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How Sushi went popular in Italy:  
the role of producers and consumers.

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*To my family*

## 要旨

本研究は、調査対象者の属性で自国の食文化が海外においてどのように普及しえるのかを明らかにすることを目的とする。現象として、イタリアにおける日本の鯔の普及を取り上げる。鯔は日本の「文化の象徴」の1つであると言える。鯔には長い歴史があり、日本の食習慣と深い関係がある。海外において鯔が大衆化したのは鯔職人と魚市場のグローバル化によって、消費者が容易に購入できるようになったからである。さらに、イタリアで普及している鯔の消費は鯔レストランのマーケティング戦略のみならず、漫画やアニメといった日本特有の「文化の象徴」も関係していると考えられる。

そこで、本稿はイタリアにおける鯔消費が、日本の文化、鯔職人、および消費者とどのように関係しているのかを明らかにする。これまでもすでに鯔の普及については研究が蓄積されてきているが(ベスター2000年)、多くの場合、北アメリカや北ヨーロッパといった限定された地域の現象を扱っていたため、本研究では南ヨーロッパのイタリアにおける鯔の普及を考察する。

第1章は本研究の構成、方法論、および背景と目的を説明する。一般的にグローバル化は経済と政府の影響を受けるが食品市場も例外ではない。食習慣、民族文化、および歴史とも深く関連する。そのため、食品の背景にある歴史が当該食品に特別な意味を与える。グローバル化の食品には、ピッツァのみならず鯔も含まれるのである。鯔はイタリアで日本食レストランのみならず伝統的イタリア料理レストランでも提供されており、比較的容易に食することが可能である。本研究はイタリアで鯔の消費がどのように広がっているのかという問題意識にこたえるために調査を実施した。生産者と鯔の消費者に対するインタビューから必要なデータを抜粋する。ベスター(2000年)とミリガン(2006年)にも同様の研究蓄積があるが、彼らの研究は北アメリカと北ヨーロッパを対象としたものであった。さらに、研究時期が10年前ごろであることから、より現代的なデータを用いた分析が必要である。

第2章ではイタリアで普及している鯔の消費と北アメリカと北ヨーロッパで普及した鯔の消費の相違点を明確にするため、鯔の歴史に関する過去のデータを収集し、現代、特に経済危機の社会との相違点を議論する。さらに、イタリアで鯔のレストランが開業した当初に鯔を食べたのはどのような消費者であったのかを明らかにする。

第3章では鮪のレストランの中でも異なるタイプの4店舗を選択して、各店の関係者を対象とした調査を実施する。調査対象者は、1)日本レストランの鮪職人、2)回転寿司の職人、3)イタリアンレストランのシェフ、および4)「ワック・スシ」チェーン・レストランの担当者である。インタビューを通じて、レストランの相違点のみならず、各々のレストランの競争戦略が明らかにされる。さらに、各レストランのターゲット顧客や消費者やニーズも議論する。生産者は鮪の普及のためにどのような役割を果たすことが必要であるのかも明らかにする。インタビューのために16個の質問が用意され、インフォーマントは質問に回答するのみならず、自由に自身のこれまでの体験について話すこともできた。データはすべて録音され、文書化された。分析はこれら収集したデータに基づいて行われる。

第4章では鮪の消費者はどのような人々であるのかといった消費者の特徴が分析される。データを収集するためにインターネットのオンライン調査を設計し、SNSのフェイスブックで調査の参加者を募った。オンライン調査は大きく2つに分かれている。第一は、参加者の個人データについての部分、たとえば年齢、性別、仕事などのいわゆるフェイスシートである。調査参加者は100人で、男性が50名、女性が50名であった。個人情報を守るため、個人的なデータを匿名にされた。第二に、消費者の食生活だけではなく漫画とアニメのような日本の「文化の象徴」に関する知識が明らかにされる。イタリアの鮪の普及はイタリアに広がっている日本の文化を指している。

最終章の第5章では本研究の調査の結果を議論し、イタリアにおける鮪の普及に関する生産者と消費者の役割を理解する。特に、近年の経済の危機の社会で鮪が生産者と消費者の食生活にどのような影響を与えたのかを説明する。

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## **Chapter I: Introduction.**

### 1.1 Background.

As Nützenadel and Trentmann wrote, food and globalization are inseparable (Nützenadel and Trentmann 2008). Food plays an important role in the creation of national and local identities and it is often the cause of political contentions, wars and protest.

Nevertheless, there are few written articles which focus on global effects linked to food consumption and distribution, subjecting them to other factors such as financial markets, politics and migration.

But food plays a key role in the globalization and is as important as finance, politics and industry. Human beings can survive without money, politicians, cars and other commodities but, they can't go far without food. Scholars have focused their attention on the diffusion of restaurant chains such as KFC or Mac Donald's linked to the globalization process but less attention has been paid to food and its creators. Globalization is more than having an Ikea or a KFC in your town (Kimura and Belk 2005: 325). Many scholars have only focused on the production of food regarding "Mcdonaldisation" (such as George Ritzer, 1993)<sup>1</sup>, but few of them have focused on globalization through food consumption (Nützenadel and Trentmann 2008). Since food is about survival, it allows us to understand the social norms and the identity of groups of individuals. Saying that "We are what we eat", it is linked not only to a chemical-biological aspect of food consumption, but it also outlines that our society is deeply influenced by its own diet. Food in fact requires storage, utensils, space, recipes and communication. It is not only linked to preparing a meal, because thanks to food and its consumption human beings can create communal relations.

Food is also a social status marker; with regards not only to Michelin stars in modern restaurants, but also to the consumption of foreign products in the past, especially during the Age of European colonial empires which began in 1493.

<sup>1</sup>George RITZER, "The mcdonaldization of society", 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Pine forge press, SAGE publications, thousand oaks, CA,2010.

The creation of the first colony in the New World, Hispaniola (the modern Haiti), in which the consumption of Europeans foods was “a common practice amongst those social groups who were keen to acquire higher status”( Nützenadel and Trentmann, 2008). Food is also a national identity<sup>2</sup> marker: after the War of Independence (1775-1783), American people refused to drink tea like British people, replacing it with coffee. So, food is about culture and as culture is not an end in itself, but a means to an end (Griswold 2008). As Griswold (2008) argued quoting Arnold and Swift, culture can be compared to the work of spiders and bees. If culture moves as do spiders, who work for themselves making webs only to catch their own meals, it cannot create communication between people. The same is for food. Food is not an end in itself but a means to an end. As bees allow people to make candles from their wax and sweet from their honey, food allows people to communicate, to develop knowledge and to spread science and technology. In this way it creates a link between culture and society. Food in fact is not to be seen as a mere commodity but as a symbol which tells a story about its creator and its origin. Only with its history, food (and commodities in general) can it obtain a value and can be considered on a different point of view not linked to the economy or finance. So, the meaning and the value of food lies in its own history and the value related to the consumption of the same food is different from place to place.

During the War of Independence, coffee was considered a drink for slaves since it was produced mainly in Brazil and drunk by people working on the coffee plantation. As a symbol of slavery in South America, it became a national drink in North America in opposition to English tea. Food is not a mere commodity, but it embodies a meaning, a value which describes us and the history of a society (Griswold, 2008:12). Let’s think again about the War of Independence in America and the destruction of tea thrown into the Boston harbour during the “Boston tea party” in 1773. Why tea and not something else? Tea was the symbol of the British Empire which had colonized India, Sri Lanka and other places, and which was characterized by tea plantations and the consumption of tea.

<sup>2</sup> Frank NUTZENADEL, Alexander TRENTMANN, “Introduction: mapping food and globalization”, in *Food and globalization. Consumption markets and politics in the modern world*, Oxford, Berg publisher, May 2008, pp.1-2.

The consumption of this beverage was a status symbol linked to the supremacy of Great Britain as a colonial power. For this reason, destroying a load of tea meant refusing that supremacy, and after the end of the War of Independence, tea was then substituted in the USA by coffee, a beverage drunk by slaves in plantations, to symbolize the birth of a free country without control of the British Empire.

The global system offers us a lot of products linked to other countries and those products can be abstract such as holidays, ideas, habits and concrete such as clothes, vehicles and food. For these reasons, some scholars argue that globalization is a phenomenon old as humanity itself. Its birth lies with the first migration of humans from Africa and the invention of agriculture, (Kiple, 2007) but it was only in the period between XV and XVII century A.D that this phenomenon arrived to join other parts of the world. Indeed, till that period a lot of cultural and economic movements such as Hellenism, Christianity and Capitalism were born. Nevertheless these movements only influenced a few parts of the known world. The diffusion of globalized food and, consequently, the increment of restaurants and shops, marketing, machinery, knowledge and tools linked to that product are a part of globalization.

According to Ceccarini “food is not a mere commodity but an artifact of human ingenuity, a creative product shaped through the accumulation of knowledge, skills and experience. Food does not travel only in response to consumer demands or by the will of multinational corporations, but also thanks to food creators” (Ceccarini 2010).

Sushi is one of the most famous dishes of Japanese cuisine found in Euro-American countries, and it is not an exaggeration to say that nearly every country in the world has sushi restaurants. Between 1970 and 1990 sushi arrived in the metropolis centers such as London and Amsterdam (Cwiertka, 2000), in high level Japanese restaurants and very expensive hotels attended by business men and Japanese tourists. Since it was considered a dish of haute Japanese cuisine, it was very expensive (Ming and Miho, 2001). With the creation of sushi-bars and low cost sushi, the diffusion in other countries such as the USA and Europe, sushi has increased as a business.

Restaurants in Italy which are linked to their territories, with local products and local loyal customers, seemed to be forced to modify their menu with a lot of ingredients coming from Eastern traditions, and in particular from Japan. Ethnic restaurants such as

Chinese, noting this fashion, are now inserting typical Japanese food dishes such as sushi in their menu. For these reasons the effects of globalization can be seen from the point of view of the “original”, created by the fusion between the “exotic” with the “familiar”(Brannen, 1992). In fact, one of the main reasons for *Californiamaki* quick diffusion, is the adaptability of new ingredients and new tastes. Sushi can be seen as proof that globalization is not just a process linked to the diffusion of Western Euro-American products and values.

Furthermore, the globalization of sushi also represents the globalization of other sectors linked to this product. For example the fish market, where more and more fish such as red tuna are now sold (Bestor, 2000) and the job market, where more and more sushi chefs are required. Nowadays, people eat and make sushi increasing its success and popularity alongside haute cuisine and popular foods. In fact, the Great Recession of 2008 which affected haute cuisine restaurants in Italy, seems to have been one of the key factors of sushi as a healthy low cost food.

Supermarkets also started to create little corners for sushi and sell ingredients in order to permit customers to create sushi by themselves at home. Japanese rice, *nori* seaweed, rice vinegar and *wasabi* appear next to the pasta and tomato sauces, which are the base of the Mediterranean diet. Then, we can say that sushi has spread to a lot of sectors linked to its own business which originated in Japan to Italy, changing the appearance of our cities, our diet, the way of making healthy low cost food, the idea of making something popular which originally belonged to a limited group.

Nevertheless, with the exception of the works of Cwierka (2005), Bestor (2000) and Milligan (2006), few literary works have focused on the diffusion of Japanese food, and sushi in particular, in Europe and few scholars have focused their attention on the spread of sushi in a country such as Italy. Scholars such as Cwierka have focused their studies on Northern European cities such as London and Amsterdam but few literary works have explored the diffusion of sushi in Southern Europe. Then these studies could be too general, because the analysis of big cities cannot reflect the situation of other geographical places inside the same country (Milligan 2005:3).

Sushi can be seen as a cultural object, sushi chefs as cultural producers, sushi restaurants as particularly social worlds and a consumer as someone who receives that cultural object. These four elements are the base of Griswold (2008) so called “cultural diamond” from which it is possible to make an analysis of a culture through a practical approach. Since

the term “culture” is ambiguous and abstract, Griswold proposes an analysis of culture by focusing on the cultural object, defined as a “shared significance embodied in form” (Griswold 2008: 12) or “a socially meaningful expression that is audible, visible, or tangible or that can be articulated ” (Griswold 2008). Globalization is a term used by scholars from 1980s and it involves a lot of different processes and it’s hard to chart its map (Robertson 1990) and recently, debates among scholar have focused their attention, in particular, on other aspects of globalization such as heterogeneity and originality since globalization is also linked to the concept of “familiar” (Brannen 1992) and “Hybridization” (Pieterse 1993).

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research questions.

With this paper, I wanted to analyze the success of sushi in Italy in order to continue the work started by other scholars such as Cwiertka and Milligan. The diffusion of sushi can be linked to consumers and creators who diffuse sushi in different ways.

The spread of sushi in Italy is not only linked to restaurants with sushi chefs who have studied in Japan before starting their jobs such as Shiro, in *Poporoya*, in Milan. To understand better how and why this has happened, we need to study the history of the diffusion of sushi, from its birth in Indochina till now in order to explain the different reasons which led to the success of sushi in the past, and compare them with the reasons for the success of sushi today.

I’m interested in how the new profession of a sushi chef has moved from Japan to Italy and how the customers’ tastes can influence the recipes of this kind of profession. The main questions of this research are as follow:

Why is sushi successful in Italy today?

What are the values linked to the consumption of sushi in Italy?

What drives consumers to eat this kind of food in a country with traditional low cost food such as pizza?

My analysis will also include sushi restaurants in Italy. For sushi restaurant I mean not only sushi bars or restaurants which offer only sushi but also Italian and ethnic restaurants which have recently inserted sushi in their menu. I’ll analyze them in order to understand:

- a) the needs of customers
- b) differences between sushi restaurants
- c) the elements which have helped sushi to become popular in Italy.

I will use electronic data linked to this argument, interviews with sushi restaurant managers chefs and their customers.

Results of this research may lead one to understand the case of sushi diffusion in Italy as an example of food globalization which is influencing the habits of Italian people. Globalization involves not only concrete items but also abstract objects such as values and ideas. If the diffusion of sushi in Italy is an effect of globalization, it should not be separated by the diffusion of other elements linked to the Japanese culture such as manga. In this way, the analysis of the diffusion of sushi in Italy can be used as an instrument for mapping the diffusion of some aspects of the Japanese culture in Italy and allows us to understand if it is correct to say that the consumption of sushi in Italy is linked with the diffusion of other Japanese cultural elements.

### 1.3 Structure.

Sushi is “a cultural product for shared meaning embodied in form” which tells a story (Griswold, 2008:12). Simply looking at the history of this particular food, we can find meanings and values which are linked to it.

The analysis of food as a global product is not separated by the concept of the globalization of workers such as sushi chefs, as Ceccarini stated in her analysis about the diffusion and the consumption of pizza and the diffusion of *pizzaiolos* (‘pizza makers’) in Japan (Ceccarini 2010).

In chapter I, I will explain the methodology followed to collect data and how collected data will be allocated in the following chapters.

In chapter II, I will focus on the sushi history and how it has moved from Japan to America and Europe. In this way I want to discover the causes which led sushi to its success both in the past and today and, this can be useful in part also in order to explain its success in Italy, too. Has sushi changed from its origin? Is sushi presented in other shapes and forms than that in Japan? Is it the same in every restaurant in Italy? How was

sushi born? How has it become successful outside Japan? What are the values that have helped it to become famous? What are the similarities and dissimilarities of sushi in the USA and in Europe? What about the diffusion of sushi in Italy in the 1990s? Does the diffusion of sushi in Italy have some dissimilarities with the diffusion in Northern Europe? Why do people consume sushi in Italy? Is it a meal or a snack? Is it simply a fashion, a synonymous of healthy food or is there is something else? This chapter will analyze how sushi was invented and how it has become successful outside Japan.

Why has sushi achieved success in Italy? What does the consumption of sushi in Italy suggest?

In chapter III, I will analyze sushi through the development of Japanese cuisine restaurants in Italy. Since these restaurants can vary, by analyzing their commercial strategies and management, we can understand in what ways they have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy. By looking at Japanese restaurants, sushi bars, Italian and ethnic restaurants serving sushi and the new generation Wok Sushi, I want to analyze the differences between those restaurants and in which ways sushi is conceived by the management. Is the choice of sushi linked to the conscious diffusion of Japanese cuisine and culture or is there is something else? Is the diffusion of sushi influencing the local food traditions? What drives consumers to choose one of this restaurants for a meal?

Is it correct to talk about “indirect Japanization” as Milligan(2006:15)? How has it evolved in Italy?

What kind of sushi restaurants can we find in Italy? How was the chain “Wok sushi” born? What are its business strategies? What are its problems? What about Sushi bars? What about Italian restaurants with sushi chefs? What are the differences between them? Who are their customers? What are their prices? What do customers expect from them? What do they expect from their customers? What kind of menu do they present? How do they promote sushi?

In chapter III, I will also focus on sushi creators who moved from Japan to Northern and Southern America in 1945, making this dish known to everyone. In order to understand how sushi spread in Italy, an analysis of sushi chefs and the diffusion of this kind of profession can reveal how sushi chefs have contributed to the diffusion of this dish and what difficulties they have found in their activity. How did they have success in spreading sushi? How can we become a sushi chefs? Are there any certifications in Italy

for sushi chefs? If there are no certifications, who can become a sushi chef in Italy? What requirements are necessary? How are training courses structured for sushi chefs? How can we distinguish a good sushi chef? Why have sushi chefs decided to open sushi restaurants in Italy? What are the difficulties with this job? How do they offer sushi to their own customers? How customers tastes influence their work? Have these Japanese restaurants influenced the local Italian cuisine or there is something else? In this chapter we will see by means of semi structured interviews how sushi and sushi chefs perceive Italian customers.

