

Service Management in the Accommodation Industry for Foreign Tourists Visiting Japan

Shunichiro Morishita
Kyushu Sangyo University, Fukuoka, Japan
Email: s.morish@ip.kyusan-u.ac.jp

Abstract— Although inbound tourists have been increasing sharply in Japan, accommodation facilities are insufficient. In this study, qualitative analysis was conducted to examine the cases of 26 Japanese ryokans and hotels acclaimed highly by foreign guests. As a result, their efforts in 1) multilingual support, 2) rooms, 3) sufficient shared spaces, 4) interactions with other people, 5) Japanese cultural experience events and 6) meals were identified. These characteristics were then sorted from the two-axis combination perspectives, hard/soft and global/Japanese. The results show that the dissatisfaction level of foreign guests has decreased through having wider rooms and shared spaces, as well as multilingual support by ICT, whereas the satisfaction level has increased by promoting interactions with other guests and local Japanese people, offering events of Japanese experience and having Japanese style facilities and gardens.

Index Terms— accommodation industry, foreign tourists visiting Japan, service management, Japanese ryokan and hotels, case analyses

I. INTRODUCTION

In Japan's current accommodation industry, the management of ryokans (Japanese-style inns), especially those located in local areas, has been facing a severe situation. The occupancy rate of city hotels, business hotels and ryokans are 79.9%, 75.1% and 37.8%, respectively [1]. Since many hotels are located in urban areas and are targeting business travelers for weekdays as well as tourists for weekends, they can expect a stable occupancy rate. However, because ryokans are located mainly in local tourists spots and hot spring areas and are affected by the style of how Japanese take their holidays, more guests come only on particular days throughout the year, for example weekends or public holidays, New Year's holiday and summer holiday etc [2]. On the other hand, the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan has increased quickly from just above 10 million in 2013 to above 30 million in 2018, and it is expected to reach more than 40 million in 2020. Although it is predicted that a shortage of hotel rooms will occur, ryokans having many vacant guestrooms can expect to improve their situation by actively accepting foreign tourists. Unlike Japanese tourists, foreign tourists in some cases stay for at least two to three nights, and for longer stays, they

often stay for a few weeks at a time in the same accommodation. Also, there are more advantages for the accommodation industry, for example, foreign tourists' holiday seasons are different depending on each country, they stay both on weekends and weekdays and their booking lead time is usually long [3].

Nevertheless, there are challenges for ryokans in accepting foreign tourists. Discontented foreign tourists are quoted as saying the following in regard to service and hospitality: "Had no opportunities to interact with Japanese people," "Felt like I was being ignored" and "No one told me how to eat Japanese food even when I was having difficulty" [1]. Japanese people who are not good at foreign languages usually look away from foreigners because they are shy and also because they cannot understand their language. Improvement in both language and social activeness are challenging for them. In addition to this delay in multilingualization, the basic ryokan's accommodation plan, in which breakfast and evening meal are included as half board, keeps foreign tourists at a distance [2].

Measures to attract foreign tourists to stay at ryokans were suggested by experienced business practitioners [1][2][3][4]. As an example, the following measures were suggested: 1) developing an online reservation system, 2) multilingual support and 3) improving web contents such as room availability management etc. [4]. Others are: 1) free WiFi, 2) guest support through multi-language information, voice based translation devices and chat concierge service etc., 3) sending information overseas through personal blogs or SNS etc., 4) multilingual websites with many images and photos, 5) separating lodging from meals but offering a variety of meals on the menu as a separate service and 6) including *soba*, *udon* noodles, curry and rice, ramen and sushi etc. on the menu [5].

As a result of examining the reasons for foreign tourists choosing the hotel which they stayed at from the viewpoints of reservation, check in/out, guestrooms, beverage, service, facilities and price, the percentage for "good service reputation" was high, whereas the percentages for "cheaper accommodation fee" and "service contents included in the accommodation fee" were low. Thus, a strong tendency where guests would expect higher quality experiences from their stay rather than reducing the cost was observed [1].

Although many previous studies often show findings based on the business practices and experiences, none of them have shown a comparison and analysis using a comprehensive academic approach. In this study, ryokans and hotels acclaimed highly by foreign tourists were carefully selected for multiple case analyses, their characteristics of management were then sorted comprehensively, and the common points were identified.

