Yamagata Kaku’s
Yamagata Online Matsuri
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Forte Hotels Taiwan’s standalone project, the Yamagata Kaku Spa & Hotel in Jiaoxi, Taiwan, is named after one of Japan’s most remote prefectures, Yamagata. Both destinations are known for agriculture, onsens, indigenous culture and natural beauty.

To market the Yamagata Kaku in Taiwan, we planned our own Yamagata Matsuri in Taiwan to promote both our hotel and our friendship with Yamagata prefecture. The brand story of Yamagata Kaku was developed to be a quiet, contemplative onsen resort that celebrated the cultural exchange of Yilan and Yamagata.

The Japanese prefecture is also famous for its annual Hanagasa Matsuri festival in August, which celebrates midsummer’s hard work with traditional dancing in colorful flowery costumes and hats.

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**Short Synopsis**

The Japanese prefecture is also famous for its annual Hanagasa Matsuri festival in August, which celebrates midsummer’s hard work with traditional dancing in colorful flowery costumes and hats.
The Yamagata Matsuri would differentiate our hotel in the competitive onsen town of Jiaoxi, by creating brand storytelling and media interest with cultural performances and international dialogue. In addition, the event also positioned our hotel as an inspirational point of connection between Taiwan and Japan, with potential to improve both our tourism economies and community engagement.

Our hotel located in Taiwan, conveniently located between South Asia and North Asia, would also build stronger market recognition by complementary promotion of Yamagata prefecture to the same target audience.
Target Markets

The target markets originally were set as East Asia outbound tourists, with emphasis on Japan, Korea, China, Hongkong and Singapore.

We target the community of medium-high income global travelers looking for a serene onsen experience, with interests in an outdoor lifestyle.

The domestic market became top priority as Covid’s limitation of overseas guests impacted the market for 2020-2022. Taiwan’s domestic market, unable to travel to top choice Japan, became Yamagata Kaku’s top market segment.
Evolution of Online Matsuri Programme

Strategy

The unconventional marketing strategy to differentiate our hotel with an annual event from another culture, needs to be taken in context of the cultural affinity between Japan and Taiwan.

Understanding the absurdity of promoting a Japanese local festival to a Japanese target audience or an East Asian market, our hotel brand may be misunderstood as a cultural appropriation exercise.

From the beginning, we address the cultural affinity between Japan and Taiwan, e.g. the post-colonial impact on identity and how it may affect tourism products in Taiwan.

Please understand there is more complexity than can be explained here, and let me lead you to consider the learning and creative aspects from this relationship: to how this matsuri represents an exciting continual dialogue as well.

The regional / indigenous knowledge and Yamagata’s community experience and rural tourism developments form dialogue and interaction with local Taiwan culture to clarify our hotel tourism product, with a strong Yilan community identity.
Evolution of Online Matsuri Programme

The first matsuri in 2020, coincided with a COVID regulation on gatherings, limiting our attendees to only 40+ VIP guests. Approximately 20 local Yilan dignitaries, including Yilan prefecture governor, and 10 Japanese business leaders, including Japan-Taiwan Office deputy chief joined in this social celebration.

The middle school indigenous dance troupe performed the Hanagasa traditional dance first, then juxtaposed it with a Taiwanese aboriginal dance following it. Official Yamagata tourism ambassadors and the local Yamagata people’s association chief and a few members also joined in the cultural exchange and danced with everyone else in our rooftop banquet room. (Please see link [1] for video record)

Due to stricter COVID restrictions, online matsuri in 2021, pivoted from original outdoor market plans to a fully virtual event. The virtual platform allowed for greater outreach, with 100 invited bloggers to the online event. Yamagata friends along with other invited Japanese guests in Japan attended and watched it live. The main audience was from Taiwan.
Evolution of Online Matsuri Programme

The first step was promoting a new visual identity with a popular Japanese illustrator, which created the special aboriginal and Hanagasa girl friendship motifs for the event. These designs, along with 100 gift sets including Yamagata snacks and sake, invited them to join our 1-hour online event. An early media release coincided with this step.