In chapter IV, I will talk about the receivers. Customers play an important role in the diffusion of sushi in Italy because they not only eat it in sushi restaurants, but they have also started to create a demand which has led supermarkets such as the Conad and the Coop, to sell ingredients and utensils for sushi. In addition, the increase in these consumers shows a deeper cultural aspect: the fascination for the Japanese culture and Japanese products, in other words “the Japanisation” described by Burt Edstrom as “a process by which Japanese elements are transposed to, and assimilated by, other countries or cultures” (Edstrom 1994:36). Analyzing customers of sushi restaurants will enable us to grasp the link (or not) between the diffusion of sushi in Italy and the diffusion of the Japanese culture. Who are the sushi consumers? Are they the same for every kind of sushi restaurant? What values link sushi consumption? How do they perceive sushi? What do they think about eating sushi? When do they eat it? With whom?

What age? What gender? Do they work? What social class do they belong to? How often do they eat sushi? Why do they eat sushi? What kind of sushi do they prefer? What is their knowledge about sushi? What do they think about sushi? How do they eat sushi? What drives them to eat sushi and not other traditional Italian low cost foods such as pizza?

This paper is based on a digital bibliography, analysis of web-sites dedicated to sushi, direct interviews to four sushi chefs and a survey with a hundred sushi consumers in Italy. I have respected the privacy of my informants by omitting their names while writing other information such as time and places of the interviews and age, gender, occupation of those interviewed.

## 1.4 Expected results.

I expect that the diffusion of sushi in Italy is caused not only to the adaptation of the original recipe to consumers tastes, but also to the availability of different restaurants for different kinds of customers which offer different kinds of this “cultural object” with different prices. Different places and different prices, means that sushi chefs also have different training and a different conception of what they offer to their customers in Italy. Since the creators are not the same for every kind of restaurant, there will be different values perceived by consumers linked to the restaurant in which they have eaten. The availability of a lot of different prices and restaurants permits sushi to be eaten by many consumers of diversified social and economic conditions.

Someone may choose sushi for its link with the Japanese cuisine, but today many modern sushi recipes were not created in Japan, but in the USA or other countries. Someone may eat sushi for its healthy ingredients, but the consumption of sushi can provoke risks for health and to the environment. Someone might decide to eat sushi for its cost, but does a “cheap sushi” embody the same values of an “expensive one”?

The success of sushi is not only linked to the globalization of sushi chefs but also to the globalization of the fish market which allows people to buy every kind of fish they need. The diffusion of sushi in Italy is in part similar to the diffusion of sushi in Northern Europe and from this analysis I expect to find differences which allow us to expand the map of the “Japanisation of Europe” (Edstrom, 1994:36 Milligan, 2006:5) . Sushi is a globalized food with its own history describing the lifestyle of population in Japan.

After the Second World War and the economic boom of Japan which began in 1965 (Caroli, 2009:224-226), sushi moved to the USA and its success can be linked not only to its fame as a healthy food, but also to the values linked to a responsible diet for the environment. With data in our hand, we could consider if the consumption of sushi also underlines the diffusion in everyday life of Japanese cultural elements such as manga and *anime* and the fascination for Japanese culture in Italy. Elements such as manga, *anime* or karaoke are not the cause or the effect of the diffusion of sushi in Italy but, they move together, mutually sustaining one another.

We will find out whether the diffusion of sushi in Italy is caused only by the adaptation of the “original recipe” to consumers taste. I will show how the availability of a great

variety of restaurants for different kinds of customers offering different kinds of cultural object with different prices, have had a huge impact on sushi diffusion in Italy, too.

Since creators are not the same for each kind of restaurant, there will be different values perceived by consumers linked to who has created that desired ‘cultural object’ and the cultural world in which that cultural object has been received. The consumption of sushi in low cost restaurants such as “Wok sushi” may be an effect of the Great Recession in Italy, driving people to eat a meal in a cheaper place than in the past, different from fast food, since quality and safe raw materials are guaranteed and controlled.

“Wok sushi” chains, have been founded only recently. If sushi chefs had not moved to Italy and if they had not started in other kinds of restaurants, sushi would only be a food for people who belong to a higher social status. All restaurants serving sushi have sushi chefs who have studied.

Nevertheless, consumers are not able to distinguish a good chef since no certification for sushi are recognized or required in Italy.

So, if certifications are not required, who can become a sushi chef in Italy? If consumers are not able to verify the quality in general of sushi chefs, how can they choose a restaurant? And what knowledge do consumers have about sushi and fish? I expect that consumers choices are not often driven by a profound knowledge of the product, but also by regarding the lack of certifications connected to this market which can steer consumers to responsible consuming.

From data collected, I expect that the diffusion of sushi is not only linked to economic strategies adopted by chefs and restaurant manager, even if they have an important role, but also to the diffusion in Italy of other Japanese cultural elements.

Then describing how sushi has spread in Italy through an analysis of the product, chefs, restaurant and consumers in particular, we can chart a map of the diffusion of the Japanese culture in Italy and what kind of relationships link consumers, Japanese culture and the consumption of sushi.

## 1.5 State of art

With regards to literary works of the diffusion of sushi in America and Northern Europe, there are interesting works by scholars such as Bestor (2000) Cwiertka (2000) and Milligan (2006) available. Bestor(2000) focused on the links between globalization of

sushi and the fish market, while Cwiertka (2000) talked about the spread of sushi in Northern Europe analyzing the mediation of Great Britain who have imported sushi which was seen as an American trend. Milligan (2006) focused on the phenomenon of the so called “Japanization of Europe”, analyzing the spread of Japanese food in the big European metropolitan cities such as Aarhus in Denmark, Athens in Greece and Liverpool in Great Britain.

All of these works are useful to understand the spread of Japanese cuisine in Europe, in particular sushi, but they only focus on Northern Europe and in big metropolitan areas with the risk of generalization. Even if Milligan has written about a restaurant in Athens, few scholars have focused the spread of sushi in Southern Europe, Italy in particular. Moving from this state of art, I wanted to focus on the spread of sushi in Italy and how it has become popular by analyzing the story of sushi from its creation till now, the restaurants in Italy serving sushi, chefs and consumers.

## 1.6 Methodology.

In this section I will describe the design used in this research to achieve the purpose stated in chapter I. The first paragraph (1.6.1) will be used to explain the research design and its reason; in the second paragraph (1.6.2) I will introduce and explain the quantitative data obtained through a survey. The third paragraph (1.6.3) will explain qualitative data collected for this research. Then the fourth paragraph (1.6.4) will be used to interpret the information.

### 1.6.1 Research design: qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods?

As scholars such as Bryman and Bell (2006) wrote, the first object of research is to collect data which already exists and to separate the useful information from the useless. The first step of this research also consisted of collecting and selecting data in electronic format, from online newspapers. Thanks to this data I was able to describe the general background regarding the diffusion of sushi. The second step of this research was to obtain other data in order to achieve the aims stated in chapter I. According to Bryman and Bell (2006) there are three methods of collecting data. The qualitative method “consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. These

practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincol, 2005:3). In this way, the qualitative research method focuses on the experiences and thoughts of each participant and through this data a researcher can make theories and hypotheses. The quantitative method is based on general data and its purpose is to make predictions about the future or to give a general background about a particular phenomenon. In this case, a researcher uses instruments such as tests and surveys which provide him data.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, even if those two methods have different procedural approaches, both emphasize truth, consistency, applicability and neutrality. With regards to those two methods there are many debates which have led scholars to introduce a third method for research design which is the mixed method. This method “is formally defined here as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or languages into a single study” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In comparison to the previous ones, this method of research is very creative, pluralistic and complementary since it balances both qualitative and quantitative data.

### 1.6.2 Already existing data and survey data.

The first way in order to collect data for these researches was finding already existing data to understand the background of the diffusion of sushi in the world and finding differences between the diffusion in the past and today and the reason for the diffusion in different parts of the world, the USA and Europe in particular.

Then, in order to understand the diffusion of sushi consumption in Italy, using a web-site which specializes in online surveys<sup>3</sup>, I prepared an online survey aimed at a hundred people in order to create some statistics about this phenomenon.

<sup>3</sup> for this online survey, I used this web site (<https://it.quick surveys.com/Dashboard.aspx>).

This online survey is based on multiple choices questions, opened questions and single choice questions. Since the quantitative method provides general data, this survey, which started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013, was open to people belonging to various backgrounds up to a hundred participants. The survey asked participants their gender, their age, their job and annual incomes in order to create varied statistics from their answers.<sup>4</sup> In order to obtain quick results from this survey, I shared it on Facebook. Within a week 41 people had answered this survey anonymously and shared their points of views about sushi consumption in opened questions. Participants were from various backgrounds since this survey was not sent to any particular target. Those who decided to answer this survey did it freely without any external obligation. In this way I have been able to create some statistics about sushi consumers, who are they and what are their characteristics and how they have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy.

Even if surveys are considered quantitative methods, this survey has also posed questions to understand participants thoughts, and has provided qualitative data. For these reasons my research design combined both qualitative and quantitative ones, using a mixed method.

### 1.6.3 Qualitative data.

The diffusion of sushi in Italy is not only motivated by consumers but it is also thanks to the chefs. In order to understand the differences amongst sushi restaurants and places where sushi is available in Italy, I have created a questionnaire of direct interviews to a “Wok-sushi” owner, a Japanese restaurant chef, a ex-Japanese restaurant chef and an Italian restaurant owner who has inserted sushi in his menu. For these interviews I prepared the same questionnaire for each restaurant<sup>5</sup> with a structured interview in order to find the differences amongst their restaurants, their business strategies and their customers.

In an additional table I have summarized the characteristics of each participant: profession, age, gender, date, place and time of interview. The data collected was summarized in a table at the end of chapter III.

<sup>4</sup> see appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> see appendix B.

#### 1.6.4 Interpretation and allocation of collected data.

The data collected has been allocated to the defined divisions explained in chapter 1.3. All of the interviews have been placed in the appendices C,D,E and F. Part of these interviews have been placed in chapter III. The information derived from the survey was inserted in the tables placed in chapter IV.

Data gathered by direct interviews has been inserted in their respective chapters and confirmed by direct quotations and references to respective appendices.

## Chapter II: Sushi and its history.

“ *A cultural object may be defined as shared significance embodied in form. In other words, it is a socially meaningful expression that is audible, visible, or tangible or that can be articulated* ” (Griswold 2008: 12). In order to understand the link between society and culture, we must start by analyzing the cultural object, focusing on its own history and on information about the country in which it was created: that is ‘sushi and Japan’. What is sushi? When and how was it created? How was it diffused in America and Europe? How and when did it arrived in Italy?

### 2.1 From *kanji* to reality

In an article published on the Waseda University website<sup>6</sup> on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 by Sasahara Hiroyuki (associate professor of the school of social sciences in Waseda University), there are a lot of *kanji* combinations which stand for sushi but which focus on different aspects of the same thing. The most used *kanji* is 寿 *kotobuki*, which usually appears in many articles and postcards for happy new year greetings. The meaning of this *kanji* is also linked to ‘long life’ or ‘longevity’. The same research states that there are other forms of *kanji* which indicate sushi. The first one and the most popular is 寿司 (*sushi*) found written in shops signs. The second one is 鮓 (*sushi*) which is composed of two *kanji*, the first on the left 魚 (*sakana*) “fish” and the second on the right 旨 (*umai*) “good, tasty, excellent”. The third one is 酸し (*sushi*), in which there is the *kanji* 酢 (*su*) for ‘vinegar’ or ‘acid’, then it focuses on the acid taste of this dish.

<sup>6</sup> 笹原宏之, “オピニオン”, in 『早稲田大学』 5<sup>th</sup> January 2007 (<http://www.waseda.jp/jp/opinion/2006/opinion221.html>), accessed on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013.  
Hiroyuki SASAHARA, *Opinion*, in “Waseda University” 5<sup>th</sup> January 2007 (<http://www.waseda.jp/jp/opinion/2006/opinion221.html>), accessed on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

The fourth one and rarely used is 鮓 (*sushi*) composed of 魚 (*sakana*) ‘fish’ fused with 酢 (*su*) ‘vinegar’ so, it suggests a fish recipe with a sharp taste.<sup>7</sup> According to the meaning of each *kanji*, we can collect some basic information about this cultural object: a tasty fish dish, with a sharp flavour. But the fact that the most written version of the word used 寿 *kotobuki* ‘longevity’ suggests us that the consumption of sushi is also linked to well-being which allows people to live a longer life.

Sushi has given us some basic information about itself but in order to understand the differences between its diffusion in Japan and its diffusion in the USA and Europe, Italy included, focusing firstly on its history (Griswold 2008:11) we can discover the causes of its diffusion which in the past were linked to a method of conservation . (Hibino, 1999: 1-5), whereas today it is a fashion. (Cwierka, 2000: 15-19).

## 2.2 “Chu” and the origin of sushi.

The modern shape of sushi comes from *Edo-mae sushi*, which originated in Japan in the XIX century in the Edo bay, today’s Tokyo. But scholars such as Corson (2007) and Yokotsuka (1985) argued that sushi had originated in South- East Asia in the IV century B.C. In their research, these authors explained that at the beginning the sushi recipe was a way to conserve protein through the fermentation of cereals. The Indochinese peninsula was on the border between India and China where Buddhism was developing. Meat was considered a food for the nobility and farmers preferred to use their only ox to work their lands. The spread of Buddhism also discouraged the consumption of meat and fish and butchering a cow or a pig would have been a terrible waste if the meat was not eaten quickly. The area around the Pacific Ocean is characterized by humid weather which is good for rice cultivation. Then the diet was based on cereals, vegetables, tofu and a little amount of meat and fish. In order to conserve meat and fish for a long period of time, in South-East Asia, people developed a system of fermentation derived from cereals which they used to conserve meat or fish in jars with rice or wheat, permitting a long shelf-life.

<sup>7</sup> ibidem.

In this way, molds and other microorganisms converted carbohydrates of low digestibility and proteins to sugars and amino-acids with a high conversion efficiency (Lee and Jul, 1982: 209-220).

Scholars argued that modern biotechnology originated by alcoholic fermentation created by primitive man.

Nevertheless, the origin of cereal fermentation is unknown. Cereals and certain kinds of fruit, need a saccharification process, which is very difficult to produce artificially. A primitive method of saccharification was chewing cereals and spitting them in order to allow saccharification through salivary amylase. Another primitive kind of saccharification was the malting process with which we produced beer from cereals (Lee, 1994: 8-25). With the Han dynasty (206 b.C.-220 A.D.) and the annexation of Korea and Manchuria (109 b.C.), Vietnam (111 b.C.) and Mongolia (129 b.C) to the Chinese Empire, the method of fermentation, the so called “*Chu*” in Chinese, was diffused all over Eastern Asia and arrived in Japan thanks to the diffusion of Buddhism. Thanks to this method of fermentation, not only food conservation but also rice wine production and soy sauce was created (Lee, 1995: 6-10). This method is still used today in particular recipes such as *kimchi*, a sort of fermented cabbage, very popular in Korea and Japan.

### 2.3 The spread of sushi in Japan: between legend and history.

If we consider Japan and its food, maybe sushi is the most famous Japanese dish. The basic structure of sushi consists of raw fish, cooked rice, *nori* seaweed, sugar, salt and rice vinegar. Then a lot of other ingredients can be added such as shrimps, cucumber, carrot or eggs and mushrooms. It is presented as an acidulous rice ball (*shari*), with a slice of raw fish on it (*neta*) or it can appear as a roll wrapped with *nori* seaweed in which *shari* and *neta* are inserted but, as previously mentioned, it was originally very different. When the recipe arrived in Japan in the Heian period (794 A.D -1192 A.D) fish was salted and inserted in a jar with cooked or uncooked rice in order to be conserved through rice fermentation. This primitive sushi was called “*nare-zushi*” and in its preparation there were no other ingredients and it was a useful way to conserve and consume protein which was limited in their diet. In the Heian period the cultural

exchanges with China allowed not only commodities such as weapons and ceramics, but also technology, cultural movements and ideologies to enter Japan. Buddhism arrived in Japan in the VIII century, it is thanks to the Buddhist monks that Chinese written characters were spread all over Japan allowing people to understand Buddhist texts (Caroli 2008: 15-19). According to a legend, Buddhism has been linked to sushi since 744 A.D, the year in which the construction of the Todaiji temple in Nara began. Before the ceremony of eyes opening of Todaiji temple in Nara in 752, in a village in Kansai region near to Biwa lake, a demon appeared under the aspect of a white snake. It provoked a lot of damage to the fields and to the population and people started to die. The chief of that village decided to talk with the demon saying that, in spite of giving him a human sacrifice, the village would also offer him a sacrifice of sushi. The demon tasted that strange dish and it was very delighted. After that, the demon promised to protect the village but, periodically, people in return had to offer him sushi.

