

Christmas in Japan: Globalization Versus Localization

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Products and services promoted on a global scale raise issues of globalism that are more superficial than the issues raised by the globalization of world holidays. It is one thing to have an Ikea and a KFC in the city, and conceivably quite another thing to have Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Halloween. Holidays like these have more complex cultural ideologies behind them. They threaten to displace traditional local holidays. And they offer a significant context in which to examine the interplay of global and local forces in the contemporary marketplace. We ask to what degree Christmas in Japan represents Western cultural imperialism, global homogenization, and a Westernization of Japan, versus local cultural adaptation, hybridization, and appropriation.

Keywords: Christmas; Japan; Globalization; Gift-Giving; Holidays; Westernization; Videography

The accompanying video examines what has been described as the first global consumption holiday: Christmas (Miller 1993). It shows that Christmas has been adopted in Japan in a big way, even though less than 1% of Japan is Christian. Although a small number of Christian churches in Japan have attempted to preserve religious aspects of the holiday, it is overwhelmingly a secular celebration with no religious meaning. Christmas celebrations elsewhere in the world have also become quite secular, but in the case of Japan, there has never been a strong Christian component to Christmas. The Christian basis for the holiday does not even enter the consciousness of most Japanese celebrating Christmas. Instead, there is an abundance of secular Christmas icons, including Santa Claus with sleigh and reindeer, snowmen, Christmas gifts, department store Christmas window displays, Christmas trees, interior and exterior Christmas lights and decorations (some private homes shown in the video have lighting

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displays that cost as much as US\$50,000), and Christmas music. In this sense it would appear that the Japanese Christmas is a good example of globalization. As with the spread of Christmas to other non-Christian countries like China and India, commercialization is its key mode of entry. As the manager of the Osaka Ritz Carlton Hotel observed, Christmas spectacle prompts consumers to feel like spending more freely. This adoption of the global commercial consumer Christmas in Japan has also been aided by a number of multinational companies, media, and brands, including Universal Studios-Japan, Disney, the Muppets, Coca Cola, Visa, Hyatt Regency, KFC, McDonald's, *Vogue*, Martha Stewart, and many others. Superficially, Christmas in Japan might be taken as an example of Western cultural imperialism.

However, our study reveals a number of aspects to the Japanese Christmas celebration that are not shared globally, even though some of them are presented as representations of Christmas in specific Western places. One example shown in the video is a multiple wedding hosted by a singing African-American "minister" under a giant Christmas tree. Another is Hankyu department store's Italian Christmas tree decorated with women's red underwear (it is considered lucky to wear red underwear at New Year's in Italy, but not to decorate a tree in this manner). Another Japanese adaptation of Christmas traditions is a long-standing tradition of fancy and expensive Christmas cakes. This is virtually the only food associated with Christmas in Japan. We also encountered a giant Christmas tree in the Japan Rail Kyoto train station decorated with the Japanese superhero Astro Boy. Christmas cards in Japan feature *kawaii* (cute) Japanese cartoon characters (see Kinsella 1995; Moeran and Skov 1993; Richie 2003). Also unlike Western Christmas, there are multiple "real" Santa Clauses in Japan, including those from Finland and Norway. Another distinctly non-Western aspect of the Japanese Christmas is the phenomenon of young couples exchanging expensive Christmas gifts and staying in an expensive hotel (see Morean and Skov 1993; Rupp 2003). Those who book too late to get into the better hotels, can be found queuing up at by-the-hour "love hotels" on Christmas Eve. These examples suggest creolized or hybridized adaptations of Christmas in Japan. Such adaptations help incorporate Christmas into Japanese culture. Such appropriations of the global seem to be characteristic of Japan (Clammer 1997; Hendry 2000; Raz 1999; Tobin 1992).

