

In Search of Possible Solutions to Over-Tourism : Manners Promotion Campaign in Gion

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オーバーツーリズムの解決策を探る ——祇園のマナーキャンペーンの事例から——

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This paper attempts to consider some of the possible solutions to over-tourism in Japan by focusing on the case of Gion south district and manner promotion campaign implemented recently. The paper describes this campaign and attempts for its preliminary critical assessments. While acknowledging its potential benefits for addressing the issues related to over-tourism in Japan, the author emphasizes that underlying issue behind the problems such as manners are the rapid growth and ultimately the number of tourists visiting Kyoto. Thus, the present campaign represents an effort that aims relatively quick quantification of the problem and a set of measures aiming to mitigate the most visible and easily to perceive issues such as inappropriate manners, yet it fails to provide long-term solutions and to address the underlying problem. On the other hand, the local community is attempting to shift from measures focused on bringing the manners to attention of the tourists towards stricter and more straightforward bans. The paper emphasizes the necessity of such measures that ultimately aim to manage the numbers of the tourists.

本論は京都の祇園南側地区において最近実施されたマナーキャンペーンの事例を取り上げ、日本において喫緊の課題として浮上しているオーバーツーリズムの対策可能性について考察を行う。本論ではこのマナーキャンペーンの事例を詳細に紹介し、その予備の評価を試みる。本キャンペーンはこれから日本においてオーバーツーリズムに向き合う上で重要な前例になると認めつつ、本キャンペーンが問題視する観光客マナーの背景には観光客の急増とその絶対人数があると主張する。従って、本キャンペーンは、オーバーツーリズムによる問題を素早く数値化でき、マナーのように認知しやすく注目を浴びる問題を緩和するための試みであるが、長期的な対策ではなく、背景にある問題の解決策を提供していないと訴える。その一方、地域住民の間では、現地におけるマナーを観光客に周知させる対策より、禁止のように比較的厳しく、直接的な対策を探る傾向がある。本論は、このような観光客の人数をコントロールする対策の必要性を訴える。

Introduction

Inbound tourism in Japan has become a keyword which symbolizes both, the potential for revitalization of the economy as well as a phenomenon that produces problems that need to be coped with. Regarding the later, new words such as over-tourism (オーバーツーリズム) or

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negative issues related to such tourism known as *kankō kōgai* (観光公害) become widely used and resonate in various media and public discourse in Japan, as well as abroad, these days. Whereas Japan has been gaining popularity among foreign travelers only slowly until the beginning of this decade, their number skyrocketed afterward and quadrupled in less than a decade. Besides benefits for the economy, such a rapid and large increase of the number of foreign visitors brought a lot of problems as well. Thus, after luring even more tourists from abroad, looking for solutions to the problems raised by skyrocketing inbound tourism and coping with over-tourism became important topics on the agenda of different actors involved in it.

Author's earlier work (Debnár, 2019) describes the recent situation regarding the sharp increase of foreign tourists in Gion south district in Kyoto, as one of the places that not only represents problematic issues, but also as a case where benefits of tourism are hard to capitalize on despite surging numbers of visitors. The article attempted to explain the motivations of tourists and how such motivations go against the local business model and consequently leading to opposition against increasing numbers of inbound tourism in the area. Nevertheless, the situation concerning the foreign tourists in the area escalated further and in early 2019, the representatives of the local community delivered an official petition asking the representatives of the city to take measures to improve the situation. This resulted into the implementation of a campaign including several measures with the primary objective to improve manners of the (foreign) tourists.

Based on fieldwork in the Gion south district and participation in the campaign, this paper describes the manner campaign and attempts for its preliminary critical assessments. Moreover, by analyzing the situation and tourism trends in the Gion and Kyoto, the paper seeks to identify other possible issues related to increasing numbers of the foreign tourists in the area. Particularly, the paper argues, that whereas manners of the tourists pose an important, highly visible and sensible problem, addressing only manners is of limited effect and does not address the issue from which such problems arise.

Inbound tourism in Japan and Kyoto—recent trends

The rapid increase in inbound tourism to Japan in recent years became a relatively well known issue due to a wide media coverage of the foreign travelers visiting Japan as well as the issues related to this rapid growth. As illustrates the Figure 1, the growth in the foreign tourists visiting Japan was relatively slow until 2011, when the numbers experienced further slump due to the triple disaster in the Tohoku region. Despite having clearly set goals and campaigns to lure more tourists to Japan by the government since early the 2000s, high prices, visa policies or geographical distance were identified as the main factor impeding significant growth in the numbers of inbound tourists in the period prior to 2012 (Funck, 2013).