The first sushi variation created in Japan was the *namanare-sushi* which was very popular until the Muromachi period (1338 A.D.-1573 A.D.) (Hibino,1999:58-60). With this new variation, and the previous method of conservation, sushi became a popular dish, since it was very quick to prepare in comparison with the previous recipes, it was called *haya-sushi* (*haya* ‘fast’). In the Edo period (1603-1868 A:D), the process of conservation through fermentation was abandoned and cooks started to add vinegar and vegetables to the recipe. This recipe and its ingredients, started to vary from region to region according to the availability of the local products. I consider sushi to be the recipe which was created during the Edo period. Edo cooks, started to use seaweed and sea fruits from the Edo bay and started to create new original recipes such as *nigiri-sushi* (seaweed roll) (Hibino, 1999: 155-170) or *edomae-sushi* (sushi made with sea fruits and shrimps) “in front of Edo”, the place in which this recipe was invented and the place in which cooks found the ingredients for this recipe. This kind of pre-war sushi had a lot of rice and instead of red tuna, and was made principally with sea fruits, in particular shrimps. During this period, sushi was often sold by local stallholders. Stallholders usually moved around with a cart supplied with chairs in order to allow their clients to sit down. In the Meiji period with industrialization and the invention of fridges and ice making machines, sushi costs were reduced since the

product could be conserved. The innovation of *edomae-sushi* and *nigiri-sushi* was a phenomenon which only involved the area of Tokyo and it was not popular in other parts of Japan, where *edomae-sushi* meant a typical dish of Tokyo. With the Kantō earthquake in 1923, people arrived in Tokyo to rebuild the city and appreciated this original food and started to diffuse this recipe in their hometowns and all over Japan. In this way, it was possible to eat *Edomae-sushi* all over Japan, even if every region already had a typical kind of sushi: typical of Kansai for example was *hako-zushi*, a dish prepared with rice and fish pressed and then cut.

## 2.4 From the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean.

At the end of World War II and its reconstruction, Japan signed agreements with the United States (as the Security Treaty in 1954), and Japanese people moved to America to study or to work. During the second half of XX century Japanese food began to spread throughout the USA. The first Japanese restaurants opened overseas were targeted exclusively at the immigrant Japanese community and only after the 1970s those restaurants started to cater for non-Japanese customers (Cwierka 2000: 15-19). Articles about sushi appeared in magazines such as *Sunset* or *Holiday* but the recipes proposed were very different from *edomae-sushi*: they proposed bread with caraway seeds and shrimps. In a country such as the USA dominated by a red-meat diet, people converted to a more healthy one based on fish and vegetables. Defined by critics as “exotic” and “unpalatable” (Bestor, 2000: 56), sushi became a haute cuisine dish. After being exported to America, sushi was modified and raw fish was often substituted by grilled fish and traditional ingredients such as *wasabi* which was replaced by other ingredients such as cheddar cheese in a process of “creolization”. In this way a foreign recipe had been adapted to local tastes with local ingredients such as the case of *California-maki* in which avocado, cucumber and crab are used. The USA has been the homecountry for innovative kind of sushi commonly named after the state in which it was created. This is the case not only for *California-maki* but also for *Seattle-maki*, with smoked salmon, *Alaska-maki* with raw salmon inside or layered outside or *Michigan-maki*, with roe, spicy tuna and avocado. Variations created in the USA were characterized by spicy tastes and cooks often preferred to use grilled or smoked fish instead of raw. In some cases, sushi chefs added particular ingredients not

included in the original recipe such as chili or mayonnaise or cheese. So in *Dynamite-maki* we can find chili, mayonnaise or cheese cream and avocado, in *Philadelphia-maki* there is cream cheese (from the homonymous cream cheese brand) cucumber and avocado<sup>8</sup>. As Cwiertka stated “The ecology movement initiated by the American hippies in the late 1960s was the first step in the global diffusion of Japanese food” (Cwiertka 2000: 15-19). At the same time the progress of nutritional knowledge, which recognized the negative effects of meat-based diets on human health, was an important factor that promoted the diffusion of Japanese cuisine in America and doctors recommended the low-fat Japanese style cuisine (Corson 2007: 28-30).<sup>9</sup>

Sushi chefs who arrived from Japan also started to teach their own profession in “Sushi academies” (Corson, 2007). These courses lasted a minimum of six months and at the beginning the problems were mainly linked to teaching the art of sushi not only to foreign people but also to women because the profession of sushi chef was considered traditionally a male profession in Japan (Corson, 2007: 70-77). It was in the 1990s, that sushi arrived in Europe and Italy and put a demand on the market. With its arrival in Europe, in big cities such as London, Amsterdam or Milan, restaurants started to offer this kind of food near stations or in places frequented by Japanese businessman or tourists (Cwiertka 2000: 15-19). Sushi restaurant were restaurants “managed by Japanese for Japanese customers”, in which staff only spoke Japanese and in which the staff uniform and furniture were Japanese. The restaurant is a kind of “home far from home” and it had to create a sort of “nostalgic exoticism”(Cwiertka, 2000:16).

Another factor which promoted the diffusion of sushi in America and in Europe was the creation of sushi bars, restaurants where conveyor belts moved food from the kitchen to the customer, the so called *kaiten-zushi*, which, contrary, to sushi bars in Japan, are expensive. The first sushi restaurants founded in Europe in the 1990s were mainly in London, attracting immigrants from all over the world who brought their exotic food culture with them (Cwiertka 2000: 15-19).

<sup>8</sup> Those are some popular sushi versions created in America. In internet there are many blogs and website in which it is possible to find recipes. See (<http://makemysushi.com/>), checked on July, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013 at 11:00 a.m.

<sup>9</sup> Traditional recipe are low-fat food; the new recipes born in America have a lot of calories (<http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/japanese-vs-western-sushi-the-calorie-countdown>).

As Cwiertka (2000) states “Japanese food in the USA evolved from an immigrant cuisine, while for Europeans it represented a food completely different from Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese and other sorts of food that could be directly linked to the European colonial past”. In Europe, Japanese food was seen as an American trend which, through sushi-bars, was seen as a new technological kind of fast-food, and started to move from London to other European cities (Cwiertka 2000: 15-19) . This is one of the possible explanations about the recent diffusion of sushi in Europe; other scholars such as Milligan (2006:1) state that sushi reveals a new kind of globalization called “Japanisation” in which elements not linked to America or the West, but to Japan, are diffused all over the world. Even if it was created in Japan, it has been stripped of its original values of cheapness and simplicity and filled with the values of profitability (Milligan, 2006:2).

### 2.5 Poporoya and the diffusion of sushi in Italy.

The first Japanese restaurant founded in Italy was Poporoya , in Rome, in 1972, by Minoru Hirazawa, called Shiro.<sup>10</sup> The first big problem he encountered was the availability of Japanese ingredients, rice in particular. In order to resolve this problem, he started to study Italian rice forms and he found a particular kind (Vercellese) with similar characteristics to Japanese rice. He selected Japanese vegetables such as *Daikon* and promoted the production of machinery for sushi production. In 1977, Shiro moved from Rome to Milan and in 1989, he created the first sushi restaurant in Italy.<sup>11</sup> He named it “*Poporo*”, the Japanese pronunciation for the Italian word “popolo” (‘people’ in English) and “*ya*” 屋 (‘store’) revealed the target of the activity. Shiro decided to open a restaurant with high quality food and low price for busy businessmen in opposition to American and Northern Europe sushi-bars, considered fashionable and expensive places (Cwiertka, 2000: 15-19).

<sup>10</sup> Annalena DE BORTOLI, *Ristorante Poporoya*, in “Associazione Italiana Ristoratori Giapponesi” (<http://www.ristoratorigiapponesi.it/recensioni/49-ristorante-poporoya.html>). Accessed on 24th June 2013

<sup>11</sup> *ibidem*.

Since he has worked in many different places in Japan, Shiro knows customer needs in terms of calories and according to these needs, he has adapted the menu. Shiro helped local residents to understand Japanese cuisine in a nation, where people are said to be very conservative about their own culinary traditions.<sup>12</sup> Restaurants such as Poporoya are a reason for success and widespread diffusion of sushi in Italy. Traditional Italian restaurants, which originally offered only products linked to their territories, started to offer new dishes with ingredients linked to the Japanese cuisine such as tofu or seaweed and, by employing sushi chefs, they started to offer sushi in they own menus (see appendix E). In the early part of XXI century (2000-2005), a new restaurant chain, called “Wok sushi” mushroomed all over Italy. Big restaurants with approximately 40 tables, approximately 40 square meters sized kitchens and more than six chefs, adopted the formula “all you can eat” , becoming one of the modern way of sushi diffusion in Italy.

## 2.6 Conclusions.

From its origin until now, sushi has been subjected to many changes. Its history started in South-East Asia as a method of conservation of food which was diffused in China and later in Japan. In Japan, the original recipe was modified again and, in the Edo period, obtained the shape of modern sushi. After the World War II, sushi arrived in the USA and it had success for its values linked to a healthy diet. In Northern Europe, thanks to the mediation of Great Britain, sushi started to be diffused as an American trend.

High price sushi-bars started to appear in the big European cities. In Italy, the diffusion of sushi seems to have been different from the rest of Europe; four kinds of restaurants, with a lot of differences, have characterized the recent diffusion of sushi in Italy from 1980s until now. Looking at its history, sushi is a product which is easily adapted to economic conditions and the peoples’ tastes. Adaptability and low cost are the elements which have characterized its history and will characterize its future too.

<sup>12</sup> ibidem.

Since some recipes have been modified in the USA in 1980s, we can foresee that in the future, Italy will propose its own version of sushi recipes. The diffusion of sushi in the USA has been enhanced by the movement of Japanese chefs who, not only worked for their own businesses, but organized courses in “Sushi Academies” with which they promoted their profession (Corson, 2007).

From a method of food conservation, sushi has arrived in the USA as a healthy diet in opposition to the traditional heavy red meat diet. In Europe, sushi bars started to appear in big cities as London, Paris and Amsterdam. Italy was also subjected to this phenomenon in the 1970s, when a few Japanese restaurants were founded in Milan. During the first ten years of the XXI century a lot of restaurants in Italy, offering sushi but few of them have similar characteristics to Shiro’s “Poporoya”.<sup>13</sup>

Today, Italian traditional restaurants include sushi or other particular dishes with Japanese ingredients such as *nori*, *konbu*, *sencha* in their menus, opening a new way of “food globalization” in which not only a particular recipe is acquired but also the raw materials and ingredients used in local cuisine.

From the diffusion of a technique for conserving food in the past, sushi became a basic recipe in Japanese cuisine. From a dish of healthy properties exported into the USA and Europe thanks to the creation of sushi bar and *kaitenzushi* (conveyed-belt sushi plates) in particular. Its arrival in Italy in the 1970s was helped by restaurants such as Poporoya which started to sell sushi and now there are dedicated restaurant chains, created to sell low cost sushi.

In order to analyze how sushi has become popular in Italy, in the following chapters, I will focus on three elements ( restaurants, chefs and customers) in order to understand:

- 1) what are the motivations which promoted the diffusion of sushi in Italy and
- 2) if its popularity is linked to other Japanese cultural elements such as manga or *anime*, ‘appreciated or searched for’ by the customers.

<sup>13</sup> see *Fipe sostiene vera ristorazione giapponese* in “www.ANSA.it” ([http://www.ansa.it/terraegusto/collection/notizie/rubriche/inbreve/2012/10/04/Fipe-sostiene-vera-ristorazione-giapponese-\\_7575063.html](http://www.ansa.it/terraegusto/collection/notizie/rubriche/inbreve/2012/10/04/Fipe-sostiene-vera-ristorazione-giapponese-_7575063.html)) accessed on 15th May 2013.

### Chapter III: Sushi restaurants and Sushi chefs.

In this chapter I will focus on sushi restaurants, analyzing the differences between them. In order to understand how sushi went popular in Italy, it can be useful to observe those sushi restaurant and look at their differences. For ‘sushi restaurant’, I don’t mean only mean restaurants which only offer sushi, but also other kinds of restaurants which have inserted sushi in their menus. In particular the differences in terms of price, value, customers and staff between an Italian restaurants which offers sushi, a *kaitenzushi* restaurant, a Japanese cuisine dedicated restaurant and a new category of restaurant recently created in Italy, called “Wok-sushi” will be analyzed.

According to an article which appeared in “ANSA” (Agenzia Nazionale di Stampa Associata) on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012, there are 458 Japanese restaurants in Italy, the 6,6% of all of the restaurants in the whole of Italy, of which about 50 are situated in Florence<sup>14</sup>. According to another article written by Fabio Savelli in “Corriere della Sera” on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012, there are about 200 Japanese restaurants in Milan<sup>15</sup>.

The interviewer created a semi structured interview in which questions are the topics that have to be covered by the answer of the interviewee. All the questions were designed in order to collect the qualitative data linked to this paper. Using open questions the interviewer allowed the interviewees to answer as freely and in as much detailed as they wanted to.

The order of the questions was created in order firstly to collect some quantitative data in order to grasp the physical differences between the places of sushi consumption. Then the interviewer asked some personal questions in order to recognize the different approach to the field of food and the different business strategies used by each interviewee in order to understand the problems linked to their profession through their own experiences.

<sup>14</sup> *Fipe sostiene vera ristorazione giapponese* in “www.ANSA.it” ([http://www.ansa.it/terraegusto/collection/notizie/rubriche/inbreve/2012/10/04/Fipe-sostiene-vera-ristorazione-giapponese-\\_7575063.html](http://www.ansa.it/terraegusto/collection/notizie/rubriche/inbreve/2012/10/04/Fipe-sostiene-vera-ristorazione-giapponese-_7575063.html)) accessed on the 15th May 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Fabio SAVELLI, *Cerchi il sushi, ma trovi il cinese ecco i (finti) ristoranti giapponesi*, in “www. Corriere.it” ([http://www.corriere.it/economia/12\\_ottobre\\_03/ristoranti-giapponesi-proprietari-cinesi\\_c29c9e22-0d94-11e2-93be-2a3b0933ba70.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/economia/12_ottobre_03/ristoranti-giapponesi-proprietari-cinesi_c29c9e22-0d94-11e2-93be-2a3b0933ba70.shtml)) accessed on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

Finally the questionnaire asked interviewees in which way the Great Recession had influenced their profession.

The participants of this questionnaire were a chef of a “Wok-sushi” chain restaurant, a chef of a *kaitenzushi*, a *sushiman* of a Japanese restaurant and a chef of an Italian restaurant offering sushi. The choice of the restaurants where interviews were conducted, was motivated by their proximity to places in where I live and known by locals.

Table 3.1:Table of interviewees.

Participants	Profession	Age	Gender	Date of interview	Place of interview	Time of interview
Participant A	“Wok sushi” owner	43	Male	01/08/2013	Marina di Cecina (LI)	11:47
Participant B	<i>Sushiman</i> in a <i>kaitenzushi</i>	35	Male	11/08/2013	Florence	13:15
Participant C	Chef in Italian restaurant	39	Male	13/08/2013	Cecina (LI)	18:27
Participant D	<i>Sushiman</i> in Japanese restaurant	41	Male	10/09/2013	Venice	12:08

### 3.1 All you can eat: interview with a “Wok-sushi” chef.

The interview took place in a “Wok-sushi” restaurant in Cecina (LI), the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013, at 11:47. Since the interviewee only spoke Chinese, questions were translated into Chinese and the answers into Italian by the owner, helping the interviewer in the composition of this semi-structured interview. It is possible to read the whole interview in the appendix C.

#### 3.1.1 The restaurant structure and its staff.

The interview with the “Wok-sushi” chef reveals to us some peculiarities of this kind of restaurant. The presence of sushi is not predominant in the menu. In this case the choice of sushi is accompanied by Chinese and Thai cuisine. The chef isn't of Japanese origin and first started working in a Chinese restaurant and only recently decided to open this new restaurant in order to diversify income and not to depend on one activity. In the menu, sushi is more expensive if compared to Chinese cuisine and Thai cuisine so the formula “All you can eat” has been adopted in order to face the economic crisis and to avoid wastes.

**Participant A:** Well, I started with a Chinese restaurant twenty years ago when my wife and I moved from China to Italy. Many of our friends working in the catering industry had opened “Wok-sushi” restaurants but my wife was skeptical. After a period of doubt, my wife was persuaded and last year, in 2012, I opened this restaurant, the first in this area. At first we started as a normal restaurant, without the formula “All you can eat” and if you look at the menu, you can see the old prices of each dish. But since sushi is the most expensive on the menu, and the economic crisis didn't tempt my customers to buy expensive food, a lot of fresh fish was wasted. So, in order to avoid this kind of waste and to allow customers to come here more frequently, I adopted the formula “All you can eat”. In this way, every evening, I finish the fish I have bought in the morning and customers can eat everything.

Six staff members, about 40 tables in a restaurant which can host more than 150 people suggests the size of the premises and the presence of a buffet allows the management to

keep a lower number of waiters. The chef has studied how to make sushi while attending specialized courses which lasted six months, and before starting this job, he first worked as waiter and then as chef in a restaurant in Rome.

### 3.1.2 “Wok-sushi” customers.

It’s hard to draw one single picture of the typical “Wok-sushi” customers. There are a lot of factors which influence the presence of a particular kind of customer inside these restaurants; first of all the weather and then the tourist season: if in Winter the majority of customers seem to be of Italian nationality, in Summer foreign people are also present in the restaurant.

**Participant A:** We have a very diversified range of customers according to the season: from Autumn to Spring the majority of customers are composed of local people, especially young people from 15 to 30 years. In Summer, there are also tourists and foreigners from 40 to 60 years, passing by the restaurant who decide to eat something here. In Summer I can double my income thanks to tourism but there are also customers during the Winter.

The age of customers is also very different: we can find young people between 15 and 30 years but also customers of an older age. In general, the medium cost for a meal is about 17 euros which includes the fixed price menu (15 euros) to which beverages have been added. Nevertheless, the number of customers has decreased if compared to the previous year when the restaurant opened, in 2012. If at the beginning the formula “All you can eat ” offering low cost sushi seemed to be a good idea in order to avoid waste, today this business strategy seems to be no more efficient to attract more customers.

