

# CHANGING JAPANESE ATTITUDES TOWARDS LIFESTYLES AND LEISURE 1970-1990

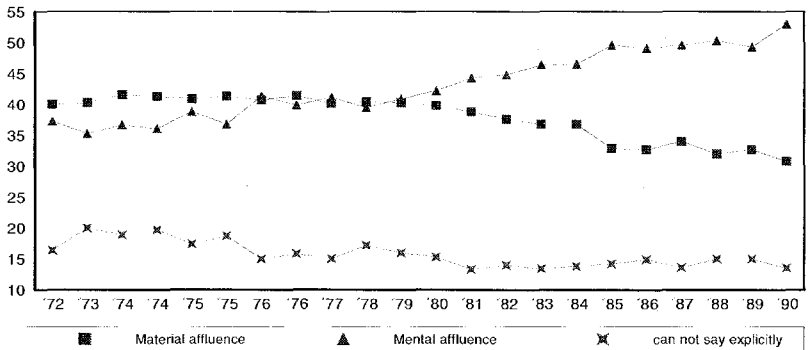
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## 1. FROM A PERIOD OF MATERIALISM TO A PERIOD OF THE HEART

Based on the *Survey on National Life* conducted in May 1990 by the Prime Minister's Office, I would like to consider the changes in Japanese lifestyles over time.

- Q: Which is closest to your opinion concerning your life in the future?
- a. Now that I have become relatively satisfied on a material level, I would like to pursue a lifestyle related with the satisfaction of the heart.
  - b. I would like to pursue materialistic aspects in order to satisfy my life.
  - c. I cannot choose between either.
  - d. I don't know.

Graph 1 illustrates the responses of Japanese people since 1972. How is one to interpret the graph? Looking back at my previous studies, I would like to attempt an analysis.



Graph 1: Material affluence or Mental affluence

Source: Prime Minister's Office (1990): *Survey on National Life*

The Economic Planning Agency (EPA), using a study on how time is spent in Japan conducted by the Japan Broadcasting Association (NHK), ana-

lyzed the effect of the overall distribution of Japan's Gross National Hours (GNH) on the utilization of national lands. Ever since it realized the significance of free time, leisure issues have become an important administrative topic. In order to analyze these issues even further, on January 1, 1972, a mission was sent to inspect the leisure situation of Europe and the United States. Our group, which participated in the mission, proposed that:

1. Japan's leisure development was ten years behind that of Europe and the United States.
2. When developing the leisure environment, the time consumption environment must be well established before the income consumption environment.
3. A new conceptualization aimed at a society of leisure must be designed.

As can be seen in the public survey data, Japanese values were changing, moving away from the satisfaction of materialistic desires to the fulfillment of the heart. Leisure issues, being closely tied in with the fulfillment of the heart, gained more attention. That spring, after a new cabinet under Prime Minister Tanaka was chosen, a redeployment of industries took place as part of the revitalization program of regional areas, while large-scale recreational centers were created in order to improve the quality of life in the regions. In May, the Leisure Development Center was created to model such recreational projects. For example, the Okinawa Exposition was one project where we studied the use of the lands during and after the Exposition (the lands were to be used for a resort development project). At about the same time, an earlier bowling fad came to an end and resort development was looked on as a "post-bowling" movement. Thus, the establishment of the Leisure Development Center received much attention from industry and regional municipalities. The fact that Sahashi Shigeru, former vice-minister of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), was appointed president contributed much to its fame.

It appeared, then, in 1972 as though Japan's leisure industry was off to a smooth start. Unfortunately, the first oil-shock hit Japan in 1973. The shift from material satisfaction to the fulfillment of the heart, as well as the development of a leisure industry, were stopped. On the global level, optimistic scenarios of the future appeared to be negated and the world entered a period of massive unemployment. Thus, the scenario of "increase of labor productivity → increase in income → shorter work hours" plummeted into the dismal "help from unemployment → work-sharing" reality. Japan, in order to rebuild its economic/industrial foundation, had to conserve its resources and develop a high-tech environment with "lighter, thinner, shorter, smaller" as its motto. For a while, leisure issues

were put aside. For the Japanese people, the fulfillment of the heart was still important, but that came only after materialistic demands were met. In 1979, all this changed. From around this time Japan became associated with "high-tech." There was a switch back to the "heart." This reversal in values has continued up to the present and the gap is growing. However, this does not mean that the fulfillment of the heart led directly to dealing with leisure issues. Only, after a period of trial and error and some soul-searching did an awareness of the connection between the fulfillment of the heart and leisure issues begin to develop from 1983 onward.

