

Festival of Japan as Brazil's Cultural Diplomacy to Japan

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Abstract

The paper explains the national interest of Brazil towards Japan is served by way of Brazil celebrating its multicultural society at the same time as it embrace its national economical interests. By supporting and maintaining the annual Festival of Japan, Brazilian government shows their ways of using soft power in order to strengthen the bilateral relations between Brazil and Japan. In this case, Brazilian government implements cultural diplomacy theory through an annual festival. This paper shows the importance of an annual festival as a tool to reach the national interests of one country towards another country.

Keywords: Brazil, Festival of Japan, national interests, cultural diplomacy, Alliance for the 21st century strategy, multicultural society.

Introduction

The author would like to describe about the Festival of Japan in São Paulo, Brazil. Using the theory of cultural diplomacy, it explains the importance of creating mutual understanding of the two country's societies in order to strengthen two country's bilateral relations. There are several ways of implementing cultural diplomacy. In this case, Brazilian government use to support and maintain the annual Festival of Japan that held for the first time in 1998 aimed to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil.

The beginning of the strong relations between Brazil and Japan

This chapter describes the origins of the strong relationship between Brazil and Japan as it has developed from earlier waves of Japanese migration to Brazil and also the importance role played by the Alliance for the 21st Century strategy in the process of strengthening relations between both countries. Further, this chapter also describes the aims of the Alliance for the 21st Century strategy and elaborates on how the Brazilian government's support for the Festival of Japan reflects these aim.

A. The role of the Alliance for the 21st Century strategy

In the 1990s, bilateral economic relations between Brazil and Japan reached a very low point, creating difficult conditions for their continuing future relations.¹ The Alliance for the 21st Century strategy was proposed at the 1999 conference of Keidanren and the CNI as a better strategy to help further improve the relationship that Keidanren and the CNI had been maintaining since 1974. It was considered that this new strategy would help to prevent a slow down, or suspension of, bilateral relations occurring again in the future. Brazilian – Japanese bilateral relations had previously been suspended during World War II as Brazil joined the allied forces due to US diplomatic pressure. After some years of interruption, relations between Brazil and Japan were restored in 1950s and with the restoration of relations, two additional elements featured in the partnership: the increasing flow of Japanese direct investment in Brazil and a rise

¹ Official page of Embaixada do Japão no Brasil. *120 Anos de Amizade Japão-Brasil*. Retrieved on September 20th 2015 from http://www.br.emb-japan.go.jp/120anos_o_que_e.html

in bilateral trade.² At the height of its economic reconstruction, post-war Japan was looking for sources of raw materials and commodities overseas. The recent changes experienced by the two economies and the fact that these changes had opened up new opportunities for economic cooperation, were a major consideration in the creation this new strategy. Both countries hoped to strengthen their bilateral economic relationship in the future through various aspects, including economically.

The Alliance for the 21st Century strategy materialized the effort of CNI and Keidanren in order to overcome the situation of low bilateral trade flows and low foreign direct investment and encourage trade and investment to reach a level that would be more compatible with the objectives of CNI and Keidanren.³ For Brazil, its current economic achievements are evidenced by its high level of exports which reflects the high international competitiveness in various agro-industrial and manufacturing sectors which it has developed in the last few years. The trade ratio of their economy is about 25% over 15% in the beginning of 21st century.⁴ As a result, the Brazilian economy has become more open as export activity has become the most prominent factor influencing the country's economic growth. Alongside this change, Brazil has increasingly take a stronger stance on issues it faces in trade negotiation processes, while in the WTO forum, Brazil is

² Katia Tiemy Akioka, *Festival do Japão: Instrumento de valorização da cultura imigrante*, Retrived on September 20th 2015 from <http://ad.rosana.unesp.br/docview/directories/Arquivos/DTA/Biblioteca/2007%20-%202012/katiaTiemyAkioka.pdf>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Centenario de Amizade Japão-Brasil*, Retrived on April 12th from <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/latin/brazil/centenary.html>

seeking preferential trade agreements with both developed and developing countries.