**Participant A:** The decreasing number of customers is a big problem and the big risk is the waste of food. My chefs and I have a deep respect for food and it was a shock for us to clean the fridge by unservable food. At first we started as a normal restaurant but even if Chinese food and Thai food price were cheaper, few people stopped here to eat and few people ordered sushi. For this reason we decided to use the formula “All you can eat” asking

customers to eat everything they ordered. The only rule inside my restaurant is that if customer wastes food, he has to pay for it in addition to the fixed price. We buy few fresh ingredients every day in order to finish everything as soon as possible and thanks to customers, every day we prepare good quality food. But, even with this choice of the formula, this year fewer people have come here to eat sushi and the previsions for the future are not good. The positive effect of the “All you can eat” formula seem to be vanishing and now I have to think of new strategies in order to attract more customers.

### 3.1.3 Diffusion and difficulties.

Adopting the formula “All you can eat”, “Wok-sushi” restaurants allow people to eat a traditionally expensive food guaranteeing for its quality and to the success especially amongst young people. Managing a “Wok-sushi” restaurant means a lot of difficulties linked not only to the increase of taxes and the purchase of raw materials, but also to factors linked to tourism such as the seasons and the weather. The economic crisis seems to have also influenced not only the number of customers and how many times they go to those kinds of restaurants, but also the adoption of particular strategies such as the formula “All you can eat” offering low cost food in order to attract more customers.

**Participant A:** When I started this activity I thought that few customers would eat sushi for a question of taste but I was wrong. The biggest problem today is the economic crisis. Not only my “Wok sushi” restaurant but also my wife restaurant which is the only Chinese restaurant in a radius of 60 km, are subjected to low attendance. Over the last two years the number of customers in both the restaurants has regularly decreased and in addition taxes have risen. The rent of the building of my restaurant is about 30.000 € a year and each month I have to pay about 2.800 €. This year the monthly fee was raised to 2.900 €. To those fees I have to add gas, water, rubbish fees, food and beverages and the staff wages. We can earn a lot of money thanks to tourism but this Summer it was cold until the end of June and at the end of August everyone went home and I think that it will be good if I have success in closing the tourist season balancing the budget and breaking even with the bills.

### 3.2. Sushi bars and *kaitenzushi*: interview with a Japanese *kaitenzushi* restaurant chef.

The first difference we can see between “Wok-sushi” and sushi bars is their size. A large building with about 40 tables for 150 customers inside, with a lot of car parking space is typical of “Wok-sushi” restaurants, while sushi bars are usually quite small restaurants. If the formula of “Wok –sushi” is “All you can eat”, with big area reserved for buffets, sushi bars do not follow this formula. As a bar, customers choose food available on the table in front of the chef. Customers can also choose to sit at a table or to sit in front of the chef, admire the fresh vegetables and fish on his desk and watch him while preparing sushi. *Kaitenzushi* also had an important role in the diffusion of sushi.

Created in 1958 by Yoshiaki Shiraishi, the purpose of *kaitenzushi* was to decrease costs since the conveyor belt substituted the role of a lot of waiters and to increase income<sup>16</sup>. In differing from a common sushi bar, in which a customer sits at a table occupying the space for four people, with *kaitenzushi*, people sit together to eat and no space is wasted (Cwierka, 2000: 18). In this way Shiraishi had success in producing low cost sushi, increasing the competition amongst the traditional sushi producers in Osaka.

The problem is that in Italy, Europe and the USA, during the early 1980s, even if sushi restaurant owners inserted *kaitenzushi* in their restaurant, prices did not decrease.

Today things have changed and so has “Wok-sushi”, recognizing the merit for both sushi bars and conveyor belt sushi, starting to adopt the idea of contact between customers and chef, and by mixing the formula “All you can eat” with the original purpose for which inspired Shiraishi to create *kaitenzushi* in serving low cost sushi.

The interview took place in a *kaitenzushi* restaurant in Florence, on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2013, at 13:15. The interview was recorded in a mp3 device and transcribed; it is possible to read the entire interview in the appendix D.

<sup>16</sup> Steven A. SHAW, *Asia dining rules*, Harper Collins publishers, New York, 2008, pp. 27-35.

### 3.2.1 The restaurant structure and its staff.

The restaurant opened in 2007 is situated over three floors. *Kaitenzushi* is on the ground floor, *yakiniku* ('grilled meat') prepared by customers themselves from their tables is available in the basement while on the second floor there is a room of about 40 square meters for aperitifs. The restaurant can host about 100 people while only conveyor belt sushi can be used by 30 people. The staff of *kaitenzushi* is composed of two chefs and one waiter.

### 3.2.2 *Kaitenzushi* customers.

People attending the *kaitenzushi* seem to be of Italian nationality living in Florence, foreign people and also tourists on holiday.

Their age ranges between 20 and 55 years old. It is difficult to calculate the medium cost for a meal since the price is calculated according to the color of each dish on the conveyor belt, but people between 20 and 30 years old usually spend about 15 euros per head while older people, from 30 to 55 years old, about 30 euros.

**Participant B:** It depends on the colour of the dishes on the conveyor belt but in general about 30 euros. Young people between 20 and 30 years spend about 15 euros, while the older people about 30 euros.

There is a percentage of loyal customers who visit the restaurant once a week but, the economic crisis and the strong competition have provoked a loss of customers and a decrease in consumption.

### 3.2.3 Diffusion and difficulties.

The diffusion of sushi, promoted by *kaitenzushi* seems to have been influenced by two elements. Firstly, the skill of a sushi chef with which sushi has been adapted to the tastes of local consumers. With traditional recipes usually served to customers, other creative versions with cream cheese, *foie gras*, fruit have been created to give customers a larger

choice. In this way, “cooking for customers” has allowed the chef to find particular recipes which have had success amongst people not used to eating raw fish. So, choice with regards to menu means different customers who not only consume sushi in the restaurant but also ask for recipes in order to make it at home.

**Participant B:** I only studied the tastes of my customers and with the traditional recipes I usually serve other creative version with cream cheese, *foie gras*, fruit. In this way, the concept of “cooking for my customers” allowed me to find a lot of particular recipes which had a lot of success among people not used to eat raw fish. So, big and diversified choice of sushi there was a bigger and diversified group of customers who watched me while preparing sushi and ask me for recipes to prepare it at home themselves.

On the other hand, the distance from the sea (about one hour from Livorno and about two hours from Rome) and the strong competition in this field, in a big city such as Florence, are the main problems to be faced.

**Participant B:** The first one is to find fresh fish since we don't live in a city near the sea. The second one is competition: in a city such as Florence you can create a *kaitenzushi* because you have a lot of customers every day of the year. But there is also strong competition especially with the “Wok-sushi” chain restaurants which have adopted this way of serving sushi. The only way to win customers is to keep the quality of food high therefore keeping prices competitive and this is very difficult now.

*Kaitenzushi* is only a way to serve sushi and the attraction for this type of premises has forced restaurants in Florence, “Wok-sushi” restaurants included, to adopt it, too. If quality is the first step in order to create high quality sushi, the management has to focus on other aspects as service or menu choice in order to attract more customers and to transform them into loyal customers.

### 3.3 Sushi in an Italian restaurant.

Italian restaurants also seem to be attracted by the presence of sushi and Japanese ingredients in their own menu. The influence of the Japanese cuisine is not only limited to ingredients or menu but also to a particular way of cooking with which Italian recipes are prepared. The interview took place in a Italian wine shop with a little annexed restaurant in Cecina (LI), 13<sup>th</sup> August 2013, at 18:27. The interview was recorded in a mp3 device and transcribed. It is possible to read the entire interview in the appendix E.

#### 3.3.1 The restaurant structure and its staff.

The restaurant in which the interview took place is a wine shop with a little annexed restaurant. The restaurant, opened in 2006, can host 30 people and it is managed by the chef and a waiter. Even if the dining room is small (maximum 15 people inside), it is possible to see Japanese items used as furniture such as hand fans or *koi* (carps) painted on a wall and a Japanese-style garden outside. The staff is composed of two people. The chef self taught in Japan. She attended a food science faculty, learning all that is necessary to prepare sushi.

Nevertheless, every day is a sort of training through which she can improve her technique. No certification is compulsory or required by law in Italy, but practical courses and knowledge in this field are essential to provide a safe and high quality product; as working with raw fish can be dangerous for ones health. For this chef, sushi is a dish in which the integrity of raw materials are linked to the territory. All dishes presented on the menu, sushi included, are made with local and fresh fish utilizing the raw materials of the area.

**Participant C:** every day spent in this kitchen is a sort of training for both of us through which we can improve our technique. In Italy no certification are compulsory or required for law but never the less we want to offer a safe and high quality product. No one can to act as a sushi chef because working with raw fish can be very dangerous for wealth. So, it is not a question of legal or illegal for me, but a question of professional ethic.

### 3.3.2 Italian restaurant customers.

The restaurant has mainly Italian customers but, in Summer foreign people also attend the wine shop and the restaurant. In the interview the chef provides a general division of customers into two different categories: groups of young people between 20 and 30 years, attracted by the idea of tasting sushi and groups of people between 30 and 60 years which often ordered traditional dishes. This is a general division: it is possible to see exceptions where young people order traditional recipes and where older people order sushi.

**Participant C:** Our customers are mainly Italian but in Summer we also have foreigners thanks to tourism. They can be divided into two groups: groups of young people between 20 and 30 years, attracted by the idea of tasting sushi, and groups of older people between 30 and 60 years who often order traditional dishes. It's a personal choice and there are also exceptions where some people over 30 order sushi, too!

The medium cost for a customer is about 40 euros and it depends on the choice of wine they decide to drink with the meal.

### 3.3.3 Diffusion and difficulties.

Compared to other kinds of sushi restaurants, in the case of this particular restaurant sushi does not cover a dominant position within the menu. Only *nigiri* and sashimi are available and it costs is about 14 euros for six pieces.

**Participant C:** We mainly prepare *nigirisushi* served with *sashimi*. We only serve this kind of sushi because we are not a sushi bar or a Japanese restaurant. We mainly prepare fish recipes inserting a dish of sushi. This was something new for us because no Italian restaurant here has a similar choice in their menu.

The strategy adopted by the restaurant is to create a simple menu with fresh ingredients and great importance is given to the origin of ingredients.

**Participant C:** For me it is a dish in which the integrity of raw materials are linked to our territory. In fact we use only fresh fish of this area for sushi in order to valorize those raw materials and the place they come from.

The diffusion of sushi in this kind of restaurant seems to have been motivated by other elements. As Italian traditional recipes are cooked in varied ways such as *tempura* frying style and, sooner or later customers, attracted by this innovation, order sushi.

**Participant C:** ...since our menu embraces both Italian traditional dishes and innovation, we can offer a bigger choice in terms of recipes and prices for a bigger and diversified group of customers. I can also say that even if the customer chooses a traditional dish such as “Melanzane alla parmigiana”, eggplants are fried with *tempura* style and this gives the dish a particular taste that you cannot find in other traditional Italian restaurants. So what has happened, people have come here to eat this particular traditional food cooked in a different way and sooner or later they ask for me sushi too.

Purchase of fresh, local and good quality ingredients is difficult because of the weather and seasons. By creating a healthy dish with local ingredients, customers rely on the chef, and in this way, the even more skeptical customer will approach sushi. Fresh and local ingredients with knowledge and experience are the basic elements on which this category of restaurants rely. The effects of the economic crisis have influenced the management of this kind of restaurant: first of all, the chef has to pay a lot of attention not to waste food. In order to avoid waste, a lot of dishes such as traditional recipes as soups and meat balls are proposed.

**Participant C:** The economic crisis has sensitized our attention on waste without losing control of the quality of ingredients. In this way we propose in our menu recipes in which wastes can be used, as we do with traditional recipes, such as the “Panzanella” where old dried bread is used, with competitive prices.

Secondly, if the economic crisis discourages people to spend money, the policy of the management is to attract people and to create loyal customers.

According to participant C, the number of customers has not decreased but over the years the medium cost for each customer has decreased from about 60 euros per head, to about 40 euros. This means that the management of this kind of restaurant, thanks to its choices, has been able to create loyal customers who are not discouraged by dining out and are disposed to pay for a product which is local, safe and fresh.

**Participant C:** The number of customers hasn't decreased but the incomes derived from them. We have a lot of loyal customers but if I compare how much they spent five years ago with how much they spend now, there is a big difference. Now a customer spends about 40 euros, while six years ago, when I opened this restaurant, about 60 euros.

### 3.4 Sushi in a Japanese restaurant: interview with a *sushiman*.

Participant D worked in a Japanese restaurant for five years before leaving his job and he was able to give the interviewer information about the restaurant in which he worked with regards to the organization within the kitchen, the customers and its difficulties. The interview took place in Venice on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 12:08. The interview was recorded in a mp3 device and transcribed. It is possible to read the entire interview in the appendix F.

#### 3.4.1 The restaurant structure and its staff.

The restaurant in which participant D worked, could host about 60 customers and the staff was composed of only six people, four of these, the chef, the *sushimen* and the dishwasher, worked in the kitchen. The other members of the staff were two waiters serving dishes and beverages to customers. From the interview we can understand a particularity within the kitchen of this kind of restaurant. According to participant D workers within the kitchen follow a hierarchical order with the chef at the top of the pyramid followed by *sushimen*.

**Participant D:** While the chef organized the work inside the kitchen, giving orders to the staff, *sushiman* were the responsible for the preparation of sushi. They have knowledge about the raw materials, the fish season and of other ingredients, the care of their own knives. In comparison with other kinds of cuisine, a *sushiman* has his own knives and he cannot lend them to other people inside the kitchen, they are personal and very expensive tools which cost can be about 600 euros. Each *sushiman* has to wash his own knives and to sharpen them. The knife is a part of him.

The chef does not cook, he only gives orders to organize the work of people within the kitchen. The practical work is the duty of a *sushiman* who has to know the seasons of fish and of all the ingredients needed in the kitchen. A *sushiman* knows the technique to cut fish and vegetables and he has to take care of his own knives which must to be cleaned and sharpened and he must never lend them to anyone. According to participant D the knife is a part of him. His experience as *sushiman* lasted 27 years, in which he started as a dishwasher in a kitchen of a restaurant in Japan. By observing *sushimen* in the kitchen, participant D started to increase his knowledge about sushi and its preparation. Before moving to Italy and working in a restaurant in Milan, he worked in a Japanese restaurant. His first experience in Italy was in Milan, and then he decided to open a new restaurant in Venice.

#### 3.4.2 Japanese restaurant customers.

According to participant D, the Japanese restaurant had mainly customers living in Venice but there were also people from Padua, Treviso and Ferrara who travelled to Venice to eat his sushi. Customers were aged from 25 years to 45 years. At the beginning of his activity in 2002, customers were frequent at the restaurant (almost three times a month) and they spent about 60 euros without beverages. The most sold dishes were *Maki* (a roll with seaweed outside), *Uramaki* (a roll with seaweed inside and rice outside) and *Onigiri* (rice balls). Participant D remembered a dish called “Sushi sashimi Mirai” which was about 45 euros as an example of the restaurant menu.

**Participant D:** Mainly people living in Venice but also a lot of people from Padua, Treviso and Ferrara who frequently went to Venice to eat my sushi.

They ranged from 25-45 years old. Older people went to eat in my restaurant from time to time.

### 3.4.3 Diffusion and difficulties.

For participant D opening a restaurant in Venice was a challenge since his colleagues had discouraged him. At the beginning the greatest difficulty was finding ingredients, especially fish, since the market in Venice only sold fish traditionally eaten by local people in Venice, and if he wanted any particular kind of fish, the price was expensive. Then, thanks to specialized suppliers, he obtained what he needed. The second difficulty was staff recruitment since he needed people who could explain to customers the differences between his product and the product of other restaurants or chain restaurants. The third difficulty was the competition by low cost sushi restaurants: for participant D the presence of low cost sushi restaurants could have led consumers to think that sushi was the same everywhere. Consumers might not be able to recognize the work and the knowledge a *sushiman* needed in preparing sushi.

**Participant D:** The main problem was to find ingredients. Since there were not any specialized suppliers who could provide us with the correct ingredients within 24 hours. Another problem was the fish market in Venice which proposed limited kinds of fish according to local tastes. If I asked for a particular fish, it was very expensive. Staff recruitment was also very difficult because they would have to explain the differences between the product proposed and that proposed by other restaurants. Competition of low cost sushi available in a lot of restaurants was a problem because customers did not recognize the differences in terms of work and knowledge behind sushi and they risked thinking that sushi was the same everywhere. In addition, strategies linked to low cost sushi can decrease the value perceived by customers. Today people have to eat quickly and don't realize what they are eating.

Talking about the economic crisis, participant D said that if in 2002 customers went out every week to eat sushi, when he left his job in 2007 they only went out once a month but

they spent more than before . This situation also changed the organization within the kitchen by focusing on avoiding wastes and guaranteeing fresh ingredients.

**Participant D:** The economic crisis influenced primarily the frequency with which customers went to eat. If at the beginning of the activity in 2002 they went to eat four times a month, with the economic crisis they went only once but they spent more than before. The economic crisis influenced our work in avoiding wastes: we bought less than before and we finished everything before buying other ingredients.

### 3.5 Conclusions.

As the interviews revealed, there are different ways used by restaurants to promote and diffuse sushi.

For the “Wok-sushi” restaurant, the diffusion is only based on the quantity of a product and of its customers. In fact, the “Wok-sushi” restaurant menu offers 60 sushi recipes (see appendix C), available all year round, and thanks to the formula “All you can eat” customers can eat everything for a cheaper price. The number of people the restaurant can host also suggests to us how important it is the role of quantity. Even with the quantity of a product, the management has to guarantee a high standard of quality, and this is possible thanks to the open view kitchen through which customers can observe the chefs working within.