We also find that Christmas is partitioned in time and space in Japan. Spatial exclusions occur not only in obvious places such as Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, and the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, but also not evident in less obvious places like Japanese restaurants, traditional tatami mat homes, Japanese gardens, and Sumo wrestling arenas. By partitioning Christmas geographically it is kept foreign, exotic, and separate from what is regarded as truly Japanese. While the adaptations discussed above help make Christmas more accessible in Japan, such partitioning helps keep the exotic exotic, as Mary Yoko Brannen also found to be the case in Tokyo Disneyland (Brannen 1992). Christmas is also partitioned in time in Japan. At midnight on Christmas Day (December 25) Christmas decorations are removed from homes, stores, streets, and offices in order to prepare for New Year decorations and celebrations (see also Rupp 2003).

Not only are the Christmas elements introduced in Japan from various countries not mixed together, each country's Christmas culture is introduced like each country's

pavilion at a World's Fair. During the Christmas season, people consume each country's Christmas as if they were at the World's Fair roaming from one pavilion to another. In New Umeda City, a German Christmas Market was opened. A Norwegian Santa Claus came to MYCAL Ibaraki department store. At the Imperial Hotel in Osaka, people took pictures with a Finnish Santa Claus. Because there is no interaction between the stories, each is consumed independently without any consistency. Similarly to the way new attractions are added at Disneyland, each year more countries' Christmas stories are introduced.

As Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) argue, all tradition is invented. Buddhism traveled from India to China to Korea to Japan. The Japanese tea ceremony and *kanji* writing system came from China. And Japanese foreign trade was forced on Japan by the "black ships" of US Commodore Perry in 1853. Unlike some of these other globalizations, Christmas in Japan has been helped by global media and global brands as well as local efforts to profit from the holiday. But in contrast to the hybridization of European Christmas traditions in the US during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Japan has kept Christmas at arm's length so that it continues to be perceived as fanciful and foreign. Partitioning of Christmas in time and space, helps keep it something that can be regarded as *gaijin* or foreign. The hybrid adaptations like the Astro Boy Christmas tree star, Christmas weddings, and *kawaii* Christmas cards have not done away with Western Christmas iconography nor have they made Christmas in Japan uniquely Japanese.

The video also includes a discussion of how Christmas is used to provide both a consumption holiday and a welcome relief from more hierarchical and obligatory traditional holiday celebrations in Japan, such as the gift giving that occurs at the O-seibo holiday that occurs at about the same time of year. Here too there is a partitioning of the Japanese holiday gift merchandise from the Western Christmas gift merchandise. They are found on different parts of department stores in Japan, involve different types of merchandise (e.g., fruits, beer, and saki for O-seibo versus wines, Christmas cakes, and jewelry for Christmas), and are given with different motivations (i.e., freely offered Christmas gifts to friends and loved ones versus obligatory O-seibo gifts to employers and business partners).

There is also a unique fantasy element to the Japanese Christmas, one that is also seen in Japanese anime, manga, films, and literature. Christmas fits well with Japanese gift-giving and photography predilections as well. At a mile-long "Italian" Luminaria light display in Kobe we observed a wave of hundreds of thousands of people, clicking pictures with the cameras attached to their cell phones. We also observed picture-taking opportunities with the Norwegian Santa Claus who appeared at MYCAL Ibaraki department store in Kyoto, the breakfast event with Santa Claus at The Ritz Carlton Osaka, and the Santa Claus in the window display of the Hankyu department store in Osaka.

In order to give a better feel for our data, Appendices 1 and 2 present extended excerpts from two of our interviews. The first is by a Presbyterian minister in Osaka and the second is by the head of Universal Studios Japan. Together they provide insight into the role of cultural intermediaries in presenting Christmas in Japan.

