

Ukraine's Image in Japan: Forming Factors

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1. Introduction

Recently it has become relatively common that the subject of an image, in whole, to be addressed in different research areas. Economic, social and humanitarian disciplines as sociology, psychology, philosophy, marketing, public administration tackle elements regarding image, the general study of these appearing as an interest since antiquity. However, the study of image, as a rule, takes place in a fragmented way; according to the discipline within which the notion of “image” is addressed, it has been given different definitions and interpretations (Cotîrlea 2015: 166).

Despite the fact that country image does not have a standard definition, without a doubt, each country has its own image. Interpreting different definitions in the literature on country image, one can conclude that some of these concepts give a small, custom meaning, while others cover a wider area (Kunczik 1997; Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999; Therkelsen 2003; Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2006; Brijs et al. 2011; Buhmann 2016). We agree with Martin and Eroglu defining country image as “a total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs about a particular

National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

country” (Martin and Eroglu 1993: 60).

Our working definition of image is informed by the idea of representation of a certain social entity (say, country, state, nation) which is constructed by various social actors in the process of purposeful or spontaneous activities. On one hand, image is an outcome of both rational, calculated and purpose-oriented actions undertaken by, for instance, the state or business associations in order to increase the attractiveness of country or profitability of business. On the other hand, image cannot be reduced to consciously and intentionally designed models or schemes of the real social object created to achieve certain aims (e.g., to increase tourists' flow or investments). It is formed in the process of multifarious and innumerable social interactions at different levels which are spontaneous and driven by motifs different from image-creation or image-manifestation. Therefore, we can identify purposeful and spontaneous sources of image-formation. The rationale for such a division is mostly analytical, since in social reality it is rather difficult, if possible at all, to precisely assess the effects and mechanisms of these two types of causes.

For quite understandable reasons, the idea that it may be possible to modify country image seems more alluring for the countries whose image is somehow negative or based on stereotypes and myths in minds of the international audience. As Dembek and Włoch (2014) note, the issue of attractiveness and international recognizability has become of the utmost importance for the 'newcomers' to international politics, such as Ukraine. Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991; previously its international image crudely came down to its being "a Soviet area". Meanwhile, it gradually dawned on the government to engage in the task of promoting Ukraine in a rapidly globalizing environment. As it had been discovered, similarly to the nation branding undertakings of other post-Soviet countries, those efforts have not always been coherent or duly effective, which was repeatedly confirmed by the numerous international ranking lists of country attractiveness

(Okhrimenko 2015).

It became obvious that lack of knowledge had generated a certain number of myths about Ukraine inside Japanese society. It means that stereotypical level of mutual perception between two countries still exists. Without a doubt, it does not lead to an adequate vision of culture, while multiplies prejudice and superstitions. Thus, the research proposed is a step to further discovering Japanese and Ukrainian people each other and strengthening long-term communications. It is also important in the light of widening and improving communications between Ukraine and Japan.

This article examines some factors determining complicated process of Ukraine's image-making in the Japanese society. The research methodology is mainly summarized to all appropriate methods and techniques used for collecting and processing empirical data and information, respectively to observing, sorting, correlating, categorizing, comparing and analyzing data so that it may be founded the addressed theoretical elements. It means, methods of observation, expert interviews, in-depth interviews, document analysis, content analysis, questioning had been used to obtain the results. At first, experts' visions will be explained; both the Ukrainian and the Japanese experts' opinions will be considered. The Ukrainian community residing in Japan will be shown as a factor determining Ukraine's image-making. Brief results of content analysis of Ukraine theme in mass media (on "The Japan Times" example) will be done in the next section. The results of students' polling concerning to Ukraine will be discussed at the end.

2. Experts' vision

Any images, one one hand, are based on facts, and, on the other hand, on imagination. The process of image making presupposes both actual and attributive features of the object. That's why image-makers, journalists, scholars, writers or even

tourists, i.e. everyone who attracts the attention of the audience, usually play an important role in promoting country image. Moreover, image making of any country occurs in parallel at two levels – official and private.

