

Topic-Setting Program to Advance Cutting-Edge
Humanities and Social Sciences Research
(Area Cultivation)

Progress Report
(Summary of Final Report)

[What is Shikouhin? An interdisciplinal research and development of
literature database on Shikouhin]

Core-Researcher: MATSUBARA Toyohiko

Institution: Ritsumeikan University

Academic Unit: College of Gastronomy Management

Position: Professor

Research Period: FY 2017 – FY 2020

1. Basic information of research project

Research Area	The cultural and social role of SHIKOHIN	
Project Title	What is Shikouhin? An interdisciplinary research and development of literature database on Shikouhin	
Institution	Ritsumeikan University	
Core-Researcher (Name, Academic Unit & Position)	MATSUBARA Toyohiko, College of Gastronomy Management, Professor	
Project Period	FY 2017 – FY 2020	
Appropriations Plan (¥)	FY 2017	1,950,000 JPY
	FY 2018	5,200,000 JPY
	FY 2019	3,932,500 JPY
	FY 2020	2,080,000 JPY

2. Purpose of research

“Shikouhin” are commonly referred to as “a generic term for food and drink that satisfies individual preferences and gives pleasure to taste, smell, and vision”. However, its substance is very diverse in various parts of the world and in the transition of the times. For example, foods and drinks containing sweetness such as confectionery may also be included in Shikouhin in terms of giving pleasure to people, and for this reason, Shikouhin cannot be defined in general.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to clarify comprehensively and interdisciplinarily what Shikouhin are, regional deviations, and period changes from the three fields of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

First of all, from a humanities–scientific point of view, it was to consider what kind of Shikouhin including sugary food and drink in various regions of the world were, and what is a traditional Shikouhin of Japan from the viewpoint of cultural anthropology, folklore, geography, and history. Subsequently, from a social scientific point of view, we reviewed the concept of Shikouhin from an economic theoretical point of view and performed empirical analysis, and aimed to obtain knowledge on the current state and future development of the Shikouhin business.

In addition to these humanities and social science approaches, the custom of using Shikouhin, including sugary foods and drinks, was originally brought about by changes in the senses centered on taste and smell and curiosity about pharmacological effects, so from a natural scientific point of view, by using viewpoints and methods such as cognitive science and psychology, habits and addictions to Shikouhin (including the “addictive” effect), desires, A new taxonomy was constructed based on functionality.

Additionally, in order to organically link research between different fields, we aimed to construct an “academic literature database” on conventional Shikouhin research with the cooperation of researchers with knowledge of system engineering.

By visualizing how Shikouhin have been classified and what kind of research on Shikouhin has been conducted by taking these diverse approaches from various perspectives, it will be an important step in future Shikouhin research to establish basic materials for the development of new Shikouhin research.

3. Outline of research (Including study member)

In order to achieve the research objectives described above, it is important to build a system in which interdisciplinary research is conducted continuously. Therefore, three groups were organized for each area, and it was used as a base for promoting interdisciplinary research.

1) Food Culture Group:

Examination of world and regionality by collecting academic information on luxury products, diversity and change of categories of Shikouhin.

ASAKURA Toshio: Group Leader, Social Anthropological Studies

ARATA Mariko: Religious Anthropological Studies

YOTOVA Maria: Anthropological Studies of Food Companies

ARAKI Hitoshi: Geographical Studies

KIMURA Hiroki: Folklore Studies

MINAMI Naoto: Western Historical Studies

KAMATANI Kaoru: Japanese Historical Studies

ISHIDA Masayoshi: Italian food culture and Studies of Slow Food Movement

YASUI Daisuke: Sociological Studies

2) Food Management Group:

“Industrialization” of Shikouhin and their global spread, grasping the current state of Shikouhin business, analysis of consumer behavior.

IZAWA Yuji: Group Leader, Behavioral Economics Analysis

NIIYAMA Yoko: Food System

TANIGAKI Kazunori: International Trade

HAYAKAWA Takashi: Marketing Strategy

OZAWA Michinori: Regional Revitalizing Utilizing Shikouhin

TANAKA Hiroko: Business Strategy

HONDA Yutaka: Industrial Analysis

YOSHIDUMI Miki: Community Development and Education for SDGs

3) Food Technology Group:

A study on the relation between taste characteristics of foods such as taste and aroma and narcotics (dependent objects) and Shikouhin.

WADA Yuji: Group Leader, Cognitive scientific research on preferences and addictions

AMANO Koji: Relationship between living environment and Shikouhin

NONAKA Tomomi: Designing information databases

YASUI Chikako: Effects of Shikouhin on mind and body

KUNIEDA Satomi: Sensory Evaluation, Consumer Survey

The main initiatives carried out during the research period using this platform are as follows.

1. We conducted interdisciplinary research on what Shikouhin are in the following ways.

- 1) A research group was organized to present and discuss mainly researchers at the Faculty of Food Management. Since the members' specialized fields are diverse, we set a common goal of "databaseizing literature" to discuss what kind of research is being developed in each field and how knowledge and methodologies in different fields can be introduced, keeping in mind how to develop and develop new humanities and social science research.
- 2) In order to promote fusion of different fields, lectures and research meetings were held inviting external members such as the Association for Shikouhin culture, the Institute of Sake Culture, and faculty members of other universities. Researchers related to animal behavior psychology, consumer behavior, physiology, nutrition, liquor, and tobacco industry were invited to gather knowledge on pharmacological and psychological effects.
- 3) Visited and toured museums on Shikouhin such as Ajinomoto Center of Food Culture Library, and exchanged information for academic exchange.
- 4) Research surveys on Shikouhin were conducted in Japan and overseas.