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Appendix 1: Interview with Pastor Fujita, December 2003

- Q: Can you tell how you explain to children what Christmas is?
- A: They have already known what Christmas is from their childhood. At church, I tell them that Christmas is the date Jesus Christ was born, thus we celebrate his birth.
- Q: I see.
- A: I tell them that Christmas at church is different from what you have in mind about Christmas. It is something different here. I think it is the way I tell them here.
- Q: Where and what do you tell them?
- A: We have small prayer during daily childcare. The children turn a piece [window] of the advent calendar every day and put up a Christmas decoration. During the period, the teacher tells them the story of Christmas. We also have Sunday School and teach them stories in the Bible. During the period too the teacher tells them the Christmas stories.
- Q: When you tell the children stories based on the Bible, do you sometimes receive questions about who Santa Claus is? In other words, how do you explain the relationship between Jesus Christ and Santa Claus?
- A: The question has not been asked yet.
- Q: Then how would you answer when being asked the question?
- A: It is a difficult question. I would say, Santa Claus was one of the Saints, who did good things for the poor and youth. St Nicholas is the name of the Saint. The Santa Claus story started there.
- Q: It is difficult for children to understand.
- A: It is. I think I will explain to children using gift as a key word. Christmas is the day God gave us his most precious gift, Jesus Christ. He gave us the gift. Thus, on Christmas day, you should not only receive gifts but also give a present to your friends and those who are suffered. Santa Claus is the model of the gift bringer.

- Q: He is a model.
- A: That is the point. I would be glad if I can express to the children through the Santa story the feeling the gift giver holds and the feeling of caring about others. By the way, Santa Claus visits our church on the celebration day.
- Q: I know. One of the children told me.
- A: Did he?
- Q: He told me that Santa was 23 years old and came here riding on a broom.
- A: Is it so? I see, I see.
- Q: The children gave him a letter.
- A: Right. They wrote to Santa Claus.
- Q: Did they write what they wanted?
- A: Maybe. Or they asked Santa to come back again next year.
- Q: A request.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Children learned here. At the same time, they also have opportunities to visit places such as Universal Studios, Japan where religious aspects are completely removed. How do you consider this way of celebrating without religious color?
- A: Well, Christmas was, as the very first Christmas shows, celebrated by a couple of people in the poor barn. It was totally different from gorgeous Christmas gifts, Christmas feast and brilliant illumination. It had a message that God stays by us even when we are lonely, suffering, and feeling ourselves weak. I like to hear Christmas carols all over the place. However, I am concerned that the Japanese are departing from the Christmas spirit. Christmas still has an important message. It is the spirit that when we receive something precious, we share it with others. Christmas in Japan seems as product-centered. I then like to teach children the other side of Christmas. It does not necessarily mean I do not like Universal Studio Japan Christmas though.
- Q: You mean you are not upset.
- A: I do not hate them at all. If I have a chance, I would love to see them.
- Q: Have you ever been there? Or do you just see them on ad posters?
- A: I have never been there. How do you like it there?
- Q: Have you ever been to the Luminaria?
- A: I did.
- Q: You just mentioned about carols. Do you play Christmas carols to children?
- A: We play Christmas songs for small children. Children also listen to the Christmas hymns. For December 21st they are now preparing for the advent play. Consequently they hear Christmas hymns.
- Q: As children songs, what kinds of songs are they?
- A: Well, ♪ Stars twinkle ♪ There are also children's hymns. There are several hymns children can sing and enjoy. I cannot remember the songs right now though.
- Q: Is there anything else which are not related to hymns?
- A: Well, they sing "*Hiragi Kazaro*" and "Jingle Bells."
- Q: Do they sing them?
- A: Yes, they love to.
- Q: The teacher plays a piano?
- A: Yes they sing along to the piano. At the Christmas celebration party we had last week and the week before, they sang "Jingle Bells" and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."
- Q: What do you do for Christmas celebration party?
- A: At Part One, we had a service using an OHP [LCD projector] and projector.
- Q: Do you have the service downstairs?
- A: Yes, downstairs.
- Q: It is where you put the clothes for the advent play?

A: Right. I show the Christmas story using the OHP and read the Bible, and the children sung hymns. The teachers pray. This is the Part One. The eldest grade pupils, since they will have the big stage of the advent play, do not have anything then. For the middle grade and youngest grade, they show something then. For example, the middle grade pupils play musical instruments. The youngest play the show of "Big Graves." Later, children and their mothers play several games.