B. The aims of the Alliance for 21st Century strategy

There are five key aims of the Alliance for the 21st Century strategy that can be identified and considered important to analyzing the reason why the Brazilian government supports and maintains the Festival of Japan. Each of these aims are presented and discussed below.

1. Promoting mutual understanding

One factor that has held Japanese companies back in the Brazilian market are knowledge gaps in terms of mutual understanding and exchange of information between the two countries concerning geography, linguistic, cultural and historical information. These gaps in mutual understanding between the two countries contributed to persistent difficulties in relations between the countries. If they are going to succeed in developing their economic partnership, then it is important that these gaps are closed.

Exchanging information and promoting mutual understanding should be more clear and active in order to promote Japanese companies to invest in Brazil by convincing them of the stability of the Brazilian economy and the potential for high profits in the Brazilian market. Up-to-date information should be provided through regularly published business letters and by showing the data on the existing official website of the government, the Brazilian Central Bank and the Brazilian Embassy in Japan. One of the most important points to note is that they

should provide such information in Japanese or English and not only in Portuguese.

2. Promotion of Grass Roots Mutual Understand

Besides creating general mutual understanding between Brazil and Japan, it is also important to promote mutual understanding at the grass roots level of their bilateral economic relations.⁵ The fact that Brazil is host to the largest ethnic Japanese community outside of Japan means that Japanese culture is quite well known to Brazilians, especially in states like in São Paulo and Paraná. Indeed, this is demonstrated by the existence of the Festival of Japan that is held annually in São Paulo.

3. Intensifying and systematizing the economic dialogue between Brazil and Japan

In order to advance mutual understanding between the Japanese and Brazilian private sectors, their representatives should meet regularly to exchange views mainly within the traditional framework of the Japan-Brazil Economic Cooperation Committee.

For their part, the two governments should cultivate greater mutual confidence by increasing ministerial visits. In April 2000, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC – a Japanese public financial institution and export credit agency that was created on October 1st, 1999, through the merger of

⁵ Katia Tiemy Akioka, *Festival do Japão: Instrumento de valorização da cultura imigrante*, Retrived on September 20th 2015 from <http://ad.rosana.unesp.br/docview/directories/Arquivos/DTA/Biblioteca/2007%20-%202012/katiaTiemyAkioka.pdf>

the Japan Export – Import Bank and the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund⁶) and the Brazilian government signed a memorandum aimed at having policy dialogues and exchanging information on a regular basis, in addition to the traditional dialogues that already existed between the two governments. It was agreed that these dialogues should be result-oriented so as to reflect the opinions of the private sector. The Festival of Japan is an example of the type of regular meetings and events that the memorandum aims to encourage.⁷

The main purpose of this point is that the two coordinating organizations have to make additional efforts to secure the attendance by representatives of major companies from both Japan and Brazil and enable substantial dialogues to take place. For certain key sectors, they should organize sub-groups to hold well-focused and continuous talks when there are issues and questions of interest to both sides.

4. Devising New Business Strategies

At a time when Japanese companies are losing ground in Brazil, it is necessary for them to reexamine their business strategies from the double

⁶ Official website of *Japan Bank for International Cooperation*, Retrived on October 5th 2015 from <http://www.jbic.go.jp/ja>

⁷ Katia Tiemy Akioka, *Festival do Japão: Instrumento de valoração da cultura imigrante*, Retrived on September 20th 2015 from <http://ad.rosana.unesp.br/docview/directories/Arquivos/DTA/Biblioteca/2007%20-%2012/katiaTiemyAkioka.pdf>

viewpoint of globalization and localization.⁸ Looking from the globalization point of view, Japanese enterprises need to look at Brazil not only in itself but in the context of their global business strategies and the reason for why they invest in business activities in Brazil in the context of their global business network. For example, for western firms, Brazil is seen as central to their investment in a wider region (Latin America) and therefore of strategic value on their world maps. It is important also for Japanese companies to design strategies for Brazil in relation to other geographies and regions.

