

# 1988: Attitudes, Lifestyles, Work and Society

By Marketing Division of Dentsu Inc.

The Japanese are at a turning point. The rapid economic advances that brought Japan to the foreground of international affairs have also led to social changes so profound that they are shaking the foundations of the Japanese psyche.

Gone are the days when the majority of the population considered themselves middle class. The recent astronomical climb in real estate prices and the gradual concentration of personnel, resources and finances from the rest of Japan to Tokyo, have made people realize that wealth is, indeed, distributed unevenly. Furthermore, they are faced with the dichotomy of living in what is quoted to be one of the richest countries in the world but where the benefits of that wealth are not channeled back to the workers who helped create it. Beliefs and values that supported Japan's amazing rise from postwar ruins are now beginning to erode. The Japanese people are searching for new directions and new values.

These are some of the factors that form the basis for the following somewhat irreverent predictions for Japanese society in 1988.

## Attitudes

### Women

Contrary to their stereotype of the past—helpless, delicate creatures trapped in a male-dominated society—Japanese women today have a strong sense of identity and purpose. Independent and career-oriented, they no longer marry simply to comply with convention, and this attitude will become more marked in the year ahead. The chauvinistic view that women are less efficient than men will continue to wane. Women with successful and meaningful careers will cease to be rarities.

### Japanese and proud of it

Since the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese have had a strong infatuation for the Occident. However, a renaissance will

take place in which people will rediscover the merits of their culture. There will be renewed interest in what is innately Japanese, accompanied by a sense of national pride.

### Speaking out

Asserting one's view and speaking out, long considered a character flaw, will gain greater acceptance as a virtue. Individuals will be encouraged to speak out, however controversially, as long as they are capable of supporting their views with a sound argument.

### Historic point of view

Schools and even businesses will encourage individuals to acquire a historical perspective when dealing with problems. As a result, literature, movies and television programs dealing with historical themes will become even more popular.

### Fair play

Because Japan's social hierarchy has been vertical throughout most of its history, the Japanese concepts of fairness and equality differ from those of the West. However, current events such as the international trade frictions and the

exorbitant rise in real estate prices will raise social consciousness so that previously accepted views on fairness and individual rights will come under greater challenge.

### Throwing the guidebook away

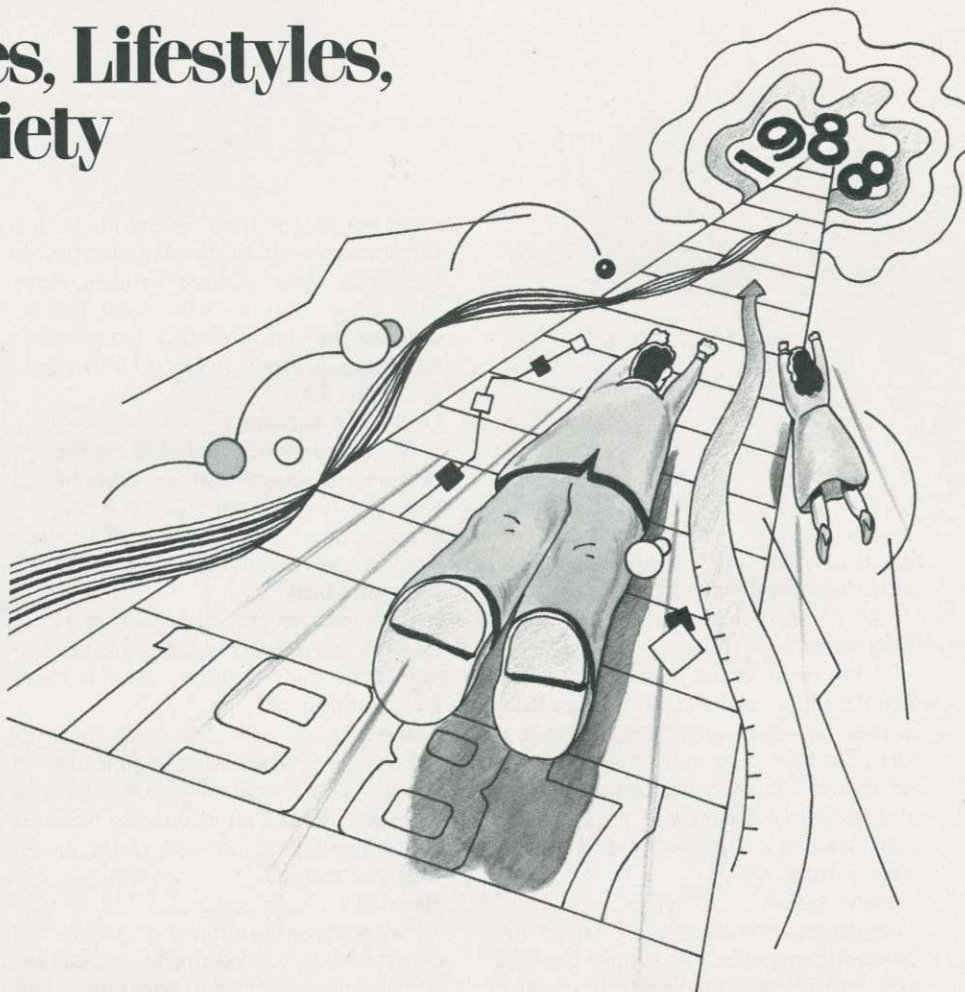
More Japanese will follow their individual preferences rather than just follow fads. This trend can be seen in the decline in the popularity of prearranged package tours and top brand name products, as well as an increase in the popularity of individual pursuits and hobbies. People are increasingly showing preferences for items and products that truly represent their individuality and personal tastes.

