

# Contrasts in Japanese Society and Culture in Advertisements: 1960s and 1990s

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This report documents research into Japanese advertisements, the purpose of which was to examine the cultural tendencies found over a timespan of 40 years from 1960–2000. Approximately 300 ads from each decade were collected from the *Tokyo Copywriters' Club Advertising Copy Annual* (volumes from 1963–2001). This scope proved too large for a longitudinal study of each year, so for the purposes of this research, a comparison study of the ads from the 1960s and the 1990s was conducted. Approximately 300 ads were randomly selected from the corpus, the main (but not exclusive) criterion being that they contained images of people. The 1960s group contains only print ads, while the 1990s group is made up of both print and television ads.

The specific research questions for each decade of advertisements were:

1. What cultural values and beliefs are expressed in advertisements?
2. How are these cultural values and beliefs expressed?
3. What do they say about the lifestyles and beliefs during that period in Japan?

Following this, a comparison of the results of each decade was made. To frame the above research questions, it was necessary to examine writings on Japanese society to learn about events and issues that were present in society at large.

## Introduction

As in most developed countries, advertising in Japan is a big business. In 1998, advertising expenditures totalled ¥5,759.7 billion (Dentsu, 2000, p.97), making it

the second largest industry in the world after the U.S. With literally thousands of advertising companies operating here and hundreds of channels for their messages, it would be difficult, if not impossible to spend a day anywhere in Japan without being exposed to at least some advertising. Besides promoting products and services, advertising works on social and personal levels “[selling] values, images, and concepts of love and sexuality, romance, success, and perhaps more important, normalcy. To a great extent, it tells us who we are and who we should be” (Kilbourne, 1999, p.74). Ads selectively reflect, mediate, and reinforce certain preferred meanings taken from society and its culture. Precisely which aspects and which values are selected by advertisers is of interest and importance (Manstead and McCulloch, 1981, p.171), and is the basis for this study.

I was interested in seeing how people behaved and interacted with each other, particularly in families, in relationships between men and women, and in how they are portrayed individually. As mentioned above, the collection of ads represents a random sampling of mostly print and some TV ads, with most of them containing people. Nearly all are from the annual volumes of the award winners from the Tokyo Copywriters’ Club advertising competition, which began in 1963 and continues today.

This very brief report focuses on a mere slice of the body of research: ads from the 1960s and 1990s. This ad corpus was further reduced to the volumes published in 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, and 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999, which contain ads mainly from the previous years (i.e., 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, etc.).

In order to assess the messages and meanings in the ads, it is essential to understand what was happening in Japan and the world during these 40 years. To this end, a timeline was constructed to visualize the social, political, and economic highlights of the period.<sup>1</sup> The timelines for the 1960s and 1990s are in Appendixes 1 and 2 of this paper. After examining them, this report will proceed with an analysis of the ads themselves, considering the events in

society that are reflected in them and the points about Japanese culture, and about men and women that they reveal, adding commentary from relevant sources in the literature. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of the important findings and suggest topics for future research.

## Summary of The Timelines

### The 1960s

The 1960s were characterized as the period of rapid economic growth following World War II. The national agenda, led by Prime Minister Ikeda's 10-year plan from 1960 to double salaries (*shotoku baizo keikaku*) was to make Japan rich, developed, and recognized in world economic and political arenas. People were encouraged to work hard to build Japan: men should work hard for their companies and women, in their chief roles as housewives and mothers, should work hard to support their families. Apart from those who were involved in agriculture, most women chose or were required by their employers to quit their jobs upon marriage, when they were in their early 20s.

This was the great age of electronic goods for the home, which shifted from the three "sacred treasures" of the late 1950s: refrigerator, washing machine, and TV to the three 3Cs of the mid 1960s: car, color TV, cooler (air conditioner). In addition to strong domestic sales, exports boomed, thanks to mass production and to the favorable yen rate, which the U.S. government had set at ¥360 to the dollar in 1947, and maintained until 1971 (McCreery, 2000, p.17).

As the economy grew, so did the number of TVs, which was already at 10 million in 1961. The television became a significant addition to the family: husbands tended to work until very late (as many still do today), and the TV was ready-made entertainment for the family in his absence (Fujimura-Fanselow, 1995, p.75). With the influx of home appliances, women's housework

time was drastically reduced, and they spent their free time reading magazines and watching TV. As TV commercials moved from live spots to pre-recorded format, the number grew, making advertising part of daily life, and the “information age” had begun.<sup>2</sup>

The buying fervor extended beyond household appliances to cars, stereos, and consumer goods. Women’s magazines no longer instructed women how to make clothes, as they did in the 1950s, but gave advice on how to buy them (Tanaka, 1999). Articles and ads were not about survival, but on how to enjoy life.

Thanks to timesaving appliances, and the debut of instant foods (freeze dried and *retort*), and other ready-made goods, homemakers were further relieved of domestic duties. They were able to begin to think about how they could enjoy their lives and how their families could enjoy life more too. “Leisure” became a key word, and improved public transportation and the “my car” boom helped women get out of the house on their own, and helped families go on weekend outings, all of which further helped stimulate the economy.

A massive population shift from rural to urban lifestyles continued to support nuclear families, which, despite popular belief, constituted half of the population already from the 1920s, but now housed them in modern new western-style “mansions,” with western-style flooring and private bathrooms.<sup>3</sup>

As people’s lifestyles changed so did the family size, and this fact was registered by the birthrate falling to below the population maintenance level of 2.1 in 1960.