Particularly, Brazil is the leader of regional economic integration in South America. Mercosur (i.e. the `Southern Common Market` regional bloc in Latin America) is an undeniable geo-economic and political reality in American continent. Its importance at the core of the emerging South American economic area is already recognized the world over, and negotiations between the bloc and other trade blocs such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the rest of Latin America and with the European Union attest to this recognition. It is of utmost importance to update relations between Japan and the countries in Mercosur and grant these relations high priority. In this case, Japanese companies should support Brazil's leadership role in completing Mercosur`s integration process.

Local empowerment is also an important point. It is often said that business with Brazilians is difficult for Japanese. Handicapped by a shortage of Portuguese speaking staff, cultural differences and complex tax and legal systems,

⁸ Ibid

Japanese businesses and their staff often cannot manage to negotiate the Brazilian market by themselves without assistance from local parties.⁹

Cultural differences constitute a major obstacle to expanding business between companies from the two countries. It is clearly understood that cultural "distance" produces very different business practices and procedures. This perception is only reinforced by the loss of relevance of the relationship model where the Brazilian state agents played a central role in fostering business links.

Localization of management, in which Japanese companies are said to be behind those from the U.S. and Europe, is an answer to the difficulties faced by Japanese business in adjusting to and operating in Brazil. U.S. and European affiliated companies in Brazil operate with a broad range of powers delegated by their parent companies. This enables them to make quick decisions and react flexibly to sudden changes in the business environment.

In the past, Japanese companies were able to recruit top personnel for modest rates of compensation, thanks to the existence of the large population of Japanese – Brazilians in Brazil. Recently, however, younger people of Japanese ancestry have shown less interest in Japan and Japanese companies in Brazil, and many of them want to work for Western companies, often attracted by the better terms on offer. Japanese firms should offer more incentives to draw local talent. In this regard, human resource development should be considered to facilitate the employment of more locals as staff or managers in their subsidiaries.

⁹ Katia Tiemy Akioka, *Festival do Japão: Instrumento de valorização da cultura imigrante*, Retrived on September 20th 2015 from <http://ad.rosana.unesp.br/docview/directories/Arquivos/DTA/Biblioteca/2007%20-%2012/katiaTiemyAkioka.pdf>

5. Favoring expansion of Japanese direct investment in Brazil

It is necessary to deepen reciprocal knowledge and create different inter-entrepreneurial and inter-governmental mechanisms for confidence-building and providing investors with guarantees. This theme is a priority insofar as the aim is to attract Japanese investors to infrastructure sectors, particularly in those sectors where investment takes a long time to mature and pay out, and also in which there are all sorts of risks for the investor. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the consolidation of Mercosur and the prospects for amplifying the bloc open great possibilities for attracting industrial investment directed at exploiting this market. As said above, Brazil is becoming a hub of the regional networks of production in South America, and the tendency is for this process to speed up with more integration on the sub-continent and later confirmation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).¹⁰

With this Festival of Japan, the Japanese companies might see which business sectors generate the highest level of demand from Brazilian consumer. For example, during the Festival, Japanese companies have the opportunity to sell their products in the exhibition and the success or failure of product sales during the Festival help companies understand the business potential of such products and the business opportunities that they could develop in Brazil. Besides the fact that Brazil is becoming a hub of the regional networks of production in South America, the Festival of Japan can also convince potential Japanese investors of

¹⁰ Masato Ninomiya, *O centenário do Tratado de Amizade, Comércio e Navegação entre Brasil e Japão*, Retrived on May 1st 2015 from <http://www.usp.br/revistausp/28/17-masato>

the Brazilian government's efforts and commitment to increasing demand for Japanese products amongst Brazilian consumers.

C. Festival of Japan as a tool for strengthening bilateral relations between Brazil and Japan

Despite the existence of a large number of immigrants from Japan in Brazil, many Japanese products do not exist and are not available there. This is not just as a result of their patterns of consumption. But it is somehow more indicative of the processes of cultural diffusion that taken place since Japanese – Brazilian persisting the Japanese heritage and upbringing. Although Japanese-Brazilians have become more `culturally Brazilian` in many ways because they are settled in Brazil, they have also maintained a sense of their Japanese heritage and ethnicity, often inherited from the older generations. Moreover, Japanese culture and behavior continues to be developed and maintained through family socialization processes in their daily life and also through the internal dynamic of the ethnic Japanese community. One of example of these processes is that some of Japanese – Brazilian were even pressured by their grandparents who were first generation immigrants, to learn the Japanese language and to behave culturally as Japanese in certain ways.