**Participant A:** I think that the formula “All you can eat” is a very good way in order to propose a food originally very expensive to a larger group of customers. A lot of customers are young people and they do not buy sushi in traditional Japanese restaurant because of its price. Our strategy has allowed us to diffuse an expensive food with lower prices keeping the quality high. Every customer can observe the chefs while preparing sushi dishes. Having an open view kitchen is a sort of guarantee of quality for customers. Everything has to be clean and I must pay attention not to make mistakes .

The management of the selected Italian restaurant revealed how foreign cuisine could be promoted with local ingredients. The preparation of typical local food is also influenced by Japanese culinary techniques as for example *tempura* style of frying. In this case, the

purchase of local and high quality ingredients increases the price of the final product. Here the quantity is not a basic element (it is shown also by the number of customers the restaurant can host). Quantity is replaced by quality and is guaranteed by the experienced staff in this field. This knowledge with the selection of local ingredients persuades customers to eat in this kind of restaurant and to taste sushi too.

**Participant C:** customers rely on me knowing that I only use local and fresh fish, even the more skeptical customers decide to taste it almost at once. Then since our menu embraces both Italian traditional dishes and innovation, we can offer a bigger choice in terms of recipes and prices for a bigger and diversified group of customers.

The diffusion of sushi promoted by *kaitenzushi* is linked to the ability of the chef to understand the tastes of his customers. In fact, the chef of the *kaitenzushi* decided to offer new recipes with traditional ones in order to persuade even the most skeptical consumers to choose sushi not necessarily prepared with raw fish.

The fact that sushi has become so successful through its adaptation to local tastes is typical of *kaitenzushi* which has based its strategy on a study of customer tastes.

**Participant B:** Well it is not my merit, but a merit for sushi itself. In every place that sushi has arrived, sushi has been adapted to the tastes of local consumers. I only studied the tastes of my customers and with the traditional recipes I usually serve other creative version with cream cheese, *foie gras*, fruit. In this way, the concept of “cooking for my customers” allowed me to find a lot of particular recipes which had a lot of success among people not used to eat raw fish. So, big and diversified choice of sushi there was a bigger and diversified group of customers who watched me while preparing sushi and ask me for recipes to prepare it at home themselves.

For most Japanese restaurants the quality of ingredients is a basic point but the value of the final product is also influenced by the work, the knowledge and the ability of the chef: the *sushiman*. As the interviews have revealed, the presence of a *sushiman*, the

hierarchical organization within the kitchen of a Japanese sushi restaurant, and the values linked to his knives are particular features which only belong to Japanese restaurants.

**Participant D:** I started to work 27 years ago in a restaurant in Japan as dishwasher and then , by observing *sushiman* I started to train and to increased my skill in preparing sushi. I worked in a lot of restaurants in Japan before moving to Italy and worked in a restaurant in Milan. In order to improve my speed I worked in a *kaitenzushi* and what I said about knives, in a kitchen of a Japanese restaurant, is the same in a *kaitenzushi* : no one can touch the knives of a *sushiman*.

If we sum-up the elements on which sushi restaurants promote the diffusion of sushi, we could quote quality, price and taste. Every restaurant based its management on these elements in very different ways.

Quality is the element which attracts customers even in expensive restaurants and it allows the creation of loyal customers (as the interview in the Italian restaurant revealed). It seems that higher prices are justified by the purchase of higher quality ingredients, and by the chef's work behind the final product as in the case of participant D. Strategies about prices have promoted the diffusion of sushi in Italy amongst different types of customers from different social conditions and age.

Studies carried out in order to understand the taste of customers had positive effects within strategies of those restaurants, offering a bigger choice in the menu permitting customers to choose different kinds of sushi, or to choose different kinds of cuisine. The presence of a variety of sushi and cuisines within the menu attracted customers and if they didn't try it in the beginning, they would try it at a later date.

According to the management in question, the choice of target was also different. We can say that thanks to these differences in quality, price and taste that characterizes these four types of restaurants, sushi was diffused in Italy. Even if chefs have tried to give us an image of their typical customer, it is very difficult to understand their characteristics.

An important external factor which has influenced the strategy of the management of those restaurants is the economic crisis. According to these interviews, the economic crisis does not only influence the management of a restaurant by focusing on avoiding waste or creating other ways to attract customers, but it influences customers freedom

from going out to eat sushi, even if this trend involves the “Wok-sushi” restaurant. The interview revealed to us that, while this “Wok-sushi” restaurant focuses mainly on the number of customers, the Italian, Japanese and *kaitenzushi* restaurant rely on loyal customers who, despite the economic crisis, eat out. According to these interviews, customers eat out less frequently than before the beginning of the economic crisis.

**Participant A:** The decreasing number of customers is a big problem and the big risk is the waste of food. My chefs and I have a deep respect for food and it was a shock for us to clean the fridge by unservable food. At first we started as a normal restaurant but even if Chinese food and Thai food price were cheaper, few people stopped here to eat and few people ordered sushi. For this reason we decided to use the formula “All you can eat” asking customers to eat everything they ordered. The only rule inside my restaurant is that if customer wastes food, he has to pay for it in addition to the fixed price. We buy few fresh ingredients every day in order to finish everything as soon as possible and thanks to customers, every day we prepare good quality food. But, even with this choice of the formula, this year fewer people have come here to eat sushi and the provisions for the future are not good. The positive effect of the “All you can eat” formula seem to be vanishing and now I have to think of new strategies in order to attract more customers.

**Participant B:** We have a percentage of loyal customers who come here once a week but in general the economic crisis and the strong competition in this field have provoked a loss of customers in general. The quality of food was already high before the economic crisis because you cannot prepare good sushi without low quality raw materials. Then we focused on other aspects of this restaurant. For example the service: waiters must serve customers without being called by customers. So, I have to work more and more in order to create other original sushi recipes and attract more customers.

**Participant C:** The economic crisis has sensitized our attention on waste without losing control of the quality of ingredients. In this way we propose in our menu recipes in which wastes can be used, as we do with traditional

recipes, such as the “Panzanella” where old dried bread is used, with competitive prices.

**Participant D:** The economic crisis influenced primarily the frequency with which customers went to eat. If at the beginning of the activity in 2002 they went to eat four times a month, with the economic crisis they went only once but they spent more than before. The economic crisis influenced our work in avoiding wastes: we bought less than before and we finished everything before buying other ingredients.

So, the creation of a loyal customer is an important factor which permits sushi to be diffused. From this interview we can understand that the “Wok-sushi” restaurant, thanks to its low price menu, has encouraged people to approach sushi by substituting the original role of *kaitenzushi* in Japan (see paragraph 2 of this chapter). These interviews have shown that three of the four chefs have attended specialized courses in sushi, while only two of them have obtained a specialized diploma. Experience as an apprentice in a restaurant is a preference to school courses, and no law obligates a sushi chef to have these kinds of certifications.

**Participant A:** Before working here, he attended a course of about six months, in a sushi chef school here, in Italy with other people who wanted to learn how to prepare sushi where he obtained a diploma in this field. After this period, he worked in a Japanese restaurant in Rome as waiter and chef too, in order to understand the life inside a restaurant. Then he gave up his job and since I needed a chef, I decided to assume him.

**Participant B:** Well, I come from Brazil. My grandfather was Japanese and during the war escaped to South America. I was born there and when I was young I attended a school for sushi chef for ten years where I obtained a diploma in preparing and presenting sushi dishes. Then I moved to Italy and for eleven years I worked in a restaurant in Sicily and then I decided to move again and start work here.

**Participant C:** In my case observing my wife. In her case, she learnt by herself while attending the food science faculty in Japan, learning everything about preparing sushi. Nevertheless, every day spent in the kitchen is a sort of training for both of us through which we can improve our technique. There is no compulsory certification required by law in Italy but we want to offer safe and high quality products. No one can act as a sushi chef because working with raw fish can be very dangerous for the health. So it is not a question of legal or illegal for me but a question of professional ethics.

**Participant D:** The “University of Life”! I mean that I did not attend any course but since I had and I still have a passion for cooking, I started to work 27 years ago in a restaurant in Japan as dishwasher and then, by observing *sushiman* I started to train and to increase my skill in preparing sushi. I worked in a lot of restaurants in Japan before moving to Italy and worked in a restaurant in Milan. In order to improve my speed I worked in a *kaitenzushi* and what I said about knives, in a kitchen of a Japanese restaurant, is the same in a *kaitenzushi*: no one can touch the knives of a *sushiman*. A keyword of my story is “passion” because working in those kind of restaurant was very hard. There are also *sushimen* attending courses to obtain particular certifications in Japan but those certifications are not compulsory. In Japan, a *sushiman* needs a certification in particular cases such as *fugu* (pufferfish), but in other cases it is not necessary.

The differences amongst these kind of restaurants can suggest that even if all of them prepare sushi, this product is not the same in each place as participant D stated.

**Participant D:** Competition of low cost sushi available in a lot of restaurants was a problem because customers did not recognize the differences in terms of work and knowledge behind sushi and they risked thinking that sushi was the same everywhere. In addition, strategies linked to low cost sushi can decrease the value perceived by customers. Today people have to eat quickly and don't realize what they are eating.

In addition, each chef has a different conception about sushi and its value.

**Participant A:** It's not just a typical dish of Japanese cuisine, but it is also a big business for me, as a few years ago this vogue started amongst consumers in Italy.

**Participant B:** For me sushi is my life. I have spent many years learning the basic techniques about its preparation. Then I worked here in Italy for about twenty years in order to understand the taste of my customers. For me sushi is a way to realize my fantasy and to create something new expressively new for my customers.

**Participant C:** For me it is a dish in which the integrity of raw materials are linked to our territory. In fact we use only fresh fish of this area for sushi in order to valorize those raw materials and the place they come from.

**Participant D:** For me sushi is life, passion and sacrifice because while everyone is enjoying themselves, I had to work very hard in the kitchen. At the same time sushi was also a satisfaction when people appreciated what you had prepared and decided to come again. And with that appreciation money automatically arrived.

Four different strategies, four different places of consumption, four different conceptions of the same product have permitted sushi to integrate into Italy. The characteristic differences of the chefs has helped within the diffusion of sushi in both big cities and small towns. From the interviews carried out it was difficult to understand the frequency in which clients visited the restaurants and their characteristics . In the following chapter, I will focus on the consumers' characteristics and needs, in order to understand the rule played by them in the diffusion of sushi in Italy.

### 3. 6 Summary tables of collected data.

Data collected in chapter III are resumed in the tables as follow:

a)Table 3.2: data about restaurants.

	Opening date	Number of customers	Restaurant location	Restaurant activities
“Wok-sushi”	2012	maximum 170 customers	Marina di Cecina (LI)	Ethnic cuisine
<i>Kaitenzushi</i>	2007	Maximum 30 customers	Florence	Japanese restaurant with conveyor belt sushi and <i>yakiniku</i> (‘grilled meat’)
Italian restaurant	2006	Maximum 30 customers	Cecina (LI)	Wine shop with annex restaurant
Japanese restaurant	2002	Maximum 60 customers	Venice	Japanese restaurant specialized in recipes made only with raw fish

b)Table 3.3: data about staff.

	Number of workers	Number of chefs	Previous education regarding sushi	Specialized diplomas
“Wok-sushi”	6	2	School for sushi chef in Italy	Yes
<i>Kaitenzushi</i>	3	2	School for sushi chefs in Brazil	Yes
Italian restaurant	2	2	Food science faculty in Japan	No
Japanese restaurant	6	3( 1chef+2sushimen)	None	No

c)Table 3.4: data about customers.

	Age of customers	Promotion	Medium cost	Most requested dishes
“Wok-sushi”	15-60 years	Radio and leaflets	€17	<i>uramaki</i>
<i>Kaitenzushi</i>	20-55 years	Web site, social network, video posted on the Internet, commercial advertising	€30	Sushi with salmon
Italian restaurant	20-60 years	Word of mouth advertising	€40	<i>Nigiri</i> sushi and sashimi
Japanese restaurant	25-45 years	Spot publicity	€60	<i>uramaki</i>

## Chapter IV: Consumers

### 4.1 Survey and quantitative data.

The findings of the quantitative method are written below. The names of the hundred participants of this survey, fifty men and fifty women, has been omitted and substituted by a pseudonymous in the case of opened questions. Through the analysis of the quantitative data we can understand the general features and characteristics of sushi consumers and their preferences in order to understand in which way they contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy. With this data it is also possible to answer questions and test the hypotheses stated in chapter I.

All the data collected with this online survey are anonymous and it is impossible to know who has answered any particular question. Data linked to participants such as gender, profession, annual income and education are anonymous. Thanks to personal information provided by participants the same question could be analyzed from different points of view, giving a deeper knowledge about the phenomenon.

In order to collect basic information in order to understand the characteristics of a medium sushi consumer, I created 19 questions<sup>17</sup>. After that I created an account with username and password in a web site<sup>18</sup>, I inserted the questions into the program on the site and I shared the survey on my personal page in the social network (Facebook). A hundred volunteers answered and shared the same questionnaire. The web-site program of the survey blocked that the same account of the same social network being used more than once.

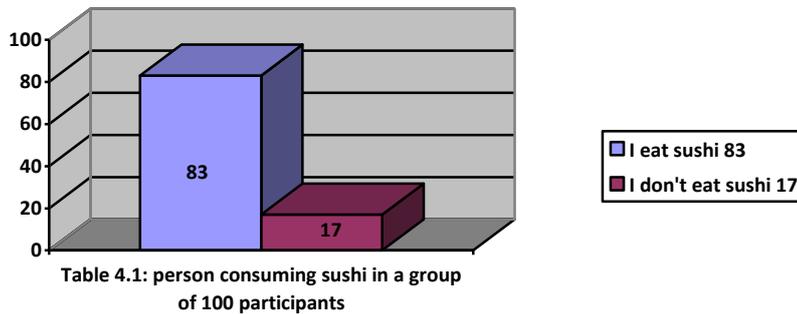
When the hundred participants had answered those questions, the survey was closed automatically by the web site and no one could answer those questions anymore. Then, the web site itself, organized the answers and created tables showing the results of the questionnaire. The answers to these opened questions have been listed and each answer has been allocated a number.

The results of the survey are illustrated and summarized in the following paragraphs of this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> the questions of the survey are available in appendix A.

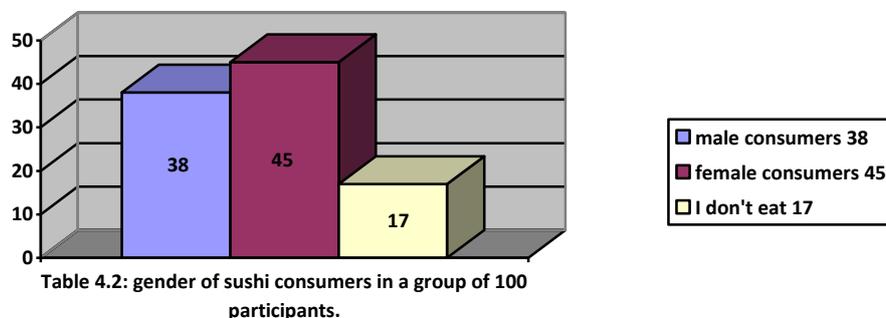
<sup>18</sup> the web site I used for this survey is (<http://it.toluna.com/>)

#### 4.2 The gender and age of sushi consumers.



(Table 4.1) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked if they ate sushi or not and 83% of them did (table 4.1). Inside this percentage, 45% is composed of female consumers and the 38% by male consumers. Only 17% of the participants answered saying that they were not used to eating sushi (table 4.2).



(Table 4.2) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

Analyzing the age of participant to survey, table 4.3 revealed that 13 participant were under 18 years, 75 participant aged between 18 and 35, 12 participant were between 35 and 54 years. Consumers under 18 years were the 3,6% of the total sum of consumers, while 8 participant aged between 35 and 54 years were the 9,7% of total consumers in the group of participants.

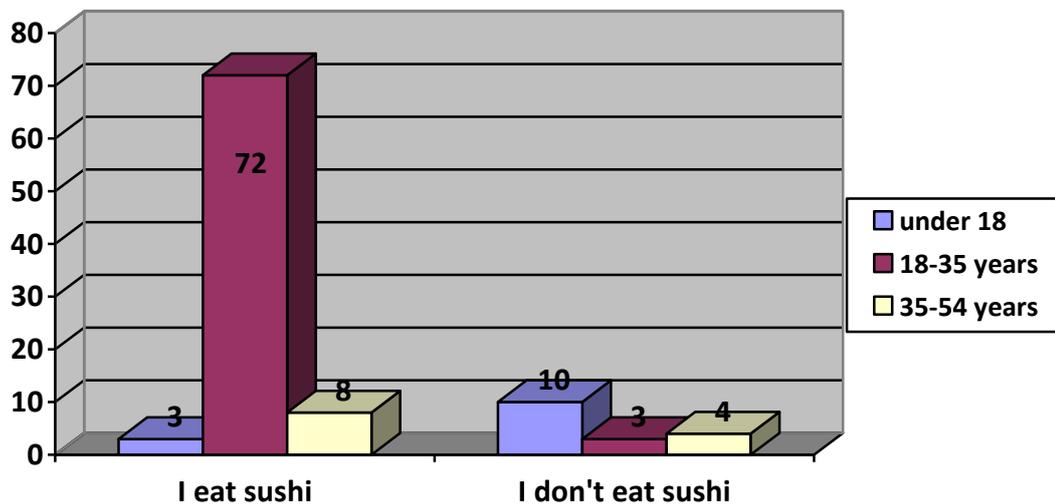
Table 4.3: participants' age.