II. LITELATURE REVIEW

At the *Japan Institute of Tourism Research symposium 2018* entitled "How should researchers address the inbound tourism market?", a sharp increase in the number of research papers regarding inbound tourism was reported following an increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan. When searching for previous studies regarding the theme of this study, a few research studies regarding satisfactory factors of mainly Chinese tourists visiting Japan were found. When looking at a survey on the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists, hot springs and *omotenashi*, Japanese hospitality, were found to be the factors for high satisfaction [6]. In order to promote Chinese tourists to revisit Japan, the following items were also discussed: 1) increasing free time for group tours, 2) improving Japanese *omotenashi*, 3) providing satisfactory Japanese meals and prices and 4) improving accommodation facilities and tourist facilities [7]. In the previous study specific to the Japanese accommodation industry, 1) meals, 2) cleanliness of guestrooms, 3) accommodation facilities and 4) staff's attitude toward customers were discussed. As for the facilities in particular, no emergency exit signs and the dirty / smelly state of bathrooms etc. were factors which lowered ratings from guests, and the quality of meals tended to be judged more strictly than the quantity [8]. As for studies specific to certain regions, there were the studies entitled "Regional characteristics of inbound tourism in the region surrounding Narita Airport: based on management of accommodation and foreign tourist behavior" [9] and "Preliminary Analysis of e-word-of-mouth by Text Data Mining: Case Study on hotels and Japanese inns in Izu Area" [10]. In others, there was a study which pointed out the current situation, where the purpose of tourists visiting Japan, not only from China but also from other Asian countries, transitioned from product value based¹ to experience value based, for example "Contents Tourism" [11]. There was also another study which discussed the concept of hospitality comprehensively while taking Japanese policies and the expected economic effect into account [12].

As for studies from the viewpoint of business owners who accept foreign tourists, the Japan Finance Corporation Research Institute (2017) conducted a survey entitled "Questionnaire on accepting inbound tourists (foreign tourists)." According to their survey, 88.8% of websites did not support foreign languages, and 0.6% of Japanese companies advertised on the Internet for overseas tourists, so not many companies were attempting to attract foreign tourists. The answers regarding accepting foreign tourists were "Actively

accepting" (17.1%), "It is ok to accept" (47.7%) and "Not wanting to if possible" (35.2%), so they did not appear to be active in accepting foreign tourists. The top reason why they did not want to accept foreign tourists was "Cannot understand each other's language" (66.7%) and the second was "Not knowing how to accept" (24.3%). As can be seen from this, communication in foreign languages is the major challenge. On the other hand, ryokans in local areas which have developed a multilingual environment are reported to be ensuring successful achievements [3]. When dealing with foreign tourists, foreign language skills are desirable, but it does not mean that they cannot accept foreign tourists without this skill. It is important for us not to see the service for foreign tourists as being different from that for domestic tourists.

As can be seen from the previous studies, both the soft factors, for example hospitality and customer service etc., and the hard factors, for example accommodation facilities including hot-spring baths and guestrooms etc., are the influential factors on the satisfaction level of foreign tourists. On the other hand, basic communication in foreign languages is the challenge on the management side, and customer service needs to be more proactive for foreign tourists. Despite this, the questions of "what are the characteristics of hotels and ryokans which are highly acclaimed by foreign guests?" and "what efforts are they making?" still exist. Therefore, this study was conducted to carry out a comprehensive review and analysis of the best practice cases in several hotels and ryokans with an established clientele of foreign tourists. The aim of the study was to make suggestions on how to attract foreign guests in the Japanese accommodation industry.

III. CASE ANALYSIS OF THE HOTEL AND RYOKAN MANAGEMENT TO ATTRACT FOREIGN GUESTS

In regard to how to deal with foreign guests in the Japanese accommodation industry, excellent practice cases have been introduced in various articles. However, these are only an introduction of each case and no comparative cross-sectional analysis has been made using an academic approach. If multiple cases are analyzed cross-sectionally, the common and specific factors can be identified. In this study, therefore, 26 cases of hotels and ryokans, which were introduced in articles as excellent examples of dealing with foreign guests since 2016, were selected. These 26 hotels and ryokans are: RYOKAN SAWANOYA [1], Kyoto Cha no yado Nazuna [13], Hotel Goryukan [14], Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa [15], Hakuba Marukin Ryokan [16], HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING [17], ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI [18], Shiba Park Hotel 151 [19], Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa [20], Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate [21], FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA [22], SAKURA HOSTEL NIPPORI [23], One@TOKYO [24], Syariah Hotel Fujisan [25], BON HOSTEL [18], GRIDS KYOTO SHIJO KAWARAMACHI [18], PIECE HOSTEL KYOTO [18], Costelun Akiba [18], HONJIN HIRANOYA [26], Arima Onsen Motoyu Kosenkaku [27], Fukujoso [28], Yamashiroya [29], Yokohama Bay