The private image is a result of self-education, spontaneous interest to the country, informal and friendly communication with its citizens. That process is completely individual, has an empirical character and may be limited to several books and albums, culinary experience, exotic innovations in interior and clothing, and so forth. The private image often becomes the first (but not always the last) stage when creating a foreign country image, and that is how it differs from making the attitudes towards many other countries. Thus, Ukraine's image is emotionally colored picture of Ukraine as a country and its elements, social, political, cultural (touristic) and economic (in particular investment) aspects, in the perception of various target groups at the international, national and local levels.

At the official level a country image making is closely related to politics, so some of its mechanisms are hidden from a third-party eye. Moreover, getting acquainted with them may cause a psychological trauma to people who are convinced that their impressions of a particular country are not connected with the backlash of politicians and big business, that is, with the authorities. But, as everyone knows, even if you are not engaged in politics, it still carries on you.

Currently, scholars in Japan, to some extent, may be considered to perform the function of public opinion leaders, or at least actively involved in its making. They are invited on TV, interviewed by mass media; their books are available in bookstores. However, while describing the Japanese experts' vision related to Ukraine's image in contemporary Japan we should keep in mind that there are few specialists on Ukrainian issues if compare with ones who have been studying Russian (previously the Soviet) themes. Thus, their influence on Ukraine's image making among ordinary people is definitely limited. The Japanese gradually expand the boundaries

of their perceptions of Ukraine, but there is still lacking information. If compare the awareness about Japan and Japanese culture in Ukraine with that of Ukraine and Ukrainian culture in Japan, it would be totally irrelevant thing (Nakai 2008).

The experts' opinions for the research subject had been collected by means of interviews (totally nine experts) focused on their research areas. Thus, it made possible to obtain data concerning to different aspects of Ukraine's image-making, though some common tendencies have also been discovered. As regarding the Japanese society's awareness of Ukraine, most of the interviewees expressed significantly restraint and skepticism. According to the experts' opinion, for the most Japanese people Ukraine seemed to be unstable territory since Chernobyl time (1986). So many Japanese thinks, "It is dangerous throughout Ukraine at present, including Kyiv, because not only East but also all of Ukraine territories are suffering from war"⁽¹⁾. It has been generating the situation when there is lack of specific ideas about Ukraine, while a great number of stereotypes on it has taken roots. For instance, the battle between the US and Russia happened in Ukraine where President Petro Poroshenko and leaders of self-proclaimed republics are the agents of CIA and Kremlin accordingly. Apparently, the crisis in Ukraine has played a role, especially after the Boeing (flight MH-17) was shot down on 17 July 2014, so the image of instability zone is still connected with the whole Ukraine. Perhaps, this stereotype is gradually effected as Japanese citizens come to Kyiv and can see by themselves that it is the European capital of the civilized state, quite comfortable for life.

In the experts' opinion, Ukraine's image in Japan used to be disseminated traditionally by means of the world famous Ukrainian brands and symbols especially in sports (Sergii Bubka, Andriy Shevchenko, Klychko brothers, Oleg Verniaev and

(1) My interview with Shinkichi Fujimori, Joint Researcher, Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, October 3, 2016, Sapporo

others). This process may be called *Shevchenkiana* (Geraskov 2015), under the name of the most famous Ukrainian poet and brand Taras Shevchenko, and it happens occasionally. Ironically, we cannot say that Ukrainian literature is famous in Japan. The most serious problem here is lack of translations of the Ukrainian literature, as the opportunity to study Ukrainian language in Japan is very limited. There are no Japanese university faculties or departments where one can study the Ukrainian language and literature at the academic level. At the same time, there are much more translations of the Russian literature as studying Russian is much more available. It is stressed by specialists that translations would be the most effective promotion of the Ukrainian literature, though both states should take much more efforts on it.⁽²⁾

No wonder that under such circumstances only a few people in Japan are able to understand duly the historic context in which Crimean crisis and conflict in the East of Ukraine occurred. On the other hand, if asking the Japanese people whether any of the European countries awaken some more specific image than Ukraine, you may notice that the case of Ukraine is not the only, reflecting the shortage of knowledge among the Japanese in field of the world history and geography.⁽³⁾

Chernobyl seems to be another element from “standard image set” that has been strongly associated with Ukraine for a long time. The Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 provoked splash of attention by the Japanese society to Chernobyl, as well

(2) My interview with Go Koshino, Associate Professor, Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, October 4, 2016, Sapporo

