

Increased Lifespan To Create Leisure Ethic

By Motoyuki Miyano

Two quiet revolutions are under way in Japan today. One is electronics, but the other is the graying of Japanese society.

Electronics technology is only about 80 years old, but already it is entering a period of wide popularity and rapid evolution. Sophisticated electronics are no longer confined to industry, but have taken their place in the home as well.

Meanwhile, Japan's society is aging at a pace two to four times faster than in France, Sweden, Britain, or West Germany, countries where this phenomenon is presently most advanced. By the year 2010, Japan is projected to have the largest proportion of aged people in the world, with 18.8% of the population above the age of 65.

These two revolutions will have far-reaching effects on the leisure activities of the Japanese people. The electronics revolution, for instance, has already made the personal computer an important educational toy for children and young people. Personal radios are under consideration for training on ski slopes. Street corner beer vending machines that greet customers with a charming "Thank you very much" are popular among young people who want to quench their thirst in the middle of the night. Computers produce animated TV programs and even compose music.

But the high-age revolution is also changing people's leisure activities, and the character of the leisure industry. The current popularity of travel and gardening reflects the aging of the population. Gate ball, a game similar to croquet, was developed for mature players, but is now spreading among young people. Shuffleboard is expected to follow the same course. The leisure industry used to concentrate on the youth market, but now is turning its attention to the "silver market."

The history of the Japanese leisure market since World War II is one of steady expansion, despite some twists and turns along the way. The decade beginning in 1965 was a period of high economic growth for Japan, and ushered in the so-called leisure age. But the first oil crisis in 1973 threw cold water on recreational activities, and the leisure industry stagnated for several years. Later, as the



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Japanese economy entered its present moderate growth phase, expenditures for leisure activities began a mild upturn. By 1979, growth in leisure expenditures exceeded that for overall consumption. In 1982, leisure spending accounted for 24.6% of total consumption.

From money-intensive to time-consuming recreation

As leisure activities expanded, their substance also changed. Recreation in the high economic growth period was mainly "money-intensive," as symbolized by the flourishing neon-lit entertainment districts in big cities. But after the oil shock the pendulum swung from bars, cabarets, golf courses and bowling alleys to relatively inexpensive but "time-consuming" recreation, including appreciation of the arts and the pursuit of cultural instruction. In today's moderate economic growth period, leisure activities are an amalgamation of the two types, with people usually engaging in simple recreation but splurging from time to time on extravagant leisure activities.

The 1980s are expected to see the flowering of a full-fledged leisure age in Japan. While French economist J. Fourastié forecasts that the share of leisure spending in French household expenditures will rise to 25% in 1989 from 10% in 1950, the Japanese were already devoting 24.6% of household expenditures to leisure activities in 1982.

The Leisure Development Center classi-



Photo: Asahi Shimbun

fies leisure activities into four broad categories—sports, hobbies/creative activities, entertainment/games, and travel/outings. The sports market in 1982 came to ¥6.3 trillion (\$26.3 billion), hobbies/creative activities, ¥7 trillion (\$29.2 billion), entertainment/games, ¥11.6 trillion (\$48.3 billion), and travel/outings, ¥13.7 trillion (\$57.1 billion), for a total of ¥38.6 trillion (\$160.8 billion).

The major leisure activities in each category are as follows:

Category	Major Activities (in order of expenditures)
Sports	Golf, skiing, fishing, camping & mountaineering, tennis
Hobbies/Creative Activities	Music appreciation, horticulture & gardening, photography, dress-making & kimono-sewing, study
Entertainment/Games	Bars, snack bars & pubs, dining out, pachinko pinball
Travel/Outings	Domestic sightseeing trips, overseas travel, hometown visits

This table presents only a static view of Japanese leisure activities in terms of expenditures. A more dynamic view of recent trends follows.

While the participation rate has dropped slightly in many sports, the frequency of participation has risen, leading to an overall increase in volume. Participation in fitness-oriented sports, such as jogging and marathons, has risen conspicuously. Although the golf participation rate has plateaued, people are going to the courses more often. And while the rate of participation in such action sports as surfing,

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yachting and hang-gliding remains low, participants are pursuing these activities more vigorously.