## 2. THE FOCAL POINT OF LIFE TURNS TO LEISURE

- Q: What part of your life do you concentrate on the most now? (Choose one)
- a. Eating
  - b. Clothing
  - c. Durable consumer goods (electrical appliances, cars)
  - d. Housing
  - e. Leisure and recreation
  - f. Others
  - g. Nothing in particular
  - h. Don't know

According to the data, the effects of the oil shock and rampant inflation first appeared in housing and eating. In 1979, eating trends stabilized and the outlook changed from satisfaction of materialism to a fulfillment of the heart, and in 1983 this changed from an emphasis on "housing" to "leisure." Ever since, the strong drive to pursue leisure activities has remained the same. Looked at from a demographic point of view, this trend is more apparent in younger age groups, among men, and within managerials and specialist occupations. This is a very interesting phenomenon since the change was initiated from leaders in society who had a large influence upon others.

age			occupation		
	men (39.6%)	women (35.1%)			
20-24	51.4	56.5	Independent enterprise	agriculture/fishery	37.2%
25-29	46.0	43.1		commerce service	39.7
30-34	45.5	37.6		other	29.9
35-39	44.2	37.0	Work in service	agriculture/fishery	31.9
40-44	41.2	35.1		commerce service/other	43.0
45-49	43.1	33.9	Employee	management	62.1
50-54	39.1	37.5		professional occupation	54.0
55-59	38.1	34.7		office worker	47.2
60-64	35.5	30.3		labor	33.2
65-69	35.6	27.9	No occupation	housewife	31.9
70-	23.2	17.3		students	63.4
				others	27.1

Table 1: Priorities of life for the future – leisure & recreation –  
 • whole 37.2%

Source: Public opinion poll on national life by the Prime Minister’s Office, May, 1990.

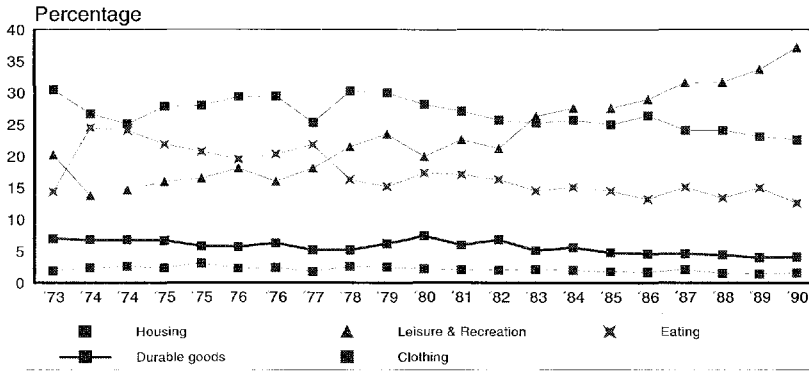
If one analyzes the data, the desire for materialistic goods is well satisfied (apart from housing) and the emphasis shifted towards how one spends one’s growing free time.

I. Samuelson’s outlook for happiness $\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{Material consumption}}{\text{Desires}}$	1. Happiness comes from reducing the denominator 2. Happiness comes from increasing the numerator 3. Happiness comes from increasing both the denominator and numerator while maintaining “numerator < denominator”
II. Outlook for happiness from materialism to post-materialism $\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{Income consumption}}{\text{Material desires}} + \frac{\text{Income consumption}}{\text{Mental desires}}$	4. Happiness comes from increasing both denominator and numerator while maintaining “numerator < denominator”
III. Outlook for happiness over an 80-year life span $\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{Income consumption}}{\text{Material desires}} + \frac{\text{Time consumption}}{\text{Mental desires}}$	5. Happiness relies on the relation between quality goods and quality lifestyles.

