coming designers and bringing products designed by them into the world. It had a major impact on the fashion industry.



Kaiho-ku

2003 Opening of remodeled Men's Building of Isetan Shinjuku Main Store

In 1968, when men began to be interested in fashion, we opened Asia's first Otoko-no-shinkan (new building for men). In 2003, the entire building was remodeled for the first time in its 35 years of history and was reborn as the Men's Building. It was remodeled into a building for men who purchase and coordinate their clothes on their own, instead of having others choose and purchase clothes for them.



Front entrance of the Men's Building

2008 Establishment of Isetan Mitsukoshi Holdings Ltd. through business integration

While the market environment grew tougher, due in part to the population decline and increasingly fierce competition, we implemented business integration to make maximum use of the two companies' management resources and take advantage of their strengths.



Business integration (news conference in 2007)

2012 Opening of small-scale stores focused on the specific strengths of Isetan

We opened ISETAN MIRROR Make & Cosmetics, small-scale stores offering cosmetic products of selected brands, mainly in station buildings. These stores are well-received because customers can purchase cosmetics without receiving counselling, or they can receive counselling if they wish. We have also opened Isetan Haneda Store, which offers selected men's and ladies' goods and food and drinks, in the Haneda Airport terminals. It consists of three zones, two for men and one for ladies. We also opened one of these stores at Chubu Centrair International Airport in 2016.



ISETAN MIRROR Make & Cosmetics (the first store)