

Keynote Speech: “Tourism and Community Development”

Tourism’s Immense Benefits for Communities Worldwide

Mega Events Give Opportunity for Community Engagements



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Every time I return to Japan, I am more and more impressed by its unique beauty and culture that is unparalleled in the world. Japan is a story of contrasts: beautiful natural landscapes and bustling modern cities; time-honored traditions and cutting-edge technology.

Yet what is more impressive to me is Japan’s incredible tourism rebound, in spite of the great challenges that the country faced following the Tohoku earthquake in 2011.

This is proof of tourism’s resilience and the strong determination of the Japanese people. In this respect, it has been a great honor for UNWTO to support Japanese government and people in its tourism recovery and to see Japan experiencing such a tourism boom.

Last year, international tourists to Japan soared 24% to reach more than 10 million for the first time --- nearly double the number of its visitors in 2002. Similarly, tourism exports rose 27%, earning a record US\$15 billion. These outstanding results consolidate the dynamic growth of Asia and the Pacific, a region which is today tourism’s new center of gravity.

But these noteworthy results did not spring from nowhere. These are the successful outcome of the solid and cohesive efforts of the Japanese government to position Japan as a distinguished tourism nation. I would like to especially commend the government’s recent initiatives to facilitate the visa requirements for the nationals of several Asian countries, which led to a sharp increase in the country’s visitors.

These positive steps, as well as the upcoming mega-events of the Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo, renew our confidence that Japan will welcome its envisioned 20 million visitors by 2020.

The theme of this year’s JATA Tourism Expo, “The Power of Travel” presents a timely and compelling message at this significant moment when international tourism continues to consolidate as one of the defining socioeconomic phenomena of our time.

In 2012, for the first time in history, one billion tourists traveled the world in a single year, up from a mere 25 million in 1950. Last year, tourism powered ahead with 5% growth, reaching a staggering total of 1,087 million tourists and earning a record-breaking total of US\$1.4 trillion in exports.

Asia and the Pacific was once again a standout performer. The region posted the highest growth in the world with a 6% increase in international tourist arrivals and a noteworthy 8% growth in receipts, further asserting its position as a leader in the international tourism market.

Many reasons have spurred this upward trend, including the region’s increasing economic prosperity, openness in terms of visa facilitation, investment in infrastructure and technological proficiency. Looking ahead, our prospects remain positive. Data for the first six months of 2014 shows that international tourism continues to grow above expectations and that as such we will end the year with a growth rate of between 4% to 4.5%.

Such trends consolidate our confidence that by 2030 international tourist numbers will reach 1.8 billion as forecasted by UNWTO. A growth which will be much due to Asia and the Pacific. The region will welcome 535 million international tourists by 2030 --- a staggering 30% of the global market share as compared to 23% today. Moreover, Northeast Asia is forecasted to be the most visited subregion in the world.

With such progress and expansion, tourism has become one of the leading sectors of the global economy --- representing 9% of the world’s GDP, generating 1 in every 11 jobs and accounting for 6% of the total exports in the world.

But these impressive numbers only tell part of tourism’s greater story. As more and more tourists cross borders around the world, they bring forth immense opportunities that transform the lives of millions of people. I would like to share a personal story about one of these people whose lives have been touched by tourism.

A few years ago, when I was aboard a riverboat sailing across the Trang An River in rural Viet Nam, I had the chance to speak with one of the ladies who was paddling our boat through the waters. She told me that she was part of a group of local women who had created a community business of taking tourists on river tours. “Before, when I did not row the boat for tourists, my income was mainly from working in the rice paddies,” she said. Like many of the residents in that rural Vietnamese community, she was earning minimum wage through farming.

But things started to change when the River started attracting tourists.

“Today,” she said, “my work has given me and my family a more prosperous life than before. I was able to save enough money to build my own house.” This Vietnamese woman is just one of the many people whose lives have been profoundly changed by tourism.

And we, the tourism sector, are able to carry immense opportunities to them. For each time we travel, use local transport at a destination or buy products from a local market, we contribute to a long value chain that creates jobs, provides livelihoods, sends children to school, uplifts people from poverty and empowers local communities all over the world.

We are no longer just visitors of new places anymore --- in this globalized world; we are all fellow stewards of this planet and people. And this is the true “power of travel”.

Tourism’s power to transform communities around the world will be the focus of this year’s World Tourism Day on September 27.

It will be a great opportunity for all of us to grasp the full potential of tourism to deliver socio-economic opportunities and better livelihoods for local communities worldwide. As a people-based economic activity built on social interaction, tourism can only prosper if it engages the local population by contributing to social values such as participation, education and enhanced local governance.

Japan is a model example of this community engagement through its early adoption of homestay programmes with Japanese host families, which have been giving its visitors a full immersive and firsthand experience with Japanese culture, language and community. Providing local communities a clear role in tourism development leads to their empowerment, building better, stronger and more resilient societies.

Mega events also give a great opportunity for community engagements. No mega events would be successful if local people don’t have a sense of participation. It is absolutely important for private sector and local community to engage in events which are held in their area.