2. Research was conducted by the following methods for constructing a database of academic literature related to Shikouhin.

- 1) In order to clearly how Shikouhin have been defined and classified by institutions with data on existing "food", such as Ajinomoto Center of Food Culture Library, the collection data was collected and entered.
- 2) The collection of literature on Shikouhin was investigated at Ritsumeikan University Library. In addition, the library materials on Shikouhin were obtained, and the database was enhanced.
- 3) In constructing a literature database, we examined how to construct a platform that mutually understands and complements differences in methodologies and values by field. However, as research activities progressed, we came to the recognition that it was difficult to clearly classify Shikouhin and other foods and beverages by taxonomy as substances, so we decided to put a hold on database and focus on collecting literature and information and data.
- 4) Since continuity is indispensable for the construction of a database, we examined the systemization of sustainable operation of the database at the Food Research Center.
- 5) In the process of constructing the database, we creating specific research themes related to luxury products not only with researchers but also with students. For example, we tried to consider problems related to students themselves, such as factors related to phenomena such as the recent preference for "sweet confectionery" linked to the de-taste of young people and diet-oriented in Japanese society.

In the final year of the project, two public academic symposiums were held to disseminate these results to the public, and the contents of the presentations at the Ritsumeikan University Research Group of Shikouhin, which had been held five times, were compiled into a booklet and published.

4. Research results and outcomes produced

Collection and analysis of historical documents on Shikouhin

In order to clarify what Shikouhin is and how it has changed over time, we collected and examined copies of old documents and microfilms related to food and Shikouhin from various regions.

In particular, from the study of food in the Edo period, using the keywords “omotenashi (hospitality)” and “gochisou (feast),” reveals that people in those days had a preference for food that could not be measured by taste alone, such as eating cranes for good luck. Therefore, by clarifying what people wanted from food and what they were trying to satisfy with food, it may be possible to clarify preferences across the time because this phenomenon reflects society.

Organizing research groups and symposiums

We established the “Ritsumeikan University Research Group of Shikouhin” in order to collect as much and deep knowledge as possible from various fields on tastes and preferences, and we held it five times. In addition, five public symposiums were held by inviting experts from domestic and overseas, and we tried to collect knowledge, disseminate results, and create networks.

Preparation of an academic literature database on Shikouhin

We collected academic literature data including general luxury goods such as alcoholic beverages, coffee, and tea, as well as confectionaries and Shikouhin that give a sense of psychological well-being such as beef in Japan. We collected more than 8,000 literature materials from the National Diet Library, Ajinomoto Food Culture Center’s “Food Library,” Cinii, and other sources, and entered detailed bibliographic information.

The relationship between Shikouhin and wellbeing

From the preliminary study for the database, we have come to the conclusion that it is difficult to clearly classify Shikouhin and general foods and beverages in terms of taxonomy as substances. Therefore, we decided to examine them from the aspect of “functions” that contribute to well-being.

In the symposium we held in our final year, it was suggested that the relevance to wellbeing may become an important factor in future research on Shikouhin.

Through these research activities, we were able to closely exchange information with leading researchers overseas, such as Professor Jacques Puisais (winemaking), a leading expert in taste education in France, Professor Charles Spence (psychophysics) at Oxford University in the UK, Professor Ken Albala (food history) at Pacific University in California, USA, and Professor Silke Bartsch (consumer education) at the Technical University of Berlin in Germany. Through these exchanges, we believe that we were able to make our country’s Shikouhin research efforts widely known to overseas researchers.

We have also been able to attract the interest of not only research institutes but also industries related to the food business dealing with Shikouhin. In the future, we plan to coordinate with industry-academia collaboration to expand our activities.

In addition, as mentioned above, we held a total of 10 research meetings and public symposiums to disseminate our results both domestic and overseas. Furthermore, in March 2021, we presented our research results based on our accumulated research activities on Shikouhin at an international symposium “Food and Agriculture Beyond the Pandemic” held under the results dissemination program based on a cooperative agreement with Northwestern University, and disseminated our research results overseas in both Japanese and English.

We believe that this project has achieved a certain level of success as an activity to form a comprehensive research base on Shikouhin. After this project is over, we will continue to carry on and develop our research activities at the Research Center for Gastronomic Arts and Sciences.

In particular, we will clarify regional deviations and changes in preferences over time, compile a database of inputted literature data, pursue the relationship between preferences and wellbeing, and hold public symposiums to constantly collect the latest knowledge and disseminate the results. We are planning to develop more interdisciplinary and leading research activities by taking advantage of the network among domestic and international researchers that we have built through this research period.

Our society is currently undergoing major changes, such as the changes in food and communication caused by the pandemic, and the state of food and wellbeing in the age with corona by IoT technology. We would like to examine the psychological and social implications of Shikouhin under these circumstances, based on the knowledge we have obtained so far.