

H.K. Cup English Program

Distinct, feasible plans key

Comments by Michael Korver, Judge and Professor at Hitotsubashi University

The winners impressed all the judges with their convincing presentations, fluent deliveries and capable responses to the judges' questions. The contest winner, Mr. Koki Matsumura, a student at Rikkyo University, presented a plan for a Japanese-style business in Hong Kong. He identified the existence of market demand for such services as well as the factors that would differentiate his salon's services from those of its competitors already in Hong Kong. In addition, he identified a significant risk to the implementation of his plan, which was the language barrier, and proposed a feasible solution to reduce that risk.

The first runner-up, Mr. Satoshi Asano of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, proposed an innovative sports business in Hong Kong which cleverly combined Japanese know-how in creating virtual sports games and the availability of vacant buildings in Hong Kong. However, his plan lacked in feasibility compared to the winner's plan.

The second runner-up, Ms. Kyo Hakugyoku of Musashino University, presented the design of a handy tool to assist Japanese travelers to Hong Kong. Called "Hong Kong Pocket," this tool contained the type of information and services necessary to address the interests of Japanese travelers as well as ameliorate their travel concerns. The plan also suffered a bit from the lack of details concerning the feasibility of developing such a tool.

It was a great pleasure for the judges to be able to award two female contestants the Fighting Spirit Prize. Ms. Yu Iwama, a student at Tokyo Medical University, and Ms. Megumi Ikeda, a student at Aoyama Gakuin University. Both contestants presented plans to introduce the unique culture of Hong Kong in innovative ways.

Although she did not win a prize, I would also like to commend Ms. Haruka Udagawa of the University of Tokyo, who made a very polished presentation on promoting Hong Kong tourism to Japan.

Overall, my impression was that too many of the contestants focused on the same aspect of Hong Kong culture — namely, the food. These contestants had a hard time differentiating themselves from the other contestants. As you can see from the results, uniqueness of topic is highly appreciated by the judging panel. In addition, more attention should be placed on the feasibility of the plan — is it possible to do, who will do it, how much will it cost and is it sustainable?

Students show various business ideas

The Japan News

What kind of business would you like to start in Hong Kong? The answer presented by Koki Matsumura, winner of the recent Hong Kong Cup All Japan University Student Ambassadors English Program, was to open a hair salon featuring high-quality Japanese service and young stylists.

The contest to promote interest in Hong Kong among Japanese youth has been held since 2007. The top winners become "student ambassadors" and are invited on a two-week trip to Hong Kong. The participants present their original ideas on one of three designated topics in the fields of business, tourism and culture.

Hair salons, sports facilities and apps

"Just like food, animations and sightseeing, I think the Japanese service industry including hair salons is known for the highest quality," said Matsumura, a third-year student at Rikkyo University, at the start of his presentation titled "Hair Salon Business in Hong Kong." He explained that there are already many Japanese hair salons in Hong Kong, but that they are expensive and outdated because the stylists who work there are out of touch with the latest trends in Japan.

Matsumura introduced his idea of inviting young stylists and interns from beauty schools in Japan to the Hong Kong salon every quarter or academic year, enabling the salons to offer up-to-date styles at affordable prices, he said.

Matsumura said he recently returned from Seattle, where he had been studying for nine months. While he was in the United States, he had a hard time finding a hair salon that catered to Japanese tastes. This experience led him to the idea for his hair salon business plan, he explained.

"His presentation was enthusiastic and easy to understand," said Michael Korver, one of the judges and a professor at Hitotsubashi University's Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy. "He showed a sophisticated understanding of business."

Satoshi Asano, a junior at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, placed second with his idea to set up sports facilities in Hong Kong featuring virtual reality technology from Japan. Referring to his experience in Hong Kong as an exchange student around two years ago, he pointed out that people in Hong Kong have less experience of sports due to space limitations. Asano said his idea could make them "more active, healthier and happier."



The second runner-up was Kyo Hakugyoku, a senior at Musashino University, who introduced her idea to promote a smartphone application named "Hong Kong Pocket." The application offers a directory of local foods, and also serves as a social network platform, where users can share photos and videos of their trip to Hong Kong, she explained. "I like this kind of cross cultural activity, and want to expand my vision with the study trip," said the Chinese native.

This year, the Fighting Spirit Prize, honoring a finalist who has lived overseas for less than a year and gave an excellent performance, went to two



Yomiuri Shimbun photos
Clockwise from far left: Koki Matsumura delivers his presentation, making full use of body language; Satoshi Asano passionately talks to the audience; Kyo Hakugyoku introduces her idea on a travel application.

competitors due to a special request by the judges. The prize winners — Yu Iwama, a junior at Tokyo Medical University, and Megumi Ikeda, a sophomore at Aoyama Gakuin University — were also selected to be student ambassadors and invited on the study tour.