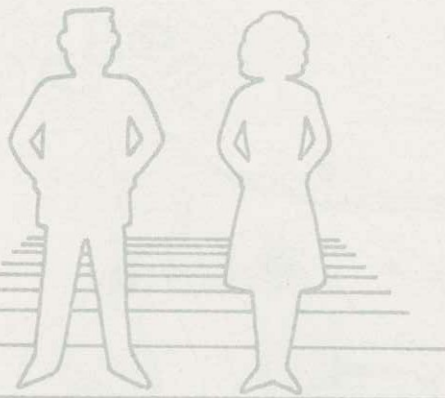
### Leaving the nest

The ease and affordability of overseas travel will encourage more people to go abroad and experience foreign cultures. The increasing popularity of overseas second homes, employment and home-stay programs also suggests that the number of Japanese desiring to live or work abroad is rising.

### Challenging one's limits

People with ambition will be more pre-





pared to go to wherever they need to in order to prove their ability or talent, even if that means going abroad.

#### **Less stress**

Being stressed and overworked is out. People will be less afraid to work or study at their own pace, allocating time and effort efficiently. The individual who gives an impression of being under pressure and intensely driven will no longer be considered an effective member of the work force.

#### **Simpler tastes**

Japanese consumers will be more discriminating, preferring simple products and services of high quality that satisfy basic needs. Gone are the days of elaborate, gimmicky products that perform a number of nonessential functions. Showy, garish packaging will also come to increasingly be considered distasteful, indicating the absence of true quality in the product.

## **Lifestyles**

#### **Private life**

The Japanese have always been dedicated workers, sometimes sacrificing their private lives for their careers. This is changing. People will place as much importance on the quality of their personal lives as on their careers. Hobbies and pastimes will be selected according to true personal interests rather than being dictated by peer pressure.

#### **Fatherhood**

Married men will seek greater fulfill-

ment not only in their careers but within the home as well. In the past, men placed their jobs ahead of their families. However, more fathers will show greater concern and responsibility toward their families. Currently, books on fatherhood are best-sellers.

#### **Order and harmony**

More and more people will see the importance of self-control and discipline in their daily lives to keep themselves in top shape. The growing number of facilities such as health clubs illustrates this trend.

#### **The early bird**

Early-morning meetings, seminars and English conversation classes are becoming increasingly popular and this trend will continue.

#### **Leisure**

People will place more importance on leisure. The length of vacation periods will increase and consequently business in the service, leisure and resort industries will expand.

#### **Housing**

An increasing number of people will own homes in the country and rebuild existing homes so that two generations can live in one house. The astronomical increase in real estate prices in major cities throughout Japan is forcing families to consider alternate locations and housing.

#### **Retirement**

The desire of people to lead active lives after retirement will mean that pensions and bonds, postretirement job placement programs, and college courses for senior citizens will become increasingly popular.

#### **Caring about others**

People will begin to show greater concern for others. There will be a renewed interest in social etiquette and manners. The current no-smoking movement and the growing popularity of books and courses on etiquette and manners illustrate this trend.

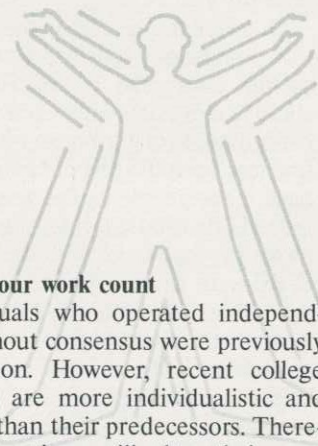
#### **Community consciousness**

People will begin to care more and more about the community in which they live. Therefore we will see many community improvement programs, social clubs and citizens' groups created at local levels. In addition, businesses that cater specifically to selective communities will expand. Such businesses include

local cable networks as well as limited area merchandising.

#### **The pursuit of sophistication**

People will seek greater sophistication in their daily lives. Instead of drinking with colleagues after work more people will attend concerts, visit art galleries and go to other cultural events. Activities that neither educate nor enrich will be considered a waste of time and will decline in popularity.