Sheraton Hotel & Towers [30], ZABORIN [31], Yukemuri no Yado Biwanso [31] and ATAMI SEKAIE [31] (Table 1). From the articles regarding these hotels and ryokans, prominent measures were extracted, and common characteristics were sorted through qualitative analysis using the KJ Method [32]. As the result, their common efforts in 1) multilingual support, 2) rooms, 3) sufficient shared spaces, 4) interactions with other people, 5) Japanese cultural experience events and 6) meals were identified. In the next section, specific examples of how to deal with foreign guests are discussed.

TABLE I. HOTELS AND RYOKANS WHICH ARE EXCELLENT IN DEALING WITH FOREIGN TOURISTS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Name	Location	Characteristics
RYOKAN SAWANOYA	Taito-ku, Tokyo	Responding to requests from foreign guests in a friendly manner by talking and with gestures.
Kyoto Cha no yado Nazuna	Kyoto-shi, Kyoto	A kiyomachiya (traditional Kyoto-style townhouse) was renovated to become a small ryokan with a gallery of traditional craft products. Offering tea making in each room and suggesting travel plans according to the conversation.
Hotel Goryukan	Hakuba, Nagano	Meal areas are separated from the lodging, but the restaurant in the hotel caters for guests and provides a wonderful food experience.
Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa	Taito-ku, Tokyo	Increased the number of twin rooms. Managing seven restaurants including the one which provides halal food. Hiring foreign staff who can speak multiple languages.
Hakuba Marukin Ryokan	Hakuba, Nagano	Renovated guestrooms and public spaces such as the lobby and dining hall with a pure Japanese style.
HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING	Ota-ku, Tokyo	Renovated guest rooms into mainly double and twin rooms. A lounge with the image of an Edo period cityscape. Multilingual staff are working here.
ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI	Kawasaki, Kanagawa	Hotel which ensures security and cleanness. There is a lounge where guests and local residents can interact with each other on the first floor. Japanese culture-themed guestrooms featuring traditional colors and room lamps with Japanese paper etc. There is a Japanese culture salon where guests can experience Japanese culture.
Shiba Park Hotel 151	Minato-ku, Tokyo	There is a ryokan facility with Japanese-style guestrooms in a part of the hotel. Staff wearing kimonos welcome guests and offer tea at the Japanese tea house.
Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa	Minato-ku, Tokyo	Made guestrooms wider and the percentage of connecting rooms is more than 80%. Multilingual support by foreign staff.
Karakasa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate	Sennan-gun, Osaka	95% of the guests are foreign tourists. Providing wider guestrooms and public spaces. Offering breakfast for vegetarians and Muslims.
FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA	Osaka-shi, Osaka	A prayer room and halal food is available for Muslims. There is a café where guests can interact with local residents.
SAKURA HOTEL NIPPORI	Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo	Designer hotel where 80% of guests are foreigners. Providing a comfortable digital environment in the guestroom. Good website. Having a café which not only guests but also everyone can use.
One@TOKYO	Sumida-ku, Tokyo	80% of guests are foreigners. Most of them are Indonesian and Malaysian. Providing services specific to Muslims.
Syariah Hotel Fujisan	Minamitsuru-gun, Yamanashi	Having a café and bar as well as dining where guests can interact with each other or with local residents. Providing a breakfast buffet which uses local ingredients.
BON HOSTEL	Naniwa-ku, Osaka	Holding events regularly such as tea making, calligraphy, kimono wearing experience etc. for foreign tourists.
GRIDS KYOTO SHUO KAWARAMACHI	Chukyo-ku, Kyoto	Excellent shared spaces which are not only a lounge and kitchen but also a library where guests can find information for sightseeing and architecture-related books.
PIECE HOSTEL KYOTO	Minami-ku, Kyoto	Concept hostel for female guests only with a cosplay theme.
Costelun Akiba	Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Renovated and added more guest rooms to the ones with Western-style beds and a separate tatami-floored living area. Multilingual support by staff.
HONJIN HIRANOYA	Takayama-shi, Gifu	Providing vegetarian meals for Indian and Western vegans to be able to enjoy eating.
Arima Onsen Motoyu Kosenkaku	Kobe-shi, Hyogo	Renovated all the old Japanese-style guestrooms into wider guestrooms with Western-style beds and a separate tatami-floored living area.
Fukujuso	Shima-shi, Mie	Fusion of modern architecture and Japanese antiques. Having excellent public spaces such as a tea house and library.
ZABORIN	Niseko, Hokkaido	Staff who speak English or Chinese. Providing Japanese cuisine which is also suitable for halal and vegan guests. Offering a variety of fitness programs.
Yukemuri no Yado Biwanso	Nanao-shi, Ishikawa	Renovated into wider guest rooms with beds and an open-air bath.
ATAMI SEKAIE	Atami-shi, Shizuoka	Utilized foreign students' internship and multilingualised the information to show access to the hotel from the airport and the floor guide.
Yamashiroya	Yufu-shi, Oita	Made guestrooms wider for foreign guests and prepared connecting rooms at the time of renovation.
Yokohama Bay Sheraton Hotel & Towers	Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa	