Among hobbies/creative activities, there has recently been a noticeable increase in horticulture and gardening. The rate of participation in other activities has generally leveled off, but the frequency of participation has increased. People who engage in hobbies/creative activities invest a lot of time in order to enjoy their pursuits more thoroughly.

Among entertainment/games, participation in table games, such as *go*, *shogi* (Japanese-style chess), cards and Othello, has risen. Dining out and *pachinko*, the single most popular pastime in Japan, have also flourished. But participation in public-operated gambling, such as horse racing and bicycle racing, has dropped slightly.

Desire for travel, creative and healthful pursuits

There has been a marked increase in travel/outing, and especially, in domestic sightseeing trips and drives. But although proportionately more people are traveling, both frequency and expenditures are low. A recent survey by the Leisure Development Center sheds some light on the future prospect for the leisure industry in Japan. (This random survey sampled 3,000 people 15 or older in cities with populations exceeding 50,000. The response rate was 87%. Subjects were allowed to give multiple answers. The preference rate represents the number of people who expressed a desire to participate in a given activity divided by the total number of respondents.)

Table Forecast of Daily Division of Hours for General Population

	1980	1990	2000
Committed time	8.73	8.74	8.19
Socializing	0.79	0.79	0.84
Sightseeing/spectator sports/appreciation of the arts	0.15	0.16	0.16
Participatory sports	0.08	0.08	0.09
Free time	0.08	0.08	0.08
Gambling	0.08	0.08	0.08
Outings/walks	0.17	0.17	0.20
Cultural instruction/hobbies	0.26	0.29	0.36
Rest/radio/TV/reading	5.52	5.59	5.87
Sub-total	7.05	7.16	7.60
Time for essential daily activities	10.55	10.53	10.54
Total hours	26.31	26.44	26.36

The survey found the preferred leisure activity of the respondents to be domestic sightseeing trips (preference rate 73%), drives (48%), foreign travel (47%), dining out (46%), and picnic/hiking/walks (43%). A surprising trend revealed by the survey was that far more people wish to travel within Japan than the 54% who already do so. Eight times more people want to travel overseas than the current 6% participation rate. A study of the growth potential (the preference rate ÷ the present rate of participation) of popular leisure activities in which more than 10 million people currently participate shows that skiing has the greatest future growth potential (1.85), followed by golf (1.71), tennis (1.56), concerts (1.39), and domestic sightseeing trips (1.34).

A more detailed picture of the recreational pursuits of the Japanese and their future wishes is revealed by a survey of residents of Tokyo, a mammoth city of 11.75 million. The figure below is from the "Survey on Life Activities of Tokyo Residents," published by the Tokyo metropolitan government in 1982.

Seven of the 16 types of leisure activi-

ties in the diagram have more aspirants than participants. These are creative activities, industrial arts/handicrafts, horticulture/gardening, cultural instruction, physical fitness, sea/mountain/sky sports, and social activities. With the exception of social activities, all are either creative and/or activities in the pursuit of health. It is dangerous to generalize on the basis of Tokyo residents, who make up only 10% of Japan's population. But, compared with the results of similar surveys, their desire to engage in creative and healthful leisure pursuits is strikingly similar to that of the nation as a whole.

Less work, more play

On the basis of various surveys and studies, the Leisure Development Center drew up a forecast (see above table) of how the Japanese people will allocate their time in the future.

The figures include time in which people engage in more than one activity simultaneously, pushing total life hours over 24 hours a day. Even so, it is clear that the leisure activities with the greatest growth potential by the year 2000 are cultural instruction/hobbies, outings/walks, and participatory sports, in that order.

The percentage of working hours in a person's lifetime has already dropped below 10% in EC countries. European trade unions are trying to reduce that to 7% by the end of the decade. In Japan, working hours will likely fall below 7% by the end of the century.

At that time, the average Japanese lifespan will be 80 years or higher. Total life hours will come to at least 700,000, 7% of which is 49,000 hours. Deducting the time spent in early childhood, education, sleeping, eating and commuting, people will have at least 230,000 hours of freely disposable time in their lives, five times more than their total working hours.

Such an age will overturn the Japanese people's current values. The time may yet come when the work ethic will be replaced by a recreation ethic. As the number of people seeking fulfillment during their free time rather than at work increases, leisure activities in Japan will enter full bloom.

Fig. Recent and Future Leisure Activities of Tokyo Residents