### ***The 1970s and 1980s***

To fill in the blanks between the 1960s and 1990s, a brief summary of the intervening years will be given here. The good life of the 1960s came to a rapid halt in the early 1970s, with 1970 being “Pollution Year One” (*Kogai Gannen*)

as a result of the growth of industries. 1971 was the year of the “Nixon shock,” and also the end to Japan’s favored yen-dollar exchange rate, and 1973 marked the first oil shock in Japan. The women’s movement saw some activity in Japan with a small number of mild protests against the government, media, and employers. The theme, however, focused more on raising the consciousness of women as individuals than on specific issues.

Japan rebounded during the 1980s and enjoyed a period of economic prosperity, known as “the bubble years.” Jobs were plentiful and women took advantage of increased work opportunities, which were bolstered at least in name by the Equal Employment Opportunities Law of 1986.<sup>4</sup> At the same time however, the family climate remained unchanged: married women, whether they worked or not, were still responsible for housekeeping and childrearing. Society offered little support and daycare facilities were in short supply. One bright spot for women in employment was the introduction, at least on paper, of the two-track system (*sogo shoku*, promotion track and *ippan shoku*, nonpromotion track), which was in part a result of companies changing from a lifetime seniority system to a merit-based one.

## The 1990s

This decade was devastated by the burst of the economic bubble (stock market crash): soaring unemployment after layoffs and company closures. In this economic climate, people looked inward and coveted their savings, which further weakened the economy. To make matters worse, many companies and banks went bankrupt or were scandalized by bad debts and coverups, and the government purse was weakened by the bailouts it liberally doled out.

The women’s movement activities of this decade took a more aggressive stance than those of the 1970s, with women lobbying to change surrounding concrete social conditions.

The birthrate continued to fall, reaching 1.5% in 1990, sending alarms across Japan that measures needed to be taken to maintain the population and the workforce. Employing more foreigners and increasing the working age limit were topics for discussion. The Childcare Leave Law of 1991 was meant to help mothers (and provisionally fathers as well) leave and re-enter the workforce after giving birth. However, like the EEOL, little was done to enforce it. Shifts in employment trends allowed more women to enter the workforce, and by 1991, their participation was 40.8%. They found work in the temporary or part-time positions which companies shifted to, since these workers were cheaper to employ than permanent full-time staff.

During this decade, as work and life became desperate, Japan was hit by a wave of brutal crimes, one example of which is the beheading incident by a 14-year-old boy in Kobe in 1997. Other acts of violence include the sarin gas attacks in 1995, and the curry poisoning murders in Wakayama in 1998.

The information age blossomed with the widespread use of the internet, as the number of users topped 10 million by 1997. Cell phones proliferated and became the preferred mode of human communication. Social skills declined as insularity resulted from the above.

People took a renewed look at their lifestyles and more and more came to value their personal and family lives over their jobs. As the birthrate continued to decline, people married later or not at all, the number of DINKS (double income no kids) rose and the modern family of the 1990s became the husband and wife. Meanwhile, the population continued to gray, bringing serious social and financial issues. Pensions were slashed, as was health insurance. At the same time, a new industry developed, catering to the aging population in the form of services and goods to support them. As the lifespan continued to rise, retired people looked at ways to enjoy their good health and, in many cases, substantial savings, and thus were targeted by virtually the entire product and service spectrum.

As people began to pay more attention to themselves and realize that they would probably live longer, there was a greater concern about health. Eating well, exercising, and alternative methods of treating illness were highlighted by the media. New trends appeared, including massage, spas, esthetic salon treatments, plastic surgery, and cosmetics for men. Looking and feeling good from the inside out became a value for both men and women in all age groups.

Interest and concern about the environment was highlighted during the decade. Japan hosted the Kyoto conference on global warming in 1997 and signed a protocol promising to take measures to help slow global warming. The themes of the environment, reusing, and recycling were taken up by the media as both companies and individuals became educated on the issues and began to take concrete action.

## **Ad Analysis**

### ***1960s ads***

The ads during this period reflect the rapid modernization and economic rebuilding of Japan and are characterized by the fact that they mainly introduced new products and services: cars, electronic goods, travel plans, and banking services. Advertisers needed to explain how they worked, why people needed them, and how they would change users' lives for the better. The ads therefore tend to be very text heavy with long and detailed explanations. In addition to technical information, user testimonies helped bolster product images. Print ads were crucial channels of information and promotion during the 1960s, since there were few other options other than contacting the maker directly or visiting a store that sold the product. TV and radio ads could only reinforce product awareness.

Some of the buzzwords of the era appear in this ad collection. For example,

Toyota Crown cars are advertised as symbols of the “high life” of the decade (TCC 1969, no. 004)<sup>5</sup>, as people’s lives improved. Women’s fashions are directed at “misses” (university-age, office workers, or otherwise unmarried young women) and “juniors” (high school girls), as women were taught to choose items according to their age (Toyoko Department Store, TCC 1965, no. 146). Brides-to-be are addressed as *oyome-san* and office workers are “BG” (business girls) (magazine, TCC 1965, no. 170). Since the latter also referred to prostitutes, it was later changed to OL (office lady). However, there are no similar words to describe men at various stages of life, apart from their roles as “salaryman,” “father” or “husband.” Thus, it appears that there is more attention paid to women in various stages of life than to men, an observation that would be interesting to examine in other time periods. Two euphemisms were coined during this decade: *Anne no hi* (Anne days) (ad in Yamakawa, 1983, p.289) for the days when women needed sanitary napkins, and “blue days” (menstrual days), noted by a cosmetics maker which encourages women to take special care of their face during menstruation (1965, no. 035).

