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会見

INTERVIEW

Crowdfunding for Japanese shops

Interview with Susuru, Marutchi and Ginmaku Festival

Starting a new business is never easy. It is even harder if you are a young entrepreneur willing to try something new.

For the purpose of this article, we met four young entrepreneurs. They share a strong interest in Japanese specialties and culture and have chosen a crowdfunding-based business model. They also managed to keep very reasonable prices, but with no compromise on quality.

These young entrepreneurs include:

Lionel Coudray, Co-founder and Manager of Susuru, a Ramen bar in Geneva.

Tomoko Hirose and David Herel, founders and managers of Marutchi, a Japanese tea room located in Lausanne.

Mizuki Mazbara, Founder and Director of the Ginmaku Film Festival in Zurich.

Could you explain your project?

[LC] Susuru is a Ramen bar. We prepare the traditional Japanese noodle soup with local fresh ingredients.

[DH] Marutchi is a tea room focusing on Japanese tea only. We are mostly a take-away shop but also have some seats.

[MM] Ginmaku means "Silver Screen"; we are an annual Japanese film Festival. We screen



MARUTCHA, Rue de la Grotte 4, in Lausanne

movies that are rarely distributed outside of Japan.

How did you come up with this idea?

[LC] Visiting Asia, I enjoyed this other way to eat wheat. In Europe, it is mostly based on bread. In Asia, noodles are everywhere. In Japan, ramen is a very popular fast food meal. We wanted to keep the fast food aspect, which is very convenient for busy people, but offering something more healthy than the fast food we have here.

[DH] I always liked tea very much, but I really discovered what tea can be when it is properly prepared like it is in Asia. Here, unfortunately, tea is often cheap black tea burned by boiled water.

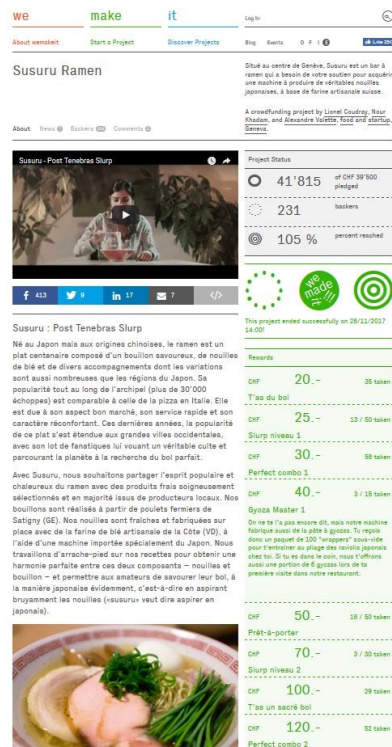
Desperate to find a place to drink proper tea, I decided to open one myself. I also wanted to keep the Asian way, meaning that the tea is good but also cheap. It is a very common beverage.

[MM] After the 2011 earthquake, I wanted to start a project based on my passion for the cinema and create a cultural bridge between Switzerland and Japan. In 2014, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship between the nations. It was the perfect opportunity to show the Swiss people some lesser-known aspects of modern Japan. I wanted this festival to be an annual event. Except for 2015 (because of a fire), we've held it every year.

会見

INTERVIEW

Crowdfunding for Japanese shops



Susuru on "We Make It". The crowdfunding service all of them used.

Why the crowdfunding?

[LC] On the suggestion of a Cantonal support agency, we tried crowdfunding. The main purpose was to acquire a noodle-making machine from Japan.

[TH] I had some experience in fundraising for NGOs from my professional background in Japan. So, after we unsuccessfully tried through conventional channels, I thought, 'why not try this other way?' To many people, tea is a niche market, and Japanese tea, a niche market inside a niche market. Fortunately, not everybody thinks so, because our founders are also our main customers.

[MM] I started by asking some Japanese companies in Switzerland, but they were unfortunately not interested in supporting cultural events. The cinema Houdini,

where we screen the movies, suggested crowdfunding as an alternative. I knew nothing about it, and today we just successfully ended our fourth edition by using this method. Having an annual crowdfunding campaign every year makes it easier in a way because people know you and help you to promote the event. It's helped us to increase the size of the event.

Is there a typical customer?

[LC] Not really; at lunch we have many businessmen and women, since Susuru is located in the bank district. We are happy to have all sorts of customers. They are simply looking for a fast, healthy and nutritious meal.

[DH] We have, of course, some Japanese people, but the Japanese community is too small to run a business only based on this. Most of our customers like tea or are curious about new things. Many of them are interested in the Japanese culture. This is also why we have to adapt to the taste of everyone.