However, the government goals for annual numbers of foreign visitors started to be cleared rapidly, and mainly prematurely, in the years following the Tohoku earthquake and following

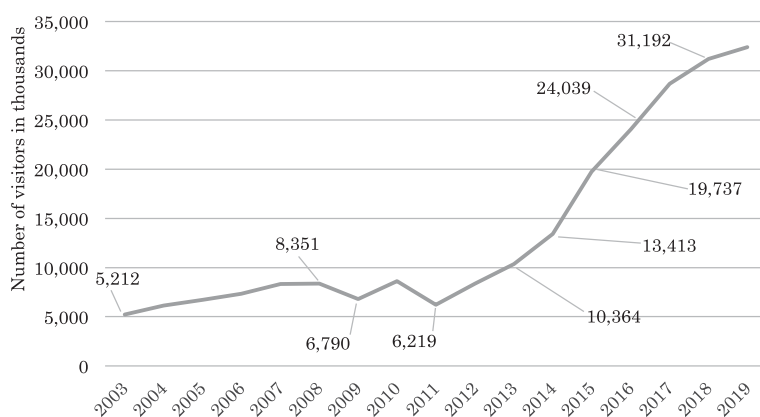


Figure 1 The growth of foreign tourists in Japan between 2003 and 2019.

Data for the 2019 represents a prediction based on an average growth between January and September 2019. Source : Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

disasters. The initial goal to lure 10 million annual visitors set in the early 2000s was reached in 2013. A new goal to attract 20 million visitors by the time of the Olympic Games in 2020, was practically achieved just two years later and consequently, new goals had to be set again. A new short-term goal was doubled to 40 million by 2020 and a mid-term goal of achieving 60 million tourists by 2030 was set up by the Japanese government as well. The available numbers for 2019 suggest that, if the rapid decrease in the numbers of tourists from the South Korea (as well as Honk Kong) continue, the actual short-term goal might be harder to reach by the end of 2020. The risk associated with a high degree of reliance on inbound tourism from a handful of neighboring countries has been identified as one of the major threats for inbound tourism in Japan (Russell, 2017) and this risk is being experienced these days. Still, there is a reasonable chance that the Olympic Games might give the necessary 25% increase (as compared to the prediction for 2019) to the present numbers of inbound tourists to reach the goal of 20 million annual visitors by the time set by the government.

The various economic and political factors behind this growth were identified by various authors (e.g., Henderson, 2017 ; Russell, 2017). Analyzing the growth patterns and factors affecting is crucial for maximizing potential economic (as well as other) benefits of the inbound tourism in Japan which is struggling with decreasing domestic consumption related to demographic change. However, besides the benefits the inbound tourism brings to Japanese economy, media cover increasingly more also negative effects that such increase (or inbound tourism per se) brings to localities around Japan. Some of such issues were illustrated and analyzed on the case of Gion south district in Kyoto earlier by the author as well (Debnár, 2019). This paper aims to further build on this work and discuss countermeasures that has been taken in this locality as an answer to problems related to increasing numbers of inbound tourists. Before addressing the way these problems are being addressed by the municipality, government and local community, it is necessary to understand some of the characteristics of the growth in inbound

tourism in the case of Kyoto. As will be argued later, this is crucial for assessing countermeasures discussed later in the paper.

Inbound tourism trends in Kyoto

Inbound tourism to Kyoto is what explains that number of nights spent in Kyoto by tourists or the amount spent by tourists in Kyoto keeps growing despite declining total number of tourists visiting this city¹⁾. Similarly to the rapid increase of foreign visitors to Japan after 2011, Kyoto has been experiencing rapid increase in the number of foreign visitors in the same period. As illustrates Figure 2, the number of stays in Kyoto by foreign tourists has increased almost five times in the last decade and the increase was even nine-fold when compared to the most recent low recorded in 2011.

