

Sales possibilities of Japanese traditional gold-leaf souvenir and dish for Chinese

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Abstract

Effective measures for increasing visitors from China are expected with the globalization in Japan. However, the economic and political exchanges between the both countries had been temporarily on pause after the issue of Senkakus. The possibility of export expansion of Japanese traditional craft goods and food culture is investigated in this study. China is considered as a main exporting country of Japan. The increasing measure of visitors from China is primarily important. The purpose of this study is to vitalize Japanese tourism industry according to tourism exchange with China, especially in the countryside. It is thought that the omotenashi (Japanese traditional hospitality) plays an important role for the measure. The experiences of purchasing souvenir and a kaiseki meal were carried out for Chinese students and questionnaire study (including hearing investigation) was implemented in Kanazawa area of Hokuriku District in Japan. As a result, they showed a strong interest in the experience and indicated the high possibility for distribution and branch shop in China. They experienced craft-goods using gold leaf and kaiseki meal as traditional Japanese culture at a city hotel in the area. Subjects are thirteen Chinese students living in Kanazawa City. There is an opinion that the price is high for the souvenirs and the meal. As for the result, it is necessary to construct a strategy focusing on a target customer. In this study, only the Chinese students were adopted as subjects. It is, however, mainly influenced by Chinese economic conditions.

Keywords

Chinese tourist, kaiseki meal, traditional craft, souvenir, purchasing behaviour

1. Introduction

The visitor number from China and South Korea had some decreasing factors due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, the issues of Takeshima Island (Shimane Prefecture, exclusive economic zone in Japan) and the territorial claim of Senkakus (Diaoyu Islands in China) [The Yomiuri, 2013]. The visitors from China dropped significantly after the later part of 2011. Meanwhile, the number of foreign tourist to Japan has continued to rise due to a drop in the yen since 2012 [Japan Travel Bureau Foundation, 2016; Atkinson 2015]. It is obvious that the increase in visitor number from China becomes a clue to regenerate Japanese tourism industry. The Japanese economy is still in a difficult situation and it is necessary to revitalize the local district [Murakami, 2016]. MICE (Meeting, Incentive tour, Conference and Exhibition) is also effective in the district [Yokohama College of Commerce, 2016]. The inbounds and travel consumption are important in the Japanese local district. Tourism exchange plays an important role to increase the foreign visitors (inbounds) number, and the exchange becomes to base on the cultural understandings of the visiting country [Oyabu, 2010]. One of them is a cuisine culture. Many Chinese dishes are reaching Japan but Japanese dishes do not reach China. There is a Japanese cuisine boom mainly in Europe and United States, and they have an extreme interest in traditional Japanese-style food [Lonely Planet 2015, 2015]. Even soy sauce and miso, which are Japanese traditional fermented foods, are also manufacturing overseas. On the other hand, Chinese take

pride in their dishes and there is a trend they do not accept a foreign cuisine really.

According to the growth of GDP in China, Chinese visitors will play an important role for increasing of the international tourists in Japan. Therefore, the establishment of software to provide Japanese dishes (washoku) through the hospitality is urgent [The Yomiuri. Morning edition, Jan.10, 2013]. Export of Japanese culture to China, therewith branch shop of restaurant and selling of traditional crafts are also important. It is necessary immediately to establish a tourism promotion considering Chinese consumer needs. It is thought Japanese traditional hospitality (omotenashi) plays a core role in the promotion. Japan has a pride in the omotenashi. The contribution based on omotenashi to tourism industry is desired and the industry makes progress due to the establishment of omotenashi system [Oyabu, 2016].

In this study, the research was carried out to understand the Chinese consumption behaviours for Japanese traditional craft and cuisine. The experiences (at a hotel and souvenir shop) were carried out for thirteen Chinese students in this research, who were living in Kanazawa. Kaiseki meal (a set menu of selected, handmade dishes served on each tray to each individual) is provided to the subjects at Kanazawa Kokusai Hotel and the subjects visited to Haku-ichi Co., Ltd, which is manufacturing and selling craft souvenirs using gold leaf. Gold leaf is a traditional craft in Kanazawa and the share is 99%. Questionnaire survey and hearing investigation were carried out after the experiences. It is necessary to establish a future export and selling system after clarifying purchasing behaviour of Chinese for souvenir and meal. The purpose of this research is to identify the following three items for Chinese, namely

- Possibility for the purchase of Japanese traditional crafts and the feeling
- Evaluation for kaiseki meal
- Evaluation of omotenashi.