Pretty, smiling young brides appear frequently in ads for household goods (mattress ad, TCC 1963, no. 113). They are often pictured in white wedding gowns alongside detailed explanations of the product merits, how they work, and how popular they are with fellow brides. Brides are also in charge of the honeymoon, according to ads for Japan Airlines of a bride and the headline, “Why not make Hawaii your honeymoon destination?” (TCC 1965, no. 116). Thus, right from the start of married life, it appears from these ads that the wife is in charge of running the household.

She takes care of the finances as well, at least for saving her husband’s salaries and bonuses and paying bills. An especially good wife will have her own “secret savings” nest egg for a rainy day. She is told by banks that she can use her secret savings to buy things for herself, too. For example, a Mitsubishi savings plan will allow her to buy that coveted ¥100,000 kimono if she saves



¥4,300 a month for two years (TCC 1967, no. 136). This shows how people saved diligently and paid for things in cash during that era.

Wives take care of the family savings and monthly expenses, but long term investing is the husband's responsibility, as shown in a trust fund ad for their children's education (TCC 1967, no. 136). The stock market is a man's realm as well (Nomura Securities, TCC 1967, no. 137). Therefore, it appears that wives' duties are confined to simple tasks, while husbands take care of more complicated money matters.

The ads show that the nuclear family is the family of the 1960s, with mom, dad, and two children, as seen in ads for Seiko watches and Mamalon underwear that sell products "for the whole family," with a picture of a family of four (TCC 1963, no. 002). This depiction is in line with the demographics of the time, as more than half of the population fell into the nuclear family group (Kumagai, 1996).

As previous research confirms (Arima, 2003; Lindner, 2004; Maynard, 1999), women tend to appear in domestic roles, as mothers, or as young models looking beautiful and posing attractively, if not playfully, and always smiling and looking happy. On the other hand, men are seen primarily in work-related scenes, and when at leisure, listening to a stereo, playing golf, or drinking with a male friend. They are also the targets of vitamin supplements that will give them the strength to "work harder" to build Japan's economy. Yamauchi supplement drinks encourage them to "Fight lots! Work lots!" (TCC 1963, no. 011). Taking Hi C Takeda (TCC 1965, no. 034) or Kabejin Kowa (TCC 1965, no. 037) will let men smoke and drink as much as they want and they will still stay healthy; they are also apparently good for the daily stress of work. Smoking and drinking are therefore not discouraged in men during this period. *Sake* makers agree: "Even when you drink more than usual, you won't get sick or have a hangover....The more you drink, the better the fish tastes" (Gekkan, TCC 1967, no. 157). They support the notion that smoking and drinking are essential social lubricants and

necessary to cope with the pressures of daily life.

The 1960s saw the introduction of instant foods and easy-care clothes, making life more convenient and timesaving, especially for housewives. An ad for Meiji *retort* curry leads with, “Today the kitchen is closed.” It follows with, “A super modern version of curry, responding to the wife’s hopes for the liberation movement.” Besides this subtle reference, there is little attention paid to the so-called women’s liberation movement, which didn’t gain momentum in Japan until the 1970s. However, the images of happy women in these ads try to show that they are at least enjoying their lives more thanks to all of these innovations. Further examples are as follows: an easy-to-wear, easy-care kimono modelled by a smiling, playful dancing woman (Toray, TCC 1963, no. 041), and rayon blouses that don’t need to be starched or ironed pictured with a young woman who is lounging and reading a magazine.

The ads tend to address the target user directly, calling them by their role name: “mothers” ; “fathers” ; “brides” ; “young ladies” ; “wives,” as they are addressed by authority figures and by outsiders. Following this salutation, they tend to be prescriptive, giving specific instructions as to what to buy and how to use, wear, serve, or eat it: “If you have a formal occasion today, you wear a kimono. It’s good to wear one when visiting” (Toray, 1963, no. 041); “It’s a popular watch that has become a synonym for fashion...Wear fashionable white with fashionable clothes” (Seiko); “Mothers, bathe your babies with your own hands!” (Mitsuwa; Muse soap, TCC 1965, no. 041); “Put this sake into boiled dishes. It will greatly bring out the flavor” (Gekkan, TCC 1967, no. 156). Thus, ads tend to be matter-of-fact and advisory.

Since most of the ads are highly informative, they tend to take a direct, serious tone. Though there are few examples of humour, it is not completely absent, as the headline from Toshiba electric rice cooker’s ad (TCC 1965, no. 084) shows: “*Shinkon hoyo hoyo. Gohan mo atsu atsu.*” [The hotness/freshness of newlyweds. The rice is hot, too.] It is accompanied by a sketch of a man and

woman lightly kissing on the lips, with many small hearts floating above them and the cooker (Appendix 3, no. 1). The play on words is a common element in Japanese discourse, adding to the lighthearted tone. In addition, this ad reflects the social norm of love marriages in the 1960s (Notter, 2002).

TV commercials in the 1960s were in 5-second slots, and another example of wordplay humor is found in the Ideal foldable umbrella ad (ad in Yamakawa, 1983, p.307; Appendix 3, no. 2), also a new invention of the times, which shows a celebrity male musician (Ueki Hitoshi, a member of Crazy Cats) in a suit holding the umbrella, saying “Nandea, Ideal. Oh, I said it again. [laughter].” One of the few nonsense ads of this era, the rhyme is memorable and lighthearted (Namba, 2002, p.65).