However, despite the similarities in the development of *numbers* of foreign tourists visiting Japan and Kyoto, there are certain important particularities in the trends and composition of foreign visitors in the case of Kyoto. First, whereas the national data show already suggested high reliance on visitors from a handful of neighboring countries with almost 85% of all foreign visitors coming from Asian countries²⁾, the composition of such visitors is different in the case of Kyoto. Whereas visitors from Asian countries still represent the majority in Kyoto as well, their share (in terms of overnight stays) is relatively lower at 59% (京都市産業観光局, 2018). Importantly, this alleviates risks associated with sudden declines in the numbers of inbound tourists due to frictions or instabilities in bilateral relations between Japan and its neighbors, as illustrates the case with South Korea these days. Although the numbers of visitors from South Korea has been dropping this year in the case of Kyoto as well, the Kyoto City Tourism Association proclaimed in its recent statistical report that the effect of this decline on the tourism industry in Kyoto is limited³⁾.

Second, and in relation to the abovementioned, Kyoto is a popular destination particularly for Western travelers⁴⁾. Whereas tourists from the Western countries represented less than 14%

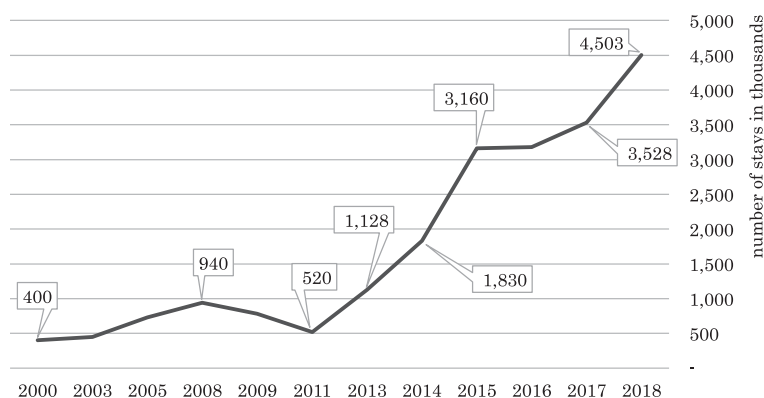


Figure 2 Number of stays by foreign tourists in Kyoto between 2000 and 2018.
Source : General Survey on Tourism in Kyoto (京都観光総合調査), Kyoto city.

of all foreign tourists to Japan in 2018⁵⁾, they represented more than 35% of all stays by foreign visitors in Kyoto in the same year (京都市産業観光局, 2018). This represents almost 10% more stays than the stays by visitors from the mainland China. In other words, popularity with the travelers with relatively stable economies and higher diversity of the inbound tourists mitigate the risks and threats that are often discussed in the case of inbound tourism to Japan in general (e.g., Russell, 2017).

Inbound tourists and the local community—issues with tourists in Gion

The following part describes current attempts to cope with the negative effects of the rapidly increasing inbound tourism in the case of Gion south district. Gion south district is famous mainly for its Hanimokoji street lined with traditional houses *machiya* and as one of the five traditional entertainment district with geisha. Gion is one of the most visited places in Kyoto by foreign tourists (Debnár, 2019 ; 京都市産業観光局, 2018). Moreover, as explained later, Gion became one of the first places in Japan to actively address the issues related to over-tourism on a large scale. As such it represents a suitable case study for discussing how over-tourism is being coped with in the case of Japan.

Data

Data for this article are based mainly on a long-lasting, ongoing fieldwork in the Gion south district as well as it utilizes some of the findings from a questionnaire survey conducted in the area in the years 2016 and 2018. Main findings of the questionnaire survey as well as data description has been published earlier (Debnár, 2019 ; デブナール, 2016) and this paper utilizes some of its findings in the analysis. The fieldwork consists mainly from participation in monthly meetings of Gion South District Council (祇園町南側地区協議会, “council” below) where the author has been actively participating since November 2015. Besides fieldnotes and materials obtained through participant observation, other related materials and interviews⁶⁾ were conducted for this project as well.

Improving the situation—present efforts in Gion

As described previously, the skyrocketing numbers of the inbound tourists in Kyoto and particularly their influx into the streets of the Gion south district lead the local council to consider and implement certain measures focused on improving the manners of tourists (for a more detailed overview see Debnár, 2019). These efforts started around 2015 (see Figure 4), yet after another four years elapsed the numbers of tourists on the streets of Gion kept growing and negative perceptions regarding tourists’ bad manners, as well as their sheer presence in the area intensified. Consequently, in early 2019, the representatives of the council wrote and delivered an appeal to the Kyoto city mayor asking him to act on the situation.