Chart 1: The changes in the outlook for happiness

In general, if the satisfaction level of one’s desires becomes higher, it is said that attention will shift to other desires. In his book *Economics*, Paul Samuelson (1948) explains the equation of happiness as being the ratio of material consumption to one’s desires. Here, material consumption may be interchanged with real income. Using this relationship, I would like to analyze the data in Graph 2. First of all, the desire for clothing and durable

consumer goods has been satisfied. If this level is maintained, then there will be no extra demand. In addition, the desire for food is also well satisfied, thus shifting the focal point to one of wanting something “more tasty, more entertaining and more healthy.” This shift is more apparent among women than among men and is indicative of the female gourmet/leisure trends. Although there exist some problems with the housing situation, as far as the data tell us, the Japanese have never enjoyed a higher standard of materialism in the past.



Graph 2: What part of your life do you concentrate on the most now?

Source: Prime Minister's Office (1990): *Survey on National Life*

Looking back upon man's long history, as Samuelson points out, there is a period in society when, even though the individuals are diligent hard-workers, society is incapable of generating the necessary wages to compensate for the work. This leads to a life of conservation and asceticism and, in light of the happiness equation, a reduction in the denominator. As portrayed in the popular TV series *Oshin*, this period lasted in Japan until the first half of the 1950's. On a global level, there are still many countries which must follow this course of pursuing happiness.

Fortunately, in the late 1950s, Japan entered a period of rapid economic development and its outlook on happiness changed from one of reducing the denominator to an outlook where the numerator was increased and, finally, into an outlook where both the numerator and denominator were increased, while maintaining the premise that the numerator must be smaller than the denominator. The first is a result of the “demonstration effect” of J.S. Duesenberry while the last is a result of the “dependence effect” of J.K. Galbraith. In this period, Japan was the most adaptive of all countries to the mechanism of “mass-production → mass sales → mass consumption” and various market research and analyses of consumption

economics observed these two effects. However, around the early 80s, people started to regret the cyclic nature of desires (apart from housing) which fluctuated between an expansion of desires followed by their satisfaction (i.e. consumption). Materialistic desires reached a plateau, leading to two marketing changes in the consumption market. One was the marketing of "goods" which led to the fragmentation of the market segmentation and product differentiation, both of which still continue today. The other was the marketing of *software*. Desire was categorized into materialistic desire and psychological desire and a market aimed at the satisfaction of psychological desire was created. In other words, the focus of marketing turned towards the leisure industry. It can be said that right now Japan is in the midst of such a marketing trend, with all the resort development projects, theme parks and overseas vacations being so popular.

However, this view of happiness will also eventually reach its zenith. As long as one invests a certain amount of income and free time, one is capable of enjoying a degree of leisure similar to everyone else. Unfortunately one gets bored of this kind of lifestyle very quickly. For example, if one is to visit Tōkyō Disneyland, one day, maybe two days at the most is enough. It is not meant for long-term stays. In order to be attractive as a recreation center for a long-term stay, it must appeal to a lifestyle combining time and income with self-development. This can be said for everyday leisure life. In other words, it is desired that an outlook on happiness be established, relating high-quality goods and services to a high-quality lifestyle.

### 3. TOWARDS 1,800 HOURS/YEAR

One of the major topics of the labor movement in 1990 is the reduction of labor hours. There are already some unions which have targeted the realization of 1,800 hours/year as their goal. When considering the following data, it can be said that this movement could not have been more timely.

Q: What things/goods do you think are in short supply in your everyday life?

- |                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| a. Shortage of wages     | 26.8% |
| b. Shortage of free time | 25.2% |

Q: Would you reduce your free time in order to increase your present income?

- |               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| a. Yes        | 21.6% |
| b. No         | 56.7% |
| c. Neither    | 17.4% |
| d. Don't know | 4.3%  |