My interview with Yoshinari Harada, Invited Researcher, Waseda University, January 13, 2017, Tokyo

(3) For instance, in Japan I have met a large number of versions for Ukraine's location on the world map, such as ‘the kingdom in south China’, ‘somewhere near Oklahoma City’ etc. Note in fairness that some people showed a good level of knowledge about Ukraine, so it depends on person mainly.

as the world mass-media had started to compare the two accidents (Fukushima as a Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster: 2011). Perhaps this discourse has somewhat changed the image of Ukraine and it should be interpreted positively, because after Fukushima the Japanese people got not the best, but reason to learn more about Ukraine.⁽⁴⁾ Currently, some exchanges on “Chernobyl-Fukushima” issues take place at governmental and NGO levels, but this process happens irregularly.

The experts marked some areas in which Ukraine could be interesting for Japan at present and in the nearest future. The first one is agricultural sector where the world market had been mainly achieved and challenged for cooperation, but still large enough, the second is game industry where Japanese consumers know the Russian “World of Tanks”, but have not heard of the Ukrainian product. The third possible area could be promotion of tourism in Ukraine. It looks quite attractive in respect that Japanese people are interested in the preservation of folk culture as it happened in Ukraine.⁽⁵⁾ At first, it may concern to the Carpathian Region where environmental conditions and maintaining traditional arts would be a good basis for ecotourism development. However, lack of Ukraine tours as well as of direct flight connection between Ukraine and Japan is still impeding that process.

Naturally, the question “What level, state or private, would be more effective of Ukraine’s image-making in Japan?” seems of getting much importance. Actually, both of them should be correlated in some model, but there are different opinions for which should be regarded as determinant one. Some experts think that private contacts and NGO activities are more important now,⁽⁶⁾ whereas the others believe

(4) My interview with Tymur Sandrovych, Ph.D. student at Kyoto University, December 23, 2016, Osaka

(5) My interview with Galyna Shevtsova, Professor, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, December 1, 2016, Kyoto

(6) My interview with Shinkichi Fujimori, Joint Researcher, Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, October 3, 2016, Sapporo

it to be too limited channel of image-making compared to the state policy that of
(7)
much more larger impact radius.

While having been interviewed all of the experts mentioned “the Russian factor” influencing Ukraine’s image in Japan. Nakai (2008) marked that it had been reflected in mixing Ukraine and Russia by the Japanese people, so they often accepted Ukraine as a part of Russia. Ukraine crisis in 2014 has somewhat changed public opinion, but those changes were limited. That is, many people became aware of the events happened in Ukraine from mass media, but most of them still used to think that Ukraine and Russia are as same.
(8)
It could be correlated with tendency that in the representation of Ukraine in Japan “political” aspects have been traditionally more accentuated than “cultural” ones. At the same time, “the Russian factor” generates cultural misunderstanding, for instance many Japanese people attach *borshch* and Cossacks to Russia omitting the fact that actually they were originated from Ukraine. Keeping in mind strong economic ties between Russia and Ukraine, and also complicated “language issue”, note at the same time that after 2014 Ukraine’s foreign policy has been inevitably oriented to joining EU and NATO, and breakup relationship with Moscow.

“The Russian factor” seems to be a long-term phenomenon. Kurokawa (2008) describes how Russia has sometimes made Japan’s policies toward Ukraine difficult to carry out. Previously, Japan’s policy toward Ukraine was formulating and implemented by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) under control of director general and deputy director general of Bureau of European and Oceanian Affairs. However, important issues with other CIS nations required clearance of the Director of the

(7) My interview with Galyna Shevtsova, Professor, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, December 1, 2016, Kyoto

(8) My interview with Yoshihiko Okabe, Associate Professor, Kobe Gakuin University, January 24, 2017, Nishinomiya

Russian Division. “It appears that the centrality of the Russo-Japan relations would subordinate all issues with other commonwealth nations to the question of how to advance Japan-Russian relations toward a conclusion of a peace treaty with Russia. (Northern Territories)” (Kurokawa 2008: 46). Later MOFA created the Division of Central and South Eastern Europe and placed Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova under this new division. The Director of the Russian Division, while still influential, would not veto purely the domestic issues of Ukraine any longer.

