Potentials And Challenges Of Tourism Development For Japan

Japan is an island country located on the Pacific coast of East Asia and consists of 6,582 islands; however, the main five islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Shikoku, Kyushu, and Okinawa (MLIT 2007). The physical geography of Japan mostly consists of forests, which make up about 68% of its land area, as well as some mountainous areas (The World Bank, 2016). Japan is also divided into 47 prefectures which are the basic governmental bodies of each prefecture (Web Japan, n.d.). According to census data from 2018, Japan had a total population of 126.5 million, and 97.8% of people were Japanese, while the rest of the 2.2% were foreign citizens. Most of the foreign citizens in Japan are from China, South Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Brazil (e-Stat, 2018). There are more than one group of indigenous people in Japan because of its many islands; however, the main groups of indigenous people are the Okinawans, who primarily originated from the southern islands of Japan, and the Ainu which primarily originated from the northern islands (IWGIA, 2019). The cultures of Japan were originally secluded, though its modern culture is now influenced by many of the major countries of the world (Haffner, Klett, Lehmann (2009). The major religions of Japan are Buddhism and Shinto, Shinto being Japan's indigenous religion and Buddhism being borrowed from India (Japan-Guide, 2020). The primary language of Japan is Japanese, with a minority of its languages being Chinese and Korean. The Japanese language borrows many of its characters from Chinese, although the Japanese share no genetic relationship with the Chinese (Deal, 2005). The Japanese economy is the third largest by nominal GDP and fourth largest by purchasing power parity (IMF, 2020). Its main industries are fishing, which accounts for about 15% of global fishing (CIA, 2020), as well as manufacturing, which accounts for about 24% of its GDP (Global Finance, 2020)., and has the third highest output of manufacturing in the world (The World Bank, 2018).

Tourism Statistics

The top inbound markets for Japan are primarily East Asian countries like China, South Korea, Taiwan, but also includes the US (JNTO, 2016). In 2018, Japan received around 31.2 million international tourists, and its tourism receipts totaled about $41.1 million (UNWTO, 2019). Japan is one of the most popular places for tourists, and has continued to grow during the 21st century, especially in the latter half of the 2010s (JNTO, 2020).

Importance of tourism in the country

Tourism plays a major part in cultural exchange, since Japan is almost totally comprised of Japanese people and the country is a series of islands, visiting the country is the best way to exchange cultures. In 2018, tourism contributed about 7.4% of Japan's GDP, making a noticeable impact in the country's GDP, but not a substantial impact (Knoema, 2018). However, the Japanese government does plan to expand its tourism industry, planning to reach the goal of 40 million visitors in 2020 (JMA, 2020).

Destination marketing

The administration for tourism in Japan is the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, also known as the MLIT. The MLIT is operated by the Japanese government and was created with the goal of planning cities, roads, buildings, transportation, as well as tourism. However, an extra-ministerial bureau of the MLIT is the Japan Tourism Agency, or the JTA which operates under the MLIT with the goal of making Japan a 'tourism nation', which means that the country is "good to live in, good to visit" (JTA, 2017). The main goals of the JTA are in its basic plan, which are to increase the number of: foreign visitors, international meetings held, nights for stay in accommodations, Japanese tourists internationally, and expenditure on tours in Japan (JTA, 2017). Japan is promoted through projects like the Inbound Travel Promotion Project, which is also known as the Visit Japan Project which is a project aimed at increasing the number of international tourists visiting japan by "quenching rumors … public appeal in overseas markets … [and] promotional programs for travel agents" (JTA, 2016).

Potentials for tourism in Japan

A potential for growth in tourism in Japan is the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games. The Olympics will be a good opportunity for Japan to attract many tourists and to expand its tourism industry even further, as the Olympics will help put a spotlight on the country, increasing the number of tourists who will want to travel to Japan. Another potential area for growth in Japan is its translational services. Being the only country that uses Japanese as its main language, most tourists will not be able to understand any Japanese, so more translational services will be needed to accommodate the growing number of tourists going to Japan. However, another potential area for growth in tourism is Japan's sparsely populated countryside. According to this article, "one of the major problems again is awareness … the world knows little of Japan's countryside" (BIJ, n.d.). By increasing awareness of the countryside, the Japanese government could provide more opportunities for tourism in these areas that will help its tourism industry grow even further.

Challenges for tourism in Japan

One of the biggest challenges for tourism development in Japan is the accommodation of the recent boom in tourists that the country is receiving. Mostly experienced in its most popular cities like Tokyo and Kyoto, the phenomena known as "tourism pollution" is occurring where many of the tourist attractions in Japan are not capable of handling the enormous number of tourists who are flooding into the country (Brasor, 2018). Many solutions have been implemented by both businesses as well as the Japanese government such as the implementation of "Japanese Only" signs and the implementation of the "sayonara tax" which requires tourists to pay an extra 1000 yen fee when leaving the country (Unseen Japan, 2019). However, another possible method of solving this issue is to create more tourist destinations that are not so close together so that tourists will be attracted to different places instead of them focusing on one main area. Another challenge for tourism development is the cultural and lingual barriers that exist between Japan and western tourists. There exist conveniences and services for the many Asian tourists that travel to Japan, but there are not as many for western tourists. For example, "in many souvenir shops, … staff who can speak Chinese or Korean are employed. However, it is often difficult to find someone who can communicate well in English. Thus, travelers from the United States and Europe often have trouble" (McCornac & Zhang, 2014). This issue can be solved by finding means to easily translate between western languages and Japanese in real time, such as through use of a translator, however the

structures of eastern and western languages are quite different that Japanese translators can be hard to find.