A. Multilingual Support

Many foreign tourists visiting Japan do not understand Japanese language and multilingual support is therefore necessary for them. For example, at HONJIN HIRANOYA, they secure staff who can speak English and also invite an English teacher every month to give English conversation lessons to the staff. 30 percent of the 70 guest relations staff are able to have practical English conversations at work [26]. Foreign contract workers including cleaning staff sometimes help with

interpreting guest conversations. HONJIN HIRANOYA is considering hiring full time foreign staff in the future. At Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate, there are foreign staff from China, Korea, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia [21]. All the staff at the reception have experience of being an interpreter. They also use a translation system with a video-phone call function [21]. At ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI, all the staff can speak English [18]. At Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa, there are staff from China, Korea, Germany, France and Ghana and they are not only skilled in their mother language and Japanese but also in English [15]. Foreign staff receive the same training as the Japanese staff [15]. Their concierges can speak either Chinese or Korean in addition to English and they give advice on the best sightseeing routes by using a sightseeing guidance system [15]. At One@Tokyo, 20 percent of the staff are foreign nationals. Although they hire international students from the Philippines, Korea, Myanmar and Russia etc. as part-time workers, staff at the reception are full time workers and offer refined guest services [18]. All the staff are trained to greet guests by saying "Hello" or "Hi" and this allows their guests to feel very comfortable as if they are visiting friends or relatives [18]. At SAKURA HOSTEL NIPPORI, about 20 percent of the staff are foreigners. They only hire full time workers and all the staff can speak business level English [23]. At FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA, the average age of the total 18 staff is as young as 27 years old and about half of them are foreign nationals from China and Taiwan etc. They are skilled at speaking both English and Chinese. Recruitment is also conducted in Taiwan [22].

It is also important to make the website and floor guide multilingual for foreign guests. For example, at Yamashiroya, they asked international students at a local university to help explain about access to the inn from the airport including how to buy tickets in English on their website. They also have an example answer sheet prepared for common questions from foreign guests [29]. Explanation of manners at the ryokan and sightseeing information are shown on the guestroom TV in many languages including English, Chinese and Korean [29]. At FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA, they explain how to brew Japanese green tea and how to use a bathroom using illustrations, and each room has an iPad on which guests can choose from eight different languages [22]. At One@Tokyo, all the guidance is written in English [18]. They also have a menu on which ingredients are illustrated, so foreign guests who do not understand Japanese can still know what is used in their meals [18]. At HONJIN HIRANOYA, in order to show their foreign guests how to stay at the ryokan, how to put a *yukata* on and how to take a bath etc., they have created a multilingual booklet with the aid of internship university students [26]. As we can see from the examples above, in order to deal with foreign guests, securing personnel with language ability and adaptability to different cultures in addition to the application of ICT are required.

Some hotels have created mechanisms with which they send information about their guests' experiences in many

languages to the world, or they let their guests do it. For example, at One@Tokyo, they have made their website a place where not only their guests but also the neighborhood can share information, for example by posting a photo of a recommended tourist spot etc. [18]. In other examples, at FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA, they are making good use of SNS and Facebook for their web marketing [22], and guests in the case of Shiba Park Hotel 151 [19] and also American and Taiwanese staff in the case of ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI [18] are sending information about hotels and guest experiences together with photos through SNS. This mechanism serves as a marketing tool to attract new foreign tourists to visit Japan.

B. Guestrooms

As for measures in relation to guestrooms for foreign tourists, efforts regarding the size, Japanese style and usage of ICT have been identified.