The authors are considering the export of washoku and the providing of the meal to Chinese with preserving Japanese traditional culture [Japan Tourism Agency, 2016]. The authors do not consider the satisfaction in taste for Chinese, that is, Japanese taste should be preserved.

2. Experience and questionnaire survey

In general, person feels one's desire, and takes one's action in dietary and purchase behaviours. At that time, the leading determinative factors are the comparison of products, the information and the service based on omotenashi. The purchase of Japanese crafts and experience of kaiseki meal are unconventional behaviours for Chinese people and they have significantly a psychological influence. This means that the atmosphere and the service (omotenashi) are important factors in their action. The questionnaire survey was carried out with consideration of such matters.

The experience was carried out firstly at a souvenir shop (Haku-ichi Co., Ltd.) and secondly a hotel (Kanazawa Kokusai Hotel). Haku-ichi is manufacturing various kinds of gold leaf goods and selling the ones. And the cuisine experience was held at the hotel. The subjects who were Chinese students, were attending two universities located in Kanazawa city. The subjects were constituted by two males and eleven females. The experiences were held between 10:00-15:00 on Jan.18, 2013. It had a higher percentage (84.6 %) in female. The age distribution is shown in Figure 1. The range was 7 (21 to 28 years) and the average was 23.23. The ages of two males were 24 and 28 years (average 26) and the average of females was 22.36. The standard deviation (σ) was 1.846 and coefficient of variation (cv) was 7.95 %, which was somewhat larger and showed large variation.

Home provinces of the subjects and the number were as follows.

Liaoning 5, Heilongjiang 2, Fujian 2, Sichuan 1, Neimenggu

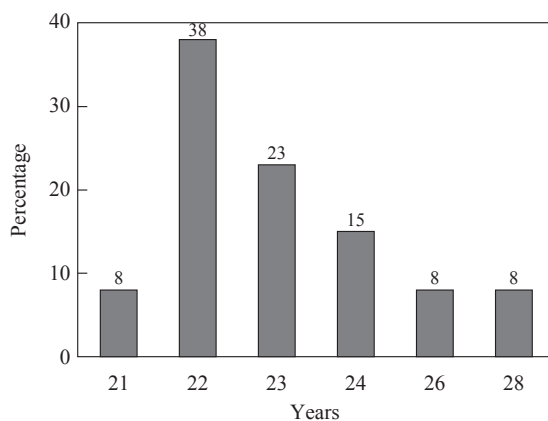


Figure 1: Age distribution of subjects

1, Shandong 1, Jiangsu 1

There were many persons (subjects) from north eastern China, because there were direct flights between Toyama (Hokuriku District in Japan) and Dalian (Liaoning Sheng). Toyama is an adjacent prefecture of Ishikawa prefecture and Kanazawa city is a capital city of Ishikawa prefecture. The two and Fukui prefectures constitute Hokuriku District. Economic exchange are increasing between Hokuriku and north eastern China (Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang), especially the district has a strong link with the three north eastern provinces. Culture and ways of thinking are different regionally in China because the country is broad and a multiracial nation. There are over 55 races including Han people in China. Of course, the cuisine culture is different with the one in Japan and the majority of Chinese cannot eat perishable, for example sliced raw fish (sashimi).