Iwama impressed spectators with her Chinese dress, originally given to her mother by her father around 12 years ago, when he was working in Hong Kong. Iwama traveled there many times to visit her father, she said, and she came to like Hong Kong.

"I learned a lot from others' presentations,"

said Ikeda. Her presentation was about a lottery and a "dessert decoration" event in her university. These events can stimulate young people's interest in Hong Kong, she emphasized.

The 15 students who competed in the final round held at KDDI Hall in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, on Jan. 16 were selected from about 100 participants nationwide. Applicants competed on various topics using visual aids, for up to six minutes each. The designated topics were: Starting my own business in Hong Kong, Attracting young Japanese tourists to Hong Kong, and Promoting Hong Kong on campus.



Finalists, judges and representatives of sponsors gather for a photo after the contest on Jan. 16.

Finalists (in speaking order)

- 1: Vio Nandana, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University
- 2: Yuki Kiyono, International Christian University
- 3: Natsumi Kato, Waseda University
- 4: Keisuke Miyano, Waseda University
- 5: Yu Iwama, Tokyo Medical University
- 6: Satoshi Asano, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
- 7: Reiko Tateyama, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University
- 8: Takuma Ishii, Meio University
- 9: Koki Matsumura, Rikkyo University
- 10: Megumi Ikeda, Aoyama Gakuin University

- 11: Kyo Hakugyoku, Musashino University
- 12: Kazuhiro Kimura, Tohoku University
- 13: Asaka Miwa, Kyoto University
- 14: Koichi Tokudome, Tohoku University
- 15: Haruka Udagawa, University of Tokyo

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Contest builds closer, deeper ties between H.K. and Japan

Opening remarks by Sally Wong, Principal Hong Kong Economic and Trade Representative (Tokyo)

Hong Kong and Japan have enjoyed a stable and mature relationship for many years. Japan is Hong Kong's third largest trading partner, and Hong Kong has always been a very safe, hospitable and welcoming place for visitors and businesses from Japan. Indeed, Hong Kong, which comprises one city only, has been the largest overseas market for Japanese food and agricultural products since 2006, taking up more than 20 percent of those exports.

Hong Kong is also the fourth largest source of tourists to Japan. In the first eleven months of 2015, about 1.4 million Hong Kong travelers came to Japan. As Hong Kong has a population of just over 7 million, it means that about one out of five people in Hong Kong visited Japan last year.

To promote closer and deeper ties between Hong Kong and Japan, we have organized the Hong Kong Cup Program almost every year since 2007. Last year, we changed the format from a speech contest to a presentation contest, and were excited to see the enthusiastic response and creativity of the participants.

This year, we are again very much encouraged to see many students from different parts of Japan joining the contest. I look forward to hearing the presentations by the 15 finalists, who will present their ideas on starting up businesses in Hong Kong or promoting Hong Kong's culture and tourism.

'Best place for business' never disappoints

Guest speech by Katsuhiko Umetsu, Executive Officer and General Manager of Global Business Development Division, Yamato Transport Co., Ltd.

We are the first company that introduced an international cool next-day delivery service in Hong Kong via Okinawa in 2013. Through this service, Japanese perishable items became available on the Hong Kong market. For instance, we now deliver tons of scallops and sea urchin to sushi restaurants in Hong Kong. Those services were created as voices of customers were captured by our 50,000 sales drivers in Japan.

Back in 2009, Yamato changed its strategy

due to the Asian market's rapid growth. We believed Asia to be one of our key markets and we selected Hong Kong as our first target. After two years of feasibility studies, Yamato launched the Ta-Q-Bin (home delivery service) business in Hong Kong in 2011. Our goal was for Yamato to be the No. 1 delivery service in Asia, offering good value not only to the business community but also to people living there.

The reason why we chose Hong Kong as our first target is that it is not only one of the most international markets in Asia but also our belief that demand for quality delivery services down to the last mile is identical to that in Japan.

In Hong Kong, we currently operate the Ta-Q-Bin business 365 days a year with 155 sales drivers and 71 trucks. We also have a non-delivery solution by using convenience stores for drop-off and pick-up services, which significantly increased delivery efficiency and convenience for Hong Kong customers.

As the No. 1 delivery service in Japan, we first thought that doing business in Hong Kong would not be so tough. However, we were wrong. We lacked effort in capturing customers' voices, as well as that of employees. Hong Kong gave us so many lessons. Yamato had to change business strategy and implementation both in tangible and intangible ways. How we should apply knowledge accumulated in Japan for 40 years to Hong Kong is our biggest challenge.

One of the keys to success in Hong Kong is changing our mind-set. The key words are diversity and inclusion, which apply to employees' gender, nationality, culture, management style and consumer behavior. I believe Hong Kong is the best place to do business for anyone. Its business environment is very competitive, pragmatic, challenging, speedy and global. However, once you set a goal and make enough effort, Hong Kong will never let you down. That is Hong Kong.