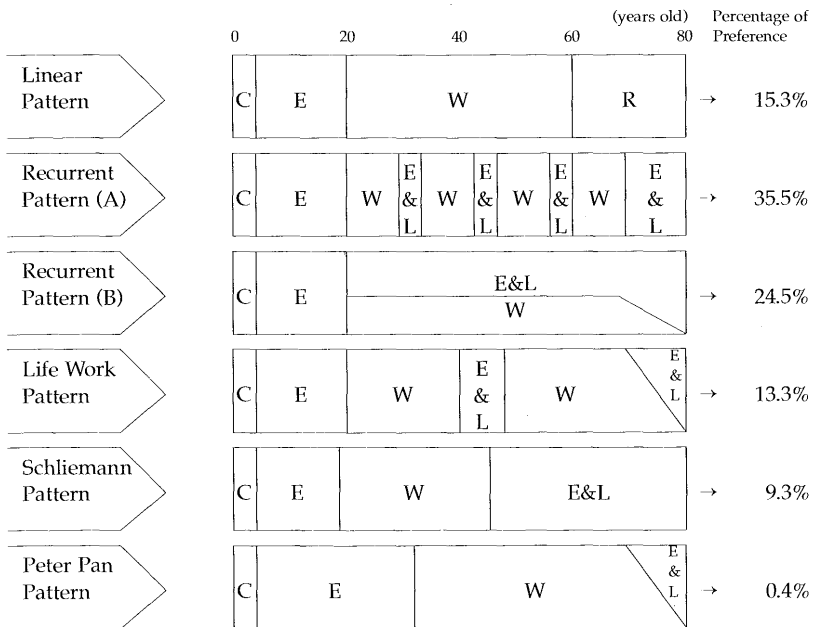
Increasing one's free time or increasing one's income... The data indicate that there is a stronger desire for free time. The period when people were hungry for money has passed and Japanese people now consider comfort and affluence as being the balance between free time and income.

Europe and the United States have already achieved the 1,800 labor-hours/year and some countries are even considering lowering the figure down to 1,500 hours/year. In Japan, ever since the Economic Planning Agency proposed 1,800 hours/year in their five-year plan, this figure has been the goal of the labor unions. What significance does this number have in light of one's time budget?

One day is 24 hours. One year is 8,760 hours. For an average life of 80 years, this amounts to approximately 700,000 hours. Assuming that one works during a 40-year period from the age of twenty to sixty, this will equal 72,000 labor hours, which is 10% of a person's entire life. One's free time increases to about 210,000 hours, or 30% of one's life. Some Japanese companies estimate this figure to be closer to 250,000 hours. This means that, in addition to the satisfaction of one's work life, the satisfaction of one's leisure life becomes an important issue. The "Survey of National Life" conducted by the Prime Minister's Office indicates this change in the trends of time expenditure. In reality, though, the people's lifestyles and society itself are still bound to the values and framework of the fifties. This is very unnatural.

What then is the time distribution desired by the Japanese? It seems that they want to switch from a "linear" lifestyle to a "recurrent" lifestyle. The basic life cycle over a period of 50 years has been: Child (C)→ Education (E)→ Work (W)→ Retirement (R). However, once the life expectancy reached 80 and an economic and temporal affluence was becoming common place, the lifestyle continued to be the same linear "C→E→W→R" lifestyle. It is preferable, however, that lifestyles evolve into a "recurrent" type, having the option to select from working, continuing one's education or pursuing leisure activities after the education stage. For example,

“C →E →W →E/Leisure →W →E/L →W →... →E/L” or “C →E →(W/E/L) →E/L”D. According to a study by the Economic Planning Agency, the percentage of people desiring a linear lifestyle was only 15% while close to 60% wanted a recurrent lifestyle. This trend is more apparent among younger age groups. If working as a responsibility can be reduced to 10% of one’s entire life, one would naturally want to distribute the work hours within the 700,000–some hours of his life in the most comfortable fashion.



C: Children  
 E: Education & Learning  
 W: Work  
 L: Leisure  
 R: Retirement

Graph 3: Preferences over an 80-year life span  
 Source: Economic Planning Agency 1986



## 4. FROM RECREATION TO AMUSEMENT TO LEISURE

The way an individual spends his free time can be categorized into the following:

1. Rest, recreation, relaxation;
2. amusement, entertainment;
3. leisure (self-actualization, self-development).

This categorization stems from the thoughts of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. In his works, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, he mentions the importance of leisure and uses the three keywords of *anapausis*, *paideia* and *scholē*. Modern day studies of leisure pair recreation with *anapausis*, amusement with *paideia*, and leisure with *scholē*. Simply put, the difference among the three is based upon whether or not there exists the intention of developing one's self or not.

	Social Stage	Life Style	Economics	Free Time	Outlook for Happiness
Stage 1	Pre-Industrial Society	Working-Saving	Classic Economics	Recreation	1
Stage 2	Industrial Society	Having (To have) -Consuming	Modern Economics Mass Marketing	Recreation + Amusement	2 3 4
Stage 3	Post-Industrial Society	Being (To be) Self Development	—————	Recreation + Amusement + Leisure	5

Table 2: Social Stage & Recreation/Entertainment/Leisure

As long as one has the time and money, one can enjoy recreation and amusement the same as everyone else, but with leisure, one must also have the *ability* to enjoy. Words such as school and scholar find their roots in *scholē*. On the other hand, leisure, as well as the word license, comes from the Latin word *licere*. License is a form of freedom vested to one who has acquired an ability. Leisure is another kind of freedom vested to one who has acquired the ability to live a fulfilled life while interacting with the values of nature and/or culture. As people's free time increases, they shift, or hope to shift the amount of time spent from recreation to amusement, and finally, to leisure.