3. Result of questionnaire survey

3.1 Production and distribution shop of Japanese traditional souvenir

Consumption behaviours of the subjects for the gold leaf as a traditional craft in Kanazawa was examined. As mentioned above, Kanazawa holds a share of 99 % of gold leaf in Japan and the one is called "Kanazawa Haku". Haku means a kind of leaf. The thinness is 1-2/10000 (mm) and it is see-through. Subjects visited Hakuko-kan which was a museum for the ex-



Figure 2: Selling corner of gilding goods



Figure 3: Gilded protective mantle and helmet

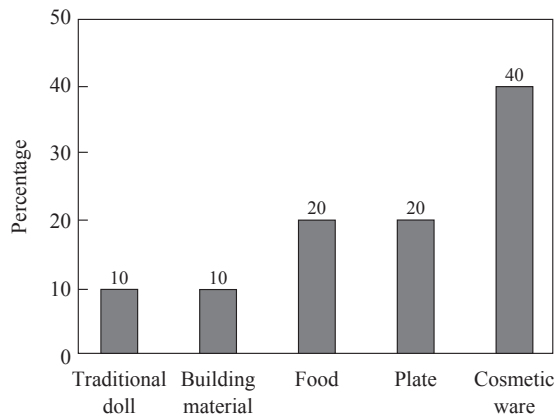


Figure 4: Interested products

perience of gold leaf operated by Haku-ichi, and there were a gorgeous “gold leaf room”, and gilding helmets and protective mantles (extremely high-priced thing). And the procedure of craftspeople can be seen in the museum. The helmets and mantles were a restoration of MAEDA Toshi-ie’s stuff (article). He was the first load of Kaga in the Edo period. After the tour of the facility, they looked on the selling room of gold-leaf products. The photograph is shown in Figure 2. The photograph of the helmets and mantles is also shown in Figure 3. Female subjects had a strong interest in an oil blotting tissue and cosmetic items containing gold leaf in a corner of selling souvenirs. Male subjects have an interest in Buddha statue, helmets and mantles and oval gold coin. Sales atmosphere and the service based on omotenashi affected the consumption behaviour remarkably in the facility, namely the environment and service of selling facility had an influence on consumption behaviour. All subjects preferred “good” (selection from “worse”, “normal” and “good”) as the result of the evaluation for the facility, and the goods of interest were selected. The result is shown in Figure 4. The maximum is cosmetic items and the rate was 40 %. The second was plate ware and food product (20 %). The rate for traditional doll and building material which were impressed gold foil on, was 10 %. Gold leaf is used as a foil decoration of architectural material and also used in the interior of Shinkansen.

The subjects of 85 % thought that Chinese would have an

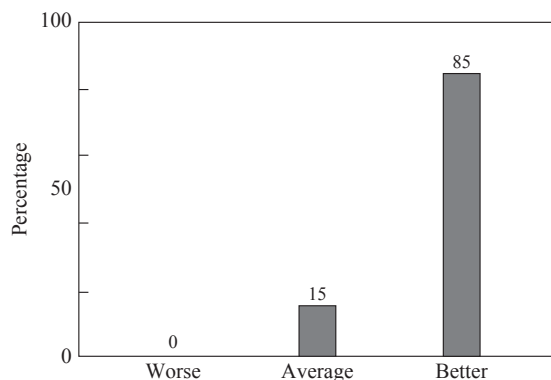


Figure 5: Comprehensive evaluation of traditional crafts

interest on the products which were sold in Haku-ichi, namely there was a high possibility of selling of gilded products (traditional crafts) for Chinese. The 15 % (two persons) answered “no opinion”. The comprehensive evaluation was also studied and the result was same as the above mentioned. The result is indicated in Figure 5. As for the result, Chinese became interested in Japanese traditional crafts. Especially, younger ladies had an interest on cosmetics, oil-blotting tissue and chocolate including gold leaf because of the high reliability for the safety and security of the ones.

3.2 Experience of kaiseki meal at a hotel

The foreign lodger number in Kanazawa city was about 63,000 in 2011 (360,000 in 2015) due to tourism reports [Japan Travel Bureau Foundation, 2016]. The number of customer in budget and city hotels decreased sharply due to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, but the one for high-class Japanese inn/restaurant increased a little bit (actual increasing number was about 250 persons a year in 2011-2013) [Department of Tourism Exchange in Kanazawa City, 2013]. It was not affected by social factors because the customer was aimed at Japanese traditional dishes but not lodging facility in their trip. The five leading departure areas of foreign lodger in Kanazawa in 2011 were as follows, Taiwan (36) USA (6) South Korea (5) China (4.4) Hong Kong (4 %)

The rate of China is few and Taiwan has eightfold persons compared with the one from China. The both countries are a member of Chinese world. China has a large potential capacity from the view point of population.