## **Work**

#### **Making your work count**

Individuals who operated independently without consensus were previously frowned on. However, recent college graduates are more individualistic and outgoing than their predecessors. Therefore corporations will alter their consensus-regulated business practices to accommodate new employees straight out of college. As long as it benefits the organization, taking initiatives will be encouraged. Restrictions that had inhibited creativity and individuality will also gradually be removed.

#### **Personal upgrading**

Businesses will require individuals who are capable of improving and educating themselves. In the past, ability and aptitude were assessed during entrance level examinations and interviews. However, more and more corporations will review their employees' current performances. As a result, study groups, night schools, training seminars and weekend business schools will become increasingly popular.

#### **Weekend market analysts**

Expensive market surveys which provide only statistics, graphs and projections are beginning to lose their credibility. On the other hand, simple suggestions made by housewives, children and other nonprofessionals have assisted manufacturers in creating inno-

vative products that have yielded huge profits. As a result, observations made by general consumers will be highly valued as influential market information.

#### **Hobby as a career**

What previously was not considered a valid occupation will gain acceptance. An increasing number of people are making their hobbies and interests their careers. Computer game software designers and handicraft workshops run by housewives illustrate this trend. As a result, services that previously did not exist will increasingly enter the market.

#### **Free-lancing**

Corporations will hire large numbers of temporary workers to work within their diversifying operations. As a result, there will be a corresponding number of individuals prepared to work part-time or free-lance for such firms. The flexibility represented by such employment will gradually alter the rigid employment practices of Japan.

#### **Professionals switching allegiance**

Leading professionals who are in high demand will switch companies without hesitation if the terms are right. In the past, switching of allegiance was unheard of. Most people believed that once you joined a large company, you were there for life. Although still widely accepted, this belief is gradually disappearing. Along with the proliferation of job transfers, the number of headhunting firms will also grow.

#### **Moonlighting**

An increasing number of people will have more than one occupation. Moonlighting has been frowned on among respectable circles and is usually done furtively. However, more and more people will acknowledge that they are holding more than one job.

#### **Information as a weapon**

Both corporations and individuals will place more importance on information and the ability to collate and control information. An increasing number of corporations will establish think tanks and many individuals will own their own personal databases.

#### **The human touch**

Society will become more tolerant of its members' frailties. There will be a grad-

ual slowing down of the Japanese economy. Corporations and individuals will no longer be driven to succeed. As a result, companies will become more tolerant toward the failure or incompetence of their employees and operations.

#### **Corporate mercenaries**

Corporations will hire small companies and professionals on a project basis. These companies and professionals will provide the corporation with specialized services. Arrangements such as these will become increasingly common.

## **Society**

#### **Demanding rights**

Complaining was never a virtue in Japan. However, there will be more and more people voicing their discontent and demanding their rights. The antimoking movement and the citizens' groups against various forms of discrimination illustrate this growing tendency.

#### **Respecting others' opinions**

People will begin to pay more attention to the opinions of others. Whether the person be a consultant, attorney or the next-door neighbor, opinions and views will be regarded with respect. Furthermore, people will seek advice and views from abroad. The current popularity of overseas commentary and international debate programs suggests that the Japanese are truly interested in the values and views held in other countries.

#### **Politics, economics and culture**

Interest in politics, economics and culture will grow, even among individuals who previously felt that these topics had

no direct bearing on their daily lives. This trend can be seen in the recent high ratings of documentary and news programs which in the past have had low ratings.

#### **Personal monuments**

Many Japanese will seek their own medium of self-expression. More people will feel free to publish their own autobiography, produce their own record, direct their own movie. The public will also be more inclined to accept these self-made artists.

#### **Personal time scheduling**

People will begin to allocate time more effectively. They will be able to work efficiently yet find time to enjoy whatever they care to. These individuals are capable of creating innovative time management schemes that allow them to fit society's routine into their own schedule.

#### **Trying alternate lifestyles**

More people will be prepared to take the risk of attempting a lifestyle that may be considered dangerous or detrimental by society at large, in order to experience a change of pace from a comfortable and secure routine.

#### **Back to nature**

People will begin to show concern for nature conservation and the welfare of the entire planet. People will actively campaign for a variety of ecological causes. Membership of antinuclear organizations will increase.

#### **Sponsorships**

Corporations will actively provide scholarships and sponsorships to talented individuals and will also be ready to sponsor a wide range of cultural events such as art and movie festivals.

#### **Charity**

More and more people will give donations to charity. Many cultural events and entertainment programs will be linked to charitable causes. Not only will people participate in major global campaigns, they will also volunteer in local community charities as well.



The above article is based on the *Outlook for 1988*, the latest in an annual series produced by the Marketing Division of Dentsu Inc.