Q: Do you have a meal or tea?

A: Yes. The children and mothers exchange gifts. Mothers get together and decide what to give for children. It is a secret. Children discuss what to give to their mothers in class. They then make candles and make Christmas decorations or something their mothers prepare. The teacher wraps the gift neatly. On the celebration day, the children and their mothers stand face to face and exchange gifts.

Q: It is wonderful. Are the gifts exchanged between a child and his/her mother?

A: Yes. Then, they have a small meal such as sandwiches or rice ball box. They also have a Christmas cake; Santa is put on top.

Q: A piece of cake for each person.

A: Right. They had them together.

Q: Any beverages?

A: Children have tea since they have the Japanese meal box.

Q: You mean green tea?

A: Yes. Children have rice ball meal box (bento). They prefer a rice ball to sandwiches.

Q: Interesting.

A: The parents have sandwiches and British tea.

Q: I see. Do children drink green tea along with the Christmas cake?

A: Yes they do.

Q: Are they served at once?

A: Yes. There are big pitchers and they pour tea.

Q: What time does the party start and end?

A: It begins at 10:00 and finishes around 1:30.

Q: Does each grade have a party at different places or do they get together?

A: One party for each grade. Therefore there are three parties on different dates.

Q: I see. It means that the show of the middle grade was only performed for the middle grade children.

A: That is right. Sometimes children have chance to see the shows of other grade children when they are practicing.

Q: When do you start Christmas preparations including Christmas songs or practicing plays?

A: We start around middle of November.

Q: It means you spend over one month for Christmas.

A: We also do the daily operations. We spend some time for making gifts or preparing for the play during the daily routines.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: 20 for the 3-year-old grade. 27 for the middle grade. 28 for the eldest.

Q: Do you have a several classes for each grade?

A: Only the youngest grade, they are divided into two groups, 10 each.

Q: Do teachers care for a certain grade as a classroom teacher?

A: Yes.

Q: I suppose the parents are not necessarily Christian. How are the ratio of Christian and non-Christian?

A: Almost none of them are Christians.

Q: I see.

A: I would say two or three families are Christian here.

- Q: I see.
A: After all because Christian population is less than 1%.
Q: I see. Which denomination is your church?
A: We belong to the Japanese Christianity Church. It is a Presbyterian Church.
Q: Would you say that again? Pre-
A: Presbyterian Church.
Q: Presbyterian.
A: Yes, Presbyterian Church. There are PCA or PCUSA churches in the US. It is a church that came from the US.
Q: Do you know the ratio of the Presbyterian Church members?
A: There are about 140 churches of the Japan Christianity Churches in Japan. There are about 5,000 members.
Q: In total.
A: Yes, in total. I cannot calculate but it must be a very small percentage.
Q: If you would like to know all of the 5,000 members, it can be possible.
A: Yes, these are small numbers.
Q: It is just like the student numbers of a public high school.
A: Or a community college.
Q: Right.
A: Right.
Q: When I asked the children what they have for Christmas dinner, they only answered cake. What do you think they have at home?
A: Perhaps unlike America and Europe, they do not have turkey and fruitcake. I mean the traditional feast. The Japanese families certainly eat Christmas decoration cakes. However, I think they eat McDonald's or KFC or the children's favorite dishes. It is why the meals vary depending on family.
Q: It means that it is hard to nominate one dish as a typical Christmas feast. Cake is the typical though.
A: They cannot miss cakes. However, there are not typical dishes for Christmas in Japan. Don't you think so too?
Q: Yes. When I asked the children if they have chicken, they say NO.
A: It can be sushi. It can be something else. I think for the Japanese families, the Christmas feast will be the family members' favorite dishes.

