

### Exploring the Travel Industry through Global Training

#### Case study of youth travel in Malaysia

The “JATA Young Leaders Study Group” entered the third quarter of this fiscal year and with the co-operation of Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, created a program for overseas training. The program aimed at training people working in travel agencies and in the travel industry in general. The four members out of ten participants in the third training session, Mr. Yoshikazu Higashi, Chairman of JATA Managerial Issues Committee, and Mr. Makoto Tokunaga, Marketing Manager of Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, talked about the results and significance of the program.

#### Members in The Third Training Session

**Yosuke Kikuma**

Assistant Manager  
Purchasing and Operation Department  
World Air-Sea Service Co., Ltd.

**Yuma Kobayashi**

Product Planning group  
Product Planning & Marketing Section  
FIT Business Development Dept.  
JTB Global Marketing & Travel Inc

**Ima Tamashiro**

Chief  
Outside sales division  
Okinawa Tourist Service

**Yuka Haraguchi**

Specialist  
Enterprise Planning Group  
Enterprise Planning Division  
Toshiba Tourist Corporation

#### “The New Travel Industry” of the Era of Great Asian Exchange

-----Please tell us about the global training of “JATA Young Leaders Study Group.”

**Tokunaga:** The Case Study of the new travel industry which operates in the era of the Great Asian exchange took place in Malaysia and we offered the feedback on the results of the study from the travel industry to JATA. In 2013 and 2014, JATA held “JATA Young Leaders Study Group” sessions for 20-35 year old employees of JATA member companies. This year, however, JATA and Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board worked together and jointly conducted the training program. We held workshops in Tokyo in April and May, had a training camp in Hakone in June and conducted a study tour in Malaysia in July. A follow-up was held in Tokyo in August and the results were officially announced at the JATA Tourism EXPO Japan 2015 in September.

**Higashi:** While it is true that the travel industry is growing globally, the question is whether the future business model of the Japanese travel industry can ensure future growth for the whole industry as we are in a situation which is rather untenable. Yet, the online travel agencies (OTA) are part of the travel industry and inbound travel is part of the tourism industry so there is nothing to fear of. The travel and tourism industry will continue to expand. But are the young people in the industry who will take it to the future thinking about how to break through the status quo and what direction they want to take the industry in? With the support of Malaysia Tourism

Promotion Board JATA’s Young Leaders Study Group – the place to discuss these issues – conducted this year’s program in Malaysia, providing an opportunity for the participants to broaden their knowledge of the host country, too. I am deeply grateful to Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board for their support.

#### Tolerance between co-existing religions and ethnic groups

-----What is your impression of the training program and the visit to Malaysia?

**Kikuma:** Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and other religions coexist in Malaysia. Seeing this first-hand made me realize that Malaysia is a country where there is tolerance for other religious beliefs. It was surprising to see mosques, churches and temples built next to one another, creating a scenery which cannot be seen in many places in Europe. Travel is called the industry of peace but I think that the tolerance which we see everywhere in Malaysia is what has the potential to bring peace. This training program allowed me to interact with people working for other companies, whom I had not had a chance to meet before and this was another great benefit for me. The realization that people of my generation are also working hard helped me strengthen my resolve to become worthy of their competition.

**Kobayashi:** I work mostly for inbound travel and as I have few chances to work with people from other travel companies, this program was a golden opportunity to hear the opinions of other people. Inevitably, I concentrated mostly on issues pertinent to inbound travel but, after considering the travel industry as a whole, I realized that inbound travel represents still a very small part of it. I realized that I do have to consider the industry as a whole and not work for the sake of inbound travel only. During my visit I realized how different Malaysia is from Japan in terms of co-existence of different cultural traditions and thought that this is one of the most attractive features of the country.

#### Counter Sales: Approach to Key Customers

**Haraguchi:** In Malaysia, in order to ensure accurate information on cultural traditions and practices, every group of over 7 tourists has to be accompanied by a guide who is in possession of a national license. Although group tours in Japan have to be accompanied by a foreign language speaking guide, there are cases of tours from neighbor countries when the tour conductor of the country of origin does all the explanation of Japanese culture during the tour. With the 2020 Olympics ahead, the inbound travel to Japan will grow. In this regard, while working to maintain the growth even after 2020, we will need to promote the use of foreign language speaking guides. It is important to implement a strategy which will help the smooth acceptance of the growing number of inbound visitors by the Japanese public. In Malaysia, places for prayer and restaurants which offer halal food are marked with pictograms. Japan, while offering services tailored to the needs of visitors of different cultural and religious backgrounds, should set the necessary infrastructure (signage, etc.) to inform the foreign guests of the existence of these services.

**Tamashiro:** Like Okinawa, Malaysia is known as a resort destination. Okinawa can learn from Malaysia in terms of developing its travel and tourism industry through distinguishing itself from the competitors. In the multicultural and multiethnic society, cultural traditions and lifestyles exist together. I was impressed with the fact that serving clients from different backgrounds on an individual basis in order to meet their individual needs is a very common practice in Malaysia. We visited a travel agency and had a chance to see their sales counter for Muslim clients and also halal facilities. The visit made me realize that the sales persons have to be prepared to respond to the needs of their Muslim customers. After coming back to Japan, I have been working to ensure that our sales staff and tour guide services are prepared to meet the essential requirements of our international visitors.