As shown above, not all ads are serious and direct. Though maintaining a mild tone and staying focused on the product, there are several ads which contain very descriptive language to promote the product, such as “the graceful sweetness” of “flower petal-like” chocolate (Meiji milk chocolate, TCC 1963, no. 009); underwear that “feels like a marshmallow on the skin” (Mamalon, TCC 1963, no. 040); Morinaga’s “hotcake feeling” (TCC 1967, no. 187); and a Toyota car ad (1969, no. 001), which states, “When they (the young couple in the photo) are talking about their happy futures, Toyota cars are always beside them and in their hearts.” Emotional, descriptive language such as this is a common feature of Japanese advertising and is consistently present across the decades, though in more recent times, is expressed in *katakana* or roman scripts.

### ***1990s ads***

With the Tokyo stock market crash and the bursting of the economic bubble of the previous decade, the recession that ensued spanned the entire decade in various degrees. In addition to cutting back on personal spending as a result of salary reductions, job shortages, layoffs, terminations, company bankruptcies,

and mergers and acquisitions all came to the forefront in people's lives. In this depressed climate, people turned inward, and began to think carefully about their happiness, health, and their futures. The importance of family was renewed. They also thought about the current state and the future of the environment. On the technology front, internet and cell phone use continued to expand. The result of these and other innovations continued to contribute to the shifting of society from group behavior to individual behavior.<sup>6</sup> All of these trends and developments are reflected in the ads of the decade.

As the birthrate continued to decline, top-down messages were being sent through the media to warn people to do something to correct it. A move by the national government to encourage fathers to take a greater role in childrearing was made in a 1992 campaign, which features the musician Sam with his child (TCC, 1999, no. 545; Appendix 4, no. 1). The ad scolds fathers: "We can't call men who don't get involved in raising their own children 'fathers.'...17 minutes a day: the average time fathers spend taking care of their children....We want fathers to get to know the pleasure and challenge of raising children.... Why don't you take time and make yourself a father?" This was a knee-jerk reaction to the steadily falling birthrate, which registered particular alarm in the weak economy, and all-round depression. The reality was, however, that although fathers may have become more aware of the importance of childrearing, it didn't do anything much to increase family size or encourage men to take child-care leave (less than 1% did; Asahi Shimbun, 2005, p.19).

At the same time, the growing aging population continued to change the face of society, and the economy found a new market for goods and services, since many of these people in their 60s-70s were in good health, had substantial savings at their disposal, and time to spend it (Dentsu, 2000, p.82). Examples of ads for the aging population include a Seibu department store ad that shows a middle-aged man in a diving suit on the beach, the headline of which is "I want to believe that aging is not just getting physically weak" (TCC 1993, no. 152).

To enjoy an active and enjoyable life for as long as possible is the new value promoted here. JR uses the euphemistic “Full moon” as the name of a campaign offering discounts and package tours to encourage older couples to travel (TCC 1995, no. 342).

Women in their 50s are the new success stories according to Shiseido in ads for Actea cosmetics to “promote successful aging.” The ads show women taking up various activities for their personal enrichment: starting university, reading for learning at home, starting a business. It notes that “if beautiful women in their 50s increase, Japan will surely change” (TCC 1999, no. 229), implying that a bright future for Japan lies in the hands of this generation of enterprising women.

Because people were spending more time alone at home, they started to care less about following the trends in favor of a lifestyle that suited their individual tastes. Individualism became valued over conforming to social norms. This contributed to a social breakdown on the one hand, but on the other hand, became a new trend, which, as more people took up, became a new norm (Tanaka, 1990).

The emphasis on enjoying life and valuing one’s self-importance was noticeable particularly in ads featuring men: in a Kirin lager beer commercial, two men are walking in a forest, looking at a 1500-year-old tree (TCC 1997, no. 18). The key line, “I’m important too. I drink Kirin lager.” suggests that just as the life and existence of the tree is significant, so is the man’s. Similarly, another ad from the same company shows a young *kyogen* actor at work, then together with his girlfriend, laughing and drinking beer (TCC 1997, no. 19). The importance of taking pleasure in your work, a concept that was often overlooked by many in the past, is made clear in the line, “Doing the thing you love gives you energy. If you love lager, you can continue.”

Though on the verge of extinction, the family continues to appear in ads, and examples, more often with one child than several, in ads for real estate, life

insurance, computers, and food. In a Tokyo gas ad, a company man goes to English conversation class after work and then home to his family (TCC 1993, no. 390). The slogan is “Today is a come straight home from work day,” showing that people’s values toward work and personal life have shifted and pressure to join coworkers for a drink after work has declined. Education continues to be an important value, as shown in the Mitsui Re-House minidrama commercial in which a family is moving house due to their daughter’s entry into high school (TCC 1993, no. 346).

Men appear equally at work and at leisure. Women were shown alongside them at leisure, often in scenes of romance. Men are depicted as gentle communicators who show that they care about their families, their wives, and others around them in clearly visible ways; as generally more “human” than the staunch dutiful household heads seen in the ads of the 1960s. Women noticed it too, responding to a 1998 Apurasu survey that they preferred men that were gentle and shared common values over those who were good looking or had financial success (Dentsu, 2000, p.237).

Men have also changed physically: they are apparently interested in dieting, having hairless bodies and smooth skin, going to spas for face and body treatments, having manicures, and at the same time achieving a physical toughness (Takizawa, 2005). They seek cosmetic surgery and products to enhance their appearance, and this is evident in a line of items for men by Shiseido that includes eyebrow grooming tools and hair styling products (TCC 1997, nos. 177, 178).