	Under 18	18-35 years	35-54 years	total
I eat sushi	3 (3,6%)	72 (86,7%)	8 (9,7%)	83
I don't eat sushi	10 (58,8%)	3 (17,6%)	4 (23,6%)	17
total	13	75	12	100

(Table 4.3) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

According to the survey 3 participant under 18 years consume sushi while 10 participant of the same age didn't. 72 participant aged between 18 and 35 years eat sushi (86,7% of the consumers)(table 4.4)

Table 4.4: age of sushi consumers in a group of 100 participants.



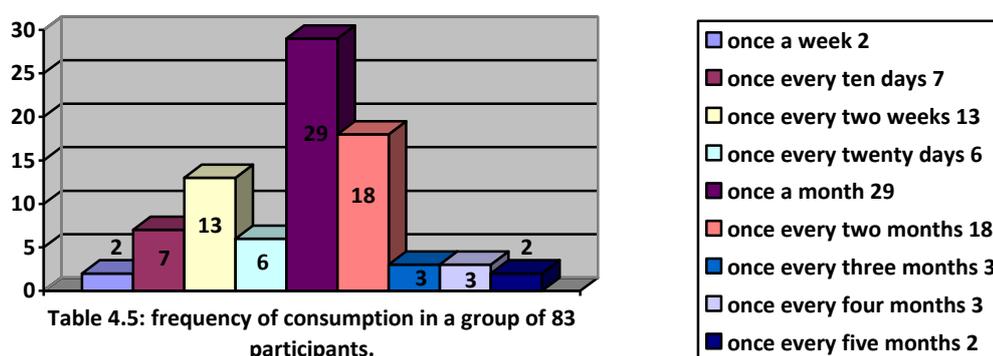
(Table 4.4) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.3 Place of residence of participants.

There is no particular area in which participants live. There is a concentration of participants in Northern Italy, in particular the Lombardia, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia. Then going southwards, participants are concentrated in the areas of Florence and Pisa, the coastal area of Tuscany, Ancona and the coastal area of the Marche region. The presence of participants is lower in Southern Italy and on the islands (Sicily and Sardinia).

#### 4.4 Frequency of consumption.

Asked how many times they ate *sushi*, 2 participants went once a week, 7 once every ten days, 13 once every two weeks, 6 once every twenty days, 29 once a month, 18 once every two months, 3 once every three months, 3 once every four months, 2 once every five months (table 4.5).

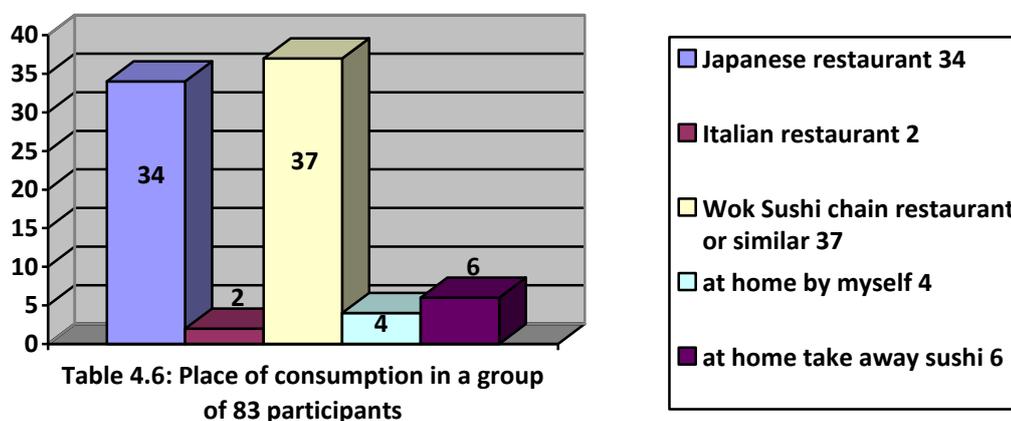


(Table 4.5) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.5 Place of consumption.

Asked where they usually ate sushi, 34 went to a Japanese restaurant offering other Japanese recipes, 2 went to Italian restaurants offering both Italian recipes and sushi, 37 went to “Wok sushi” chain restaurants or similar restaurants, offering Japanese, Chinese and other kinds of cuisine with “All you can eat” formula. 4 ate sushi at home

and prepared it by themselves while 6 ate take-away sushi at home. 17 of participants didn't eat sushi (table 4.6).



(Table 4.6) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.6 Travelling to eat.

Participant were asked if they travelled from their own city to eat sushi and, 55 replied that they ate sushi in their own city and 45 travelled to other cities to eat sushi. Those who said that they ate sushi in a different city, justified their choice saying that they usually worked, studied or lived in that city. Others answered saying that they preferred to move because big cities offered more choices in terms of restaurants, prices and quality.

#### 4.7 Home made sushi.

According to this survey, 25 prepared sushi at home, 58 never prepared sushi at home and 17 didn't eat sushi. People who said that they prepared sushi at home, said that they watched video-tutorial programs on the internet (41%), they attended courses of sushi preparation(2%), they learnt through books regarding cuisine and sushi (12%) thanks to Japanese friends who taught them (9%) and only 1% learnt through their own experiences in restaurants offering sushi (table 4.7).

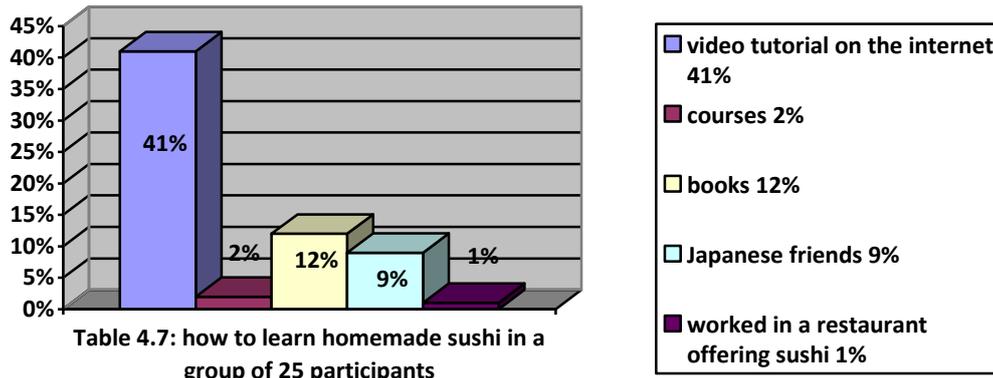


Table 4.7: how to learn homemade sushi in a group of 25 participants

(Table 4.7) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.8 Choice and influencing elements.

Participants were asked what were the elements which had influenced their choices about sushi restaurants. 20 participants said that their choices had been mainly influenced by prices , 3 by fish quality, 10 by restaurant appearance, 12 by friends suggestions, 5 by comments in internet about that restaurant, 2 by dish appearance. 17 participants didn't eat sushi (table 4.8).

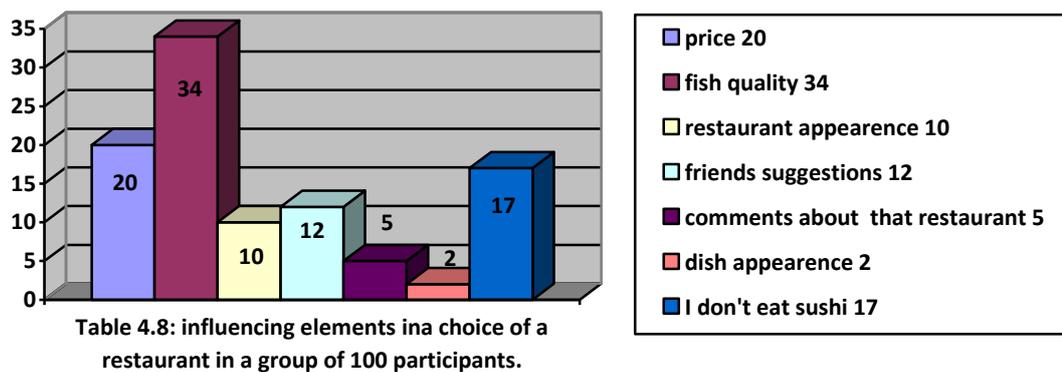


Table 4.8: influencing elements in a choice of a restaurant in a group of 100 participants.

(Table 4.8): Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.9 Alone or not? The value of sushi consumption and the image of sushi.

Amongst the consumers, 3 of the participants went alone to a sushi restaurant while 80 stated that they went to sushi restaurants with others. 17 stated that they didn't eat sushi.

With regards to the values perceived by the participants, 31 of them didn't perceive sushi as a "status" saying that sushi is now available everywhere with a lot of competitive prices. One participant in particular said that:

Participant N.18: "I wouldn't consider it a "status", for me it's normal. I look at it as a gift to myself when I want to spend a special evening out with my friends. I often take it at home just like pizza!"

28 participants answered that it was a good and healthy dish and it's consumption represented a good alternative to the normal diet or to ordinary recipes.

Participant N.8: "It means eating something different and light."

Participant N.68: "It's good, healthy and light. It's another way to spend an evening eating out. In the Summer it is the only non-Italian cuisine I prefer."

24 participants consider sushi another way to approach Japan and its culture, closing the geographical gap between Italy and Japan.

Participant N.36: "For me, it means a link to a culture I love and visiting a country in which this culture was born. It is not a status but a way to feel near to a country where I left my soul, my heart and a lot of friends."

17 participants answered saying that they didn't eat sushi.

According to the participants of this survey, sushi is a typical recipe of Japanese cuisine with rice, raw fish and seaweeds. The image which is derived from Q11 is that sushi is a dish with healthy properties, delicious and light. Someone underlined the "exotic" element which is linked not only to the ingredients but also to the style of cooking so

different from Italian one. What emerged in answer N.66 is the gradual success amongst consumers skeptical about the consumption of raw fish:

N.66: “It has become a fashionable recipe everywhere. To be honest, I didn’t like it much at the beginning. Then, with the passing of time, I started to appreciate it, if well cooked. I think that its worth can be considered only in relation to Japanese cuisine.”

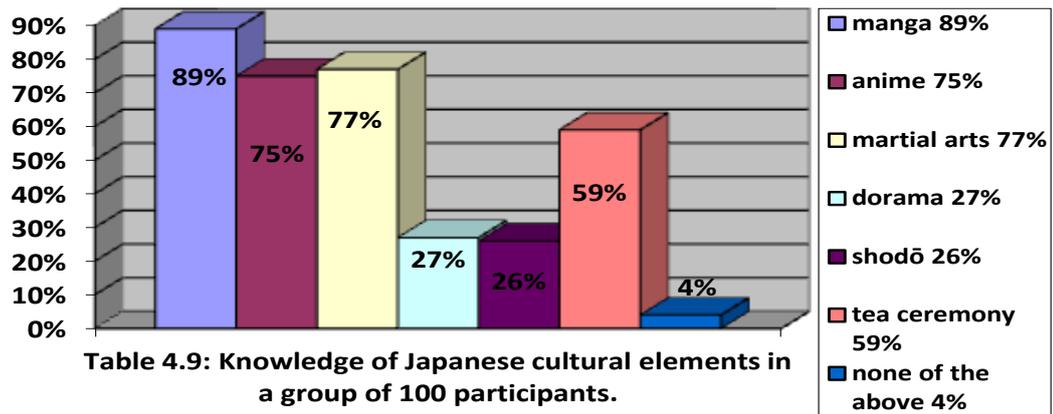
#### 4.10 Raw fish and images linked to sushi.

Asked if raw fish was a problem, 61 participants said that it wasn’t a problem, 23 said that it was a problem for some kinds of fish but in general it was not a problem, 9 said that they didn’t like the idea of eating raw fish but they could eat it. 7 said that it was a big problem and they usually ordered sushi without raw fish.

Participant were asked what was the first image that sushi evoked in their minds, they said the imagined movie scenes inside a *kaitenzushi* or the restaurant in which they consumed *sushi*, the red color of tuna meat, the smell of ginger, the taste and the colour of *wasabi*.

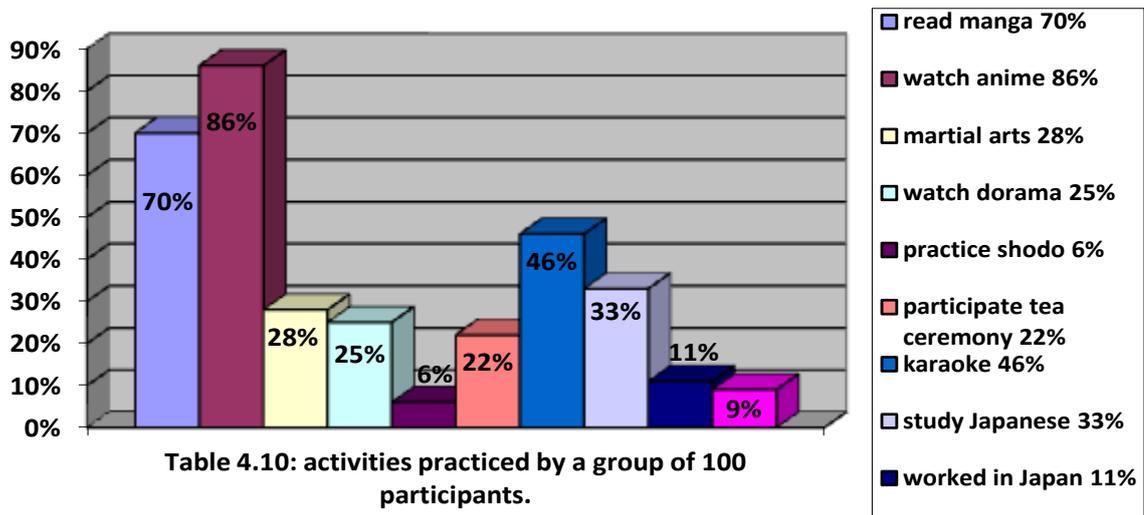
#### 4.11 Sushi and other Japanese cultural elements.

Participants were asked if they knew of other Japanese cultural elements and, 89% of them knew manga, 75% anime, 77% martial arts, 27% *dorama*, 26% *shodō* and 59% the tea ceremony. Only 4% did not know anything of these cultural elements (table 13).



(Table 4.9) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

70% read manga, 86% watched *anime*, 28% practiced martial arts, 25% watched *dorama*, 6% practiced *shodō*, 22% participated in tea ceremonies, 46% practiced karaoke, 33% studied Japanese, 11% worked in Japan, 9% did not do any of these activities (table 4.10).



(Table 4.10) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

These two tables (table 4.9 and 4.10) revealed a wide diffusion and knowledge of other Japanese cultural elements amongst the participants. Nevertheless, asked if there were some links between sushi consumption and those activities, 53 participants said no links. A common point of view for people linked to this group is that creating links within sushi and other Japanese cultural elements could provoke stereotypes linked to Japan and its cultural world.

Participant N.36: “I don’t think there is a link between appreciating a dish and being interested in some aspects of a different culture. I love Japan and a I practice a lot of activities linked to Japan but I hate raw fish, steamed rice or soy sauce..”

Participant N.47: “Not necessarily. Very often, people eat sushi without the knowledge of the Japanese culture. This is because sushi is sold and consumed in restaurants, a place to which everyone goes. In order to know other aspects of the Japanese culture you need information while with sushi you only need to walk around your own city and collect some leaflets about sushi restaurants inviting you to taste the seaweed roll with raw fish inside”.

47 participants thought that there is a link between sushi consumption and being interested in other Japanese cultural elements. Many of them said that being interested in the Japanese culture could encourage people to be interested in Japanese food since food and culture could not be separated. In some cases, participants said that being interested in sushi and consuming it could be a consequence of being interested in other Japanese cultural elements.

Participant N.93: “I think that to appreciate a typical recipe of a nation might move people to widen their knowledge about the culture and the traditions of that nation; so I think there is a link”.

Participant N.75: “ I think there is a link because, food is a part of culture itself. If we approach the Japanese culture, I think that the

idea of tasting sushi should be spontaneous, considering that it is possible to eat sushi anywhere in Italy”.

#### 4.12 The first approach to sushi and knowledge about its recipe.

Participant were asked how they approached sushi, a lot of them answered that they had become familiar with sushi through television and *anime*. Others said it was thanks to friends and members of the family. There were also those who had approached sushi thanks to overseas travels.

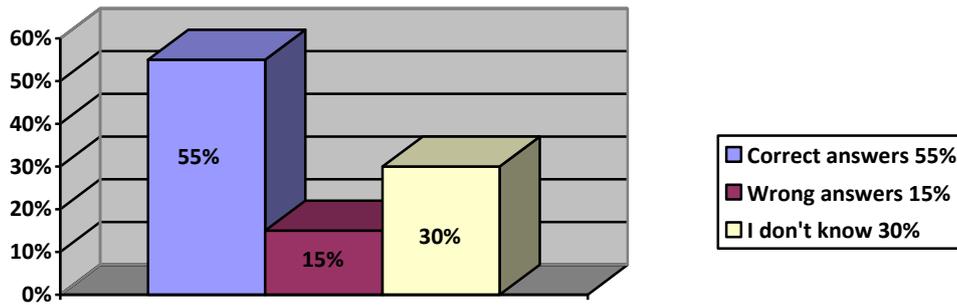
Participant N.30: “ Reading manga and watching anime” .