JATA Tourism Expo Japan Keynote Symposium

Establishing an Olympic Legacy as Groundwork for Japan as a Tourism-oriented Country; Strategy for and Route to Success Learned from Sydney and London



Taleb Rifai



John O'Sullivan



Christopher Rodrigues



Ryoichi Matsuyama



Yoshiaki Hongo

At the keynote symposium on the theme of Mega Events and Tourism — Creating a Novel Image of Japan on the Global Tourism Market, Prof. Yoshiaki Hongo of Tokyo Metropolitan University, Special Advisor to Japan Tourism Agency, acted as the moderator, and the panelists were Ryoichi Matsuyama (president, Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO)), Christopher Rodrigues (chairman, Visit Britain), Taleb Rifai (secretary-general, UNWTO), and John O'Sullivan (managing director, Tourism Australia). A discussion unfolded on how to utilize the Olympics in Japan, which aims to have 20 million inbound foreign visitors in 2020, to make Japan a tourism-oriented country.

John O'Sullivan, managing director of Tourism Australia, was the first to give a presentation, and he described the Sydney Olympics held in 2000 from the perspectives of strategy, partnerships and tactics, brand impact, legacy and assessment, post-Olympic developments, and so forth.

First, concerning strategy, he explained that building began in 1993 immediately after the decision was made to hold the games in Sydney. By publicizing not only the events at the games but also Australia's tourist attractions, they attempted to boost Australia's global brand power.

He noted that a survey implemented in 2001 revealed the following outcomes as a result of the brand-strengthening strategy: (1) recognition of Sydney and Australia rose dramatically, (2) people's impression of Sydney and Australia became more favorable, (3) interest in visiting Sydney and Australia increased.

Furthermore, O'Sullivan stressed the following four points as the legacy gained from the Sydney Games: (1) infrastructure development, (2) establishment of trust through holding of the event, (3) the ability to hold a large event, and (4) expansion of awareness of tourism's value and importance. He shared the fact that, arising from this legacy of the games, the number of foreign travelers visiting Australia and the number of business events have increased.

Christopher Rodrigues, chairman of Visit Britain, depicted the 2012 London Olympics, which are still fresh in memory, as a "showcase for Britain." He revealed the tourism strategy, which was to avoid a drop in demand in 2012, the year of the London Olympics, and to endeavor to establish an Olympic legacy while making "stimulation of the core market" and "development of new markets" the centerpieces.

He divided strategic development revolving around the Olympics into three stages, i.e., image building prior to the Olympics, global exposure during the Olympics, and maximization of the Olympic legacy following the games. He pointed out that since measures were devised across a span of more than 10 years, "it was a marathon, not a sprint."

Presenting the results of the campaign revolving around the Olympics, Rodrigues explained that the number of foreign visitors to Britain during the games was 422,000 people, the economic effect was 2 billion pounds, and media exposure through the campaign was received by 28,000 locations in Britain, which was equivalent to 3.7 billion pounds worth of advertising expense.

Rodrigues shared the fact that, following the record-setting 33 million inbound foreign visitors in 2013, the first quarter of this year maintained a high growth rate of 12% year-on-year. Thus, he emphasized that the tourism strategy revolving around the London Olympics is returning significant results.

Following O'Sullivan's and Rodrigues' presentations, Ryoichi Matsuyama, president of JNTO, compared the 1964 Tokyo Olympics with the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, saying that whereas the former represented Japan's debut on the world stage following its post-war recover as a "New Japan," the upcoming games will be a test of how to create an Olympic legacy in Tokyo which is now a mature city, while also showing international society the recovery of eastern Japan from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

To successfully stage the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Matsuyama indicated that Japan needs to deal with three issues, (1) avoidance of overconcentration in Tokyo, (2) minimization of a decline in inbound visitors in 2020, and (3) coping with the media, and he said, "We'd like to learn from the experience of the Sydney and London Olympics."

Also, as a legacy of the 2020 Olympics, he revealed that JNTO would like to aim for (1) a successful Olympic Games in a mature city with an aging population, (2) strengthening of Japan's brand and communication of its attractiveness as a tourist destination and MICE venue, (3) higher awareness of tourism as a key industry and boosting of inbound tourism, (4) a ripple effect from the Olympics on outlying areas, and (5) active participation by volunteers and supporters.

Taleb Rifai, secretary-general of UNWTO, pointed out the importance of communicating the attractiveness of Japan outside of Tokyo, including during the period around 2020 when the Tokyo Olympics will be held, and of spreading the ripple effects of the Olympics to all parts of Japan in concrete form

The moderator, Yoshiaki Hongo, mentioned, "Since the Olympics and tourism intersect in multiple domains, it may be postulated that a legacy will be left in a variety of forms." He wrapped up the discussion at the symposium, saying, "While we will clarify how to achieve a higher level than we currently have in a variety of fields, what is likely to remain in the field of tourism in the end as a legacy is an improvement in our ability to draw out people's desire to visit Japan and extensive efforts to carry that forward."