

The 22nd Asia-Pacific Retailers Convention and Exhibition (Tokyo 2026)

The Future of Retail: Innovation Meets Tradition

Concept:

Innovations such as AI and robotics are set to dramatically transform the retail landscape. The industry can no longer survive by simply building on the past. In this era of digital transformation, the retail industry must continually reinvent its business models to deliver new value to consumers. Yet innovation is not limited to technology. The craftsmanship and on-the-ground ingenuity that retailers have cultivated over time are equally innovative. Refining these skills to offer customers richer, more comfortable, and more convenient lifestyles will remain a critical mission for the retail sector.

At the same time, the retail industry faces pressure to address various internal and external changes as well as social issues ranging from the rise of Generation Z, embracing diversity and inclusion, rapid aging in some countries, urban challenges, and global climate change. Moreover, the industry must continuously evolve to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and achieve the carbon neutrality targets set by many countries and regions for 2050.

Japan is currently grappling with a declining birthrate and an aging population, presenting its retail sector with numerous challenges including labor shortages, rising labor costs, logistics issues, customer harassment, loss prevention, and frequent natural disasters. Many of these issues are likely to confront other Asia-Pacific countries and regions in the future. As a nation at the forefront of addressing these challenges, Japan's retail strategies will offer valuable insights for other retailers across the region as they chart their long-term outlooks.

Even as society undergoes significant change, one principle in retail remains constant and universal—that retailers thrive by staying aligned with customers, thereby earning their loyalty. We must maintain a commitment to mutual prosperity, supported not just by customers but by a diverse range of stakeholders including employees, business partners, and local communities. Retail has a broad base of supporting industries, spanning from manufacturing, wholesale, IT vendors, and service industries such as hospitality, tourism, and food service. The importance of traditional Japanese business ethics, like *sanpo-yoshi* (good for the seller, buyer, and society), and Asian-derived philosophies, such as *jiri-rita* (benefiting oneself and others), remains timeless.

The Asia-Pacific region is one of the world's largest markets, and it is projected to experience further growth in the future. With the aim of overcoming inherent regional challenges and enhancing the region's appeal, we will host the 22nd Asia-Pacific Retailers Convention and Exhibition held October 2026 in Tokyo. Our theme, "The Future of Retail: Innovation Meets Tradition," encapsulates the concepts outlined above. We envision a conference where retailers and various stakeholders from across the region can come together, transcending national, regional, and industry boundaries to share experiences and current developments, learn from each other, deepen connections, and explore new business opportunities, with a vision toward a sustainable future for the retail industry.