Japanese dishes were evaluated from around the world because they had high quality, daintiness and beneficial to our health. Consumer needs becomes higher as the Asian economy rises continuously. There is a tendency that the needs for Japanese dishes are growing as a safe and reliable food is desired with the income growth. The grade of food safety achieves very high level in Japan [Oyabu, 2012]. Every subject evaluated the taste as “better” for a comprehensive evaluation which included “worse”, “average” and “better” (three levels). The taste can be acceptable significantly for Chinese. The atmosphere of the kaiseki-meal experience is indicated in Figure 6.



Figure 6: The experience of kaiseki meal

The evaluation result for cooking ingredient is shown in Figure 7. The “better” makes up 60 % and “average” accounts for 33 %. It means that some persons do not get used to Japanese-style foods. Some of the subjects could not eat “perishable”. There are 77 % of “better” in the evaluation of quantity and it is highly acclaimed but there are some feedbacks that the amount is large for elderly persons. The results are shown in Figure 8. The 92 % of the experienced subjects responded that the kaiseki meal could be also acceptable in China and the remaining persons were unclear. The experienced meal cost was 8,000 yen (about US\$ 80) per person. The evaluation for the cost was surveyed. The result is expressed in Figure 9. The sixty two percent evaluated that the cost was high. The 38 percent responds “average”, that is, the cost could be acceptable depending on customer. The acceptable price in China was investigated and the 66 % indicated 200 to 400 Chinese Yuan for the meal. The 17 % was 401 to 600 Yuan, and the remaining indicated lower than 200 Yuan. A hearing investigation was carried out after the experience. The reasonable price was 300 Yuan (about 4,800 JPN) in the investigation. The results for the reasonable price are expressed in Fig.10. The kaiseki meal received a high evaluation mark even in the investigation. Most subjects were satisfied with the meal because Japanese unique ingredients were used in the meal and it was seemed high-class. It is thought that Chinese will take an interest in the meal.