Apart from backpackers, because many foreign tourists travel as a couple, group or family, double or twin rooms rather than single rooms are in demand. Therefore, FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA [22], Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate [21], Yokohama Bay Sheraton Hotel & Towers [30], Shiba Park Hotel 151 [19] and Yukemuri no Yado Biwanso [31] have made their guestrooms wider than the conventional ones when they conducted a renovation or started the business. At Fukujuso, they used to have Japanese-style guestrooms only but renovated all rooms into wider guestrooms with Western-style beds and a separate tatami-floored living area [28]. Also, Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate [21] and Yokohama Bay Sheraton Hotel & Towers [30] offer many connecting rooms for families to stay. On the other hand, at FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA [22] and Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate [21], in order to make use of guestroom's limited space, they made bed legs higher for their guests to be able to store large luggage such as suitcases under the beds. In addition to this, at Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate, to save space, there are no bathtubs but just showers [21].

Next, some hotels and ryokans offer Japanese-themed guestrooms which attract foreign guests. For example, PIECE HOTEL KYOTO offers large Japanese-Western-style rooms with beds, a table and chairs [18], and Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate offers simple but stylish modern-Japanese style guestrooms [21]. At Shiba Park Hotel 151, they offer guestrooms where guests can experience Japanese culture. Each guestroom has a Japanese style sliding door in between a bedroom and bathroom area, as well as a hexahedral Japanese paper lamp which has patterns of Japanese seasonal scenes [19]. All amenities are in a package with a traditional Japanese hemp leaf pattern. At HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING, although guestrooms are modern, their rubbish bins and storage boxes are of traditional Japanese style [17].

In regard to the application of ICT, many hotels offer free WiFi these days. Among them SAKURA HOSTEL NIPPORI was the first to offer free WiFi as early as 2004 [23]. At HONJIN HIRANOYA [26] and One@Tokyo

[18], smart phones are available for guests to use in each room, with which guests can make free domestic and international calls and search for things on the Internet. At Yokohama Bay Sheraton Hotel & Towers [30], Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate [21] and HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING [17], universal power wall sockets with USB ports are available. Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa also has power wall sockets which suit overseas plugs [15].

Moreover, at ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI, there is a female-only floor, and when the guests exit the elevator, there is a door which requires a key to enter. Shared shower rooms with dressing spaces are all individual with a key to enter, and there are safety deposit boxes next to beds. Even though this is a hostel type of accommodation, they ensure strong security [18].

C. Sufficient Shared Spaces

Because foreign guests prefer spending time in public spaces rather than in the room, many hotels and ryokans make efforts to offer comfortable share spaces.

FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA, which accommodates many group guests, provides a large lounge space with 64 seats for guests to avoid the crowds in the lobby and relax with family and group members [22]. They offer their guests complimentary tea and coffee in the lobby between 3pm and 12am [22]. In the lobby there is also a photo taking spot with a signboard saying "I'm in Osaka" in six different languages. In this way, they encourage guests to send information to the world through SNS [22]. HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING has wider hallways to the guestrooms, so their guests with large suitcases can move easily through the hotel [17]. At Hakuba Marukin Ryokan, they renovated the old lounge into a wider modern-Japanese style lounge [16]. At Costelun Akiba, a hostel with a female-only dormitory, they hired a world-renowned cosplayer as a supervisor and created cosplay-friendly bedroom spaces. There is also a photo shooting spot in this hostel [18].

At Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate, in the shared space, there are currency exchange machines, a coin laundry, safety deposit boxes, massage chairs and capsule toy machines which are popular among foreign guests [21]. At Yokohama Bay Sheraton Hotel & Towers, there is a tour desk where the specialized staff provide tourism information and assist with bookings for various activities [30]. At Shiba Park Hotel 151, there is a culture salon where foreign guests experience Japanese culture and entertainment etc. during their stay [19].

The lounge of HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING has checkered pattern walls, which reflect an image of a cityscape from the Edo period, and displays items related to Japanese lifestyle, culture and food culture [17]. At ZABORIN, there is a public space where Japanese antiques are on display as well as a tea house and library [31]. At One@Tokyo, their hotel concept is being an art exhibit, and they offer their guests comfortable spaces which are modern and stylish but also have an atmosphere of downtown Tokyo at the time of the good old days [18]. At Kyoto Cha no yado Nazuna, artworks created by craftsmen in Kyoto are displayed in

the lounge area and other spaces, and all of these are available for purchase [13]. At HOTEL NIWA TOKYO, there is a little forest in the courtyard where the guests can enjoy the beautiful scenery of the four seasons of Japan. There is a huge Japanese style lighting feature with a wooden frame and paper shade in the lobby which adds a more Japanese atmosphere [20]. At ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI, they have pamphlets about associated hostels located in local cities, and staff provide travel consultation on a personal basis [18].