[MM] I am very happy to say that there is no typical viewer in our

festival. We have people from all origins and ages.

What is your feeling so far?

[LC] It is great; we are sold out most of the time (the number of ramen bowls is limited to 70 per service). It is a lot of work of course, but our customers are happy. We manage to keep fast service, high quality and reasonable prices.

[DH] It has been very positive so far. We expected a slow start, like most of the shops, but because of the crowdfunding, we immediately had a lot of customers. We also enjoyed good press coverage. Now the challenge is to keep the interest high in the long term.

[MM] It has been a great experience. We reached a good size for an independent festival for this year's edition, with 1600 people. The support from our founders year after year is amazing. We can also count on the support of companies that are very appreciated by our viewers since they know how valuable their contribution is. We make sure to highlight companies' contributions as well.

JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL



May 23 - 27, 2018
Kino Houdini & Riffraff Zurich
ginmaku-festival.com

HOUDINI RIFFRAFF TOYOTA VOXTEL SJCC Japanese Language Studio

HELVETIA JAPAN FOUNDATION

The Ginmaku Festival will return next year for its 5th edition

Greater Nagoya at the EPHJ-EPMT-SMT: second year

For the second year, companies from the Greater Nagoya area attend to the EPHJ-EPMT-SMT under the scope of the Regional Industry Tie-up Program (RIT) and with the support of JETRO.

During these three days, the seven Japanese companies had a lot of visitors. But, quality is more important than quantity. As they told us, the discussions went deeply into details and the interest of their counterparts was great. People that visited the booth during the last edition came back with very precise questions, confirming the importance of regularly attending to show how serious you are about entering the Swiss market.

Hopefully, it will lead to more busi-

ness opportunities for both Swiss and Japanese companies.

This was the last year of this RIT program, but some of the partici-

pants expressed their interests in attending next year's edition by their own means.

行事

EVENT



The Greater Nagoya booth is very popular

Enhancing Measures to Attract Global Talent

The combined effect of an ageing society and economic recovery led Japan to a record low unemployment rate (2.5%). This good news also has some negative effects regarding the shortage of manpower. In order to answer this shortage, the government promotes three complementary solutions: better integration of women in the labour market, development of robotics and attracting foreign professionals. Regarding this last point, last year, the government introduced a "Green Card" for highly-skilled foreign professionals that should help them to stay in Japan.

According to the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry, Japan had

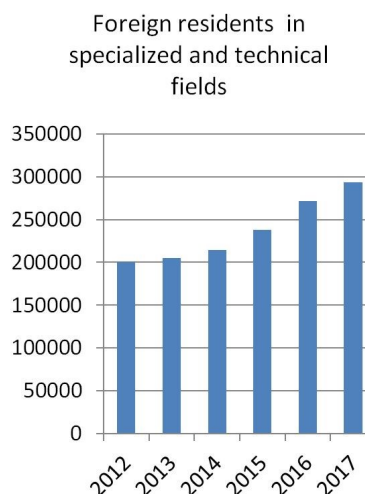
approximately 2.5 million foreign residents last year. Among them, more than 290,000 had status of residence in specialized and technical field. The "Green Card" offers them a permanent residency if they live in Japan for at least one year.

Prime Minister Abe insisted on the importance of highly qualified people to the Japanese economy; not only to answer the manpower shortage, but also to stimulate innovation by adding external insights. In addition to the Green Card, the government increased the number of services for foreign residents, like dedicated information and English speaking medical clinics. The government's welcoming

policy seems to be working, as the number of foreign residents in specialized and technical fields has increased by almost 50% in the past five years.

動向

SITUATION



Sources: Cabinet Office and METI

活動

ACTIVITY

Thank you and all the best!

JETRO Geneva will miss two key members of its team. Mr. Masashi Nakazono, Director General, and Ms. Masako Brichaux, Assistant Director and Accounting, are both leaving the office at the end of this month.

Mr. Nakazono has been Director General of the Geneva office for

three years. He will shortly return to the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry before assuming his new assignment in Vienna.

Ms. Brichaux is leaving for a well-deserved retirement. She worked for 32 years in JETRO Geneva. Her precious knowledge will be missed by the whole team. She will remain

very busy, dedicating more time to her passion for art and fashion.

The new Director General will be Mr. Takashi Wada, beginning on July 1st. We will introduce him more thoroughly once he's properly settled.



JETRO Geneva's team with JETRO's Chairman Hiroyuki Ishige.

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

*The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>*

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