3. Ukrainians in Japan as a forming factor of Ukraine’s image

Nowadays, one of the most influential subjects of Ukraine’s image making throughout the world by its number and organization is Ukrainian diaspora. Ukrainians residing abroad have become a very important factor of Ukraine’s perception inside the societies of foreign countries. As Motyl (2010) asserts: “It is true that Ukraine should cooperate with the diaspora, but, what is more important, Ukraine needs to understand that without diaspora it is not possible to improve its image. Unlike Ukraine, the diaspora has the experience, finances, institutes, influence and knowledge of world languages” (Motyl 2010: no page number).

Actually, there is still no Ukrainian diaspora (community) or citizens who have acquired the status of 《foreign Ukrainian》 (expatriate status) in Japan. However, the number of the Ukrainian citizens who temporarily reside in Japan for studying, private affairs or work are growing.⁽⁹⁾ There is an unofficial organization of Ukrainians residing in Japan “Krayany”. The main purpose of their activities is to promote Ukraine in Japan and provide possible support for those who would like to give their children the essential elements of the Ukrainian education. The organization

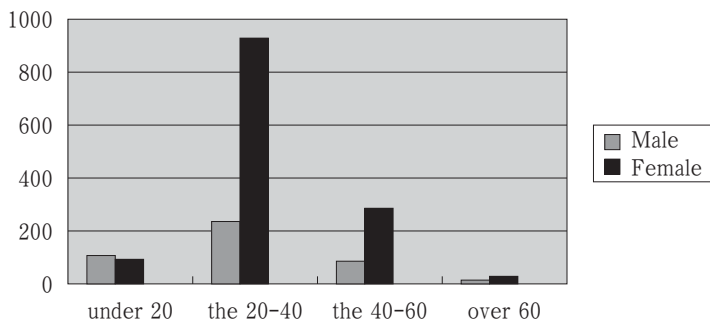
(9) Embassy of Ukraine in Japan official website. Available from:
<http://japan.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukraine-japan/ukrainians-in-japan>

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was initially established as e-mail newsletter in March 2000, and later they have started their page on Facebook.⁽¹⁰⁾ The organization has no formal structure, formal membership or governing bodies, its main purpose is consolidation of Ukrainians living in Japan. “Krayany” is mostly online community while offline events are usually arranged through online communication. There is no official registration of “Krayany” participants, so its exact number could be hardly calculated. Overall, due to a small number of participants it could be characterized as organization with low activity. Some temporary revival as of both online and offline communities had been caused by the events of the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine.

According to the statistical data of Ministry of Justice of Japan, there were 1,745 Ukrainian people residing in Japan as of June 2016 (Ministry of Justice of Japan 2016). If looking through their age and gender characteristics we can note that the most typical Ukrainian in Japan (53.4% in the total number) would be a woman in the 20–40 age group (see Figure 1)

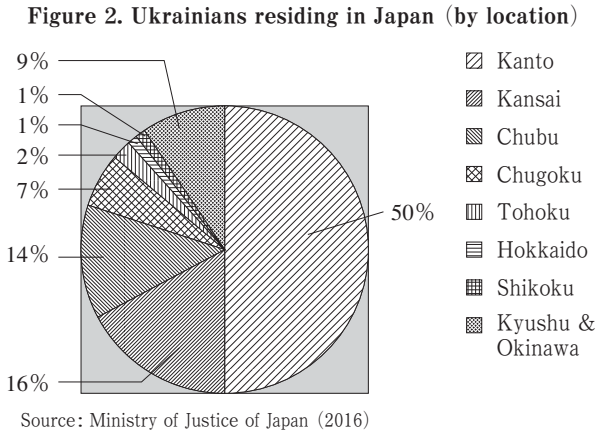
Figure 1. Ukrainians residing in Japan (by age and gender characteristics)



Source: Ministry of Justice of Japan (2016)

(10) Available from <https://www.facebook.com/ukrainians.japan/>

Concerning to geographical dissemination of the Ukrainian people throughout Japan we can conclude that half of them are located in Kanto Area, while Kansai (16%) and Chubu (14%) ones are in the second and the third positions accordingly (see Figure 2).