D. Interactions with Other People

Some foreign tourists prefer having conversations with other tourists who have the same interest about travelling or interacting with local Japanese people. Therefore, some hotels and ryokans gather foreign tourists together with local Japanese people by making use of shared spaces such as the lounge. At NAGONOYA, the second floor is their guest house and the first floor has the café and reception area. They encourage interactions with other foreign guests as well as with locals in cooperation with people from the shopping arcade where they are located [18]. At PIECE HOTEL KYOTO, in addition to shared spaces such as a lounge and kitchen, they also have a library space where guests cannot only access guidebooks and architecture-related books, but also interact with other foreign and Japanese guests [18]. At BON HOTEL, the lobby and lounge have an adjoining café and diner, and the guests and locals interact and exchange information [18]. At SAKURA HOSTEL NIPPORI, there is a café serving beer from 50 different countries around the world. Since locals also visit the café it has become a place where foreign guests can interact with locals [23]. They sometimes invite foreign guests to participate in a local festival to experience Japanese culture since they are a member of a neighborhood association [23]. At One@Tokyo, there is a restaurant and bar managed by the hotel on the first floor where locals can also casually visit at lunch and dinner time. The lounge at ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI also has an adjoining restaurant and bar and serves as a place for guests to interact with each other as well as with locals [18].

E. Japanese Cultural Experience Events

Some hotels and ryokans offer various events for foreign guests to be able to experience Japanese culture. BON HOTEL offers a sword fighting experience and *miko* (shrine-maiden) experience [18], GRIDS KYOTO SHIJO KAWARAMACHI offers a matcha tea making experience and kimono wearing experience etc. [18], HOTEL NIWA TOKYO offers *mochi* pounding in the lobby at New Year [20], SAKURA HOTEL NIPPORI offers a tea ceremony, *yukata* wearing and calligraphy, SAKURA HOSTEL JIMBOCHO offers an Imperial Palace jogging activity, and HOTEL CHINZANSO TOKYO offers a tea ceremony experience at a tea house located in a Japanese garden [20]. At Shiba Park Hotel 151, hotel staff offer a variety of free programs such as *origami*, calligraphy and the tea ceremony. They also offer regional exchange events such as cherry-blossom

viewing and radio calisthenics. At Kyoto Cha no yado Nazuna, they offer activities which utilize the network with local residents, such as a tea ceremony experience, gardening experience at a temple and craftsmen's workshop visit. [13]. The staff at this ryokan do their best to communicate with guests. When the guests arrive at the inn, they show them into the room, make tea while doing check-in and suggest travel plans which suit each guest based on the conversation. At breakfast, they talk to guests while grilling seasonal ingredients on a charcoal grill. In summer, they put seasonal fruits and Japanese soda drinks in a container with ice and bring it to the room when guests return from an outing. They also take photos when the guests check-out [13]. At Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa, staff wearing their *kimonos* welcome guests at the entrance of a Japanese garden and make tea at the tea house [20]. At ON THE MARKS KAWASAKI, staff offer the guests a running event and city tour with rental bicycles [18]. The running event was originally an event for local residents. When finished, the hotel offers a free glass of beer in the dining area, which becomes a place where foreign guests and local residents interact with each other.

F. Meals

Since foreigners have different tastes and lifestyles to Japanese, some of them do not like time constraints. At One@Tokyo, according to the needs of guests who arrive at different times of the day due to their flight schedule, they offer all-day breakfast [24]. At HOTEL JAL CITY HANEDA TOKYO WEST WING, breakfast is available from 4am to 10am, so it is available for the guests who leave Japan on an early flight [17]. As for the breakfast menu, Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate provides a Western food buffet with many sorts of bread [21] and FP HOTELS SOUTH-NAMBA provides a Western food focused buffet which is suitable for vegetarians and Muslims. At Arima Onsen Motoyu Kosenkaku, they provide delicious Japanese vegetarian meals for the Muslim and vegan guests who avoid meat dishes [27].

In order to deal with foreign guests who, prefer separating lodging from meals, Hotel Goryukan manages their hotel and restaurant separately [14]. Their restaurant has an open concept kitchen and bar counter. They offer a half buffet which utilizes the open kitchen space during summer, and this has been popular among foreign guests [14].

