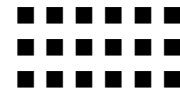


## 2003 Hit Products in Japan



### **The Key Phrase for 2003 Was “Toward a Freer Multidimensional Lifestyle—Six Different Moods Combine to Create a Free, Vibrant Consumerism”**

*2003 Hit Products in Japan* is published as part of a series that has been chronicling hit products since 1985, and examines and generalizes major trends that represented the “consumer mindset” in 2003. Consumer selections for this year’s hit products are based on Internet surveys carried out by Dentsu’s Center for Consumer Studies (CCS) in September and November of this year, and the top 10 are listed below.

According to the report, consumer trends for 2003 can be summarized in the key phrase “Toward a Freer Multidimensional Lifestyle — Six Different Moods Combine to Create a Free, Vibrant Consumerism.” The analysis identifies three main currents of consumer activity, “anticipating renewed energy,” “anticipating changes in lifestyle,” and “anticipating increased free time and enjoyment,” and six specific “consumption zones” or “moods” expressed in the following phrases: “pursuing physical health and an active life,” “sharing in the thrill,” “change the way you feel by changing the way you look,” “enjoying unexpected diversions and new dimensions,” “trendy adult living,” and “relaxing with lighthearted leisure.”

While purse strings remain tight due to the prolonged recession, consumer activity is slowly improving as signs of a recovery in the Japanese economy become more apparent. The year 2003 was a time in which consumers sought to structure their lives more freely, and bring new energy and vitality into their lives by moving dynamically between several different consumption zones, depending on their mood at the time. This movement in pursuit of renewed energy was often expressed in the following terms: “I’d like to become stronger, so I drink health tonics,” “I’d like to share in some of New York Yankees player Matsui’s energy and persistence,” “I’m looking forward to the start of a new audiovisual life with a stylish thin-screen TV monitor,” “I’m nourished by a wide variety of relaxing TV programs, storing up on energy for tomorrow,” and so on.

We could say that until now consumers have been characterized by a tendency to sit tight until the recession is over, like a bird that “burrows into its nest until the storm passes.” This year’s hit products, however, give the impression that “consumers are starting to come out in search of a new world or a renewed sense of vitality.” These signs that some consumers are beginning to move “out of their nests” and shift into a more energetic mode may well herald a full-scale recovery in individual consumption during the next year.

### **2003 Hit Products Top 10 List**

- No. 1: Broadband Internet
- No. 2: Amino acid drinks
- No. 3: *Bayside Shakedown THE MOVIE 2* (film)
- No. 4: Compact digital cameras
- No. 5: Japanese baseball players in the U.S. Major League
- No. 6: (HDD and DVD) hybrid recorders
- No. 7: “Fountain of Trivia” (TV program and best-selling book)
- No. 8: Thin-screen (plasma/LCD) televisions
- No. 9: “Harry Potter”
- No. 10: Internet auctions

Note: The above products, chosen from approximately 200 hit products, all registered 90% or higher in terms of “recognition,” 50% or higher for “popularity,” and 40% or higher for “attraction and interest” in the Internet survey.

#### **Outline of the “Hit Product Recognition Survey”**

- Survey Period: September 1–4, 2003 (first survey), and November 7–10, 2003 (second survey)
- Survey Subjects: Men and women around the country over the age of 15
- Sample Size: 700 (responses received)
- Survey Type: Closed Internet research

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## Energetic Inclinations—Six “Moods” of the “Consumer Mindset” in Three Consumer Trends

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### I Anticipating Renewed Energy

#### *The Consumer Mindset, Mood No. 1: Pursuing Physical Health and an Active Life*

Consumers moved away from last year’s lethargic phenomenon, when people were loathe to exert themselves physically and wanted instant results without all the effort. The tendency toward getting up and getting active increased in 2003, and people realized that health was the key to having the energy for a dynamic life. Consumers made admirable efforts to get healthy by restoring their physical energy.

#### **Healthy teas**

Green teas that are rich in tea catechin, an ingredient effective in reducing body fat, were extremely popular. Because these teas must be drunk daily to get results, they required consistency and willpower on the part of the consumer.