Appendix 2: Interview with CEO of Universal Studios, Japan (USJ), December 2003

- Q: Are there any devices or ideas which improve the quality of Christmas [here]?
A: Well, first of all, there is no religious background in Japan, thus it becomes a point to do gorgeous decorations. In other words, it would be Christmas trees and fir trees in many places. Basically such decorations are the main work for us.
Q: The color of Christmas would be ...
A: The color obviously consists of red, white, and a little green.
Q: Do you have any USJ colors?
A: They are blue and white.
Q: How do you deal with Christmas color, being consistent to the USJ color?
A: There would be a situation that we use them together.
Q: You mean you do not hide the USJ color.
A: No, we do not.
Q: Is there anything else except the trees and fir trees that you mentioned?

- A: I would say music is crucial. We play music of original arrangements all through the Christmas season studio-wide. We though do not play Christmas songs in the Jurassic Park area and Joe's area since they are more thematic.
- Q: Do you continuously play the music we heard at the entrance? You also play different music inside the park.
- A: Yes, there are some around 10 pieces in the patterns.
- Q: Are they all USJ original music?
- A: They are original arrangements but not original tunes. They are music from the USA. We arrange and play them.
- Q: Do you know the titles of 10 pieces?
- A: No, I do not since the Entertainment Department does the job.
- Q: Don't you think that lately in Japan "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" is played many places?
- A: Well, I do not know ... Even if so, I doubt it is a USJ effect. Yes, people play "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" as well as "White Christmas" lately.
- Q: You mentioned "White Christmas" as your personal impression or as common knowledge?
- A: It is my personal opinion.
- Q: Do you use "White Christmas" because of its lyrics? I mean, Irving Berlin felt lonely being away from his family at Christmas time and wrote this song. In this sense, the song has more family gathering taste.
- A: No, we do not consider the text or the background of the song.
- Q: Then, you choose the songs based on the image or melody.
- A: You are right.
- Q: Who selects music?
- A: The American staff does.
- Q: Really? In the US?
- A: Yes.
- Q: They choose them there.
- A: The same music is played in Florida as well.
- Q: I see. We just saw the *Sesame Street Show*. The singers sung Christmas songs in Japanese. On the contrary, the choir sung in English. Does your department decide how the combination of Japanese and English should be?
- A: No. The Entertainment Department develops shows. My department asks them to make the show just Christmassy as our request. We also order them to make the Sesame Street characters get involved in the show and make them to be seen as attractive. First we order, then the Entertainment Department develops the show, finally our department uses it for Marketing strategy and publicity.
- Q: You mean that, first, your department has abstract concepts. Then the Entertainment Department embodies them, and your department again takes them back.
- A: You are right. Our department checks dialogs when the Entertainment Department is making the scenario. We however leave them details of dances and musical selections [to them].
- Q: Does the Entertainment Department hire the performers, conducting job interviews?
- A: You mean the entertainers?
- Q: Yes.
- A: Yes, it does.
- Q: I heard that the job interview is conducted in the US though.
- A: Well, our Entertainment Department staff goes to the US and Australia and conducts auditions there.
- Q: Do you mean the American staff in the US does not have right to decide?
- A: You are right.