The run-up originally was going to include a special blogger-led Matcha Mountain climbing video and a new Imaten food truck media segment which was unfortunately delayed by the dual disruptions of a June typhoon and Covid-restriction construction delays.
Evolution of Online Matsuri Programme

The online event on August 6, 2021, began with a promotional video from Yamagata Prefecture.

The rundown of event elements follows included the below segments:

- Introduction of Yamagata Tourism Video
- Introduction of MC & Host
- Introduction of festival
- Sharing and introduction of KOL guests
- Taiko drum celebration
- Hanagasa dance celebration
- Special VIP guest introduction and Q&A of Takamiya Hotels in Yamagata
- Special guest well-wishes from Denroku foods, Hatsumago Sake, Yamagata People Association
- Introduction of Yamagata products
- Yamagata knowledge contest
- Ending cheer and appreciation to team and sponsors

Online Matsuri livestream video Link [2]
Promotional Elements / Distribution

Post online event, the media distribution as follow:

Taiwan Media

- Online Matsuri News release
  - 26 News

Blog Social Media

- Online Matsuri Blogger Sharing
  - 14 Facebook Posts
  - 14 Instagram feeds
Roles & Responsibilities of Persons Involved

Volia Wang
Role of project leader
Forte Hotels Taiwan

Ingrid Jiang
Event liaison

Shigeko Katayama
Japan relations

June
Event planner and media manager (2021)
Starfish Concept International
Results Generated

Hotel revenue comparison of 2019 to 2021

REMARKS
1. The COVID-19 outbreak in Taiwan started from February 2020
2. Hotel closed every Tuesday to Thursday for overall sterilization.
3. Hotel closed every Monday to Thursday for overall sterilization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Avg.RR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$2,326,602.06</td>
<td>$236.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$3,946,057.68</td>
<td>$226.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>$4,353,842.22</td>
<td>$236.57</td>
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</table>

Currency is USD
USD : NTD= 1 : 28.71
Results Generated

Social Media Following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>1386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>1486</td>
<td>1611</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>10287</td>
<td>14514</td>
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</table>
### Hotel social media comparison

#### Ranking in TripAdvisor 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel Name</th>
<th>TripAdvisor Rating</th>
<th>TripAdvisor Rank in Jiaoxi, Yilan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>山形閣Yamagataku Hotel &amp; Spa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>晶泉丰旅Wellspring by Silks</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>寒沐Mu Hotel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>長榮鳳凰Evergreen Resort Hotel</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>老爺Hotel Royal</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中天Hotel Valletta</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>川湯春天旗旗舰馆Chuang-Tang Spring Hotel Flagship</td>
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<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>船塚Maison de Chine Hotel</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>品文旅Hotel PIN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Best of the Best**

![Travellers’ Choice 2020-2021](image)
Results Generated

Hotel social media comparison

Ranking in TripAdvisor 2020

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TripAdvisor 分数

TripAdvisor礁溪91間飯店排名
Hotel social media comparison

Leading Hotels in Jiaoxi, Yilan
Hotel news media comparison

Taiwan media mention

Japan media mention in Yamagata

2020

2021

25

26

25

2020

2021
Our strong cultural relationship with Yamagata prefecture.

Strong Taiwan market presence in the young, affluent market in Taiwan, which is more resilient to covid impact on the lodging market.

Certain reservations must also be mentioned, the COVID situation adjusted our target audience from international to focus on domestic audience. But as we enter 2022, we are slowly pivoting back.

Yamagata Matsuri 2022 will be a love theme for Yamagata prefecture just as Japan inbound tourism is expected to return in August. With a positive outlook for 2023, we will return the theme back to Yilan and Jiaoxi, to celebrate Yamagata Matsuri 2023 love for Yilan.
Supporting Pictures / Videos Embedded or Linked

1- Earlier Matsuri 2020 video (https://youtu.be/_YVwDdWRjfo) [1]
3- Online Matsuri event photos
5- Imaten food truck photo link
6- Blogger sharing photos
7- News release photos