#### **Amino acid drinks**

These soft drinks provide health benefits in the area of preventing muscle fatigue and burning fat, but only when linked with physical exercise.

#### **“Oxygen chargers”**

A highly effective means of replenishing a tired body, inhalation of oxygen-enriched air was the answer for people looking for a refreshing boost before going back out and giving their all.

#### **Products for a better night’s sleep**

More and more people realized that a good night’s sleep is the key to an energetic day. They sought products that promise better sleep, including non-prescription drugs for better-quality sleep, a variety of bath oils and salts, and lotions that help one to relax before going to bed.

### ***The Consumer Mindset, Mood No. 2: Sharing in the Thrill***

At times, people feel that they want to escape from the humdrum reality of day-to-day life. In 2003, people looked to role models for inspiration and proof that amazing accomplishments are possible by persevering to the end. The passion of these stars rubbed off, energizing regular folks to reach just that much higher.

#### **Japanese Major League Baseball players**

Hideki Matsui, Ichiro Suzuki, and all the other Japanese stars playing in the Major Leagues in the United States were perfect examples of the ideal way to live — doing one’s best to contribute to the team.

#### **Hanshin Tigers products**

An array of products related to the Hanshin Tigers, the Japanese baseball team that clinched its league championship title for the first time in 18 years, began to show up on store shelves mid-season and continued to sell like hotcakes. Earning this long-awaited victory after drastic, and painful, restructuring, the Hanshin Tigers symbolized rejuvenation.

#### **David Beckham**

Leaving behind his long-familiar surroundings of England, Beckham continued to compete ambitiously after moving to Spain to play in the Spanish league. His sincere embrace of adversity and the way he prioritizes love for family also won the hearts of female fans.

## **II Anticipating Changes in Lifestyles**

### ***The Consumer Mindset, Mood No. 3: Change the Way You Feel by Changing the Way You Look***

Consumer patterns have not made a total turnaround, but the number of durable goods on the list of 2003 hit products suggests that lifestyles are in fact changing. Consumers enthusiastically welcomed the latest, high-tech, made-in-Japan products, which led the world in innovation. These best-sellers attracted both young people, who enjoyed their novelty value, and the older generations who lived through the years of surging economic growth in Japan. Older folks regarded these innovations with a sense of nostalgic luxury reminiscent of things they only once dreamed of.

**Ultra-thin televisions (plasma/LCD screens)** Ultra-thin televisions offer much more than superior picture quality; their sleek design also adds a striking presence to the interior of any room and conserves space. Compatible with the latest cutting-edge broadcasting technology, these TVs represent a pioneering innovation on the audio-visual stage.

**Hybrid recorders** With the double recording function of hybrid recorders, TV viewers could record programs on both hard disc and DVD. Meeting the need for on-demand recording, hybrid recorders permanently save only what is essential to the consumer and save time spent searching for blank recording space on videotapes. In 2003, consumers looked to these recorders to push back the frontiers of the audio-visual experience.

**Compact digital cameras** With sophisticated features built into a compact body, these cameras, long unfamiliar to many women, were stylish enough to appeal to them as a new kind of fashion item.

**Third-generation cell phones** Transcending the simple mobile phone with a whole array of functions available at the push of a button, the latest cell phones brought people one step closer to a society of ubiquitous communication.

**Mini-minivans** With multifunctional third-row seats, these new vehicles offered new flexibility for passengers, giving the owners real room to use their imaginations.

**Broadband** People thoroughly enjoyed their online freedom of choice. Whether surfing the Internet, shopping online, making IP calls, or playing network games, broadband was the “wide open road” of the Web, taking users anywhere they wanted to go in the virtual world.

***The Consumer Mindset, Mood No. 4: Enjoying Unexpected Diversions and New Dimensions***

Products were more often used in unexpected places and purchased by unlikely groups of people in 2003. A new type of consumption began to emerge, transcending traditional associations. The lines between in and out of the home, parent-child relationships, and different types of lifestyles all began to blur.