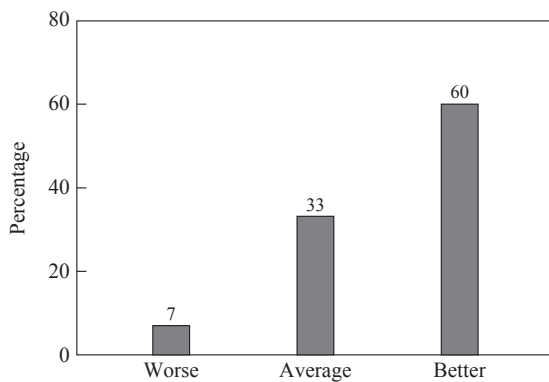


Figure 7: Evaluation for the ingredient

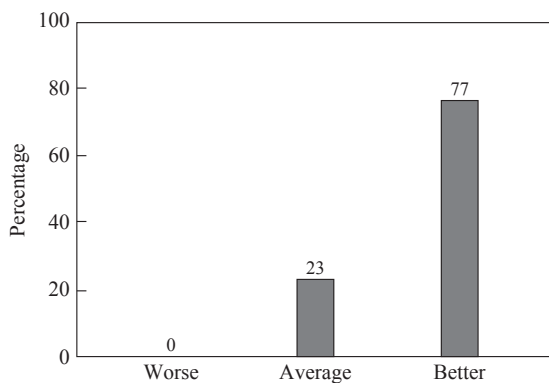


Figure 8: Evaluation of quantity for the kaiseki meal

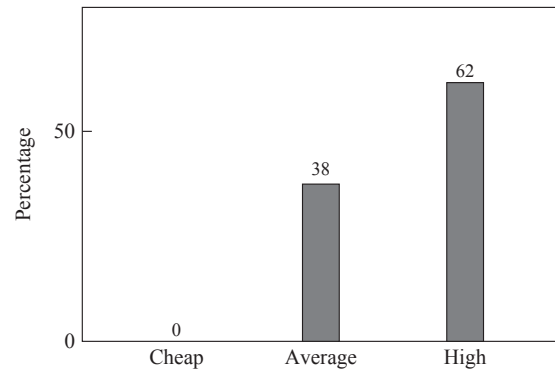


Figure 9: Evaluation of price for the kaiseki meal

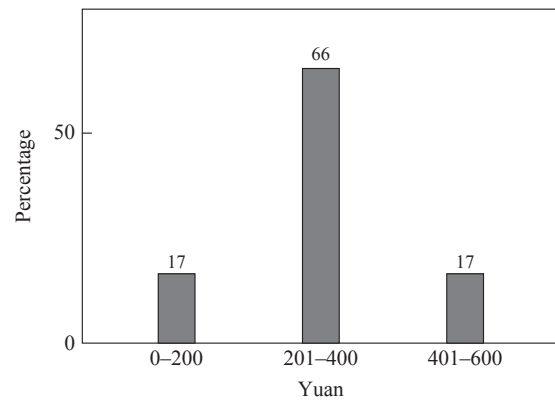


Figure 10: Allowance price for the meal in China

3.3 Evaluation for individual kaiseki dishes

Traditional kaiseki meal of Kanazawa was provided in the experience. There were many traditional kaiseki restaurants in Kanazawa and they had unique characteristics respectively, for example historical meal and the dishes using in-season ingredients. The basis of kaiseki meal is a bowl of soup and three kinds of simple dishes (Japanese soup, sashimi, broiled steak/fish and cooked food). In the experience, the following dishes were served in the menu serially. Rice bowl was served with the broiled stake due to the request of the subjects. The usual method was to serve the one prior to a dessert. The sequencing of the serving rice bowl differed from the one in China.

- Cold meal (salmon maki, smoked duck, sweet red-bean paste jelly, crab meat, field mustard, dish dressed with sesame sauce, marinated in a spicy sauce)
- Sashimi (sashimi of sea bream, northern shrimp: soy sauce or boiled sake as condiment)
- Soup substitute (savory egg custard of crushed sesame seeds boiled in water, shark fin dressed with a thick starchy sauce)
- Rice bowl (with miso soup and pickled vegetables)
- Broiled steak (Japanese-style steak, leek, chilli sauce)
- Cooked food (boiled bones of sea bream)
- Fried food (fried red flat fish, tempura with thin dipping sauce or boiled down stock)

- Dessert (zenzai with sticky rice flour dumpling)

Five-grade evaluation for the each dish were carried out, namely the grades were

5: very satisfied, 4: satisfied, 3: average, 2: slightly dissatisfied, 1: dissatisfied.

The photograph of cold meal mentioned above is indicated in Figure 11 and the photograph of sashimi is also shown in Figure 12. Two types of condiments (soy sauce and boiled sake) were served. The boiled sake was a kind of old typed seasoning (pickled plum was put into sake and boiled). It was used in the Edo era. Many subjects preferred soy sauce and they thought it delicious. There were two types of soup for fried foods in (7). The evaluation for the soup is indicated in Figure 13. A lot of subjects preferred the thin dipping sauce. The thin dipping sauce (iridashi in Japanese) was made from thin soy sauce, mirin (type of sweet rice wine used in cooking) and bonito. These condiments could be used in other menus depending on their taste. The comprehensive evaluation for the menu is shown in Figure 14. Seventy-three percent satisfied with the menu and twenty-seven indicated “satisfied a little”. It was judged that the kaiseki meal could be acceptable by Chinese. The evaluation for each dish was carried out using the following score. The one was derived by multiplying the evaluation grade by the