As a result of such pledge, continuous appeals to other city representatives and increasing

awareness of the problems that the skyrocketing inbound tourism brought to Japan in the public, the southern district of Gion has been selected for a pilot project with an objective to improve the manners of tourists in the area. The project entitled “Increasing awareness and education of tourists on the manners in the Gion South District” (祇園町南側地区における観光客へのマナー周知・啓発事業) funded by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, officially started on September 30th, 2019 and lasted until December 8th of the same year⁷⁾. It represents a collaborative effort of the government (the ministry and its body responsible for tourism in the region – Kinki District Transport Bureau), local government (Kyoto city government), and the local community (Gion South District Council) which, importantly, acknowledges the problems associated with the over-tourism, and inbound tourism in general, in Japan. The campaign included the following activities⁸⁾ :

1. Push-up notifications to smartphones : Tourists (or other individuals) who have installed two particular applications for tourists (Japan Travel by NAVITIME and TRAVEL JAPAN Wi-Fi) on their smartphones will get push-up notifications explaining the manners when entering the area.
2. Education and guidance on manners by multi-lingual inspectors : two inspectors speaking English and Chinese patrol the area and admonish tourists on inappropriate manners throughout the duration of the project.
3. Posters informing about surveillance cameras and manners : banners informing tourists on inappropriate manners and about the operation of surveillance cameras in the area are posted around the district (Figure 3).
4. Estimating numbers of visitors and instances of inappropriate manners : The number of visitors to the area and their approximate period of stay are estimated based on Wi-Fi sensors⁹⁾. The number of inappropriate manners in the area are estimated based on the video records from the surveillance cameras¹⁰⁾.
5. Assessment of the effect of the campaign : multiple questionnaire surveys among residents as well as tourists are held before, during, and after the campaign in order to provide basis for evaluation of the campaign.
6. Other activities : some other activities were organized and implemented in cooperation with other organizations and are being deployed as a part of this project as well.
 - a. Manner-improving campaign organized by the local community, Kyoto city, and two local universities. Students of the two participating universities (Ryukoku University and Kyoto Women’s University) distributed pamphlets and other goods explaining and raising awareness of the manners in the area (held on October 25th).
 - b. Education on manners by police patrol cars broadcasting messages in multiple languages informing tourists on inappropriate manners in the area (organized and implemented by the local police department continuously throughout the duration of the project).



Figure 3 Poster with inappropriate manners on one of the houses nearer the northern entrance to the Gion South district.

Source : Author's archive.

- c. Screening of a short educational movie clip regarding manners before the shows at the Gion corner (Foundation for the Promotion of Kyoto Traditional Entertaining Arts – 京都伝統伎芸振興財団)

The campaign received a wide coverage in media and represents an important step towards acknowledging the problem of over-tourism and finding solutions to negative effects of inbound tourism on local communities. The commencing of the campaign was covered by most of the major newspapers and TV stations in the Kansai region¹¹⁾. The news on the campaign were further reported by international outlets (e.g., “Japan’s Kyoto targets badly behaved tourists with smartphone alerts on local manners,” 2019) adding to the increasing media coverage on the problems that increasing numbers of inbound tourists bring to Japan by international media. Moreover, news on particular events during the campaign or covering the issues related to the manners of the tourists in the Gion area preceding the actual campaign were brought by media as well¹²⁾. The media reported on the bad manners of tourists, such as blocking traffic, smoking on the streets or entering private properties and illustrated the frustration of the local residents with the situation by interviewing some of them.

The campaign importantly contributes to raising the awareness of tourists on the particular manners that are deemed to be inappropriate in the area. As illustrate Figures 3 and 4, the campaign aims to raise awareness of manners particular to the area of Gion, such as touching lanterns, leaning on *inuyarai* (bamboo fences), or taking pictures of geisha. Moreover, as illustrates Figure 4 showing previous wooden banners erected in the area and present manners that are used in the campaign (push-up notification, leaflets, banners), the focus on particular manners is



Figure 4 Former banner with inappropriate manners (left) and list of inappropriate manners found in new materials (right)

Source : Author's archive.

slightly shifting and the present campaign focuses on the most pressing issues. In this respect, the present campaign represents a step forward as a collaborative attempt between the municipality and local community that aims to improve the well-being of the residents.

The limits of manner campaign

Despite undeniable positive aspects of the present manner campaign and the fact that in the time of writing this article the campaign was still an ongoing project that cannot be sufficiently evaluated yet, there can be identified certain limitations to this campaign. Understanding of such limitations can help us to improve further efforts as well as to understand the underlying issues that need to be addressed. At present, there can be identified at least the following limitations to the manner campaign.