- Television shopping** With a product lineup more accurately reflecting what consumers wanted plus more convincing sales pitches, TV shopping was all the rage in 2003. Whether mothers raising small children, middle-aged men who couldn't be bothered to go out shopping, or senior citizens who wanted to avoid the hectic pace of retail shops, all kinds of people considered it both a pleasurable shopping experience, and a thoroughly enjoyable form of entertainment.
- Trinkets with soft drinks, candy and snacks** 2003 saw an even greater variety of "free" trinkets that came with soft drinks, candy and snacks. There were tiny action figures reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s, and even mini-CD compilations of hit songs to bring back memories of decades gone by. Parents and children traded trinkets like brothers and sisters, and more and more fathers became a sort of older brother to their sons.
- Picture books for adults** Despite the publishing drought, the number of first editions of picture books continued to grow. One contributing factor was the growing number of adults enthralled by these books' highly artistic drawings and profound, yet deceptively simple, themes. Another was simply that mothers tended to slip into the role of elder sister, and found that the pleasure of doing so was entirely their own.

### **III Anticipating Increased Free Time and Enjoyment**

#### ***The Consumer Mindset, Mood No. 5: Trendy Adult Living***

In 2003, people increasingly realized that the true measure of adulthood is not the number of years one has lived, but the level of maturity attained. People of all ages started to discover that, no matter how much they fought to get ahead, their success in the "rat race" did not bring true abundance or happiness. These consumers "grew up" to create their own standards by which to assess their lives. The song "Sekai ni Hitotsu Dake no Hana (One-of-a-Kind Flower)" struck a chord among young people, many of whom looked forward to their adult lives with a more "grown-up" perspective than the "immature adults" they saw fighting day in and day out to stay one step ahead of their neighbors.

**“Sekai ni Hitotsu  
Dake no Hana  
(One-of-a-Kind  
Flower)”**

In this song, which sold more than two million copies, the Japanese pop band SMAP sang of the importance of individuality, tapping into the growing number of Japanese who appreciated a way of living that celebrates the best in each unique individual more than ambitions of reaching the top rung of the ladder at the expense of everyone else.

**Premium dark beers**

Uniquely full-bodied dark beers with their distinctive taste proved popular in the Japanese market. With a different taste than the conventional favorite beers, dark beers were meant to be sipped and enjoyed slowly, making them perfect for those who valued process over outcome and treasured small moments of luxury.

**Department store  
supermarkets**

Consumers have fallen in love with supermarkets in department stores as the place to get excellent tasting side dishes to round out their meals. Fairly expensive ingredients are on offer for those more interested in satisfying their senses than filling their stomachs.

**Designer *ryokan***

Uniquely designed *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inns) in all their sophisticated detail brought Japanese people back to their native appreciation of genuine quality, a value that was slowly being forgotten in the confusion of contemporary life.

***The Consumer Mindset, Mood No. 6: Relaxing with Lighthearted Leisure***

Though not necessarily essential to survival, playfulness and laughter certainly provide a small escape from the realities of day-to-day life, and at the same time can offer unexpected insights. In 2003, laughter helped people to relieve the stress of the day and recharge their batteries for the next one.

***“Fountain of Trivia”***

Billed as a fount of “useless information,” this Fuji Television trivia variety show helped viewers enjoy a relaxing break from the tension of the long day’s deluge of serious information. The random facts featured on the program became the next day’s break-time conversation, giving viewers twice the energy-inducing bang.

***“Nande darou? (Why is that?)”***

In their “*Nande darou?*” gag, Tetsu and Tomo, a pair of standup comedians, asked all the simple questions about everyday life that nag at everyone, but no one ever asks. This comic routine combined repeated silly questions and a strangely compelling gesture that just about everyone in Japan imitated at one time or another, and made kids and adults alike laugh out loud.

**Powder bead pillows**

Filled with tiny beads, these enticing pillows had a unique feel and texture all their own. The inexplicably exquisite comfort they provided melted away the day’s tensions from body and neck.

**Miniature dogs  
(Chihuahuas)**

It all began with a droopy-eyed Chihuahua appearing in a television commercial, and Japan was swept into a small-dog boom. The innocent sweetness of these tiny creatures brought out a certain protective parental desire, unconsciously restoring the confidence of many people in Japan.

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