Participant N.29: “My parents are interested in Asian cuisine and since I was a child we used to go restaurants to eat sushi”.

Participant N.12: “ I went out with some friends of mine and we went to a restaurant in which I tried it for the first time”.

#### 4.13 Consumers knowledge about sushi.

Giving them three pictures of three different recipes of sushi, and asking the participant what kind of sushi was represented, a ratio of 55% of answers were correct while a ratio of 30% of participants said they had no idea. Only 15% gave a wrong answer (table 4.11).



**Table 4.11: correct and wrong answers about sushi in a group of 100 participants.**

(Table 4.11) Source: survey created by the author; started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 and closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.14 Interpretation of the results.

In the group of the hundred participants, only seventeen people said that they didn't eat sushi. If we want to draw a profile of a typical sushi consumer, this survey reveals a percentage of consumers who are mainly women, with an age between 18 and 35 years old. Consumers in general don't eat sushi very often, about once every two or three months in a *sushi* restaurant. Many consumers went to a "Wok-sushi" chain restaurant and Japanese restaurant, while few consumers ate sushi in an Italian restaurant which offered sushi on their menu.

If we look at the interviews with the Italian restaurant management and the "Wok-sushi" chef (chapter3), this trend is reflected in the choices of business strategies adopted by each management: the "Wok sushi" restaurant focuses on quantity of customers by attracting them with low cost food and the Italian restaurant manager focuses on local and quality ingredients with higher prices and fewer tables influenced by the type of customer. There is little difference in terms of percentage (only 10%) between consumers travelling from their town and people who eat sushi in their own town. As the opened questions (Q5)<sup>19</sup> suggested, this could be explained by the absence of those kinds of restaurant in particular urban areas but also by the larger choice that big cities offer in terms of price, competition and quality.

<sup>19</sup>see appendix A.

What a customer needs in these restaurants is good fish quality as the survey has revealed. Few consumers seem to be influenced by prices even if the majority of them ate sushi in cheap places such as “Wok sushi”. Another point of view is that the strategy of “Wok sushi” restaurant in preparing low cost sushi is not a synonym of bad quality and the presence of the open view kitchen could be a sort of guarantee for customers.

Few consumers prepare sushi at home and the majority of them rely on specialized books or tutorial programs available on the internet while consumers eating sushi in a restaurant are influenced in choosing a restaurant mainly by its price and fish quality. Consumers in Italy go to sushi restaurants with other people and few of them didn't eat raw fish. Many of these consumers were able to distinguish sushi recipes, showing that they had sufficient knowledge of it. The use of internet has been important not only to understand how to prepare sushi, but also with the diffusion of other Japanese cultural elements such as manga or *anime*.

Talking about other Japanese cultural elements, many participants had some knowledge of them: for example, a large percentage of the participants watched *anime* or read manga. On one hand it doesn't seem to have any correlation with sushi consumption because, as the answers to the opened questions suggested, not all sushi consumers have a wide knowledge about Japan or practice any of the activities the survey proposed. It could also present a clichéd image which doesn't reflect reality.

On the other hand, the comparison of the percentage of sushi consumers and the percentage of consumers which practiced or knew of such cultural elements, suggested the diffusion of the Japanese culture in Italy.

In northern Europe, the diffusion of sushi seems to have been accompanied by the diffusion of other Japanese cultural elements (Milligan, 2006:1). There might be and might not be a link in terms of cause and effect of sushi consumption and other elements and this is shown in the experiences furnished by the answers to the opened questions. In fact as some participants said, many of them were introduced to sushi by manga or *anime* in which characters ate sushi, but many of them approached it thanks to friends who invited them to eat it.

What is important to notice is that the majority of the participants were aged between 18 and 35 years and they were influenced in their choices by price and fish quality. According to the answers to the opened questions, sushi is a valid substitute to pizza or other kinds of Italian foods with low prices.

It means that the diffusion amongst consumers has occurred in very different ways according to the experience of each individual, but it also means that this promoted the diffusion of this consumption amongst people offering a competitive price and serving fish of good quality at the same time. In this sense the diffusion of sushi amongst consumers cannot be divided by the role of sushi restaurants in promoting and offering this kind of food.

## **Chapter V: Conclusions.**

### 5. Conclusions.

In this chapter, not only the conclusions about the findings of the research, but also limitations and problems found during the research are questioned.

#### 5.1 Findings of the research: the role of producers.

The results of the study suggests that the diffusion in Italy of sushi has derived from four elements: firstly, the presence of different kinds of restaurants which propose different products. These different restaurants have different business strategies which allow sushi to be presented in different menus with different prices (see appendix C, D, E and F).

Secondly, restaurants have the merit for having understood the interests of the consumers for sushi, and their different business strategies were created to satisfy what their customers needed. Basic needs such as quality, price and taste have been used by restaurants as a foundation in order to develop their business strategies which involve not only price but also the building of the restaurant and its internal organization (see table 3.2).

Thirdly, the ability of *sushimen* in understanding the taste of their customers and allowing sushi to be modified and to be eaten sooner or later by people skeptical of eating raw fish. *Sushimen* also study the particularity of local ingredients, and by using them, attract many customers.<sup>20</sup>

Fourthly, the role of choice: today there is not only one kind of restaurant offering sushi and all the restaurants analyzed in this research do not offer only sushi in their own menu (see appendix C, D, E and F).

Sushi consumers behaviour during the Great Recession is closely related to the frequency with which people ate out which, according to interviews, has decreased. At the same time the Great Recession has affected not only consumers but also chefs who adapted their strategies to the new contest.

<sup>20</sup> see Lee MILLIGAN, “*Japanese cuisine and the Japanisation of Europe*” , in *Kontur*, nr.13, 2006, pp. 1-3.

Nevertheless, thanks to the creation of loyal customers, sushi restaurants continue to sell sushi. The interviews revealed profound differences in the organization of each restaurant and in the work behind the creation, those differences suggested that even if you can eat sushi anywhere, sushi is not the same.

## 5.2 Findings of the research: the role of consumers.

Even with the presence of low cost sushi restaurants, frequency in which consumers go out to eat sushi has declined and this is confirmed by the survey (table 4.5). What the study suggests is that the Great Recession has not stopped the consumption of sushi, but it has focused consumers attention on their budget, changing their habits in terms of frequency of consumption (table 4.5 and appendix C, D, E and F).

The study revealed that the diffusion of sushi amongst consumers is accompanied by the diffusion of other Japanese cultural elements such as *anime* and manga (table 4.9 and 4.10) but, that does not mean that there is a correlation between the consumption of sushi and the interest for other Japanese cultural elements. Since Griswold (2008:12) defined a cultural object “as shared significance embodied in form”, the study revealed that sushi could also be considered a cultural object. Behind the consumption of sushi there is its history (see chapter 2), the work of chefs who permitted receivers (customers) to appreciate this food and there is the creation of particular place (see chapter 3) of consumption with the purpose to attract and to satisfy their own customers.<sup>21</sup> The study showed that consumers in the number of participant to survey, aged between 18 and 35 years, were in total the 86% (table 4.3) although we could find older people who ate sushi. This means that today young consumers will be the older consumers of the future and the forecast is that the consumption of sushi will increase in the future. Answers to the survey showed that consumers consider sushi a valid alternative to other meals consumed outdoor and they linked values such as health to this dish and those elements seem to encourage people to go out and eat sushi.

<sup>21</sup> see: Wendy GRISWOLD, “Culture and the cultural dismond” in *Cultures and socialites in changing world*, Sage publications, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Thousand oaks, California, 2013, pp. 11-16.

### 5.3 Problems and difficulties found during the research: questions without answers.

This research was subjected to problems and difficulties. The first problem was the scarcity of reliable documentation about the diffusion of sushi in Italy. Few scholars had focused on sushi diffusion in northern America and Europe such as Cwierka (2000) and Milligan (2006) and their research focused primarily in particular areas of Europe and mainly in a big city such as London.

Few of them wrote about the situation of southern Europe. For this reason, even if their written works are appreciable, they can be seen as too general. The second difficulty is regarding the interviews: one of participants did not speak Italian and his ideas had to be quoted by a third person which could have caused misinterpretation.

Another problem encountered was that the characteristics of restaurants chosen might have been different to other existing restaurants which belonged to the same category. One problem regarded parts of the survey: the survey may not reflect the real situation of a single participant.

Another problem faced was that the replies from the fifty men and fifty women participants which were coincidental. If the proportion between that was different, then it made the statistics using participant genders difficult. An ulterior problem regarding the online survey was the honesty of the participants: the web site that had been used for this type of survey blocked any further entrance from those who had Facebook from participating again. But if a participant had more than one profile he could participate as many times as he/she wanted. Even if the research demonstrated how sushi went popular in Italy by focusing on the role of producers and consumers, questions about certifications and quality were still unanswered. Only two participants interviewed have certifications specializing in sushi. There are no recognized documents available to help consumers understand the quality of food and the ability of the chef. How to recognize good quality sushi? Is price the only element on which we rely on in order to recognize the quality of sushi?

Lastly, this work provides data regarding a limited period of time. It is for the same reason that further studies undertaken could reveal a different situation both analyzing

the chefs and the trend amongst consumers or could extend or be contrary to the findings of this study, revealing new characteristics amongst chefs and new forms of consumer behaviour regarding sushi consumption.

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## Appendixes

### **Appendix A**

Online survey.

Personal questions about the participant:

.What is your genre?

- male
- female

.What is your age?

.What is your education?

- elementary diploma
- middle school diploma
- high school diploma
- bachelor
- master
- apprenticeship
- technical school
- old system degree
- doctorate
- other
- I do not answer

.What is your job?

- top manager
- manager/ administrator
- supervisor
- teacher
- clerk
- freelance
- agricultural entrepreneur
- artisan
- skilled worker

- unskilled worker
- housewife
- retired
- student
- unemployed

. What is your annual family income?

- <15.000€
- 15.000€-19.999€
- 20.000€-29.999€
- 30.000€-39.999€
- 40.000€-49.999€
- 50.000€- 59.999€
- 60.000€-69.999€
- 70.000€- 79.999€
- 80.000€- 89.999€
- 90.000€-99.999€
- 100.000€-149.999€
- 150.000€- 199.999€
- 200.000€ -249.999€
- >250.000€

Questions:

Q1. Have you ever eaten sushi?

- yes
- no

Q2. How many times do you eat sushi in a month?

- once a day
- once a week
- once 10 days
- once two weeks
- once 20 days
- once a month
- never

Q3. Where do you usually eat sushi?

- Japanese restaurant which offers also other Japanese recipes.
- Italian restaurant which offers also sushi.
- “Wok sushi” chain or similar restaurant, with “All you can eat” formula and offering other kinds of cuisine (Italian cuisine, Chinese cuisine..)
- At home, I can prepare it by myself
- At home, I order/buy takeaway sushi
- I don't eat it

Q4. Have you ever prepared sushi at home?

- yes
- no
- I don't eat it

Q5. If yes, where do you find the recipes?

- I watch online courses on internet and videos on You tube
- I read books about cooking and sushi
- I attend courses to prepare sushi
- A Japanese friend taught me
- I worked in a restaurant serving sushi and I learnt to prepare it
- I don't prepare it at home

Q6. Talking about a sushi restaurant, what influence your choice in selecting them for a meal?

- price
- fish quality
- dish presentation
- restaurant appearance
- parents and friends suggestions
- briefings and comments about that restaurant on the internet
- menu
- I don't eat it

Q7. When you go to a sushi restaurant, do you go alone or with someone?

- alone
- not alone
- I don't eat it

Q8. What is your opinion about eating sushi? What values do you think are linked to sushi consumption? Is sushi consumption a status?

Q9. What is sushi for you? How can you answer this question?

Q10. Is eating raw fish a problem for you?

yes, absolutely, in fact when I go to eat *sushi* with my friends I always choose dishes with cooked fish

I don't like raw fish but I can eat it

I can eat some varieties of raw fish but there are some I can't eat

no, absolutely it is not a problem for me

Q11. What is the first image you see when you think about sushi?

Q12. Except sushi, what other Japanese cultural elements do you know?

manga

*anime*

martial arts

*dorama*

*shodo*

*ikebana*

tea ceremony

nothing of above

Q13. Have you ever practiced any of the following activities?

I read manga (translated or in original language)

I watch *anime* (translated or in original language, with or without subtitles)

I practice martial arts (karate, judo, kendo, aikido...)

I practice *shodo*

I take part to tea ceremony

I sing *karaoke*

I study Japanese language ( at school, private institutes, university...)

I work in Japan

nothing of above

Q14. Do you think there is a link between eating sushi and being interested in other Japanese cultural elements?

Q15. How did you get to know about sushi?

Q16. What kind of sushi do you like most? Put them in order from the one you like most.

<i>Gunkan</i>	
<i>Temaki</i>	
<i>Hosomaki</i>	
<i>Nigiri</i>	
<i>Sashimi</i>	
<i>Chirashi</i>	
<i>Uramaki</i>	
<i>Futomaki</i>	
<i>Simple sushi</i>	

Image 1

Q1. Is it a *temaki*?

- yes
- no
- I don't know

Image 2

Q2. Is it a *gunkan*?

- yes
- no
- I don't know

Image3

Q3. Is it a *uramaki*?

- yes
- no
- I don't know

## **Appendix B**

### Interview

- 1)What is the main activity of your restaurant?
- 2)When did you open your restaurant?
- 3)Why did you decide to open it?
- 4) How many people worked with you?
- 5)How many customers can you host in your restaurant?
- 6)Who are your customers?
- 7)How did your chef learn to cook sushi?
- 8)What kind of sushi is mainly eaten by your customers?
- 9)How do you promote your restaurant?
- 10)What is sushi for you?
- 11)How much does a customer usually spend for his/her meal?
- 12)What prices do you offer in your Japanese menu?
- 13) How do you think you have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy?
- 14)What difficulties are you facing?
- 15)Has the number of customers decreased or increased?
- 16)How has the economic crisis influenced your work?

## Appendix C

Interview to a “Wok-sushi” owner.

1)What is the main activity of your restaurant?

My restaurant specializes in ethnic cuisine, especially Chinese, Japanese and Thai cuisine. We sometimes prepare pizza too. We have based our business on the formula “All you can eat” so we offer those particular foods with a fixed price.

2)When did you open your restaurant?

Well, I started with a Chinese restaurant twenty years ago when my wife and I moved from China to Italy. Many of our friends working in the catering industry had opened “Wok-sushi” restaurants but my wife was skeptical. After a period of doubt, my wife was persuaded and last year, in 2012, I opened this restaurant, the first in this area. At first we started as a normal restaurant, without the formula “All you can eat” and if you look at the menu, you can see the old prices of each dish. But since sushi is the most expensive on the menu, and the economic crisis didn’t tempt my customers to buy expensive food, a lot of fresh fish was wasted. So, in order to avoid this kind of waste and to allow customers to come here more frequently, I adopted the formula “All you can eat”. In this way, every evening, I finish the fish I have bought in the morning and customers can eat everything.

3)Why did you decide to open it?

I also have a Chinese restaurant which is now managed by my wife and it produces a large turnover but I wanted to work more, earn more money and diversify the origin of my income. Since there weren’t any other similar restaurants in this area, I decided to open one.

4)How many people work for you?

With me, six people: two chefs and three waiters and myself. We have a buffet service and waiters only have to take customers to their table, to serve them beverages and to clean the tables after consumption.

5)How many customers can you host in your restaurant?

We have tables inside and outside, in the garden. When we are full, we can host up to 170 customers.

6)Who are your customers?

We have a very diversified range of customers according to the season: from Autumn to Spring the majority of customers are composed of local people, especially young people from 15 to 30 years. In Summer, there are also tourists and foreigners from 40 to 60 years, passing by the restaurant who decide to eat something here. In Summer I can double my income thanks to tourism but there are also customers during the Winter.

7)How did your chef learn to cook sushi?

Before working here, he attended a course of about six months, in a sushi chef school here, in Italy with other people who wanted to learn how to prepare sushi where he obtained a diploma in this field. After this period, he worked in a Japanese restaurant in Rome as waiter and chef too, in order to understand the life inside a restaurant. Then he gave up his job and since I needed a chef, I decided to assume him.

8)What kind of sushi is mainly eaten by your customers?

Before we had introduced the formula “All you can eat” we served big groups of about ten people who would order ships (big wooden ships used as trays) with which we served sushi and sashimi. When I introduced the formula “All you can eat” the most kind of sushi eaten was *uramaki*.

9)How do you promote your restaurant?

I usually use leaflets and I ask to the local radio to prepare some spot publicity during its broadcasts.

10)What is sushi for you?

It's not just a typical dish of Japanese cuisine, but it is also a big business for me, as a few years ago this vogue started amongst consumers in Italy.

11)How much does a customer usually spend for his/her meal?

Well, the fixed menu price is 14,90 euros without beverages and dessert. Usually about 17 euros.

12)What prices do you offer in your Japanese menu?