Brazilian nikkeijin (the name given for Japanese – Brazilian who migrate back to and resettled in Japan), develop their cultural ties by maintaining ethnic traditions through festivals that consist of rituals, food, music, and dress. The Festival of Japan, as an event allows Japanese – Brazilians in Brazil, to symbolically liven up and reconstruct their special cultural heritage and traditions.

In positive way, Brazilian society reinforces the Japanese – Brazilian community's notion of itself as having a unique and special culture by using the term `Japonês` to refer to people of Japanese descent people.

The Festival of Japan (Festival do Jãpao), which is considered to be the biggest and best festival of Japanese culture in the world outside of Japan, was first conducted by KENREN (Federation of Provinces of Japan in Brazil) in 1998 as a way of, celebrating the 90th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil. The aim for the first festival was to promote Japanese culture and pass on traditions and cultural knowledge to new generations. KENREN itself was established in the resumption of emigration after the war encouraged by families of Japan who had organized an entity ``Chihouken Kaigai Ijukazoku Kai`` (Regional Association of Families of Overseas Emigrants). Later, in 1962, it was formally established at the national level under the designation of ``Kaigai Nihon Ijukazokukai rengokai – Kazokukai`` (Japan Federation of Families Emigrants Ultramarionos).¹¹

From 1998 to 2001, the Festival of Japan was held at Ibirapuera Park, with the support of the City of São Paulo. In 2004, it shifted and was held in the courtyard of the parking lot of the Legislative Assembly. In 2005, when the festival was in its the 8th year, and seeking larger premises, the Festival of Japan

¹¹ Masato Ninomiya, *O centenário do Tratado de Amizade, Comércio e Navegação entre Brasil e Japão*, Retrived on May 1st 2015 from <http://www.usp.br/revistausp/28/17-massato.pdf>

was transferred to the Exhibition Centre Immigrants in the South Zone of São Paulo.¹²

Data 2.2

Festival of Japan themes

| Year | Place | Theme |
|------|---|---|
| 1998 | Parque Ibirapuera – Marquise | Japanese culture |
| 1999 | Parque Ibirapuera – Marquise | Japanese culture |
| 2000 | Parque Ibirapuera – Viveiro Manequinho Lopes | Japanese culture |
| 2001 | Parque Ibirapuera – Viveiro Manequinho Lopes | Japanese culture |
| 2002 | Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de São Paulo | Japanese culture |
| 2003 | Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de São Paulo | Japanese culture |
| 2004 | Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de São Paulo | Japanese culture |
| 2005 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Anime and Manga |
| 2006 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Matsuri (Festival) |
| 2007 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | The Beauty of The Provinces |
| 2008 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Immigration Centenary |
| 2009 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Environment |
| 2010 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | The Art of The Provinces |
| 2011 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Food and Longevity |
| 2012 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Sustainability and The Future of Humanity |

¹² Official page of Festival do Jãpao. *Historia do Festival do Japao*. Retrieved on June 8th 2014 from <http://www.festivaldojapao.com/tema2014/historico/>

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2013 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | Technology and Modernity |
| 2014 | Centro de Exposições Imigrantes | The Origin of Happiness |

*Source: Festival do Japão*¹³

Since 2005, each annual Festival has been based around a theme. In 2008, the Festival theme was chosen to celebrate the centenary of Japanese immigration to Brazil, and in 2010 the Festival theme related to, the art of the different Japanese provinces, setting a new attendance record. In 2012, celebrating 15 years of Festival of Japan, the event was based around the theme ``Sustainability and the Future of Humanity``. In 2013, the theme was ``Technology and Modernity``.¹⁴

With each year, the organizers try to introduce different activities, news, gastronomic curiosities, technology and health tips and wellness into the Festival program. Several organizations and public and private institutions in Brazil and Japan participate in the Festival, allowing the integration and exchange of information. Meanwhile, the Federation of Provinces of Japan in Brazil - KENREN, which takes the lead in directing and organizing the event, keeps the original spirit behind the creation of the Festival alive: the dissemination of culture and Japanese traditions and supporting charities, whilst ensuring that the not for profit character of event is retained.

