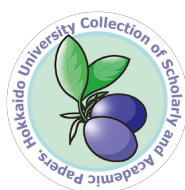




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A Study on Foreign Tourists Visiting Japan: Resolving Local Tourism Issues

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Since the pandemic, the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan has increased. In 2024 it exceeded pre-pandemic levels, reaching a record 36 million people (January to December 2024), approximately 1.5 times the previous year.

Of these foreign tourists visiting Japan, 66.5% were tourists from East Asia, and over 80% were independent travelers. Repeat visitors outnumber tourists visiting Japan for the first time, and their activities are shifting from shopping to activities and experiences, including entertainment services.

Cases of overtourism have been reported various parts in Japan. This refers both to qualitative issues, including inappropriate behavior among foreign tourists visiting Japan, as well as quantitative issues including overcrowding. This paper identifies issues and discusses measures to alleviate them.

The influx of foreign tourists into local communities means contact with different local cultures and standards. In tourist destinations large numbers of foreign tourists visit, where intercultural communication is likely to occur, it is useful to switch from high-context to low-context communication styles, and it is important to respond with clear codes. Simple textual information (so-called low-context information), including notices on bulletin boards that simply raise awareness of morals and manners, is not enough, and promoting a fundamental understanding of the background and values of local culture is also necessary. The World Tourism Organization has introduced the concept of the “Responsible Traveler,” which states that it is essential for travelers to treat respectfully the areas they visit and recommends that they learn about the local history and culture beforehand.

It would be effective to combine the promotion of an understanding of the intrinsic value of local tourism resources with appeals to improve morals and manners. The increase in repeat tourists from overseas means that they have opportunities to learn about Japan’s local culture and society. If interpretation could be used to improve awareness of the values of the local culture and society, it could help to alleviate these problems.

Local governments need to first understand the intentions and feelings of locals regarding local tourism and reach a consensus with locals before promoting the acceptance of foreign tourists. Thus, the governments need to provide locals with opportunities to deepen their understanding of local

development and tourism.

Japan's local tourism resources are diverse, but most of them have characteristics associated with public goods (non-rivalry and non-excludability). For this reason, increases in consumption (increased congestion), discourages consumer-use (reduced profits). The public nature of tourism resources makes them susceptible to overtourism.

Furthermore, at international airports in Japan, which are public goods, foreign tourists can be seen sleeping on benches and floors at night. This might be free riding on public goods. Condoning this kind of behavior at international airports gives the impression of lax management. Showing a country which demands adherence to the rules would serve as a warning against the selfish consumption of public goods often seen in overtourism.

However, overtourism occurring in marketized conditions where fees are charged is different. This represents excess demand within the market, and measures to rebalance demand by raising prices are required. By setting fair prices and making the basis for those prices reasonably clear, dual pricing for foreign tourists could be considered as an option.

In conclusion, there is no argument with the statement "Tourism: a Passport to Peace". It is precisely because of peace that the movement of people increases. However, the original purpose of tourism is exchange based on mutual understanding, and tourism that has a negative impact on locals and communities is not sustainable. It is essential to develop a tourism that contributes to sustainable development through consensus with local communities, improves the environment, and makes use of the original character of localities. The government, which is promoting the acceptance of foreign tourists, needs to control the quality and quantity of tourism activities. It is urgent to build consensus within local communities and then work to improve the systems and environments for foreign tourists.