After scrupulous monitoring through the Facebook community of Ukrainians residing in Japan (the total number of its members was 776 as of November 1, 2016) there had been chosen 10 categories (scholars, students, models, wives, employees, officials, business, arts, mass-media & communications, NGO) for personal in-depth interviewing the representative from each category. One-to-one personal communication was considered the best method of analyzing Ukrainians residing in Japan as a formative factor of Ukraine’s image, due to dissemination of the Ukrainian people all around Japan as mentioned above.

The obtained data let us understand that the most active Ukrainian communities had been organized in Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya and Fukuoka.

(11) Available from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/336308389830693>

There are some differences in opinions, but, in principle, they have consolidated views on global issues. The interviewees have not named any officially registered organization promoting the Ukrainian culture in Japan. Probably it could have reasoned some gaps in knowledge about Ukraine inside the Japanese society, «as if the Japanese had another vision of history where Ukraine started since the USSR times, but had been like *tabula rasa* before that. As a result, youngsters here just make believe they know what is Ukraine, while elderly people perceive it as the Soviet Union⁽¹²⁾». This situation might have given an impetus for Ukrainians in Japan to strengthen activities in Ukraine's image-making process, but it seemed to be very depended on the person.

The Ukrainian community in Japan, on the one hand, was supposed to be more active than the Russian one,⁽¹³⁾ and on the other hand, far less active than the Ukrainian community in Australia.⁽¹⁴⁾ They had initiated some activities, and some of them were supported by the local authorities, but generally based on organizers' enthusiasm (Kotenko 2016).

Another aspect of Ukraine's image-making in Japan reflected in the complicated process of Ukraine-Russia relationship. Ukraine crisis had generated different reactions by the Ukrainians in Japan. Some part of the Ukrainian community took pro-Russian position and felt themselves to belong both Ukrainian and Russian cultures. They used to attend events arranged by both Ukrainian and Russian communities.⁽¹⁵⁾ It seems surprising for the pro-Ukrainian majority and confusing for the Japanese people, because many of them still used to think Ukraine and Russia

(12) My interview with Liza Zhukovskaia, Model, December 9, 2016, Tenri

(13) My interview with Bogdan Pavliy, Lecturer, Toyama University, February 5, 2017, Maibara

(14) My interview with Sergii Onishchenko, Musician, December 14, 2016, Kobe

(15) My interview with Roman Yakovenko, First Secretary of the Embassy of Ukraine in Japan, November 23, 2016, Tokyo

to be as same. Thus, we can mark some alternative or parallel process of Ukraine's image-making, or rather image-breaking, promoted by pro-Russian Ukrainians residing in Japan.⁽¹⁶⁾

The interviewees agreed in solid that Ukraine's image in Japan should be improved, because the current level of awareness of Ukraine by the Japanese people seemed to be insufficient. The proposals on its improving were different and included organization of special culture missions from Ukraine,⁽¹⁷⁾ further promoting of Ukrainian brands and planning a good state policy on image-making issues.⁽¹⁸⁾ There also was an opinion to let this process flow naturally, because Ukraine has already good image as «a country of beautiful girls».⁽¹⁹⁾ However, all of the interviewees were optimistic as regard to the future of Ukraine-Japan bilateral relations arguing that there are many common points between Ukrainian and Japanese cultures, and no territory conflicts at the same time.

4. Mass-media

In general, Ukraine's representing in the world media seems rather weak and mainly related to the negative side. Leading global media such as the Times, the Economist, the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times the Washington Post, and others, had traditionally paid little attention to the Ukrainian news, not to mention resonance topics, such as corruption or Chernobyl (UCEPS 2000: 3-6). It is note-

(16) Apparently, pro-Russian wing inside the Ukrainian community is the smaller one, though now it seems not possible to calculate it exactly, as well as to estimate the scale of its activities, it could be a subject for further researches.

(17) My interview with Liza Zhukovskaia, Model, December 9, 2016, Tenri

(18) My interview with Roman Yakovenko, First Secretary of the Embassy of Ukraine in Japan, November 23, 2016, Tokyo

(19) My interview with Rimma Takahashi-Simonova, married to Japanese, November 23, 2016, Chiba

worthy that inadequate or negative image may be the result of the lack of information, stereotypes or even so-called celebritization of politics. Perceptions of Ukraine's image in Japan, besides emphasizing some kinds of significant and unique events, have different dimensions for being studied. Without a doubt, we must look through a broad medium, such as newspapers, for the better observing of Ukraine's image in Japan. Newspapers reach tens of millions of Japanese people every day. They are widely considered a trusted and credible source of information concerning topics that may be touched upon only briefly on television or radio.