¹³ Official page of Festival do Jãpao. *Historia do Festival do Japao*. Retrieved on June 8th 2014 from <http://www.festivaldojapao.com/tema2014/historico/>

¹⁴ Ibid

The Festival of Japan, by its very existence, provides an opportunity to the Japanese companies to be informed about Brazilian people's interest in Japanese products and helps to convince Japanese companies about the benefits of investing in Brazil to be able to fulfill Brazilian consumer's demands. Particular examples of this at the Festival, include exhibitions where Japanese foods, Japanese traditional ornaments, Japanese electronics products, etc, are presented and available for Festival visitors to purchase.

In the last Festival of Japan, even Japanese cars were on the exhibition, and the high level of Brazilian consumer demands is evident from the number of Japanese products that were sold. By supporting the Festival of Japan, the Brazilian government actively contributes in one way to the aim of exchanging information and promoting mutual understanding. By doing so, Brazil helps to serve its own national interest.

Through the different themes of the Festival every year, the Festival allows Brazilians to gain a better understanding about Japanese culture, as well as becoming more aware of and attracted to Japanese culture and products. The level of interest in Brazil in Japanese culture and products can be seen from the number of the visitors to and volunteers for the festival, which have continued to increase every year. In the most recent year 2015, the number of visitors over the whole of the three day festival reached 200.000 people.¹⁵ The event aims to promote and preserve Japanese culture and traditions, and also to assist related organizations and service related projects.

¹⁵ Hijika Okawa, *Kanazawa Japão: Ishikawa no 18º Festival do Japão em São Paulo*, Retrived on October 11th 2015 from <http://www.kanazawa.net.br/?p=376>

In the context of this situation, Brazilian government, by maintaining the Festival of Japan, is able to find a way to open young Japanese - Brazilian people's minds about working for Japanese companies in Brazil. Because the main problem in this case arises from cultural differences, the participation of Brazilian people in various activities at the Festival of Japan provides a way for young Japanese - Brazilian to see how Brazilian people can now be accepting of the Japanese culture.

Additionally, the Japanese education foreign ministry also promotes a scholarship program during the Festival in order to attract and interest more Brazilian students who are willing to study in Japan. In turn, Brazilians studying in Japan provides another way in which Brazilian people can promote their culture in Japan, thus allowing Brazil to exercise a form of cultural diplomacy. Subsequently Japanese people can then develop a better understanding of Brazilian culture that in turn will make Japanese people more willing to work with Brazilian in Brazil.

Conclusion

One of the most important objectives of the Alliance for the 21st Century strategy is to support the growth and development of mutual understanding and information between Japan and Brazil. It is considered that these gaps in knowledge between two countries, which have contributed to persistent strains in their relationship, need to be closed if the two nations are to succeed in developing their economic partnership. Another way of creating mutual understanding is by promoting culture exchanges between the two countries. The

Festival of Japan is now supported by Brazilian government as a way to serve Brazil's national interest in relation to their bilateral and economic relationship with Japan. Brazil and Japan have together accomplished one of the most efficient strategic alliances in the world, one which has served as an example to many other countries. The Brazilian government's support for the Festival of Japan represents the use of Brazil cultural diplomacy, as a form of Brazilian soft power, in order to achieve their goal of strengthening their bilateral relations with Japan as well as embracing and fostering Brazil's economic interests with Japan as well. The active participation of Brazilians and the number of visitors that Festival attracts demonstrate how Brazilians respond positively towards Japanese culture. The different themes of the Festival of Japan and the participations of Japanese companies in various exhibits at the festival also show how the festival contributes to encouraging commercial and economic activity.

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