

9 Afterword: the Virtual Future ...

Imagine we've just selected 2079 as the destination for our time machine. This takes us straight into a car-purchasing scenario in the fall (autumn) of 2079. The model concerned is a VW Golf Green¹ 2080². The VW strategy of 2079 lets customized cars sell *themselves*, not only figuratively but even literally.

Here, VW has successfully entered an extremely fast-growing new market – half the population on the most populated continent on Earth (female customers in Asia). Past experience of life-style patterns in some regions makes it easy for the adaptive Market Intelligence Miner software in the background to quickly discover even slightly similar patterns emerging elsewhere and to feed the information through – to development, marketing and so on; also, a corporate culture of Mass Customization enables all roles in the enterprise to quickly tune into these patterns.

Japan consistently stands out in the World Health Organization's longevity statistics. Among natives this year, average lifetime soars to an all-time high of 121½ years. Along with dramatic improvements in the country's environment and an individualization of high-tech health care, highly customized diets based on functional foods and traditional Japanese macrobiotics are very common; consequently, heart diseases are extremely rare. By just a click, both traditional Meiji-school doctors and Western-school doctors can routinely submit – very current and detailed – diet profiles to their client's favorite Webcustomizer Food-Store; the profiles are used by suppliers to generate robot-programs for the hardware that manufactures individualized foods and drinks (as the proportion of youngsters decreases, workers are in short supply generally and in particular for “hamburger flipping”).

A similar procedure is standard with training programs, as client data is transmitted to both traditional training sites (“do”) and Western-sport clubs; both traditions have become very skilled in customization of training plans

¹ In 2080 (as well as at present), Golf and Beetle are well-known global trademarks owned by The VW Group.

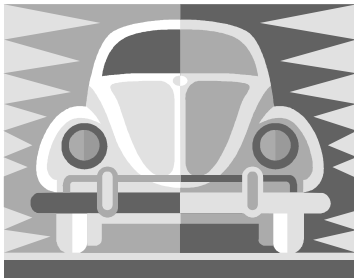
² Hopefully, the law of Pareto works with futuristic scenarios, too; if so, 80% of this will become true before 2080 (and 20% will turn out to be a bad guess).

to cater for various levels, backgrounds and needs, as well as in individually motivating their member to continue.

Life management has become extremely common. For the most part, Japanese mothers take care of their child during the pre-school years and then, when the child starts attending school, they start a new career. Many creative people work part-time into their 80-ies. As in several Asian countries these days, most Japanese universities have customized their doctoral programs to allow for a variety of life styles and backgrounds. This has made it possible for an unprecedented number of female students to succeed in science, technology, arts, teaching or medicine, thus constituting the fastest growing group of consumers on the planet ever ...

Shizuka enters the living room of her Kyoto apartment, sits down and points at the word “purchases” (written in Kanji) in the “Frequent tasks” margin of a wallpaper-thin widescreen on the wall³, using the voice-controlled ring telephone as a pointer (these days, ring telephones are not only capable of ringing but are also ring-sized, worn on a ring-finger, and extremely reusable in a variety of tasks). In a realistic human voice, the e-commerce module of the device confirms start:

- How can I help you?
- I’m considering a new Volkswagen.
- Do you prefer to contact a remote salesperson or a tele-present Virtual?
- A Virtual to begin with, please.
- Connecting.



³ Along with extremely agile grandparents, the extensive use of robotics and intelligent home agents has caused a dramatic drop in the housework necessary in Japanese children’s homes.