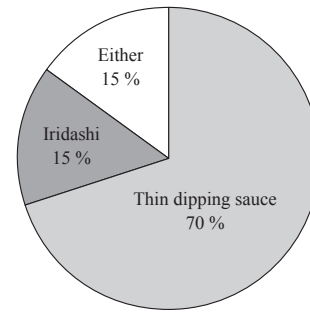


Figure 13: Evaluation on two types of soup for tempura

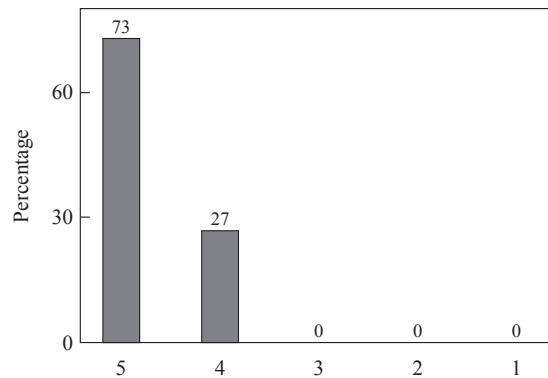


Figure 14: Total evaluation for kaiseki meal

Note: 1: dissatisfied, 2: slightly satisfied, 3: average, 4: satisfied, 5: very satisfied



Figure 11: Provided cold mea



Figure 12: Provided sashimi with two types of condiments

Table 1: Score for each dish

No.	Dish	Score
(1)	Cold meal	4.85
(2)	Sashimi	4.92
(3)	Soup substitute	4.77
(4)	Rice bowl	
(5)	Broiled steak	4.85
(6)	Cooke food	3.86
(7)	Fried food	5.00
	Tempura	4.92
(8)	Dessert	4.26

percent in each dish and introducing the summation (= score). It is easy to judge each dish by using the score than using graphs for evaluation. For example, the score for the (1) cold meal is 4.85 because the grade 5 is 85 % and grade 4 is 15 % ($5 \times 0.85 + 4 \times 0.15 = 4.85$). The result for each dish is indicated in Table 1. There is not the score for rice bowl in the table because it is widely-consumed in China and all members evaluate Japanese rice as “satisfied”. Fried red flat fish and tempura were provided in (7). All subjects indicate “satisfied” for fried red flat fish but there is a negative evaluation for tempura including fried onion. One person evaluated it as “slightly satisfied” and the score was 4.92. The evaluator preferred fried sweet potato rather than onion in hearing investigation. The total evaluation

for kaiseki meal is 4.68 and it is very high score.

4. Conclusion

It is necessary to increase the number of Chinese tourists visiting local districts in Japan, and provide Japanese traditional meals and sell craft goods because China has a potential to become a big market of Japan. This study is also intended to investigate their distribution in Japan and China. The experience for Japanese meal and the crafts was carried out in Kanazawa city. The experiencing persons were Chinese students and the age range was not wide as a questionnaire survey. Therefore the results were not the correct evaluation for the majority of Chinese. However, many effective suggestions were gotten. Eighty-five percent evaluated the souvenir of Kanazawa leaf gold as “satisfied” and face lotion including leaf gold was popular with female students. They also preferred the oil-blotting tissue, plate wares and food items with leaf gold. Whole experiencing people evaluated the selling facility as “satisfied” because it was a positive atmosphere and goods could be visible. Correspondence of the stuffs for the customers had a high evaluation due to the hearing investigation. Namely it is thought Japanese omotenashi can be acceptable to Chinese. It is, however, difficult to define omotenashi.

The size and taste for Japanese meal at a hotel got a high mark. However sixty percent was “satisfied” in the mark for cooking ingredients, which was in somewhat small measure. Ninety-two percent evaluated the menu as “acceptable in China”. The reasonable price for the meal was about 300 Yuan (about US\$ 50). The price was low than the one in Japan. The estimated cost for the kaiseki meal by the subjects was low. Probably they did not understand that the cooking ingredients were sufficiently-vetted and constituted the meal. The cost of the meal should be examined. Japanese traditional crafts and kaiseki meal will be accepted to wealthy people in China by explaining the materials and the ingredients. There is a high potential to sell these goods and service widely for Chinese both in Japan and China. It is necessary to increase the sales to improve Japanese economy and promote better understanding between the both cultures of the countries.

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