- Q: The Japanese staff chooses and hires the entertainers who fit the Japanese tastes?
A: Right.
- Q: Is there anything in particular? What kind of entertainers are popular in Japan?
A: The important point is whether or not the foreign performer is easy to get close to for the Japanese. The American Entertainment Department director and the Japanese staff go to the US or Australia and conduct auditions. The American director checks the performer's talent. The Japanese staff checks the familiarity of the performer.
- Q: Who are the target customers for *Sesame Street Show*?
A: Well, kids and family are our target.
- Q: How is it different from the normal customers?
A: On weekdays, there are fewer children. Even so, the Japanese young women are interested in watching the TV characters performing in the show. They have an impression of *kawaii* or cute. Thus, even if the script does not fit to the real customers, it is fine, as long as the customers are satisfied with the characters' motions, songs, and dance.
- Q: I see. The show had a story and it was like a musical.
A: The truth is that the Sesame Street Company gave us orders for the background story. For example, Cookie Monster loves the letter of W, which is less known by the Japanese. The company asked us to use the story like that. We will include the story as our future theme.
- Q: It must be a concern of yours because you receive many requests from various places. Can you explain a little bit about the show we are watching now.
A: In the middle of the park, there is a lagoon. There are three large barges as stages.
- Q: Verges?
A: Barges are the ship shape stages.
- Q: How do you spell the term B, E, R, G, E?
A: I do not really know. On that barge ...
- Q: They are floating.
A: Yes, they are floating.
- Q: They are floating.
A: They are floating. Since it is heavy, it is almost touching the bottom of the lake. They also have electric screws to move around.
- Q: I see.
A: We do not move it by using the screws. Before starting the show, we move it from the storage.
- Q: How large is it in diameter?
A: Well, it is around 7 meters by 5 meters.
- Q: It is not big and rectangle.
(a voice of a woman) The spelling is B, A, R, G, E.
- Q: Oh, it is BARGE. Thank you.
A: Thus on the barge, there are dancers.
- Q: On three barges.
A: Yes. The dancers come out and dance. The Sesame Street characters join there too.
- Q: The Sesame Street characters, again.
A: They dance with various Christmas songs. There are also pyros.
- Q: Excuse me?
A: Pyros.
- Q: Did you say pyros?
A: We call gunpowder, pyro.
- Q: How do you spell it?
A: P, Y, R, O.
- Q: P, Y, R, O, PYRO.
(Russ Belk) PYRO

- A: Then ...
- Q: Pyro are fired.
- A: Yes, fireworks.
- Q: It means that this show is not a musical like the show we just watched.
- A: You are right. There are about 6 to 7 Christmas songs. The dancers dance along to them. There is also illumination, lighting, and pyro that come together.
- Q: Does the Entertainment Department select the songs?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Are the songs English or Japanese?
- A: They are English songs.
- Q: They are English. If the show is for the children, don't you use the Japanese songs?
- A: Well. The music is one of the backgrounds. We do not try explaining the meanings of the songs to the children.
- Q: I see. Who are the target customers of the show?
- A: Do you mean the Christmas show?
- Q: The show of the lagoon.
- A: The show is for all. I would say that the adults can enjoy it more than the children.
- Q: The actual audiences are older.
- A: Yes. Those who are 18 year old to the 30s can enjoy it.
- Q: How do you call such customers?
- A: Well, we call them F ONE and F TWO who are 18 to 34 years old female.
- Q: Does F stand for female? One and Two.
- A: Yes.
- Q: F1 means single women and F2 means couples?
- A: No. F1 is those between 18 to 25 years old.
- Q: F2 is those between 26 to 34 years old. The target of the previous show was Kids and Family.
- A: Yes.
- Q: It means when the customers in F1 and F2 are done with the show, they will be the parents of Kids and Family.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Is Santa Claus in the show the same person on the advertising poster?
- A: Well ... honestly speaking ...
- Q: Are there many Santa Claus?
- A: Yes. The truth is there are a several Santas. They work under the shift schedule.
- Q: Can you explain what is the event of Santa like?
- A: Santa is sitting on the chair. The guests stand in line. They each have their picture taken with Santa.
- Q: Do the guests talk to him?
- A: No. Since Santa is *gaijin* [foreign], there are few conversation with the guests.
- Q: Can the performers talk with the guests?
- A: Yes. However, there is a limitation. They only give greetings.
- Q: In English.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Does Santa speak Japanese?
- A: They don't.
- Q: Is it forbidden?
- A: It is not prohibited. They simply cannot.
- Q: I see.
- A: It is because we switch the performers after one year passes.
- Q: How come? It is because of the working visa?
- A: No. We like the performers keep the feeling of freshness.