We could have looked through some transformation processes of the image of Ukraine by monitoring "The Japan Times" newspaper digital version for the period of 2013–2016, have analyzed Ukraine's mentioning (total number 1353), and distinguished different news categories (politics, economics, crisis, culture, Chernobyl, Crimea, etc.). It has enabled understanding peculiarities of providing information about Ukraine and looking through changes in this process for a long term.

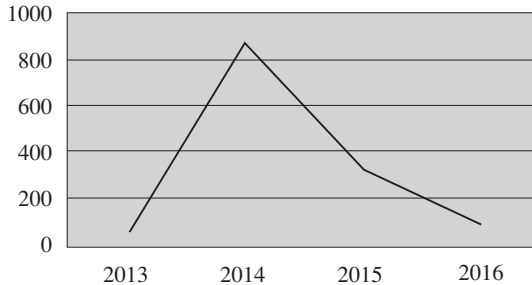
In whole, Ukraine's image could have been reduced to the following elements:

- Little-known European state, still looking for its place in the world;
- Crisis country, politically unstable;
- Area mostly negative for business, with high investment risks;
- Corruption in all state bodies;
- Country where the war happened;
- Chernobyl;
- Famous Ukrainians (mainly athletes): Klychko brothers, Andrii Shevchenko, Sergii Bubka;
- Problems with Russia, including gas transit under the Russian control;
- Beautiful women.

Messages related to the Ukrainian theme could not consider as similar: if there was no message about Ukraine for a certain period, a significant number of articles

on the Ukrainian issues appeared later (see Figure 3)

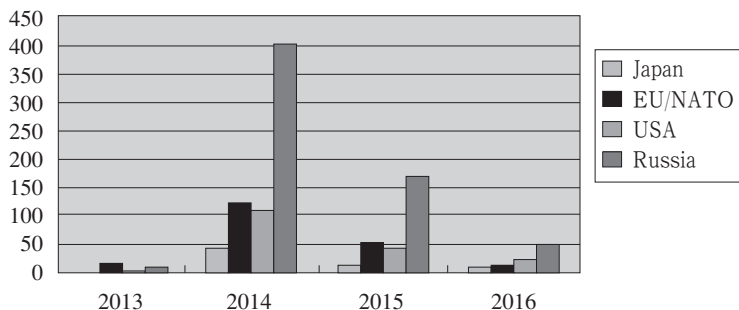
Figure 3. Mentioning Ukraine in “The Japan Times” (2013-2016)



It was determined by the circumstances that had happened (economic changes, social movements, political reforms, etc.). Thus, the increase of messages about Ukraine took place in 2014 when, after the Revolution of Dignity, a steady interest to Ukraine in Japanese media became noticeable. Although the general number of messages related to the Ukrainian issues had increased, it did not mean they had favorable context for Ukraine. They published both positive articles and ones condemning hesitations and confrontation inside the Ukrainian government. This must be taken into account, as media news, are certainly of crucial importance in forming public opinion on images of other countries. Studying of news media coverage processes, Kleppe et al. (2014) identify three types of images: brother-land image, acquaintance image, and foreigner image. These types vary along dimensions such as media salience, cognitive versus affective content, complexity, and self versus other anchoring.

One could find that in most of the publications Ukraine had mentioned only along with materials where the main semantic meaning was reporting of events in the world in general, or events in a particular country or alliance, such as Japan, Russia, USA, EU/NATO (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Context country/alliance for the message related to Ukraine



On one hand, even a side-by-side message creates an information reason promoting the country image, but on the other hand – the semantic content of the article can automatically shift to the idea of Ukraine. Therefore, in the case of negative messages, Ukraine's image is also automatically distorted.

5. Students' polling

Within the framework of the research conducted, it has become possible to arrange students' questioning concerning to Ukraine's image. Totally 292 students from five Japanese universities (Kwansei Gakuin University, Kobe Gakuin University, Gifu University, Kanazawa University, Jin-Ai University) took part in that polling. The questioning purpose was to determine the forming factors of Ukraine's image among Japanese students as the category of people who are subjected to the impact of mass-media and experts at the same time.