The present campaign represents an effort that aims relatively quick quantification of the problem and a set of ad hoc solutions aiming to mitigate the most visible and easily to perceive problems. On one hand, quantification of the problem can empower the local community by providing it with data or “facts” that can be further used to improve their position in negotiations with the municipality or other organizations. In other words, the data accumulated throughout the campaign (e.g., the number of visitors, number of instances of inappropriate manners) can be used to illustrate the problems local community faces with further objective evidence and thus help to increase the pressure on the municipality to act and implement further policies (as also discussed in the following part) in the future. At the same time, the present campaign undoubtedly addresses the problem of manners as one of the most pressing issues identified by the *residents* as well.

On the other hand, however, it can be argued that the campaign does not sufficiently provide a long-term solution and is not focusing on the underlying problems. First, by the definition of the subject of the campaign (i.e., the tourists) the campaign addresses those who will most probably never come again. Whereas it can be argued that in the case of tourism such

limitations can be seen as inevitable and thus such practices as the best practice in the given situation. However, it needs to be acknowledged that there can certainly be more effort put into promoting the awareness on local manners to those who are about to visit the area as well¹³).

Second, the present campaign focuses on the visible problem of the manners but fails to address the crucial underlying factors that lead to such situations. Particularly, it can be argued that this campaign does not address the *number* of tourists as a problem per se. Although the word over-tourism starts to be used by the municipalities or state apparatus in Japan as well, as illustrates also the discussion below, it is largely seen more as a problem that needs to be managed (e.g. by adaptation) rather than a problem that needs to be solved (e.g., by limiting the numbers of tourists). The importance of problematizing the number of tourists in Kyoto can be illustrated by the prognosis of further growth in numbers of international tourists in Kyoto. As the analysis of inbound tourism trends above suggests, Kyoto is significantly less dependent on countries such as South Korea and thus, whereas the recent frictions between the two countries do seem to affect negatively the numbers of Koreans coming to Kyoto, the overall trends might be significantly less affected than in the case of national trends. Similarly, because of the popularity with the Western travelers (which has a relatively long tradition), Kyoto might be less prone to be adversely affected by possible economic downturns in the area or political frictions with the surrounding countries that are often seen as the main threats to further growth of inbound tourism in Japan (Russell, 2017). In other words, the numbers of international visitors to Kyoto are more probable to keep growing, or at least unlikely to decrease in the near future. This effectively translates into continuing (or even increasing) burden on already over-crowded areas such as Gion, or Fushimi-Inari. While improving the manners of tourists might alleviate some of that burden, it will not solve the problems in everyday life of residents.

Discussion—searching for possible solutions

One of the adverse effects of the influx of tourists in the case of Gion is the possibility that the crowds of tourists will have a negative effect on the local business in the longer term. As argued previously, the local business model centered on entertainment by geisha is incompatible with the notion of a tourist and thus, contrary to a common trend, the tourists do not represent a business opportunity for many of the local establishments (Debnár, 2019). Moreover, the representatives of the businesses and residents openly admit that part of the premium prices the customers pay for the services in the Gion is based on its image of a traditional, high-class entertainment district. However, with the crowds being present on the streets of Gion from early morning hours until late in nights, the local business owners increasingly express their concern that the district will lose its appeal, and this will negatively affect their businesses.

Throughout the fieldwork, as well as from the brief public statements of the local residents for media, it becomes clear that the stance many residents and business owners take is that of opposing *crowds* of tourists, or the idea of mass-tourism¹⁴). As an answer to the growing num-

bers of tourists in the streets of Gion and escalating frustration with the status quo, the representatives of the council plan to implement new measures which actually represent an attempt to address the numbers of tourists in the area. Particularly, the former wooden banners with manners on Figure 4 (left) are planned to be replaced with new banners banning photography in the area. As one of the leaders of the local community put it, it is an attempt expressing a shift from measures focused on bringing the manners to attention of the tourists towards stricter and more straightforward bans. Moreover, the underlying idea behind this particular measure is to attempt to control or even decrease the number of tourists in the area. Author's questionnaire survey (presented also to the council) confirmed that most of the tourists come mainly to Gion area only to take pictures – and not necessarily that of the geisha – without spending money (and thus economically contributing) in the area (Debnár, 2019 ; デブナール, 2016). Consequently, banning photography became discussed in the council as a possible measure that can possibly decrease incentives for tourists to visit the area. Although legal constraints or law enforcement issues still pose significant challenges to a successful implementation of such policies, such an attempt illustrates the awareness of the problem of number of tourists and express the intention to address it directly by the representatives of the local community.