- Q: Prevent [it from] getting dull.
- A: Yes. The performers can earn more money compared with money they make in their own countries. We do not want them to be getting used to it.
- Q: You replace the performers. Do you sometimes replace the performers in the middle of the contract term?
- A: Yes, only when some problems occur.
- Q: The guests only have their picture taken with Santa. The children sit on Santa's lap and does he ask for the children's request ever?
- A: No, he does not do it.
- Q: Is it because it takes too much time?
- A: Time is a matter. Language difference is a matter. Responsibility is a matter too.
- Q: Can you tell me what Santa is like?
- A: He is general Santa Claus.
- Q: Is he old?
- A: Comparatively, yes. They are not like in their 70s or 80s. I would say in their 50s.
- Q: Are they hired only for the season?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Are they from the USA?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Are the children pleased?
- A: Yes. They see Santa in town. But USJ Santa is a foreigner with a thick shape.
- Q: He has a unique appearance compared with fake Santa in town.
- A: Yes, the children are pleased with him.
- Q: I saw in the poster that Santa wears costumes, beard, and glasses. Does the entertainment section prepare them?
- A: Yes. You will see him in the lagoon show.
- Q: I see. Does he sing a song?
- A: He does not. Instead, he rides on the sleigh and goes around the lagoon.
- Q: What draws the sleigh?
- A: There is a sled on a boat.
- Q: Are there any reindeers?
- A: There are reindeers but fake ones.
- Q: I see. Can you tell me how many guests visit during the Christmas season?
- A: There are many. From November 7 to December 25, there are about 1,800,000 people.
- Q: I see. Last year there came around 7,400,000 people in one year.
- A: It was around 7,500,000.
- Q: 1,800,000 means it is one-seventh or one-sixth of total guests number of the year.
- A: This year, the number increased and there came 9,000,000 already.
- Q: In one year.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Still, even though Christmas season is not a break like summer break, there come that numbers of guests.
- A: Yes, Christmas is a good opportunity.
- Q: Do you have any other events equal to Christmas?
- A: There is a Halloween event done in September to October.
- Q: Halloween. Since the Halloween image is scarier, the targets would be F1 and F2?
- A: Yes. F1 and F2 are sure. Moreover, since USJ is a theme park for all targets, at the Snoopy area, we have Halloween attractions for children. It is about 20% of total Halloween events though.
- Q: In terms of physical scale?
- A: You are right. Also including costs. The other 80% of events are for high teens and those in their 20s.

- Q: Do you use any specific characters instead of Snoopy?
A: Well, this year we use *Beetlejuice*.
Q: How about last year?
A: We used *The Mummy*, the movie last year.
Q: Is it a mummy?
A: Yes.
Q: Would you say that you have enough characters who fit to Halloween?
A: Well, since Universal has classic monsters, such as Dracula, Wolfman, Frankenstein, we can use them.
Q: I see. Do you think Halloween will be spread in Japan?
A: Yes, it has already spread.
Q: You mean not only in your Park, but in Japanese culture?
A: Yes. Commercially, companies use Halloween too. For example, SONY Plaza sells Halloween related products. Other confectionery manufacturers also sell pumpkin desserts. When the market is growing the culture is settled as well.
Q: How do you think about the Halloween color for Japanese people?
A: Well ...
Q: The colors are not familiar to the Japanese people. Black and orange combination as well as each color, respectively.
A: The colors of the US pumpkin and the Japanese pumpkin are also different.
Q: Right. The US pumpkin is orange. The Japanese pumpkin is green.
A: It is why we put pumpkin lanterns all over the place in our Park.
Q: When somebody asks me what Halloween is, I answer it is like the Japanese Bon holiday.
A: Our recognition is festival. Carnival or Fair. It is the day that both children and adults can have fun party.
Q: Speaking of Christmas again, you do not put Cross at all, do you?
A: Never.
Q: Neither Jesus Christ.
A: Not at all.
Q: Is that the same in the US Universal Studio too?
A: Right.
Q: I see.
A: We like to express and show the US Christmas image to the Japanese guests. However, as I said before, since the Japanese do not have a Christmas background as the US people do; all we can do is to show the Christmas image which the Japanese have already had as information. In other words, we express a Christmas image which the Japanese guests are pleased to see.
Q: Where do you find the Christmas image that the Japanese hold?
A: We learn from the knowledge each person has from his/her childhood. TV and movies ...
Q: Since you are also Japanese raised in Japan, you can subjectively and instantly tell which is Christmassy and which is not.
A: That is right. But the final decision is given by the American director of the Entertainment section. About Christmas decorations, the creative director visits us to see from the US. He checks every show and other designs.
Q: Do you sometimes fight with the American staff from the US?
A: Yes. It is because the American staff tries bringing in the religious motif. I try explaining to them that the Japanese cannot understand the religious meaning and suggest that they not express the religious flavor.
Q: They try bringing in the religious motif.
A: Yes. The Americans and the Japanese have totally different customs and ways of life. But the American staff wants to do events for their Independence Day. We explained