When answering the question «What feelings do you have as to Ukraine?» the majority of respondents choose indifference (77.7%), while others marked delight (5.5%), envy (4.8%), anger (2%), interest (2%) etc (as portrayed in Figure 5).

Speaking of the current state of bilateral relations between Japan and Ukraine, only 5.5% regarded it as good, while 25.3% as rather good, 5.1% - not good, 12.3%

Figure 5. 《What feelings do you have as to Ukraine?》

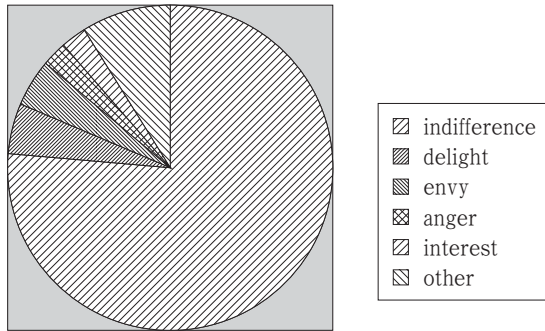
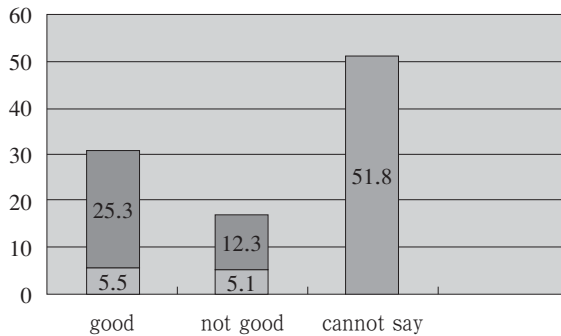


Figure 6. 《Current state of bilateral relations between Japan and Ukraine》



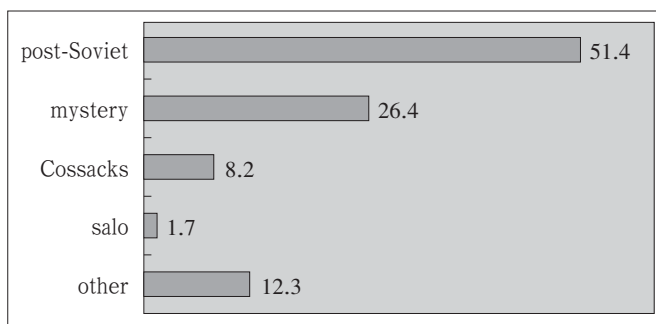
- rather not good, and more than half (51.8%) could not say briefly (Figure 6).

It should be noted that only 0.3% of students having been questioned ever visited Ukraine, 37.7% - not yet, but would like, and 62% - not and not going to. These figures correlate with 'indifferent' feelings as to Ukraine. Moreover, for 39,3% the first time they have heard of Ukraine was before 2014, for 22,3% - after 2014, while for 36% it was the first time on the questioning.

Concerning to the question 《Which image, in your opinion, describes Ukraine the best?》 the majority believes Ukraine to be post-Soviet area (51,4%), whereas

for 26,4% Ukraine is a kind of mystery, for 8,2% - land of Cossacks, and for 1,7% - country of salo and vyshyvanka. In addition, Ukraine was associated with Chernobyl, Russia and Crimea crisis, agriculture, good entertainments and girls, cold weather and sports (Figure 7).

Figure 7. «Which image, in your opinion, describes Ukraine the best?»



More than half respondents (51,4%) have not ever faced with Ukrainian culture previously. The most common cases of awareness of Ukraine related to history (23,3%), cuisine (7,2%), music (6,8%), literature (4,5%) and cinema (3,4%).

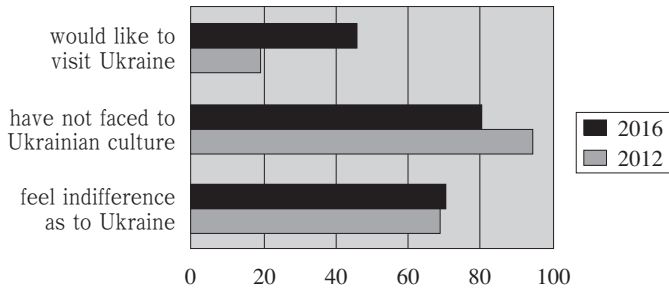
As for the interest in Ukrainian culture, 68,5% have not chosen anything they would be interested in, while 8,6% named cuisine, 4,1% - music, 3,4% - Cossacks, by 2,7% - history and culture, 2% - relationship to Russia, by 1,3% - literature, climate and entertainments.