Japanese food	Pieces/slices	cost
Miso soup	1 portion	2,50 €
Tartare (tuna)	1 portion	10,00 €
Tartare (mixed)	1 portion	6,00 €
Wakame seaweeds	1 portion	3,50 €
Salmon nigiri	2 pieces	3,00 €
Red tuna nigiri	2 pieces	4,00 €
Shrimps nigiri	2 pieces	3,00 €
Pink shrimps nigiri	2 pieces	4,00 €
Bass nigiri	2 pieces	3,00 €
Bream nigiri	2 pieces	3,00 €
Octopus nigiri	2 pieces	3,00 €
Eel nigiri	2 pieces	4,00 €
Raw shrimps	2 pieces	4,50 €
Mixed sushi	12 pieces	15,00 €
Salmon eggs gunkan	2 pieces	4,50 €
Caviar gunkan	2 pieces	4,00 €
Salmon gunkan	2 pieces	3,50 €
Tuna and wakame	2 pieces	4,00 €
Salmon temaki	2 cones	3,00 €
Red tuna temaki	2 cones	3,50 €
California temaki	2 cones	3,00 €
Tempura temaki	2 cones	3,00 €
California uramaki	8 pieces	5,50 €
Salmon and Philadelphia uramaki	8 pieces	6,00 €
Red tuna and cheese cream uramaki	8 pieces	7,00 €
Tempura uramaki	8 pieces	6,00 €
Tempura roll	8 pieces	10,00 €
Salmon Teppanyaki	1 portion	6,00 €
Eel	1 portion	7,00 €
Salmon and avocado	1 portion	5,50 €
Tuna and avocado	1 portion	6,50 €
Shrimps tempura	1 portion	7,00 €

Shrimps tempura with salmon eggs and cheese cream	1 portion	8,00 €
Salmon hossomaki	6 pieces	3,00 €
Tuna hossomaki	6 pieces	3,50 €
Bream hossomaki	6 pieces	3,00 €
Cucumber hossomaki	6 pieces	3,00 €
Chicken futomaki	1 portion	4,50€
Tempura futomaki	1 portion	14,00 €
Eel futomaki	1 portion	13,00 €
California futomaki	1 portion	9,00 €
Salmon sashimi	12 pieces	11,00 €
Tuna sashimi	12 pieces	12,00 €
Mixed sashimi	12 pieces	14,00 €
Mixed chirashi	1 portion	9,00 €
Eel chirashi	1 portion	11,00 €
Salmon carpaccio	1 portion	10,00 €
Red tuna carpaccio	1 portion	12,00 €
Mixed carpaccio	1 portion	10,00 €
Small sushi ship	16 pieces	15,00 €
Medium sushi ship	30 pieces	30,00 €
Big sushi ship	60 pieces	60,00 €
Mixed tempura	1 portion	10,00 €
Shrimps tempura	1 portion	12,00 €
Vegetable tempura	1 portion	6,00 €
Pressed sushi with salmon, avocado, shrimps	8 pieces	13,00 €
Udon	1 portion	7,00 €
Ramen	1 portion	7,00€
Yakitori	3 sticks	5,00 €
Tempuramen	1 portion	8,00 €

This is only a part of the complete menu. As I said, those were prices before we decided to adopt the formula “All you can eat”. We can prepare Chinese and Thai food too with cheaper prices but now they are also included in the formula; originally Chinese and Thai food was about 50% cheaper in comparison to Japanese food. We have also built a wood fired oven for the pizza; in this way customers can choose from a bigger variety of food according to their own tastes and their needs. This is not a big city so, if a customer arrives today to eat sushi, maybe it will pass a week or two before he wants to eat sushi again and it can be a problem for us. So we decided to offer different foods to allow customer to come here and eat frequently thanks to cheaper prices.

13) How do you think you have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy?

I think that the formula “All you can eat” is a very good way in order to propose a food originally very expensive to a larger group of customers. A lot of customers are young people and they do not buy sushi in traditional Japanese restaurant because of its price. Our strategy has allowed us to diffuse an expensive food with lower prices keeping the quality high. Every customer can observe the chefs while preparing sushi dishes. Having an open view kitchen is a sort of guarantee of quality for customers. Everything has to be clean and I must pay attention not to make mistakes .

14)What difficulties are you facing?

When I started this activity I thought that few customers would eat sushi for a question of taste but I was wrong. The biggest problem today is the economic crisis. Not only my “Wok sushi” restaurant but also my wife restaurant which is the only Chinese restaurant in a radius of 60 km, are subjected to low attendance. Over the last two years the number of customers in both the restaurants has regularly decreased and in addition taxes have risen. The rent of the building of my restaurant is about 30.000 € a year and each month I have to pay about 2.800 €. This year the monthly fee was raised to 2.900 €. To those fees I have to add gas, water, rubbish fees, food and beverages and the staff wages. We can earn a lot of money thanks to tourism but this Summer it was cold until the end of June and at the end of August everyone went home and I think that it will be good if I have success in closing the tourist season balancing the budget and breaking even with the bills.

15) Has the number of customers decreased or increased?

Well, if I compare the number of customers when I opened this restaurant and the number of customers of this Summer, certainly it has decreased.

16)How economic crisis influenced your work?

The decreasing number of customers is a big problem and the big risk is the waste of food. My chefs and I have a deep respect for food and it was a shock for us to clean the fridge by unservable food. At first we started as a normal restaurant but even if Chinese food and Thailandese food price

were cheaper, few people stopped here to eat and few people ordered sushi. For this reason we decided to use the formula “All you can eat” asking customers to eat everything they ordered. The only rule inside my restaurant is that if customer wastes food, he has to pay for it in addition to the fixed price. We buy few fresh ingredients every day in order to finish everything as soon as possible and thanks to customers, every day we prepare good quality food. But, even with this choice of the formula, this year fewer people have come here to eat sushi and the previsions for the future are not good. The positive effect of the “All you can eat” formula seem to be vanishing and now I have to think of new strategies in order to attract more customers.

## Appendix D

Interview to a *kaitenzushi* chef.

1)What is the main activity of your restaurant?

My restaurant is a Japanese restaurant with *kaitenzushi* on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, a room for *yakiniku* (grilled meat) in the basement and a room for the happy hour on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

2)When did you open your restaurant?

In 2007, so about six years ago.

3)Why did you decide to open it?

I'm a creative character and I wanted to propose new taste in new places. From when I was a child I liked experimenting with food tastes. Then I wanted to satisfy this curiosity and I decided to open this restaurant in Italy.

4)How many people work with you?

Ten people: three other chefs, the waiters and myself. Out of the staff just one sushi chef and a waiter work with me in the *kaitenzushi* area.

5)How many customers can you host in your restaurant?

With only the *kaitenzushi* we can host 30 customers, but on the other floors of the restaurant we can host about 100 customers.

6)Who are your customers?

We have mainly local customers but since we are in a touristic area, foreign people also come to eat here. Sometimes Japanese people who are on holiday here or working in this city come to eat sushi. They are usually between 20 and 55 years old.

7)How did your chef learn to cook sushi?

Well, I come from Brazil. My grandfather was Japanese and during the war escaped to South America. I was born there and when I was young I attended a school for sushi chef for ten years where I obtained a diploma in preparing and presenting sushi dishes. Then I moved to Italy and for eleven years I worked in a restaurant in Sicily and then I decided to move again and start work here.

8)What kind of sushi is mainly eaten by your customers?

Customers usually eat salmon so mainly all sushi prepared with salmon is the first to be finished.

9)How do you promote your restaurant?

The restaurant has a web site, then we have a profile on social networks, we have also prepared a video which is posted on the internet and some private television broadcast commercial advertising the restaurant.

10)What is sushi for you?

For me sushi is my life. I have spent many years learning the basic techniques about its preparation. Then I worked here in Italy for about twenty years in order to understand the taste of my customers. For me sushi is a way to realize my fantasy and to create something new expressively new for my customers.

11)How much does a customer usually spend for his/her meal?

It depends on the colour of the dishes on the conveyor belt but in general about 30euros. Young people between 20 and 30 years spend about 15 euros, while the older people about 30 euros.

12)What prices do you offer in your Japanese menu?

We start from a minimum of 2,50 euros a dish until 6 euros a dish. In general each dish contains two pieces of sushi.

13) How do you think you have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy?

Well it is not my merit, but a merit for sushi itself. In every place that sushi has arrived, sushi has been adapted to the tastes of local consumers. I only studied the tastes of my customers and with the traditional recipes I usually serve other creative version with cream cheese, *foie gras*, fruit. In this way, the concept of “cooking for my customers” allowed me to find a lot of particular recipes which had a lot of success among people not used to eat raw fish. So, big and diversified choice of sushi there was a bigger and diversified group of customers who watched me while preparing sushi and ask me for recipes to prepare it at home themselves.

14)What difficulties are you facing?

The first one is to find fresh fish since we don't live in a city near the sea. The second one is competition: in a city such as Florence you can create a *kaitenzushi* because you have a lot of customers every day of the year. But there is also strong competition especially with the “Wok-sushi” chain restaurants which have adopted this way of serving sushi. The only way to win customers is to keep the quality of food high therefore keeping prices competitive and this is very difficult now.

15)Has the number of customers decreased or increased? Why?

We have a percentage of loyal customers who come here once a week but in general the economic crisis and the strong competition in this field have provoked a loss of customers in general.

16)How has the economic crisis influenced your work?

The quality of food was already high before the economic crisis because you cannot prepare good sushi without low quality raw materials. Then we focused on other aspects of this restaurant. For example the service: waiters must serve customers without being called by customers. So, I have to work more and more in order to create other original sushi recipes and attract more customers.

## Appendix E

### Interview to an Italian restaurant chef.

1)What is the main activity of your restaurant?

My business is a wine shop with a little annexed restaurant. I prepare special dishes to be served with particular wines. In fact, my menu has mainly Italian dishes with the exception of sushi and sashimi.

2)When did you open your restaurant?

I opened the wine shop and the restaurant in 2006, 6 years ago.

3)Why did you decide to open it?

At the beginning I wanted to open a traditional Italian restaurant but, after the marriage with my wife who is Japanese, we decided to open a restaurant offering sushi and sashimi with Italian traditional recipes too. It was a decision to fuse our knowledge in food in order to offer to customer something new

4)How many people work for you?

Two people: my wife and I.

5)How many customers can host in your restaurant?

About 30 customers. We can host 15 people inside and 15 people in the zen garden outside. We decided to underline the fusion between Italy and Japan mixing furniture styles. You can see on the inside near the entrance we have inserted Japanese hand fans. We have painted a carp on the wall near to the kitchen and we have inserted *kanji* also in the restaurant sign.

6)Who are your customers?

Our customers are mainly Italian but in Summer we also have foreigners thanks to tourism. They can be divided into two groups: groups of young people between 20 and

30 years, attracted by the idea of tasting sushi, and groups of older people between 30 and 60 years who often order traditional dishes. It's a personal choice and there are also exceptions where some people over 30 order sushi, too!

7)How did your chef learn to cook sushi?

In my case observing my wife. In her case, she learnt by herself while attending the food science faculty in Japan, learning everything about preparing sushi. Nevertheless , every day spent in the kitchen is a sort of training for both of us through which we can improve our technique. There is no compulsory certification required by law in Italy but we want to offer safe and high quality products. No one can act as a sushi chef because working with raw fish can be very dangerous for the health. So it is not a question of legal or illegal for me but a question of professional ethics.

8)What kind of sushi is mainly eaten by your customers?

We mainly prepare *nigirisushi* served with *sashimi*. We only serve this kind of sushi because we are not a sushi bar or a Japanese restaurant. We mainly prepare fish recipes inserting a dish of sushi. This was something new for us because no Italian restaurant here has a similar choice in their menu.

9)How do you promote your restaurant?

I have only get a web site for the restaurant and the wine shop. Customers usually arrive here thanks to word of mouth advertising.

10)What is sushi for you?

For me it is a dish in which the integrity of raw materials are linked to our territory. In fact we use only fresh fish of this area for sushi in order to valorize those raw materials and the place they come from.

11)How much does a customer usually spend for her/his meal?

About 40euros, it depends on the kind of wine the customer decides to drink.

12) What prices do you offer in your Japanese menu?

The sushi and sashimi dish costs 14,50 euros for six pieces.

13) How do you think you have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy?

Thanks to our choices: if customers rely on me knowing that I only use local and fresh fish, even the more skeptical customers decide to taste it almost at once. Then since our menu embraces both Italian traditional dishes and innovation, we can offer a bigger choice in terms of recipes and prices for a bigger and diversified group of customers. I can also say that even if the customer chooses a traditional dish such as “Melanzane alla parmigiana”, eggplants are fried with *tempura* style and this gives the dish a particular taste that you cannot find in other traditional Italian restaurants. So what has happened, people have come here to eat this particular traditional food cooked in a different way and sooner or later they ask for me sushi too.

14) What difficulties are you facing?

My difficulties are linked to time and weather: fish must always be fresh, especially for sushi in order to guarantee quality to customers. Also the weather can be a problem for us: in case of storms here, we have to move southwards to buy fish; sometimes we cannot find the same kind of fish there and we are forced to offer consumers a different dish.

15) Is the number of customers decreased or increased? Why?

The number of customers hasn't decreased but the incomes derived from them. We have a lot of loyal customers but if I compare how much they spent five years ago with how much they spend now, there is a big difference. Now a customer spends about 40 euros, while six years ago, when I opened this restaurant, about 60 euros.

16) How has the economic crisis influenced your work?

The economic crisis has sensitized our attention on waste without losing control of the quality of ingredients. In this way we propose in our menu recipes in which wastes can be used, as we do with traditional recipes, such as the “Panzanella” where old dried bread is used, with competitive prices.

## Appendix F

Interview to a sushi man.

1)What is the main activity of your restaurant?

My restaurant proposes recipes made only with raw fish such as sushi, sashimi, tartare and served with light sauces in order to valorize the taste of the fish and other ingredients.

2)When did you open your restaurant?

The restaurant was opened eleven years ago in 2002.

3)Why did you decide to open it?

For a challenge. I was working as *sushiman* in a restaurant in Milan and every one discouraged me saying that opening a new sushi restaurant in a place such as Venice would be a failure. Nevertheless, I moved to Venice and I opened the restaurant with other people and I worked there for five years. Then I left my job in 2007 and I worked in another place but the sushi restaurant continued to attract customers for another 6 years. After eleven years from the opening, it closed.

4) How many people worked with you?

The staff was composed by six people: a dishwasher, a chef, two *sushiman* and two waiters. While the chef organized the work inside the kitchen, giving orders to the staff, *sushiman* were the responsible for the preparation of sushi. They have knowledge about the raw materials, the fish season and of other ingredients, the care of their own knives. In comparison with other kinds of cuisine, a *sushiman* has his own knives and he cannot lend them to other people inside the kitchen, they are personal and very expensive tools which cost can be about 600 euros. Each *sushiman* has to wash his own knives and to sharpen them. The knife is a part of him.

5)How many customers could you host in your restaurant?

About 60 people.

6)Who were your customers?

Mainly people living in Venice but also a lot of people from Padua, Treviso and Ferrara who frequently went to Venice to eat my sushi. They ranged from 25-45 years old. Older people went to eat in my restaurant from time to time.

7)How did your chef learn to cook sushi?

The “University of Life”! I mean that I did not attend any course but since I had and I still have a passion for cooking, I started to work 27 years ago in a restaurant in Japan as dishwasher and then , by observing *sushiman* I started to train and to increased my skill in preparing sushi. I worked in a lot of restaurants in Japan before moving to Italy and worked in a restaurant in Milan. In order to improve my speed I worked in a *kaitenzushi* and what I said about knives, in a kitchen of a Japanese restaurant, is the same in a *kaitenzushi* : no one can touch the knives of a *sushiman*. A keyword of my story is “passion” because working in those kind of restaurant was very hard. There are also *sushimen* attending courses to obtain particular certifications in Japan but those certifications are not compulsory. In Japan, a *sushiman* needs a certification in particular cases such as *fugu* (pufferfish), but in other cases it is not necessary.

8)What kind of sushi was mainly eaten by your customers?

They ate mainly Uramaki, maki and onigiri as traditional sushi and other creative recipes.

9)How did you promote your restaurant?

After one year from the opening we decided to promote our restaurant and with the spot publicity, people came to known about the restaurant and suggested it to their friends.

10)What is sushi for you?

For me sushi is life, passion and sacrifice because while everyone is enjoying themselves, I had to work very hard in the kitchen. At the same time sushi was also a satisfaction when people appreciated what you had prepared and decided to come again. And with that appreciation money automatically arrived.

11)How much did a customer usually spend for its meal?

They usually spent about 60 euros without beverages.

12)What prices did you offer in your Japanese menu?

It depends on the fish but for example there was a dish called “Sushi sashimi Mirai” and it cost 45 euros.

13) How do you think you have contributed to the diffusion of sushi in Italy?

It is very difficult to enter a propose a foreign food in a country with a huge and solid culinary base such as Italy. It is very difficult to propose a foreign food in Italy. But I think that my contribution to the expansion of sushi is the combination and the balance of tastes. I proposed raw fish with light sauces in order to allow customers to understand the original taste of that particular fish.

14)What difficulties did you face?

The main problem was to find ingredients. Since there were not any specialized suppliers who could provide us with the correct ingredients within 24 hours. Another problem was the fish market in Venice which proposed limited kinds of fish according to local tastes. If I asked for a particular fish, it was very expensive. Staff recruitment was also very difficult because they would have to explain the differences between the product proposed and that proposed by other restaurants. Competition of low cost sushi available in a lot of restaurants was a problem because customers did not recognize the differences in terms of work and knowledge behind sushi and they risked thinking that sushi was the same everywhere. In addition, strategies linked to low cost sushi can decrease the value perceived by customers. Today people have to eat quickly and don't realize what they are eating.

15)Had the number of customers decreased or increased?

During the period in which I worked there the number of customers increased.

16)How did the economic crisis influenced your work?

The economic crisis influenced primarily the frequency with which customers went to eat. If at the beginning of the activity in 2002 they went to eat four time a month, with the economic crisis they went only once but they spent more than before. The economic crisis influenced our work in avoiding wastes: we bought less than before and we finished everything before buying other ingredients.