The new young man also drinks whiskey, which used to be considered an older man’s drink, as he is now somehow mature enough to appreciate the fine taste. Kimura Takuya, a member of the music group SMAP, appears in a dark suit, no tie, with the shirt partly unbuttoned to show his smooth chest, swaying sexily with a glass of whiskey in his hand. The text of the ad is: “It’s no longer your father’s drink. Whiskey has become cool” (TCC 1999, no. 38). This ad

shows the power of advertising to try to start new trends.

Women are featured variously in ads, sometimes as sex objects, at other times as innocent, childlike and cute (JT peach-flavored water; see discussion below), and still at other times as confident and responsible (Shiseido Actea). Depictions of women in domestic roles are present, but do not dominate, as they do in the ads of the 1960s.

There are a considerable number of ads in which women's bodies are bared to sell a wide range of products, a drastic shift from the ads in the 1960s which showed women as being cute and childlike, but kept them fully clothed. Selected examples of the many found in the 1990s set of ads include the following: a JR ad (TCC 1993, no. 278; Appendix 4, no. 2) for train travel to Izu (a beach), which shows two head-to-waist photos of the same smiling young woman, the first in her uniform for her work as an OL and the second one in a bikini. Her changed look is explained by the ad text which says, "If you go to Izu, a Kodama [train] is faster."

Many ads contain images of partially clothed women that have no relevance to what is being advertised. An ad for Playstation computer software (TCC 1995, no. 245) features several women in bathing suits at a poolside. The monologue is "1, 2, 3. 1, 2, 3. 12/3 game changes," mimicing the steps that the women are taking as they walk across the floor. A whiskey ad (TCC 1993, no. 43) shows a frontal photo of a young topless woman in shorts sitting on a beach. The text in small font reads, "Sing me a love song. Give me a piece of ice." The product does not appear in the ad, so the focus is completely on the woman. Her body is therefore exploited by the advertisement. Similarly, an ad for steel cans (Nippon Steel, TCC 1999, no. 257) shows a closeup photo of a smiling young woman in a bikini on a beach holding a steel can. Scantly clothed men are conspicuously absent from this set of ads.

The relationships between men and women are more open in the ads of this decade with couples seen kissing and holding hands. Love is a central theme of

many, as will be shown below.

Ads that were entertaining rather than informing about the product in which a dramatic or comic scene is played out are very common. The dramas primarily feature romance as seen in ads for alcohol, tobacco, cell phones and email services. There is absolutely no information about the products in these ads, showing a complete shift away from the highly instructive ads that dominated the 1960s. A dramatic ad for Madonna wine (TCC 1999, no. 46) shows a couple having dinner at the woman's apartment. The woman thinks to herself, "When this bottle is empty, will he leave? Maybe." The man is thinking similarly: "When this bottle is empty, should I leave? Maybe." The final line is, "This wine frees the two of them. It also ties them together."

Similarly, a slice-of-life drama series of Fujitsu personal computer ads (TCC 1997, no. 255) show an older middle aged couple bantering with each other about things completely unrelated to the computer that the husband is diligently poring over. The playful tone of the ads makes them pure entertainment.

Humor appears in ads variously and one of them that shows the signs of the times is for Brio men's magazine (Kobunsha TCC 1999, no. 593) in which a couple at home late at night in their pajamas are being questioned by the police about a suspected theft. The police officer asks them if anything is missing. They reply "no" at first, but then the husband says that something is in fact missing: although he graduated from Keio University and is paid a lot of money at work, and has a wife who graduated from Ferris University and an adorable daughter, he is missing something. The last line is "Men are missing something" with the idea that the magazine will fill the emotional void. The humor is in that the missing item is not any "thing" in particular, but that although he and his wife both went to prestigious schools, and he earns a good salary, he lacks self-fulfillment, suggesting that status and money aren't everything.



Health is a key social issue that is featured in a number of advertisements. “Lifestyle diseases” (*seikatsu shukan-byo*; Ono Pharmaceuticals, TCC 1997, no. 163), and eating more vegetables (Kagome vegetable juice: “A lifestyle with vegetables begins” [*yasai seikatsu start*]; Ajinomoto hondashi). An Ajinomoto ad that features eating breakfast as its theme presents a morning scene with the daughter ready to dash off to work and her mother scolding her for not eating breakfast, quoting the Ministry of Health’s survey results, that “one out of four (25%) of young people don’t have breakfast” (TCC 1999, no. 106) and that breakfast is essential because “everything starts from the morning.”

In another move to promote good health, near-water beverages became popular as people steered away from highly sugared or carbonated nonalcoholic drinks. A peach-flavoured water meant to be healthy is advertised in a JT commercial that features a young woman in a bathrobe and curlers dancing around the room drinking from the bottle, looking cute and attractive and rather childish. This ad supports the above discussion of the portrayal of women. The bottle itself is an innovation of the 1990s, when 500ml PET bottles came into wide use (for portability and convenience) over aluminum cans.

Another important social issue that is highlighted in the ads is the environment. The ads show that companies are developing new products and taking greater interest in and responsibility for protecting it. A Kirin beer ad (TCC 1997, no. 32) promoting its recycling efforts, shows a kimono-clad woman in a tatami room clearing away the dishes and beer bottles after a party (*enkai*). The headline is, “I’m collecting resources,” to show Kirin’s recycling activities in an ad which combines tradition with modernity.