G. Others: For Muslim Guests etc.

Although there is not a lot of demand yet, some hotels and ryokans give consideration to specific religions. For example, at Syariah Hotel Fujisan, since 80% of the guests are foreign tourists and most of them are Indonesian and Malaysian, they make a variety of arrangements for accommodating Muslims [25]. There is a prayer room and a qibla mark which points to Mecca is placed in each room. They only use halal-certified seasonings and domestically produced beef. This hotel was covered by an Indonesian TV company and is well known among Muslims who live in Japan. The company president, Mr. Shigeru Yamashita, also provided staff

with training to teach them how to welcome and entertain Muslim guests at the hotel which he previously owned. In 2014, he took part in the foundation of NPO JAPAN HALAL DEVELOPMENT & PROMOTION, which has been engaged in Muslim support projects at tourism regions and which has been leading halal certification organizations in Japan [25]. This hotel also hosts workshops for other companies which run accommodation businesses to instruct them on how to cater for Muslim guests. Moreover, they serve the same meal to non-Muslim guests for them to experience halal meals.

At Karaksa Spring Hotel Kansai Air Gate, Muslims can borrow a compass substitute for a qibla mark which points to Mecca and a prayer mat substitute for a prayer room. There is a foot-washing place for Muslims in the barrier-free bathroom in the lobby [21]. The restaurant at this hotel is certified as halal by the Japan Islamic Trust [21]. At Sakura Hotel Hatagaya, there is a prayer room available for Muslim guests. They have a refrigerator and freezer dedicated to halal food, and Muslim customers even come to the restaurant from other hotels [23]. At ATAMI SEKAIE, there are English and Chinese speaking staff, and they offer Japanese cuisine which is suitable for halal and vegans. They also offer various fitness programs [31].

IV. DISCUSSION: CLASSIFICATION OF MEASURES FOR ACCEPTING FOREIGN GUESTS VISITING JAPAN

As the result of examining and analyzing the hotels and ryokans accredited highly by foreign tourists, measures in the following items were identified: multilingual support, rooms, sufficient shared spaces, interactions with other people, Japanese cultural experience events and meals. Fig. 1 shows the classification of the measures. The horizontal axis shows the global or Japanese local factors, and the vertical axis shows the hard or soft factors.

Firstly, regarding the globalization of hard factors, guiding information in the hotels and ryokans should be displayed in multiple languages including English, Chinese and Korean in order to reduce the stress of foreign guests. In particular, access to the hotels and ryokans using public transportation, which is sometimes difficult even for Japanese people, as well as the bathing manner at hot springs etc. should be explained in multiple languages. As for the guestrooms, apart from business travelers and backpackers who travel alone, foreign tourists usually travel with more than one person and prefer wider guestrooms such as twin and double rooms. Some hotels offer higher availability of connecting rooms particularly for families. In some cases, in order to make use of guestroom's limited space, taller bed legs are used for the guests to be able to store large luggage such as suitcases under the beds, or bathrooms with no bathtubs but only showers are provided. Free WiFi services are taken for granted and USB ports and universal power wall sockets available in guestrooms are very handy not only for foreign guests but for all guests.

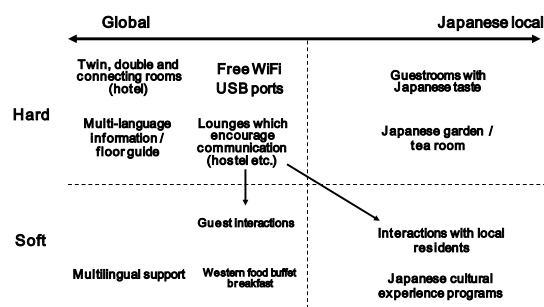


Figure 1. The framework for dealing with foreign guests

Regarding the globalization of services, multilingualization is also an important challenge for dealing with foreign guests. Therefore, some hotels and ryokans hire staff who can speak foreign languages, or train staff to be able to have practical conversations with guests in foreign languages. These days, translation devices are available on the market, so making use of these is worth considering. Regarding meals, there are quite a few cases where ryokans offer a Western food buffet breakfast focusing on bread rather than Japanese food.

Regarding the Japanese hard factors, there are hotels which offer a lounge, guestrooms and amenities with Japanese taste. Since some *onsen* ryokans, hot spring inns, originally have a Japanese style, they deliberately do not modernize but make this a selling point. Some hotels and ryokans have a Japanese garden which attracts foreign guests.