The main source of getting information about Ukraine for 75% respondents is mass-media (newspapers, magazines, TV, Internet), whereas for 8,6% - communication with Ukrainian people, for 2,7% - books on Ukrainian themes, for 3,1% - university, and 10,6% have no such kind of source.

Almost all of the students (98,3%) do not know any organizations promoting Ukrainian culture in their cities.

It is interesting to compare results of polling in 2012 and 2016 when students from Kwansei Gakuin university answered the same questions related to Ukraine (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Correlating results of Kwansei Gakuin University students' polling in 2012 and 2016



Almost the same number of students felt indifference as to Ukraine in 2012 (68,75%) and 2016 (70%). Awareness of the Ukrainian culture had somewhat improved from 6,25% to 20%. In both cases there was no one who had ever visited Ukraine, though more students (40%) would like to do it in 2016 if compared with 2012 (18,75%).

The questioning let us conclude as follows. Today Japanese students can hardly be aware of the situation in post-Soviet area comparing to the Soviet period when the state contacts had better organizational basis, information and ideological content [Geraskov 2015]. Such non-awareness seems to have long-term character, and is possible to make prognosis for no substantial changes in this situation under the current circumstances.

Conclusions

The relationship between Japan and Ukraine works on many levels and involves

many actors. The phrase 'Japanese-Ukrainian relations' usually brings to mind an image of interaction between the governments of each country. Yet, if we merely examine the diplomacy between the two countries, then we are left with an incomplete picture of the forces that affect how the nations engage each other. A key element to consider is the relationship between the two societies. Popular opinion and popular perceptions of each culture in the eyes of the other are far more subtle elements to consider, yet they are no less important than the official acts of government, and indeed, may even be more so. Analyzing these cultural perceptions is a complex task. Neither the culture that is perceived nor the one that does the observing is a static entity. The country image abroad is usually anchored in long-lived stereotypes, clichés, traditions, and, as such, it is not easily or readily malleable (Anholt 2007; Dinnie, 2009; Govers–Go, 2009).

Currently, there is no clear image of Ukraine inside Japanese society. Actually, only the experts in the Ukrainian issues are aware of Ukraine on the higher level. After 2014 Ukraine's image in Japan was subjected to change meaning the information wave caused by the interest in recent events in Ukraine, though it seemed to get fall last time. Moreover, it became clear by results of the research that Ukraine's image in Japan is still often constructed under subordination to "the Russian factor". The influence of Russia to that process has been viewed throughout the whole research. As a result, the Japanese people still often mix Russia and Ukraine in their minds.

Yet the most important general conclusion drawn from the variety of studies conducted was as follows: the key problem of Ukraine is not a bad or negative international image in Japan, but rather the lack of image. Most Japanese have a very meagre knowledge about Ukraine, if they have any knowledge of it at all. Information about Ukraine in Japanese media is scarce and it usually concentrates on politics and crisis affairs. The recognition of Ukrainian products, services and

investment opportunities on Japanese markets is low, and Japanese general public does not receive much information about the situation in Ukraine.

Ukraine's presence in the information space is not a problem of the state, but society as a whole. The national policy of Ukraine's presence in the information space should be based not only on the capabilities and desire of the state, but also on the potential of non-governmental organizations, economic actors and individual citizens. The state is assigned to the role of coordinator. Ukraine already has a certain image, and the discussion is not about renewal, but about its change.

The growing awareness of both the low profile of the Ukrainian international image and the importance of building a competitive identity for it had inspired Ukrainian institutions, and not only the governmental ones, to undertake numerous promotional activities. For a long time, such attempts were not very successful, and they were also poorly coordinated. Current Ukraine is trying to change it by implementing a set of activities provided by the Concept of popularization of Ukraine in the world and promotion of Ukraine's interests in the worldwide information space.

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