The Toyota “eco project,” which began in 1997, aims to introduce vehicles that are environmentally friendly. Ads such as these which introduce new products and new concepts tend to be text-heavy, which single them out from most of the ads of this decade which have minimal textual support. A Kaname recycling company’s ad sends the subliminal message as its headline. Pictured

with a photo of a banana peel, the headline reads, “So-called ‘environmentally friendly’ products make trash in the process of their production.” In this ad too, there is a long text in fine print which explains the company’s activities and what consumers can do to support their efforts. A dramatic ad for a Hitachi water purifier uses the Chinese character for water as its central image, apparently drawn with a brush and ink, but in fact with dirty water. The headline reads, “When did the water get so polluted that we could write with it?” (TCC 1999, no. 337; Appendix 4, no. 3), underscoring the urgency for action to clean up.

Though Japan today and the ads shown here are steeped in modernity, aspects of traditional Japan appear from time to time reinforcing things, customs and values that continue to prevail. A Kirin beer ad (TCC 1993, no. 62) features a middle-aged man wearing a *yukata* sitting outside of the public bath with a bottle of beer and a cigarette. The caption is “Japan blend,” showing that the scene and the beer together are the essence of Japanese culture.

The blend of old and new are apparent in the Toyota series for its Progres car, which is built around the Meiji era writer Soseki Natsume. The advertisements ask “how does one define ‘a thing of quality’ in Japan? What is meant by a ‘good shape, and a good size’ for people? The advertising technique of overlapping Soseki’s pursuit of such universal issues with a ‘small luxury car’” is the pairing here (Dentsu, 2000, p.214). The ads are played out as a series of minidramas with no reference to the car save for the narrator’s line at the end and a brief shot of the car. In the ads, Soseki is talking with his editor, his wife, or, as in the following ad (TCC 1999, no. 414) with his niece, who asks, “Say, Uncle, don’t you ever get tired of being with Auntie?” To which Soseki replies, “Do you have anything you eat everyday?” She replies, “Well, pickles. Auntie’s pickles.” Asked if she gets tired of them, she says “no.” Soseki concludes: “Auntie and me are like that, I guess.” Thus, the ad instills family values and a sense of human goodness, with the hope that the car will do the

same.

In an advertisement for JR East, an older couple stand in front of their old, traditional-style house. The caption beckons the children to come home for the new year holiday: “Actually, there is no independence from children. New Year’s day is father’s day and mother’s day” (TCC 1997, no. 370). Parents and their children tend to live apart in this era, since the children usually want independence from their parents (not vice versa), and this ad appeals to the children to at least preserve an important tradition, and be with their parents at the new year. Thus, advertisers continue to make use of traditional values and customs for products other than typically “Japanese” items such as seaweed, miso, sake, and kimono (MacGregor, 2003). These ads show that no matter how modernized or globalized Japan becomes, it will still retain at its core at least some of its values and traditions.

## Summary of the Findings

Several contrasts that can be found between the two decades examined here are worthy of discussion. As noted above, the 1960s are characterized by the “work hard, build Japan” fervor that swept the country as Japan worked feverishly to rebuild its economy and develop its industries. Evidence of these efforts appear in text heavy, direct and informative ads for new goods and services, and in the new and improved lifestyles that people were both enjoying and suffering from (i.e., salarymen exhausted from overwork).

People are depicted in standard family and social roles as loyal and devoted husbands and wives/housewives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brides, couples, and company workers and often addressed by advertisers by their role titles directly, in an instructive, authoritative teacher-student way. Men are primarily pictured in work scenes or in work roles, and women, apart from young office workers, as housewives and mothers. Always with a smile on

their faces, women tend to be portrayed as cute, feminine, and childish, while men were pictured variously, but not unnaturally as women were.

In the 1960s ads, as in real life, women are responsible for simple financial transactions, while men take care of more complicated ones. Women sell food, household goods, fashion and cosmetics; they serve alcohol, while men drink it. There are few indirect ads which do not focus on the product or its merits, and little evidence of humor or nonsense. Clearly, informing and educating the audience is the main goal of the ads.

The ads of the 1990s take a very different approach, reflecting the depressed economy and desperation of people during that decade. People are encouraged to redefine themselves and enjoy life, and to look forward and make the most of a healthy and active retirement. The ads tend to be indirect, with much less information than those of the 1960s. They are often played out as entertaining dramatic or comic scenes from life that people can both enjoy and relate to. Therefore, while the ads of both decades speak to people, they do so in very different ways.

Women and men are featured differently in the 1990s, as people presented as individuals, not in their familial or societal roles. Scenes with romance are frequently used, especially in ads for tobacco, alcohol and telecommunications. Women are often shown partially clothed, which, as society is clearly more able to accept or at least tolerate in this decade, shows women in the same stereotypical light of women as the objectification of the cute smiling women of the 1960s.

Old age, the environment, the economy, health, and the pursuit of the individual are some of the key issues of the 1990s that are clearly evident in the advertisements. The main focus of the 1960s, by contrast, is on production, distribution, wealth, and internationalizing Japan, when life appeared to be simple if you lived within your expected role and did what society required.

The ads reflect people's lifestyle and their attitudes and feelings. They

reinforce conventions, and introduce and support social trends and attitudes. Ads, therefore, are important symbols that, as has been shown above, both inform us about life and society, and reinforce what we already know.

## Topics for Future Research

As this study is only the tip of the iceberg in the wealth of information and insights that can be mined from advertisements, there are many projects that need to be pursued. A study of the 1970s and 1980s is yet to be done to complete the picture; specific studies on the way women and men are shown: the language they use, the poses they assume, the gestures and expressions they make, because all of these factors have an effect on the audience. Statistical studies such as chi square and cluster analyses will help bolster the authority of findings. In addition, more research and dialogue with the advertisers themselves will give insights into the meaning behind the messages expressed in the ads. Clearly, there is much to be done, and this research project has provided the materials needed to achieve a wider and more persuasive picture of the relationship between advertising and society in Japan.