Regarding the Japanese soft factors, there are hotels and ryokans which offer various Japanese cultural experience programs such as calligraphy and kimono wearing etc. Also, at some hostels, they manage their lounge on the first floor as a café and bar, where local residents can also come, and encourage foreign guests and local Japanese people to communicate with each other and enjoy cultural exchanges. At hostels which offer dormitory type rooms in particular, guests are strangers, but they naturally start a conversation, exchange information and share their experiences. The more they enjoy their conversation, the greater opportunities they have for interacting with each other while having drinks in the lounge, dining area or at the bar. Such places are available not only for guests but also for local residents and serve as a place where travelers from all over the world, who seek interaction with other people, can exchange information.

Moreover, regarding "*omotenashi*", Japanese hospitality, there was no case of doing something specific for foreign guests, but some efforts were shown. For example, at Ryokan SAWANOYA, they have manuals prepared in multiple languages to explain how to check in/out and how to take a bath. However, apart from these, staff try their best at using broken English and body language to communicate with foreign guests [1]. The owner of Ryokan SAWANOYA thinks that what is important is to convey their feeling of welcome to foreign guests, and even if staff cannot have a detailed

conversation in foreign languages, they can make foreign guests happy with their kind attitude [1]. At HOTEL NIWA TOKYO, they dare to offer the same service as they do to Japanese guests, so foreign guests can feel a natural and homely atmosphere [20]. On the other hand, depending on the national characteristic, culture and religion, such as Islam and Hinduism, special attention is needed on both hard and soft factors.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the cases of hotels and ryokans which were active in accepting foreign guests and acclaimed highly by them, and their characteristics were identified, sorted and analyzed. The aim of the study was to identify measures which could satisfy inbound tourists in Japan's accommodation industry. In the review of previous studies, although various statistics and surveys targeted inbound tourists were conducted, specific measures were not discussed or suggested. In order to address the challenge, 26 ryokans and hotels which were introduced in trade magazines as successful cases for accepting foreign guests were selected and analyzed for their characteristics using the KJ method, and the effectiveness of specific measures was discussed. As a result, measures in the following items were identified: multilingual support, rooms, sufficient shared spaces, interactions with other people, Japanese cultural experience events and meals. These were sorted from two-axis combination perspectives, hard/soft and global/Japanese.

Regarding the multilingual support, since free language translation apps are being developed and multi-language translator tools are available at many shops with the advancement of ICT, they will overcome the multilingual communication problem [33]. Moreover, with the advancement in AI, IoT and big data, AI concierge services which support English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese and Korean have appeared, and these can chat with guests, recommend a good restaurant and even make a reservation for them [34].

On the other hand, regarding Japanese hospitality "omotenashi," there was no need to specialize this for foreign guests who usually come to Japan to experience a different culture. For example, at Ryokan SAWANOYA, which has been popular among foreign tourists, they try their best to communicate with their foreign guests using broken English and gestures. The owner of SAWANOYA says "There is no need to change what we have now. Accept it as is. It doesn't always mean that foreigners need a special service. We just do our best to respond to their requests," and puts emphasis on the welcoming attitude and feeling of wanting to show hospitality. From the research results obtained in this study, when accepting inbound tourists, globalization for removing the distress and discontent of foreign guests, as well as *omotenashi* with which they can experience Japanese culture could contribute to an increase in their satisfaction level.

However, quantitative analysis by conducting a questionnaire is required to find out whether these factors

for satisfying foreign guests are actually effective. In addition to this, interviews with people involved and field surveys are required to find out about the management style of these hotels and ryokans acclaimed highly by foreign guests. Further research should be undertaken to address these tasks.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I hereby confirm that there is only one author whose name is Shunichiro Morishita as mentioned above under the paper's title.

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Shunichiro Morishita received the Ph.D. degree in social sciences from Waseda university, Japan, in 2009, and the Ph.D. in knowledge sciences from Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology in 2018, respectively. Before he joined Kyushu Sangyo University in 2014, he had been with Hewlett-Packard Ltd for 22 years, as a business process analyst, project manager and so on. His researches cover service and knowledge management in the Japanese hospitality industry.

He is an Associate Professor at Kyushu Sangyo University in Japan. He published *Entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific: Case Studies* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), *Kyushu Area Studies* (Japan: Koyo Shobo, 2019) and others.

Dr. Shunichiro Morishita has PMP (Project Management Professional) and is member of Japan Association for Management Systems, Japan Management Diagnosis Association, Society of Serviceology and others. He received a best paper award from ICServ2016 (The 4th international conference on Serviceology).