On the other hand, as also discussed above, the present manner campaign or other incentives by the city or government often presume - or tacitly tolerate - continuous growth in the numbers of foreign tourists. For example, even policies that explicitly use words such as over-tourism do not necessarily aim to reduce (or slow down the growth), but rather propose measures that would, for example, distribute the tourists to alleviate the over-crowding in particular areas. One such example is Kyoto city's policy of distribution of tourists along three dimensions ; time of the day, season, and place. This policy has been pursued in various forms by the city officials for a longer period and recently has been apparently adopted in what is called "Countermeasures to over-tourism project" (オーバーツーリズム対策事業) by Kyoto City Tourism Association¹⁵⁾. As illustrates the following quote from the description of this project, even in such cases rather evasive language is being used and the numbers of tourists per se are not being addressed :

“[This project] will produce an environment where the concentration of tourists' demand in particular season or time will be alleviated, and tourists can enjoy Kyoto in all of its corners all year long” (translation by author)

Whereas the aim here is not to assess such policies (which have only started to be implemented) and it can be argued that some of the goals, indeed, do consider or regard numbers of tourists as a pressing issue, the abovementioned short quotation should illustrate an often seen tendency in discussions or policy proposals on inbound tourism in Japan. Namely, the inbound tourism in Japan represents an economic incentive in the first place. Its potential to supplement

for the dwindling domestic consumption or revitalize local economies are the points which are being emphasized and pursued. Even with the unprecedented growth in the number of foreigners visiting Japan every year as tourists, the macro economic impact of this industry is still limited (Russell, 2017) and to fully capitalize on this potential in macro-economic terms, even more tourists are needed to come. Thus, every time after achieving a milestone, new numeric goals in terms of number of annual visits are being proposed by the Japanese government as discussed earlier. In this way, the pressure to *increase* the number of inbound tourists is a (national) mantra that can be hardly ignored by any of the government bodies or local governments.

However, as cases from other global touristic cities located mainly in Europe suggest, such macro-economic, market oriented and often neo-liberal views of inbound tourism have negative impact on the well-being of local communities. Moreover, numbers of tourists left uncontrolled for a long time can often lead to issues having adverse effects on the cities and its citizens in general, such as hollowing out of the city centers, increasing crime rates, or even social unrests (for the overview of the latter in various European cities see, for example, Colomb & Novy, 2017). At the same time, the way cities such as Barcelona, Amsterdam, Venezia or Firenze have adapted to tackle the growing numbers of the tourists and more radical countermeasures they have been taking recently might serve as role models for Kyoto. For example, cities such as Firenze, Venice or Amsterdam introduced strict fines for misbehavior in public spaces (from drinking alcohol on streets, through littering, to mere sitting on frequented public spaces) and are being introduced by international as well as domestic media and often discussed by the members of the Gion south district council.

Finally, besides the problem of the number of tourists per se, it is crucial to realize that the number of inbound tourists is not only large but that it has been surging in an unprecedented and largely elsewhere unseen pace as well. As suggested also above, the increase in inbound tourism is relatively a new issue for Japan and their numbers are renewing previous records every single year since at least 2013. In addition, the growth rate is far beyond common growth rates seen around the world. For instance, whereas international tourism has been growing globally by about 6% per annum in recent years (UNWTO, 2018), Japan experienced its first single-digit growth since 2012 only after six years in 2018. Despite relatively slower growth in the last year, the average growth rate between 2012 and 2018 still exceed astonishing 26% with a maximum of more than 47% in 2014.

The fast growth brings particular set of issues distinguishing the experience of cities such as Kyoto from its European counterparts where the growth has been relatively slower and thus spread over longer period. For example, the notion of “compressed modernity” argues that the pace over which large structural changes, such as, for instance demographic change, happen alter the experience of such change and its outcomes (e.g., Chang, 2010 ; Chang & Song, 2010). In a similar way, it is crucial to acknowledge the different timeframe over which the number of

foreign visitors escalate in particular cities in search for possible solutions accordingly, both, in terms of content and time.