## Notes

1. Timeline source material is from the following: Yamakawa, 1987; Fujimura-Fanselow, 1995; Ishikawa & Takashima, 2000; Hakuhodo, 2004; Nakajima, 2004; and Asahi Shimbun, 2005.
2. The irony was that in the so-called “information age,” the TV programs and magazines that were targeted at women cut them off from a free range of information rather than opening up the world to them: they gave plenty of information about child raising and homemaking, fashion, and beauty, but offered little intellectual enrichment. National and global issues were conspicuously absent, making the scope of life that women were exposed to selective and protective.

3. The nuclear family made up 54% of the population in 1920, and remained about the same until 1988 and after, when it exceeded 60% (Kumagai, 1996, p.17). To compare, three-generation families were 37.5% of the population in 1955, dropping off to 19.2% in 1965, and 13.1% in 1992 (ibid., p.19), with the differences likely taken up by elderly couple and single person households. The above trend was already visible in the mass media of the 1950s, and one example is in the film, *Tokyo story* (*Tokyo monogatari*, 1953), which shows the breakdown of the three-generation family caused by postwar urbanization (Sato, 2003).
4. Employers were not penalized for violating the EEOL.
5. This citation refers to the volume year and ad number in the *Tokyo Copywriters' Club Yearbook*.
6. Singular lifestyles are evidenced decades earlier when public baths were made obsolete by private baths in homes, refrigerators and microwave ovens made eating together no long necessary, and rental videos and DVDs and the Sony Walkman made listening to music and watching movies private entertainments (Nakajima, 2004).

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## Appendix 1:

Table 1: Timeline of Events, 1960s

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1960		*J-U.S. security treaty renewed *student protest riots across Japan in response *new PM Ikeda starts campaign to double people's incomes in the next 10 years to stimulate economic growth as a national agenda		*beginning of instant food era (i.e., Maxwell House) *cars emerging as a commodity (start of "my car" era) *start of color TV *5 million TVs in Japan *fertility rate falls below population maintenance level of 2.1
1961				* "Leisure" becomes mainstream word (on weekends, go somewhere with your family by train or in your car) *"Privacy" is publicly recognized (concept/human right) *seamless pantihose and sanitary napkins debut (40年間お待ちしました! (アンネの日 becomes euphemistic catchphrase)

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YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1962	<p>*Cuban missile crisis</p> <p>*USSR sends first astronaut into space</p>	<p>*“joshi gakusei bokokuron” debate that increased no. of women at 4-year universities will lead to nation’s demise</p>		<p>*population shift rural-&gt;urban</p> <p>*air pollution, traffic accidents become serious problems</p> <p>*electronics boom</p> <p>**“high style” image emerges</p> <p>*stress of salarymen recognized (working frantically to build economy)</p> <p>*looking forward to 1964 Tokyo Olympics: develop Japan, especially Tokyo</p> <p>*first expressway opens</p>

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1963	*U.S. President Kennedy assassination broadcast on live satellite TV	*series of domestic kidnappings (motive: ransom)	*PM Ikeda year 3: prices/incomes rise  *construction boom of high class mansions (symbolize "high life and shift to western style homes")  *age of consumerism: people want high class goods  *Seiko replaces Omega as official clock of the Olympics	*tourist visa no longer needed to leave Japan (passport only)  *concept shift from "leisure" to "vacances"  *Ideal brand foldable umbrellas debut
1964	*eve of Vietnam War  *Tokyo Olympics	*Japan joins IMF (Japan seen as country with money, resources)	*Tokyo: international city  *Tokaido Shinkansen debuts	*my car era accelerates; motorization is popular word ("kaisoku" era)

Contrasts in Japanese Society and Culture in Advertisements: 1960s and 1990s (Laura MacGregor)

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1965		<p>*new PM Sato: Ikeda's 10-year plan continues, but Sato breaks the trend, causing gov't deficit; starts National Treasury Bond</p> <p>*U.S. army uses Okinawa as departure base for Vietnam (Sasebo used to store arms)</p> <p>*students protest against Vietnam war</p>		<p>*JALPAK starts (first package tours)</p> <p>*salarymen become melancholic (tired of working to build Japan)</p>
1966	*China: Cultural Revolution starts	*politicians' bribery scandals	<p>*economy improves</p> <p>*car production #3 in world</p> <p>*3Cs: cooler, car, color TV</p>	<p>*"hino e uma" (unlucky year for child-birth) -&gt; birthrate declines</p> <p>*Beatles tour in Japan</p>
1967	<p>*McLuhan era</p> <p>*Martin Luther King assassinated</p>	*student riots peak (form army against police; fight internally too)	*100 million cars (#5 in world)	<p>*pollution increases</p> <p>*Twiggy boom; mini-skirt</p> <p>*cosmetics for men debut</p>

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1968		*student riots peak again against Japan-U.S. treaty renewal *daigaku funsou becomes gakuen funsou; students protest university system  *citizens oppose Narita airport construction	*mansion construction escalates	*small car->mid-size car  *“shiwase na high life” catchphrase  *1 million colour TVs *theft of ¥300 million->auto deposit of salaries begins
1969	*Apollo 11: man walks on the moon		*oil consumption rises *economy grows from high consumer demand *GNP #3 in world	*“otoko wa tsurai” Tora-san movies begin *early retirement for working women declared invalid (Tokyo) *women’s liberation meetings/demonstrations
1970	*Osaka World Expo  *JAL plane hijacked	*J-U.S. security treaty renewed  *gakuen funsou fragments into groups		

Appendix 2:

**Table 2: Timeline of Events, 1990s**

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1990	<p>*East and West Germany reunite</p> <p>*first annual Earth Day (April 23)</p> <p>*World Cup Soccer Italy</p>	<p>*Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act</p>	<p>*economic bubble bursts; people save rather than spend, concerned about future</p>	<p>*fertility rate falls to 1.5</p> <p>* shift in values: importance of family over work; live life at own pace; buy goods according to preference, rather than trends or social pressures to conform</p> <p>*beverages boom in 500ml PET bottles</p>
1991	<p>*Gulf War begins</p>	<p>*PM Miyazawa into office</p> <p>*childcare leave law: unpaid leave of up to one year for either parent</p>	<p>*scandals in finance and securities industries</p>	<p>*average age of working women is 35.8 (compared to 24 in 1950)</p> <p>*26.5 million women in workforce (50.7% of women 15 or older) ; women make up 40.8% of total workforce</p> <p>*husbands spend average of 12 minutes/day on housekeeping, shopping, childcare</p>

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1992	*Barcelona Olympics	*PKO cooperation law passes: SDF peace-keeping troops to Cambodia	*Nikkei averages falls below ¥15,000	*"kawaii" is pervasive catchword
1993		*construction industry scandals *PM Hosokawa into office *2-party system collapses	*layoffs cause increasing uncertainty in job market	
1994	*World Cup Soccer USA	*Murayama coalition government into office	*job market becomes desperate	*heat waves across Japan->water shortages *women make up 31% of university student bodies (but are less than 10% of faculty)
1995		*Kobe earthquake	*numerous financial institutions fail	*sarin gas attacks in Tokyo subway *number of Japanese travelling abroad tops 15 million
1996	*Atlanta Olympics *Hong Kong reverts to Chinese sovereignty	*PM Hashimoto into office *Health Minister apologizes for knowingly distributing HIV-tainted blood in 1980s	*spending boom in anticipation of consumption tax rise	*e-coli O-157 food poisoning  *popularization of the internet advances at fast pace



Contrasts in Japanese Society and Culture in Advertisements: 1960s and 1990s (Laura MacGregor)

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1997	*Kyoto Conference on the environment (global warming)	*major financial inst. and construction companies go bankrupt	*consumption tax rises from 3% to 5% (spending falls in response)  *car navigation system starts *Big Bang in finance industry	*rampage kills school children in Kobe  *internet users exceed 10 million
1998	*World Cup Soccer France	*PM Obuchi into office  *revision of Liquor Tax Law *new Kyoto station opens	*unemployment swells; more company layoffs  *negative economic growth	*curry poisoning murders in Wakayama *tobacco ads banned on TV and radio (magazines and newspapers exempt)  *Princess Mononoke hit movie  *aging society, recycling, the environment are key social issues

YEAR	WORLD	JAPAN		
		Politics/The Nation	Economics	Society
1999		<p>*Tokai mura nuclear facility accident</p> <p>*Y2K anxiety/preparation</p>	<p>*company mergers/layoffs accelerate</p> <p>*low prices (half-price hamburgers, low malt beer substitutes, digital camerals, minicars, cut-rate airfares, cheap short-stay domestic tours) to revitalize consumption</p>	<p>*due to continued recession, people spend more time at home; want to make homes more comfortable (DIY, etc.)</p> <p>*family = husband and wife</p> <p>*men's "beauty make-up" proliferates</p>
2000	*Sydney Olympics	<p>*PM Mori into office</p> <p>*digital BS broadcasting begins (radio and TV)</p>		

Appendix 3: 1960s ads

Toshiba Rice Cooker (TCC 1965, no. 84)

(Permission to reprint granted by Mr. Nonaka of Toshiba Agency, tel. 03-3457-2355 and Tokyo Copywriters' Club, September, 2007)



『言語・文化・社会』第6号

Ideal Umbrella (Yamakawa, 1987, p.307)

(Permission to reprint granted by Tokyo Copywriters' Club, September, 2007)



Appendix 4: 1990s ads

Japan (then) Ministry of Health (Sam) (TCC 1999, no. 545)

(Permission to reprint granted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare [厚生労働省, tel. 03-5253-1111] and Tokyo Copywriters' Club, September, 2007)



JR Izu  
(TCC 1993, no. 278)

(Permission to reprint granted by JR  
Tokai Publicity Department [JR 東海  
東京広報, tel. 03-6711-9450] and  
Tokyo Copywriters' Club, September,  
2007)

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Hitachi Water Purifier (TCC 1999, no. 337)

(Permission to reprint granted by Mr. Fukami, Hitachi Appliance Publicity Section [日立アプライアンス宣伝部, 日立家電事業部, tel. 03-3502-2111] and Tokyo Copywriters' Club, September, 2007)



# 現代日本の広告に現れた文化的価値観の研究

ローラ・マクレガー

この論文は日本における広告を調査し、40年間（1960-2000）のその文化の傾向を分析する。TCC年鑑（1963-2001）から10年ごとにそれぞれ約300の広告を集めた。期間が長いので、この論文では1960年代と1990年代の広告を比較した。人物を扱った広告をランダムに約300集めたが、1960年代は雑誌広告のみで、1990年代は雑誌広告とテレビ広告がある。調査の目的は

1. 広告では、どのような文化的価値観と信念が表現されているか。
2. このような文化的価値観と信念がどのように表現されているか。
3. 当時の日本のライフスタイルや信念について、どう述べているか。

この後、各年代を比較し、日本の社会の出来事を学ぶため、当時の日本の社会についての資料を調査することが必要となった。