- them that the Japanese hardly know about the Revolutionary War. There are frequent arguments about things related to customs.
- Q: Are there any events that you at first hesitated about but finally you accepted?
- A: St Patrick's Day. I told them that the Japanese are not familiar to this kind of thing. However, since we have an Irish restaurant in the Park, we experimentally do a small campaign, such as serving green beer.
- Q: There must be some Japanese who are upset to see the Japanese getting rid of the religious meanings from Christmas. Especially the elder generation. How do you deal with them?
- A: Our park conducts research every day in order to find out the general recognition and perception about customs. We ask a several guests to answer a questionnaire. According to the results, we will know which is preferred, which is well known, which is interesting.
- Q: You mean in the park?
- A: Yes.
- Q: How about outside the park?
- A: No, we do not conduct research outside the park.
- Q: You don't. Don't you think that the guests are filtered? I mean that they are more open to the foreign customs than those who do not come and visit USJ. If it is true, you should ask questions to those who have a closed mind to the foreign consumer culture.
- A: We think that for the first step, we have to know what the guests think about our events. There are 10,000,000 people visiting to our Park in a year. It is one-twelfth of the Japanese population. It means that we can have large enough numbers for sampling. We do not regard it as limited data and information because it is obtained inside the Park.
- Q: Can you tell the percentage of the numbers of the repeaters? I mean the actual numbers of the visitors.
- A: The ratio of the repeaters changes every year. It is a rough estimate, but I would say 35% of the visitors are the repeaters.
- Q: When you say repeaters, it indicates the guests who come here only twice as well as the guests who come here 10 times or 20 times. Don't you think it is too rough a term?
- A: You are right. But Tokyo Disneyland counts the same way too.
- Q: For example, in my case, when friends of mine from different areas or foreign countries visit me, I would take them here. There are also those who are really fans of USJ and visit here frequently.
- A: As you point out, the mere repeaters and the real fan are different. It is why we sell the year-round pass. It is for the real fan. At the same time, we try to fulfill the needs of those who live near here and visit us twice or three times a year. When you say repeaters, it is no distinction between the real fan and mere visitors. But in our Marketing target strategy, we clearly divide them and develop different strategies.
- Q: How can you calculate 35% are the repeaters? How can you distinguish the fan and the mere frequent visitors? It must be hard to do it.
- A: You are right.
- Q: Are the Christmas events almost finished for the year?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Do you have any problems you need to solve for the next year?
- A: Yes. One theme is to increase the decoration volume. Also, for the next year, we have already decided that we use the Sesame Street characters as the main Christmas characters. At the shows this year, we saw the generation diversity in the audience. We should develop shows which can satisfy the wider targets in age.
- Q: Can you tell me why you use the Sesame Street characters instead of Snoopy?
- A: It is because Snoopy is the main character for Halloween.

Q: How much is the budget for decoration this year?

A: I am sorry. I cannot answer this question.

Q: The decoration itself and electricity costs must be huge.

A: Yes. Of course we spend much on electricity. But it costs more for operation and running costs every day.

Q: Operating costs.

A: Yes, operation costs are much more expensive.

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