Conclusions

This paper discussed possible solutions to recent issues related to over-tourism in Japan. It focused on the area of Gion south district and described in detail very recent project entitled “Increasing awareness and education of tourists on the manners in the Gion South District”. This collaborative project by representative bodies of the national and local governments as well as the local community can be of high significance for future efforts addressing similar issues in other parts of Japan. Besides its collaborative character which crucially involves the local community, it represents also the first large scale project attempting to alleviate negative effects of over-tourism on local communities. In this case, the campaign aims the improvement of tourists’ manners which often represent the most palpable symbol of over-tourism for media as well as local residents.

However, despite undeniable possible positive impacts of the present efforts, the paper identified some of its limitations as well. It has been argued that the present campaign focusing on manners does not sufficiently provide a long-term solution and is not focusing on the underlying problems. Considering the particularities of the Gion area as well as the general situation and policies regarding inbound tourism in Japan, the number of tourists (or over-tourism) has been identified as the main underlying factor. Thus, addressing or controlling the numbers of tourists is necessary to improve situation especially in areas such as Gion where tourism has very limited economic benefits for the local businesses. On the other hand, however, measures aiming for control (or even decrease) of the inbound tourism are in stark contradiction with the national policy of further increase that aims to double the number of annual tourists visiting Japan in the next twelve years.

As has been repeatedly argued by media as well, Kyoto (or Japan) can definitely learn from the experience of other global touristic cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona or Firenze in terms of the best practices and possible solutions to over-tourism (e.g., Chavez, 2019). As the discussion above, however, suggests what the city of Kyoto cannot afford is to take the same time to tackle the issues related to abrupt increase in the foreign tourists as did the European cities.

Notes

- 1) According to the General Survey on Tourism in Kyoto conducted annually by the Kyoto city, the total number of visitors to Kyoto peaked in 2015 at 56.8 million and gradually declined to 52.7 million in 2018 (京都市産業観光局, 2018). On the other hand, according to the same survey, the number of nights spent by visitors and the total consumption kept growing.
- 2) Number of visitor arrivals to Japan statistics by Japan National Tourism Organization (available at : https://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/statistics/data_info_listing/index.html)

- 3) Source : <https://www.kyokanko.or.jp/kaiin/report/hotel201908> (last accessed October 22nd, 2019)
- 4) For the purposes of this paper, the Western travelers or the West includes tourists from the North America, Europe and Oceania (where the vast majority of tourists come from Australia and New Zealand).
- 5) Number of visitor arrivals to Japan statistics by Japan National Tourism Organization (available at : https://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/statistics/data_info_listing/index.html)
- 6) Interviews conducted for this research include four formal interviews with different members of the local council as well as numerous informal interviews with other members and some local residents.
- 7) The project was still ongoing in the time of writing of this article. There was a possibility of extending the actual duration of the project depending on funds.
- 8) Based on materials provided to meetings of the Gion South District Council (September 9th, 2019) and review committee of the projects (September 9th, 2019). Overview of the project and the main activities to be implemented can be also found on the official homepages of the Kyoto city or Kinki District Transport Bureau (e.g., <https://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/sankan/page/0000257741.html>).
- 9) Only visitors with devices using Wi-Fi can be counted by this method. Temporary visitors (e.g., tourists) and permanent residents can be estimated only based on the time they (or the devices) spend in the area.
- 10) The videos from the surveillance cameras covering the area will be analyzed and instances of an inappropriate manners counted manually.
- 11) For example, five major TV (NHK, ABC, MBS, ANN, Kansai TV) stations brought prime-time news reports on the day campaign started (September 30th, 2019).
- 12) For example, NHK Kyoto brought a special report on the problems regarding inappropriate manners of the tourists and how over-tourism is being dealt with in some European cities in their regional prime-time news on June 20th, 2019.
- 13) For example, by promotion through social networks, guidebooks or directly to tour organizers. Although Kyoto city already organized a campaign focused on tour organizers from China, more diverse and intense activities need to be considered and implemented as well.
- 14) The present leaders of the council repeatedly emphasize that Gion is not a touristic attraction and that they do not want tourists in the area (see also, Debnár, 2019). However, more clarification of their stances reveal that they are against the idea of mass-tourism and against all forms of tourism in general. Many establishments actually do allow tourists, particularly with a proper reservation or introduction, in one way or other.
- 15) Project is described on the following HP : <https://www.kyokanko.or.jp/kaiin/project/sustainable/> (accessed on October 18th, 2019)

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