Presently, there is an impending change in the values concerning leisure and school: a so-called period of "self-development" and "life-long education" is on the horizon. In order to enter this period, people must strive to achieve their personal interests and prepare a support system for the rest. The new outlook of happiness will make possible the connection between high-quality goods (satisfaction of materialistic desires) and high-

quality lifestyles (satisfaction of psychological desires). Happiness will be the degree of income consumption achieved relative to one's materialistic and psychological desires, in addition to the degree of time spent relative to the level of one's desire of self-development.

In Japan, maintainance of durable consumer goods has reached a saturation level. Also, quality goods such as cars, cameras, audio equipment, which were considered to be unavailable are now easily possessed. However, even if the supplies were of good quality, without the ability to use them, a high-quality lifestyle would not be possible. If one observes the present Japanese lifestyle, it is apparent that there is a lack of the ability to use goods to their maximum potential. If there were, it would mean the arrival of the time of "self-development."

Aristotle says that, "Happiness can be thought to be in leisure. As we have wars to achieve peace, we work to enjoy leisure." He applies *schole* to leisure and the antonym *ascholia* to work. In addition, people cannot work without recreation (*anapausis*) and amusement (*paideia*) and depend upon work. However, leisure (*schole*) is a goal in itself and its means is work.

Looking from a fundamental view of leisure, the expenditure of free time, the desire for a recurrent lifestyle, the movement from materialism to the psyche, and the focal shift to a life of leisure are all healthy and desirable trends in Japan. The only problem is that, even though such desires exist, the environment and various support systems must be prepared to realize their goal of a life filled with leisure.

## 5. THE PREPARATION OF URBAN ENVIRONMENTS BEFORE RESORT DEVELOPMENTS

Presently, the environmental destruction brought about by golf course development and resort development has grown into a relatively significant problem. Japan's development of free time environments is closely controlled by industry, and compared to that of Europe and the United States the cost is much too high.

In other words, too much emphasis is placed on the promotion of income consumption types of leisure. The main receptacle of free time should be the home and community before the resort. The environment should be developed in such a way that all people can enjoy time consumption types of leisure. Japan's present situation is plagued by an effort to siphon off the development of free time environments and promote instead resort development projects which destroy environments abounding with nature.

As Japan reduces labor hours and increases free time, the preparation of an environment capable of supporting free time and leisure within urban areas must be promoted quickly. Unfortunately, it has become a hardship to obtain new lands to serve as receptacles for free time purposes due to the rapid increase in real estate prices. Now that one cannot find extra land within school districts, perhaps through charity drives, enough money can be collected to renovate the schools' facilities into life-long education centers and life-long sports centers. In an average school district, it should not be that difficult to set up life-long education trusts and sports trusts of 1.5 billion yen to 2 billion yen through the contributions of the community and business. In Japan, there are about 1,000 universities. The tailoring of the curriculum and facilities to meet the needs of life-long education and life-long sports should be relatively easy. If such a preparation of the free time environment is accomplished in urban areas, the association of leisure = golf will be broken, and these urban environments will have a positive effect towards the conservation of the natural environment.

As of now, 20–50 billion yen are invested in the development of an average 18–hole golf course. If the restrictions concerning the development of golf courses were to be raised, there would be about 500–1000 new development proposals. However, if the entire amount of money were to be invested in the 7,000 junior high schools, 5,000 high schools and 1,000 universities (2 billion yen a piece), it would be possible to develop leisure facilities which would meet the needs of people even better. The present administration may consider the construction of school buildings to have reached an end, using its budget instead to construct cultural facilities. It may be a better idea to reconsider what leisure is and what it ought to be, and based on the results, transform school facilities into community colleges and life-long education centers, which will ultimately result in the promotion of the development of a free time environment.

#### REFERENCES

- Samuelson, Paul (1948): *Economics. An Introductory Analysis*. New York: McGraw-Hill.